The Governance of Urban Productive Safety Net Program in Lideta Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Ethiopia has been implementing and operationalizing the productive safety net program in rural and urban areas since 2005 and 2016, respectively, as an indispensable social protection initiative with the objective of ensuring food security, supporting livelihoods and building resilience. The program stands out as Africa's most significant social protection initiative due to its extensive nationwide coverage and substantial number of beneficiaries. The study was conducted with aim to explore the implementation of the urban productive safety net program and assess its alignment with the pillars of the good food security governance framework for food security established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. A qualitative research approach and case study research design were employed based on their appropriateness for addressing the research objective. Thematic analysis, supported by Maxqda software, was used for the data analysis. The findings of the study analyzed through the good food security governance framework revealed that the practical operation of urban productive safety net program exhibited notable strengths in governance principles including participation, accountability, transparency, equality, and fairness. Some of the key indicators include active beneficiary involvement in decision-making, awareness of rights and duties, and availability of program's information. However, limitations were identified concerning the rule of law, efficiency and effectiveness, and responsiveness. Some of the manifestations include discrimination instances, inadequate startup capital and support after graduation, absence of public work compensation insurance and the average response time to beneficiary requests, highlight areas that require improvement for better governance of the program. Therefore, to enhance the successful operationalization of the program, the government should improve targeting processes to ensure equality and

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fairness by addressing instances of bias that exclude the poor. Moreover, increasing the startup capital in line with inflation indices and providing ongoing follow up and support after graduation will conclusively help graduates establish sustainable livelihoods. Furthermore, implementing health insurance for beneficiaries and ensuring timely responses to their requests will strengthen the program's responsiveness. Furthermore, the overlooked good food security governance principles such as accountability, rule of law, and participation shall be incorporated into the urban productive safety net program implementation manual as recommended by the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Keywords: Productive Safety Net Program, Food Security, Good Food Security Governance Maxqda, Lideta sub city, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Social safety nets have been essential in ensuring food security, particularly for people experiencing poverty and hunger(World Bank, 2018). The World Bank's particular intervention in social safety nets program in the 1980s in response to global food insecurity crisis contributed for its advancement worldwide(Wereta & Ahmed, 2024; World Bank, 2011). Because of this remarkable engagement by the World Bank, safety nets have increasingly come to be acknowledged as social welfare programs that support people from low-income families impacted by structural adjustments and economic transitions and such policies had been implemented in countries including the former Soviet Union, Poland, and Ukraine(Subbarao et al., 1997).

According to (Patel, 2018), safety net programs in Africa received more attention and funding in the early 2000s. In Africa, social safety net programs have been gaining importance as governments expand their coverage to enhance food security and resilience for vulnerable communities, despite challenges remain in scaling and ensuring their effectiveness(Beegle et al., 2018).The World Bank's thorough assessment of twenty-two African countries indicated safety net programs in Africa emerged as a direct response to the global economic crisis. This assessment emphasized how important safety net programs in alleviating poverty across Africa (Patel, 2018).

According to the 2024 UNDP's report, 1.1 billion people are living in severe poverty worldwide. Out of this number, 553 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 402 million are in South Asia(UNDP, 2024). Africa South of the Sahara are the world regions with the highest hunger levels, with Global Hunger Index scores of 27.0, indicating serious hunger and malnutrition (FAO, 2023; Global Hunger Index, 2023).

Ethiopia has also been regarded and recognized as one of the most vulnerable countries to food insecurity and mostly impacted by famine (Global Hunger Index, 2023; Mohamed, 2017). 86 million people are living in poverty in Ethiopia and the country is ranked third in the world with the largest impoverished populations(UNDP, 2024). This poverty situation in the country urged the government to introduce a proactive social protection program to address food insecurity rather than relying solely on emergency food aid(Gebresilassie, 2020).

After constructive discussions between the Ethiopian government and its development partners, the country realized the implementation of the Productive Safety Net Program in 2005 with initial 5.5 million beneficiaries in 262 Woredas and as of June 2024, there have been 8 million reported beneficiaries[3] in 489 chronically food-insecure Woredas(Wereta & Ahmed, 2024). One notable gap in the implementation of the productive safety net program was its exclusive focus on rural areas. However, following the recommendations of the 2014 National Social Protection Policy, the government approved the Urban Food Security and Job Creation Strategy on May 8, 2015, to support over 4.7 million urban poor living in 972 cities and towns. Then, the Urban Productive Safety Net Program was launched in 2016 in 11 selected large cities including Addis Ababa, Adama, Assayita, Asosa, Dessie, Dire Dawa, Gambella, Hawassa, Harari, Jijiga, and Mekele(Gebresilassie, 2020).

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[3] JRIS-Newsletter-May-June-2024 pdf as accessed on 20th of February 2025

In the first phase of the urban productive safety net program, about 604,000 beneficiaries were benefited across 11 cities through a gradual roll-out plan during a five-year period. On October 27, 2020, the Ethiopia government launched the second phase of the urban productive safety net project by expanding the beneficiaries' coverage from 11 to 83 cities. The project is supposed to support 798,500 beneficiaries in the second phase.[4]

Given the large size of Addis Ababa and the relatively high poverty rates it records, about three-quarters of the urban beneficiaries were from this city(Gebresilassie, 2020; World Bank, 2015). Because of which 170,000 program beneficiaries were supported and finally graduated from the initiative which began in 2016. After this successful achievement, Addis Ababa as a city launched the second phase of its Urban Productive Safety-Net Program (UPSNP) on January 3, 2022, targeting 110,000 vulnerable residents below the poverty line who are living in 120 Woredas in the capital. However, Addis Ababa was late to launch the second phase of the program because it started the first phase later than many other cities. Of the 170,000 program beneficiaries in the first phase, 33,181 were from Lideta sub city.[5]

Coming to the governance of the Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP), it is designed to alleviate urban poverty through a multi-level organizational structure that encompasses federal, regional, city, Woreda, and kebele levels, each with specific responsibilities. At the federal level, the Federal Job Creation & Food Security Agency (FJC & FSA) manages and coordinates the program. This is done by in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). The Urban Good Governance & Capacity Building Bureau (UGGCBB) and the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) support these efforts by focusing on capacity development and financial management(Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation, 2016)

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[4] Ethiopian News Agency as accessed on the 20th of February 2025. The data are available at: https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/en_18002

[5] Ethiopian Monitor as accessed on 20th of February 2025, the data are available at: https://ethiopianmonitor.com/2022/01/03/addis-ababa-launches-second-phase-safety-net-program/

At the region level, the Bureau of Urban Job Creation & Food Security oversees implementation, while technical committees handle specific components like public works and livelihoods. At the city level, city councils and the City Urban Safety Net Coordination Committee (SNCC) manage annual plans and coordinate various technical aspects. The Woreda Chief Executive is responsible to supervise the project management and planning processes, while the local councils approve beneficiary lists and oversee grassroots implementation(Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation, 2016).

The latest implementation manual of the urban productive safety net program which was issued in 2020 incorporated 13 principles including: goal-oriented, strategy-based, fair and transparent, non-discrimination, timely, predictable, and appropriate transfers, integration with local plans, proximity, gender equity, avoiding dependency syndrome, confidentiality, clients' access to information, best interest of the beneficiary, and respect and dignity(Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure, 2020). On the other hand, good food security governance framework is built on seven key principles which include: efficiency and effectiveness, equality and fairness, *accountability* , responsiveness, transparency, participation, and the rule of law(FAO, 2011b). As clearly evident, the principles of the urban productive safety net program demonstrates a partial alignment with the principles of good food security governance framework through its emphasis on *equality and fairness* (via non-discrimination, gender equity, and fair and transparent processes) and *transparency* (by clients' access to information). The program's focus on goal-oriented and strategy-based actions demonstrates the governance principle of *effectiveness*, while timely and predictable transfers align with *responsiveness* in addressing immediate needs of beneficiaries.

However, there are critical gaps evident in program's adherence to the good food security governance framework. First, *accountability* mechanisms are absent: there are no provisions for independent audits, grievance redress systems, or public reporting, raising risks of mismanagement. Second, the program neglects *the rule of law,* failing to anchor operations within legal frameworks which weakens enforceability and rights protection. Third,

despite the program emphasizes operational *responsiveness* (timely transfers), it lacks adaptive mechanisms to adjust to systemic shocks like inflation. Finally, *participation* is overlooked. These omissions from the program implementation manual of the urban productive safety net program is against the recommendation of Food and Agriculture Programme which undermine its ability to address structural drivers of food insecurity(FAO, 2011c).

The implementation of the productive safety net program in both rural and urban areas has brought good examples of progress. For instance, Ethiopia's 2000 Global Hunger Index score was 53.3 indicating an extremely alarming hunger level. However, the country has now made progress since then and achieved reduction of 26.1 between its 2000 Global Hunger Index scores (53.3) and the 2024 Global Hunger Index scores is (26.2).[6] These reductions by 26.1 in hunger are particularly impressive given the challenges facing the world and the stagnation in hunger levels at the global level in recent years, specifically in the year 2023(Global Hunger Index, 2023). Another study indicated that the productive safety net program has played a significant role in building and safeguarding household assets, as well as in providing infrastructure(Workneh, 2008). Other figures also indicated that the Ethiopia's PSNP meaningfully reduced drought impacts by 57% while simultaneously lowering the national poverty rate by 2% (SPEC, 2021; Tareke, 2022).

Despite the Ethiopian Government and donors' consortium led by the World Bank launched PSNP to ensure food consumption and prevent asset depletion among food-insecure households in chronically food insecure areas, its operational implementation has been hampered by considerable number of challenges which include; ineffective geographical, administrative, community targeting, clients dependency syndrome; stakeholder disengagement; poor project manual implementation; gender bias; premature

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[6] Global Hunger Index Scores by 2024 GHI Rank as reviewed on 10th of February 2024, It is available at: https://www.globalhungerindex.org/ranking.html

and an unrealistic emphasis on graduation as a measure of success and financial and infrastructure problems(Messay et al., 2022; MoUDH, 2016; Wordofa, 2019). However, this study has not found premature graduation as a challenge for urban productive safety net program operational implementation.

Many of the operational challenges observed during the implementation of the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) can be attributed, in part, to the lack of a comprehensive integration of good food security governance principles in both the program's implementation manual and its practical implementation. These principles include: the rule of law, participation, transparency, responsiveness, accountability, equality and fairness, and efficiency and effectiveness. These principles are not fully incorporated into the recent program implementation manual of the urban productive safety net program, as it overlooks aspects of accountability, rule of law, and participation, leading to systemic gaps that hindered the program's overall effectiveness.

Moreover, there is a research gap indicating the good food security governance of the Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) in Ethiopia, particularly in Addis Ababa. Despite the program's importance in addressing urban poverty and food insecurity, no adequate studies have systematically examined the governance frameworks underpinning the Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) in Ethiopia. This gap in the literature necessitates the need for research to explore how governance mechanisms are incorporated into the program's design and implementation. The objective of this research is, therefore, to examine the governance practice of urban productive safety net program through the lens of the good food security governance framework established by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) by considering Lideta Sub city of Addis Ababa City Administration as a case study.

1.2   Literature review
1.2.1 Theories of governance and social protection

Collaborative governance theory. Collaborative governance is collective decision-making process by the involvement of the concerned stakeholders to address various public issues like food insecurity(Ansell & Gash, 2008; Keping, 2018). The theory focuses on joint efforts among diverse stakeholders to achieve common goals and enhance governance efficiency(Keping, 2018). The collaborative theory to governance offers important lessons for enhancing food security by integrating diverse perspectives from various stakeholders including governments, Civil Society Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Community Leaders, which in turn, leads to responsive policies tailored to local needs(Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Participatory governance theory. Participatory governance theory emphasizes the inclusion of citizens, communities, and stakeholders in decision-making processes to address societal challenges (Asare-Nuamah et al., 2023). When applied to food security, it focuses on empowering marginalized groups, fostering collaboration between governments and civil society, and creating locally relevant solutions to hunger, malnutrition, and food system inequities(Canton, 2021). Participatory governance directly strengthens food security governance by ensuring that policies and programs addressing hunger, equity, and sustainability are shaped by the communities they impact. By prioritizing inclusivity, it amplifies the voices of marginalized groups such as smallholder farmers, women, and indigenous communities who possess critical knowledge of local food systems but are often excluded from decision-making. Transparency in food policy processes builds trust and reduces corruption, ensuring resources reach those in need. Accountability mechanisms, such as community-led monitoring of food distribution programs, hold institutions responsible for equitable outcomes(World Bank Group, 2020)

Social protection theory. Social protection theory is a framework that emphasizes the role of governments and institutions in providing support to vulnerable populations to reduce poverty, inequality, and food insecurity. In the context of food security and productive safety net programs, social protection theory provides a lens through which to understand how interventions like cash transfers, public works, and livelihood support can

enhance access to food, improve nutritional outcomes, and build resilience among vulnerable households(World Bank, 2018). Social protection theory also asserts that a comprehensive system of social safety nets and related policies are vital for reducing poverty and vulnerability, enhancing food security, and promoting economic resilience(FAO, 2012).

1.2.2 Empirical literature review on urban productive safety nets program

Conducting an empirical literature review is a cornerstone of rigorous and evidence-based research because it systematically synthesizes data-driven studies to ground research in verifiable evidence, thereby ensuring objectivity and validity while identifying gaps, inconsistencies, and trends in existing research(Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Snyder, 2019). Based on this understanding, a rigorous literature review has been conducted to mainly identify the research gaps so as to avoid redundancies and ensure this study addresses new issues rather than duplicating existing studies(Snyder, 2019)

The study, titled "Monitoring and Evaluating Ethiopia's Urban Productive Safety Net Project (UPSNP)," was commissioned by the World Bank in 2017. The research aimed to assess the progress of the Urban Productive Safety Net Project (UPSNP) in Ethiopia. The study concluded that the UPSNP was well-targeted to poor households and it brought a positive impact on household income and food security(Franklin et al., 2017).

The study by Abdulahi et al., (2024) titled "Impact of Urban Productive Safety Net Program on Poverty Reduction and Food Security: Evidence from Major Cities of Eastern Ethiopia (Dire Dawa, Harar, and Jigjiga) explored the factors that affect a household's decision to participate in the program. The study found that UPSNP has a positive impact on poverty reduction and food security. They also found that the likelihood of participating in the program is affected by several factors, including age of household head, number of children, savings, home ownership, employment status, and economic shocks. The authors conclude that the UPSNP is effective in reducing poverty and food insecurity and recommend that the program be expanded to other urban areas in Ethiopia. They also recommend that the program should focus on creating sustainable income opportunities for its participants(Abdulahi et al., 2024).

Another study by Amosha and Abi (2023) titled "The Effects of Urban Productive Safety Net Program on Household Food Security Status in Gulele Sub-city, Addis Ababa" aimed to investigate the impact of the Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) on food security among urban households. The study found that participation in the UPSNP had positive effects on food security levels among households. It revealed that a significant percentage of the sampled households faced various levels of food insecurity, and factors such as the age of the household head, family size, and savings influenced food security. Although the program contributed to improved food access, it did not significantly enhance asset accumulation or overall livelihood improvement. The study recommended that local governments at the sub-city and Woreda levels should focus on activities that would reduce food prices and stabilize household food security. It emphasizes the importance of creating job opportunities and increasing cash transfers to Urban Productive Safety Net program (UPSNP) beneficiaries, which would help poor households generate more income and improve their ability to purchase food items. Furthermore, enhancing the savings culture among participants and adjusting cash transfers based on current living conditions are highlighted as measures to ensure better food security for urban poor households(Amosha & Abi, 2023).

The study titled "Impact of Ethiopia's Urban Productive Safety Net Program on Households' Food Insecurity: The Case of Mekelle City, Tigray, Ethiopia." aimed to evaluate the effect of Ethiopia's Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) on the food insecurity of urban households. The study found that the UPSNP has a considerable effect on the income earnings and consumption spending of program beneficiary households. The study recommended that the program should be expanded to other urban cities in Ethiopia.

The article titled "Public works and cash transfers in urban Ethiopia: Evaluating the Urban Productive Safety Net Program" by Abebe et al., (2018), assessed the effects of the Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study aimed to understand the program's impact on household income and labor supply, changes in non-

public-works labor force participation, household welfare, gender roles, community outcomes related to public goods, and perceptions of welfare influenced by the program. Findings indicate that the UPSNP effectively targets urban households to enhance income and reduce vulnerability, enrolling approximately 18% of households, with 30% receiving direct support and 70% participating in public works. According to the study, the program provided significant economic benefits, improving household wellbeing(Abebe et al., 2018).

The study by YH Gebresilassie (2020) which focused on the Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) and its effects on food security status in Mekelle, Tigrai, Ethiopia. The study findings indicated that Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) has helped improve access to food for many households, but there were still challenges such as lack of resources and skills training programs.

The study, titled "Impact of Urban Productive Safety Net Program on Urban Households' Asset Accumulation and Food Consumption Rate in Dessie City, South Wollo Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia," was conducted by Alem-meta Assefa (2024) and published in PLOS ONE. The research found that beneficiary households of the UPSNP exhibited higher home asset accumulation, community asset accumulation, and better consumption and food security status compared to non-beneficiary households. The study concluded that the UPSNP has a positive impact on asset accumulation and consumption rates in Dessie City(Assefa, 2024).

The study by Amsalu Tadesse (2021) examined the implementation efficacy of Addis Ababa's Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) and its consequential impact on household food security within the Arada sub-city. His research revealed that while UPSNP has made significant contributions in supporting food access through cash transfers and public works, persistent challenges including resource constraints and inconsistent skills training impede the Program's overall effectiveness. The study advocated for an expanded, multi-sectoral social protection framework to enhance sustainable food security outcomes and he recommended targeted improvements in

beneficiary selection, stakeholder collaboration, and the provision of timely and adequate support to mitigate dependency and foster long-term self-sufficiency among participants(Tadesse, 2021).

1.2.3 Justifications for novelty

Despite extensive empirical research on the Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) in Ethiopia, no prior studies have specifically examined the governance frameworks underpinning the program's implementation. Existing literature (e.g., Franklin et al., 2017; Abdulahi et al., 2024; Amosha & Abi, 2023; Abebe et al., 2018; Tadesse, 2021) has predominantly focused on evaluating the UPSNP's socioeconomic impacts (e.g., poverty reduction, food security, asset accumulation) and implementation challenges (e.g., resource constraints, skills gaps, beneficiary targeting). However, critical governance dimensions such as decision-making processes, accountability mechanisms, collaborative coordination, or stakeholder roles in program design and delivery remain unexplored. None of them explored the UPSNP implementation process through the lens of the good food security governance framework established by the Food and Agriculture Organization.
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Although existing studies highlight what the UPSNP achieves, they do not address how governance structures enable or hinder these outcomes. For example, Tadesse (2021) notes challenges in beneficiary selection but does not analyze the institutional policies or administrative processes driving these inefficiencies. So, by shifting the focus from outcomes to governance processes, this study tries to address a critical gaps in the literature and offers insights into systemic drivers of success or failure that previous UPSNP evaluations have overlooked. This positions our work as foundation for future policy reforms and academic inquiry. While existing studies have extensively documented the socioeconomic impacts of Ethiopia's Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP), there is a notable absence of research examining the governance frameworks that shape its implementation.

1.3 Conceptual and analytical framework for governance for food security

The concept of governance is a very old one; it can be traced back in the works of Aristotle, who referred to good governance to describe a state ruled

by an ethical and just governor(FAO, 2011c). In contemporary discourse, good governance is intrinsically linked to democracy, as it can only be realized within a free and democratic political system, whereas autocratic systems, even at their optimal best, may achieve good government but inherently lack the conditions necessary for good governance, which is contingent upon the presence of freedom and democratic principles. As a result of which, good governance becomes an inevitable consequence of democratization (Keping, 2018).

In the context of food security, governance refers to the formal and informal rules, processes, and collaborative mechanisms through which public and private stakeholders express their interests, make decisions, and implement and sustain actions to achieve food and nutrition security at local, national, regional, and global levels(FAO, 2011a). In this study, the operational definition of good governance for the urban productive safety net program entails the integrated application of quality dimensions of the seven good food security governance principles namely efficiency and effectiveness, equality and fairness, accountability, responsiveness, transparency, participation, and the rule of law. So the analytical framework for good governance for food security involves these seven quality dimensions as proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization(FAO, 2011a). When all of the principles of good governance are followed and their true implementation is ensured, governments and systems are seen to be well governed(Aurangzeb, 2022).

Effective food security governance is anchored in clear, participatory, and responsive planning, decision-making, and implementation across the four pillars of food security namely: availability, access, utilization, and stability(FAO, 2011a). The goal of achieving food security for all is at the heart of FAO's engagement defined as: *all people, at all times, and should have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*. This vision is grounded in four interconnected pillars of food security: availability (adequate food production, distribution, and trade systems), access (affordability, equitable resource allocation, and poverty reduction), utilization (optimal nutrient absorption through food safety, dietary diversity,

and health practices), and stability (resilience against shocks to sustain the other three dimensions over time). Achieving food security requires harmonizing these four pillars simultaneously, which underpins the FAO's twin-track approach which integrates immediate support for vulnerable populations with long-term investments in agricultural production and productivity, governance, and inclusive policies(FAO, 2011b).

In this study, good food security governance principles such as *efficiency and effectiveness, equality and fairness, accountability, responsiveness, transparency, participation, and the rule of law* are critical independent variables in addressing the four pillars of food security namely; *availability, access, utilization, and stability.* The interplay between governance principles and the pillars of food security forms a dynamic, mutually reinforcing system. The food security governance principles operate as independent yet interdependent entities, each strengthening specific pillars of food security while collectively creating a cohesive system that transforms food security from a theoretical goal into a tangible reality, as visualized in the conceptual framework linking governance actions to food security outcomes.
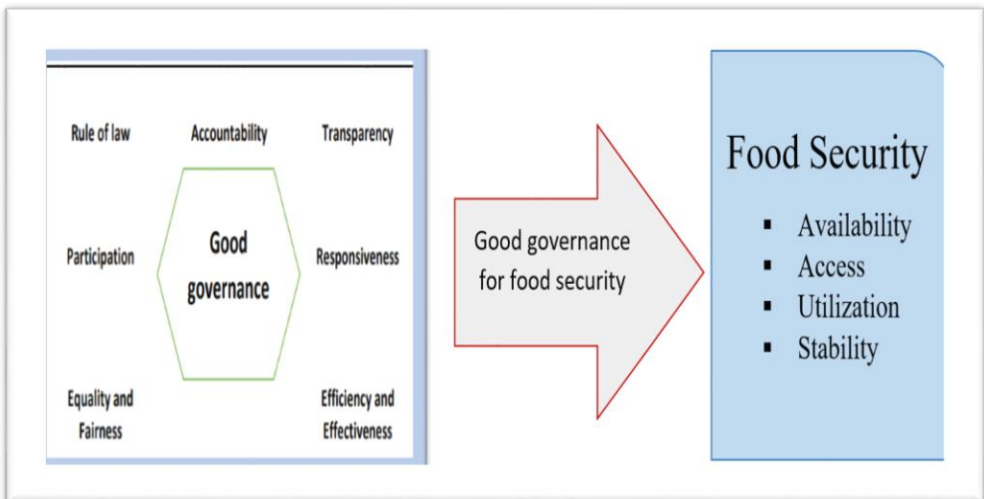

Figure 1: Adapted conceptual framework of governance for food security based on (Ali, 2015; Aurangzeb, 2022)

2. Research methodology

2.1 Description of the study area

The study is conducted in Lideta Sub-city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The nature of the sub-city is cosmopolitan and one of the eleven sub-cities of Addis Ababa and is home to an estimated population of 277,876 (CSA, 2021). Its geographical area is 9.18 square kilometers. The sub city is located at the heart of the capital and situated in a latitude of approximately **9°0'41.76" N** and a longitude of **38°44'3.84" E. It** is bordered on the north by Addis Ketema sub city, on the south by Nifas Silk-Lafto sub city, on the east by Kirkos sub city, and on the west by Kolfe Keranio Sub-city. The Sub-city is divided into ten administrative Districts or Woredas in Ethiopian context(Addis Ababa City Administration, 2020). The relevant study data was collected from the shaded Woredas[7] on the study map (Woreda 03, 06, 07, 08, 09 and 10) where the UPSNP was implemented during the time of data collection. At Addis Ababa city administration level, about 170,000 beneficiaries have graduated from the UPSNP after acquiring financial and vocational skills. Of these numbers, 33,181 beneficiaries or 9400 household heads were from Lideta sub city[8].

Figure 2: Study map of Lideta sub city
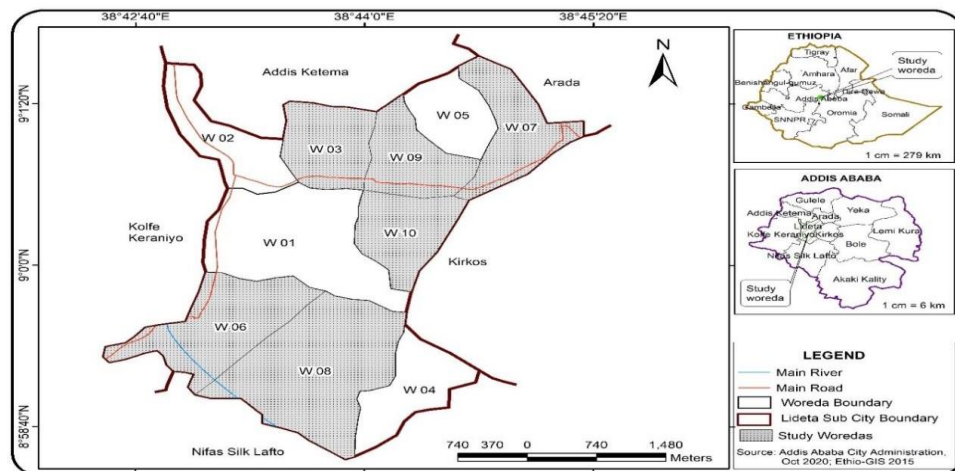
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[7] In Ethiopian context, Woreda has an equivalent meaning with district. Addis Ababa City Administration has three hierarchical levels: the city administration is at the top, the sub-city in the middle, and the Woreda is at the bottom.

[8] https://ethiopianmonitor.com/2022/01/03/addis-ababa-launches-second-phase-safety-net-program/ as accessed on 25th of December 2024

2.2 Research design and approach

This study used a Case study research design (Creswell, 2013). The research approach used in this study was qualitative due to its persuasive applicability for addressing the research objective(Morse, 1991).

2.3 Data sources, methods of collection and tools

The research methodology employed in this study was intended to collect and analyze primary and secondary data sources to enlighten participants' views on the governance for UPSNP in Lideta Sub city. Hence, both primary and secondary data were collected to enrich the study with the intention of triangulating the methods of the research. An interview guide was the most important data collection tool mainly used in this study. To assure the study's authenticity and credibility, a variety of data collection methods were used including desk reviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and field observations. The data collected in these tools were triangulated carefully in order to remove the likelihood of bias and prejudice regarding the instrument's limitations coming from unregulated sources.

2.3.1 Desk reviews

The document or related literature review comprises a review of journals, edited books, treaties, reports of relevant organizations, national legislations including the FDRE Constitution of the 1995, policy papers, development initiatives, and reports on their implementation. The researchers used this materials in examining and analyzing the current state of governance of food security with a particular emphasis on UPSNP implementation in Lideta Sub-city. As noted by Yeshewas (2019) the globalized environment has made it possible for the researchers to acquire relevant data from all corners of the world.

2.3.2 Focus group discussions

A series of six FGDs were conducted among participants who were randomly selected from six study Woredas mentioned above. To ensure triangulation of the data collection, three different groups of FGDs were purposively organized. The three groups include UPSNP beneficiary, UPSNP graduate and UPSNP waiting list. Here, purposive sampling was used to organize the three groups of FGDs and simple random sampling was used to select FGD participants from each Woreda. It was possible to conduct only one FGD for one group but to get more data for the study, two FGDs were conducted with

participants of the same group. So three different groups multiplied by two FGDs for each results a total of six FGDs for the study. As a result, the first two FGDs were conducted among households who were beneficiaries of the UPSNP in the sub city during the time of data collection. These beneficiary participants were randomly selected from each Woreda. So that one Woreda was represented by one beneficiary in the first two FGDs each. At the same time, the subsequent two FGDs were carried out among households that have already graduated from the UPSNP in the sub city. These graduated FGD participants were also randomly selected from each Woreda. The last two FGDs were conducted among households who are not yet beneficiaries of the UPSNP but are on the waiting list and have been classified as experiencing food insecurity by the sub-city. All the six FGDs were conducted face-to-face using a voice recorder and transcribed verbatim afterwards. Data collection using the FGD method was conducted between May 30, 2023 and June 03, 2023. The figure below shows the three strata of FGDs and the coding system of each FGD discussed in the research.
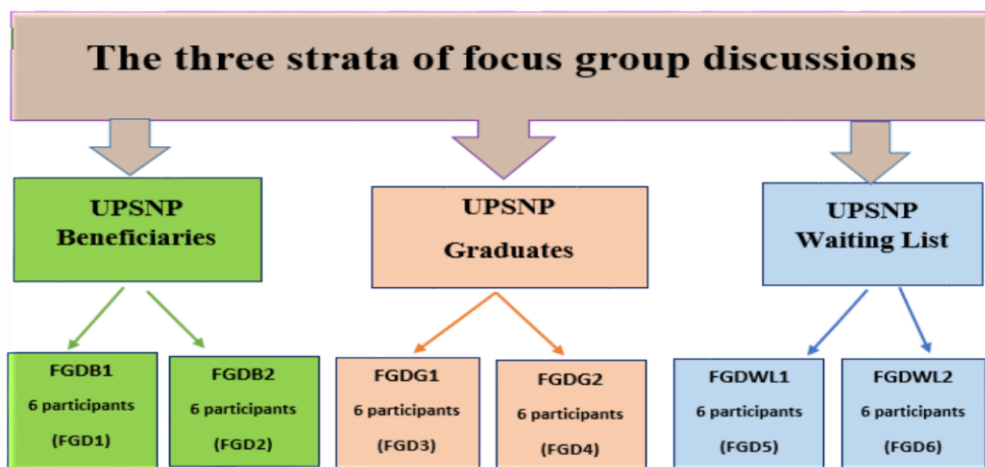
Figure 3: The focus group discussion map of the study

2.3.3 Key informant interview

The research utilized the data triangulation technique, which involved conducting interviews with government authorities and comparing the results. Semi-structured and open-ended interview questions were used to extract as much perspectives as possible about the subject, allowing for the introduction of fresh questions in response to the informant interviewees' replies. The

interviews were generally guided by a sequence of approximately ten questions. In this study, interviews were conducted with authorities of the Lideta Sub City Food Security and Job Creation Office (coded as KII-LSFSJC), the Addis Ababa City Administration Food Security Coordination Directorate(coded as KII-AAFSCD), the FDRE Human Rights Commission (coded as KII-EHRC), and the FDRE Ombudsman Institution (coded as KII-Ombudsman). Their consent was secured before the interview and it lasted about 50 minutes on average. Additionally, all interviews were conducted face-to-face using a voice recorder and transcribed verbatim afterwards. The use of a recording device during the interviews enables taking of observational notes. Data collection using the interview method was conducted between August 17, 2023 and December 7, 2023. The duration of data collection via KII was extended due to the busy schedules of the authorities and professionals involved in the key interview process.

2.3.4 Observation in the field and personal experience

The study was primarily supplemented by data collected through FGDs, and interviews, and document analysis. However, incorporating field observations and firsthand experiential data further enhanced the study's richness, authenticity, and trustworthiness, ensuring a more comprehensive and grounded analysis.

2.4 Sample size determination and sampling techniques

As clearly announced on the objective, the goal of this study to examine the governance practice of urban productive safety net program through the lens of the good food security governance framework established by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) by considering Lideta Sub city of Addis Ababa City Administration as a case study. Therefore, Six Woredas (Woreda 03, 06, 07, 08, 09 and 10) were purposively selected out of ten (10) where the UPSNP was being implemented during the time of primary data collection between May 30, 2024 and June 03, 2023. Lideta sub-city was chosen as the focus of this case study for four compelling reasons. First, Lideta accounts for the highest concentration of the poor with a headcount index of 53 percent(Netsanet, 2009). Second, the poverty gap index, (which shows the amount of resources needed to lift up the poor to the poverty line level), indicates that Lideta sub-city is the most deprived one. Third, Lideta

Sub-city takes the lead with 80 percent of the sample households experiencing a poverty situation at least once in the period from 1995 to 2008; fourth, the complex and multi-faceted nature of urban poverty like Lideta Sub city demands a deeper understanding for both knowledge generation and practice; however, urban poverty has been a neglected area in both research and poverty reduction policies Maxwell D 1999 cited in(Degefa, 2010).

2.5 Authenticity and trustworthiness of the research

In qualitative research, authenticity and trustworthiness are central to preserving the integrity and ethical-epistemic rigor, as they safeguard the objectivity and credibility of the inquiry Daymon & Holloway 2002 cited in(Yeshewas, 2019). The traditional notions of validity and reliability are often associated with quantitative paradigms but qualitative research prioritizes **authenticity** i.e. the extent to which findings accurately reflect the lived realities of participants and contexts and **trustworthiness** encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Tekeli & Bozkurt, 2022; Yeshewas, 2019). To maintain the study's authenticity and credibility, relevant and appropriate research design and research approach was utilized. Additionally, data triangulation was made using multiple data sources like desk review, FGDs and interview. This helped to minimize bias and substantiated the credibility of research findings. Furthermore, common understanding or rapport was reached about the objective of the study among the data collectors and the study participants which helped to collect authentic and credible data for the study.

2.6 Consideration of ethical issues

To get the desired data from any individual or organization, being ethical and creating rapport is the most important precondition. All the research participants in this study were appropriately informed about the purpose of the research and their willingness and consent was secured before the commencement of the FGDs and interviews. Regarding the right to privacy of the respondents, the study maintained the confidentiality of the identity of each participant. In all cases, names were kept confidential thus collective names or codes were used. Moreover, the proposal and all the data collection tools were reviewed and approved. Moreover, ethical clearance was finally issued by the Institutional Review Board(IRB) of Addis Ababa University on March 20,2023 with reference number 009/03/2023 and Addis Ababa Health

Bureau on April 19, 2023 with letter reference number A/A/H/B/12074/227. In this context, significant focus was given to presenting the research findings while maintaining their reliability and adhering to ethical standards as the issues studied are presented in impartial manner.

2.7 Data Analysis techniques

Thematic analysis techniques and MAXQDA2020 qualitative data analysis software have been applied in this research, which facilitated the systematic data analysis. MAXQDA is a popular software registered trademark of VERBI Software Consult Berlin/Germany(MAXQDA, 2020). The process of data analysis using MAXQDA followed a series of structured steps. Initially, the data was prepared for import into MAXQDA. Subsequently, MAXQDA2020 was installed and launched, and a new project was created by selecting "New Project" from the file menu. The transcribed FGDs and interviews, saved in MS Word format, were then imported into the newly created project. Subsequently, coding and coding system were established in a hierarchical structure. After coding, the patterns, themes, and relationships within our data were analyzed because the software provides various tools for data exploration including word frequency, and code matrix analysis. Moreover, the data was visualized to support interpretation and present findings. Word clouds, charts and other visual representations were created. Finally, the findings were interpreted based on the analysis conducted in MAXQDA.

2.7.1 Thematic Analysis

This study employs thematic analysis (TA). TA is a technique for systematically identifying, organizing, and providing insight into patterns of meaning (themes) in a dataset(Braun & Clarke, 2012). TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences by focusing on meaning across a dataset. The goal of TA is not to identify unique and idiosyncratic meanings and experiences found only within a single data item. This method, then, is a way of identifying and making sense of what is common to the way a topic is discussed or written about. Thematic analysis is a flexible method that allows the researchers to focus on the data in numerous different ways. With TA one can legitimately focus on analysing meaning across the entire dataset, or one can examine a particular aspect of a phenomenon in depth. One can report the obvious or

semantic meanings in the data, or can interrogate the latent meanings, the assumptions and ideas that lie behind what is explicitly stated(Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

In qualitative research, providing detailed explanations for themes and subthemes has considerable number of advantages. These advantages include improved understanding of the issues under investigation, contextualization, and transferability. Moreover, explanations boost transparency and credibility, place research findings in a larger context, make it easier for finding to be transferred, and advance knowledge. In general, explanations provide qualitative research more depth, consistency, and clarity, which increases its value and usefulness for both researchers and readers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). As a result of which, the following explanations are provided for the main themes and subthemes used in this research so that it paves the way for clarity and contextualization. The main theme is the good food security governance framework. FAO explains good food security governance as an essential factor for sustained economic growth, sustainable development, poverty and hunger eradication, and for the realization of all human rights including the progressive realization of the right to adequate food (FAO, 2005a). The sub-themes are explained based on the FAO's good governance framework, UPSNP project implementation manual and the Ethiopian food and nutrition security policy (FAO, 2011c; FDRE, 2018; MoUDC et al 2020).

Main theme	Sub themes	Explanations
Good food security governance framework	Rule of Law	The rule of law ensures that the UPSNP adheres to established rules and regulations. This includes ensuring that program implementation is transparent, beneficiaries' rights are safeguarded, and resources are used lawfully. Maintaining the rule of law improves the program's effectiveness, trustworthiness and accountability.
	Participation	To ensure food security through UPSNP, communities must actively participate and take control. The term participation describes the proactive engagement and involvement of all pertinent stakeholders in the UPSNP's execution and implementation. It places emphasis on the need to involve a range of viewpoints, stakeholders, and impacted parties in order to guarantee that the UPSNP is carried out successfully and that the benefits are shared fairly.
	Transparency	In order for the UPSNP to be transparent, details regarding its goals, requirements for eligibility, selection procedures, and distribution of resources must be made available to the public. Transparency is required in the planning, targeting, implementation, and graduation. All UPSNP clients, anytime they make a request, should have access to the data that is kept about them and their families.
	Responsiveness	Responsiveness is the ability of program coordinators and implementing government organs to adjust and react to the changing requirements and challenges faced by the UPSNP clients. This entails responding quickly to new requests shovel, emergency helmet overalls.
	Accountability	Holding governmental organizations, program managers, and other stakeholders accountable for their actions and choices is the essence of accountability in the UPSNP. This entails handling Program resources in an open and transparent manner, making sure the funding is used wisely and effectively, and setting up procedures for handling beneficiary complaints or grievances. Accountability upholds the integrity of the program, fosters good governance practices, and supports in development trust.
	Equality& Fairness	All program beneficiaries shall be treated equally. There should not be habit of treating one person or group of people unfairly or poorly in comparison to others. Gender equity should be introduced to address the specific needs, interests, and capacities of men and women, ensuring that they benefit equally from the program.
	Efficiency & Effectiveness	Efficiency and effectiveness in the governance of the UPSNP involve optimizing the use of available resources and achieving the desired outcomes. A predetermined transfer or payment schedule should also be followed by a timely transfer and this on time payment will only satisfy household needs.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Demographic data analysis

During the study, interviews were conducted with three distinct groups of FGD participants namely UPSNP beneficiaries, graduates, and waiting list[9.] The data obtained was analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis and Maxqda software. First, a table was developed to present the demographic data of the FGD participants who were identified as P1, P2, P3,P36. The participants' perspectives in the FGDs were then categorized using an identified coding system based on the analytical framework. The data for the study were evaluated thematically. Visual data analysis techniques like word frequency, and Code matrix analysis were also used to assess all of the data collected from the field, and the most frequently occurring terms were identified and shown in a word cloud.

Out of the total 36 FGD participants involved in the study, 25 or 69% were identified as female. The rest 11 or 31% were male. The participants' ages ranged from 24 to 77. First, the data gathered from FGDs and KIIs were transcribed in a verbatim manner so that every single word from an audio recording was captured in writing exactly as it was pronounced in the original speech. Then, the verbatim transcription was translated into English and the files were loaded as a project into the MAXQDA2020 software. The primary themes, sub-themes, and particular codes were developed for the software. After this process, six major themes, twenty-one sub-themes, and one hundred thirty codes were identified. The primary theme, the Good Food Security Governance framework covers a wide range of topics or sub-themes, including the rule of law, participation, transparency, responsiveness, accountability, equality, and fairness, effectiveness, and efficiency. These

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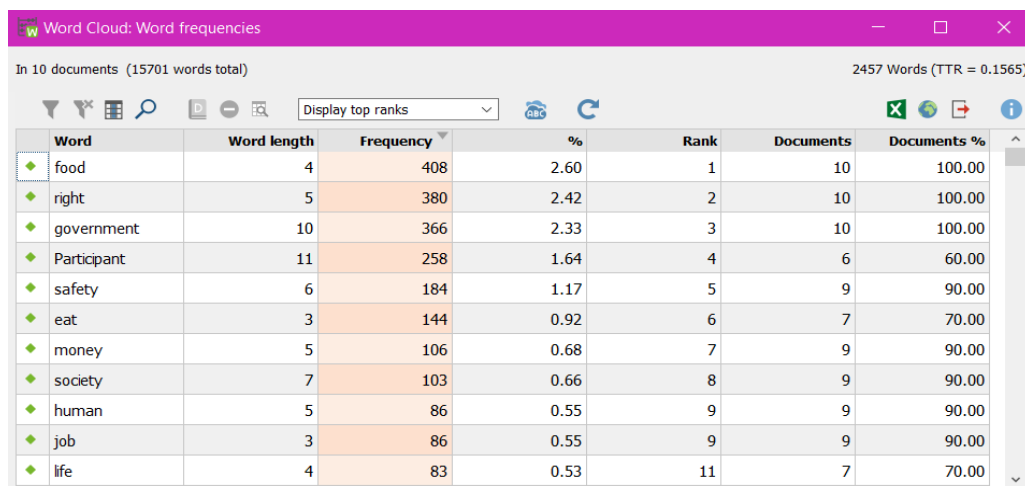
[9] *The first two FGDs were conducted among households who were beneficiaries of the UPSNP in the sub city during the time of data collection. These FGDs are coded as FGDB 1 and 2. So the FGD participants here are coded as FGDB1P1-P6 and FGDB2P1-P6. The subsequent two FGDs were carried out among households that have already graduated from the UPSNP and coded as FGDG 1 and 2. Each participant is coded as FGDG1P1-P6 and FGDG2P1-P6. The last two FGDs were conducted among households who are not yet beneficiaries of the UPSNP but are on the waiting list and have been classified as experiencing food insecurity by the sub-city and coded as FGDWL 1 and 2. Each participant is also coded as FGDWL1P1-P6 and FGDWL2P1-P6*

sub-themes are the established principles of good food security governance framework.

3.2 Word cloud frequency analysis

The themes and sub-themes introduced into the MAXQDA software underwent colorful analyses. The pillars of good food security governance framework were already identified and finally underwent through the software. To conduct a word frequency analysis, every statement spoken by each participant was examined. However, some terms like (is, was, it, and, or, etc.) were found unnecessary and were finally excluded from the dataset. After the words were combined and the stop list was applied, a total of 15,701 words were found on the uploaded documents to the MAXQDA software.

Figure 4: Word cloud for the good governance framework for urban productive safety net program

Some words had far greater frequencies than others did, and these words with the highest frequencies were visually represented in the largest size in the word cloud. In this study, which examined the perceptions of participants on the good food security governance principles, UPSNP beneficiaries, graduates from UPSNP, the waiting list and KII from relevant offices had participated. Out of the data collected from these groups of participants, 75 most frequently repeated words were determined to be visualized in a word cloud. Some of the words like food, right, government, etc. appeared larger than others. This was related to the frequency of the word in the uploaded

documents. In other words, the size of words is directly related to its frequency.

Table 1: Word frequency table of word cloud

Word	Word length	Frequency	%	Rank	Documents	Documents %
food	4	408	2.60	1	10	100.00
right	5	380	2.42	2	10	100.00
government	10	366	2.33	3	10	100.00
Participant	11	258	1.64	4	6	60.00
safety	6	184	1.17	5	9	90.00
eat	3	144	0.92	6	7	70.00
money	5	106	0.68	7	9	90.00
society	7	103	0.66	8	9	90.00
human	5	86	0.55	9	9	90.00
job	3	86	0.55	9	9	90.00
life	4	83	0.53	11	7	70.00

(Word Cloud: Word frequencies — In 10 documents (15701 words total); 2457 Words (TTR = 0.1565); Display top ranks)

Source: Maxqda20 word frequency table produced for the study (April 2024)

The word frequency table clearly indicated the most top ten words with the highest frequency which include; food (408 times), right (380 times), government (366 times), participant (258 times), safety (184 times), eat (144 times), money (106 times), society (103 times), human and job (86 times) and finally life (83 times) as depicted on the Table 1. Since the study focused on the governance for food security, words like food and food rights, as well as the government's involvement in securing these rights has been repeated more frequently than others by the study participants. The word cloud was applied to ascertain the frequency of high-frequency word repetitions. Table 1 illustrates the word frequency of terms that are repeated in the 15,701 total words uttered by the study participants, alongside the respective ranks in the frequency analysis table. The implications of the top three frequently repeated words are discussed as follows:

3.2.1 Food (mentioned 408 times):

As witnessed from Table 1, the term food has repeatedly been spoken than any other word in the dataset signifying the fundamental focus of the study on food security aspects. It is understood that obtaining food is mandatory as

one cannot survive without it. An UPSNP beneficiary in the first FGD noted the following perspective which supported the aforementioned reality;

> *Food is essential for survival. It is a fundamental necessity without which no individual can survive. From my point of view, I have been working in the urban productive safety net program just to get money from the public work engagements and support my children and myself cognizant of our inability to survive in its absence (FGDB1P1).*

Throughout the discussion on the issue under the study, UPSNP beneficiaries in the FGDs manifest diverse perspectives. Some of them underlined that securing food is the ultimate responsibility of the individual and hard work is the only means to achieve individual and household food security. They underscored that food is something obtained through personal endeavors and efforts. Another participant from FGDB1 emphasized that food is acquired through individual endeavors and hard work.

> *In my personal opinion, it is my responsibility to ensure my own food security. I am now working hard diligently within the urban productive safety net program plus other income generating activities and ensuring it through my own efforts but some individuals may ensure their food needs through donation from various aid agencies (FGDB1P6).*

During the KII, authorities from Lideta sub city underlined that first and for most, citizens should work hard and bring change on their food security. However, some of the FGD participants from the UPSNP beneficiaries believed that the government is responsible to secure food security as per the orientation of human rights based approaches. They emphasised that UPSNP is an essential tool to support food security endeavors of the government in general and the urban poor in particular. Participant 1 from among beneficiaries in the first FGD said the following:

> *The Ethiopian government is basically responsible for meeting the food needs of its citizens; however, due to considerable number financial constraints, it cannot afford food to everyone. The citizens who have the ability to engage in any lawful and productive economic activities shall be supported by the government to start business and then secure their food needs. The young citizens shall get job opportunities and work hard. It would be useful to conduct research on the topic of sustainable support to be provided for the young citizens, which will help them to start business.*

Overall, the aforementioned discussions emphasized the importance of food as a basic necessity for human survival, as well as the complex connections among individual endeavors, government support, and the right to food.

3.2.2. Right (Mentioned 380 times):

The frequency of the word right in the dataset suggests that an important focus was given to the right to food, or entitlements within the governance to food security context. It also demonstrates that most of the discussions is all about the right to food and entitlements including its access, distribution, or affordability. The UPSNP beneficiaries who participated in the FGDs uttered wonderful ideas about the right to food. An old woman during the FGDs said the following idea:

> *In my opinion, the right to food is the right to work and manage families. For me, the right to food is the right to work not the right to be fed. Some people may get food stuffs in terms of donation from different philanthropic organizations, but I am working in the urban productive safety net program and then receiving my salary and manage my family using the transferred payment in return to public work activities (FGDB1P3).*

In this regard, Article 25 Sub Art 1 of the UDHR underscores that everyone has the right to a standard of living, including food (UN General Assembly, 1948). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) under Article 11 Sub Art 1 underlined that the States Parties to the covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and the family, including adequate food. The same covenant says that the State Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of the right to adequate food (UN General Assembly Resolution, 1966). Since 1948, the issue of food security has become the agenda of the global community and the 1996 World Food Summit defined food security as:

> *Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life(FAO, 1996).*

From the aforementioned international covenants, it is possible to easily understand that everyone should have access to an adequate and nutritious food for an active and healthy life and to this success a concerted effort is required at all levels; local, national and global.

3.2.3. Government (mentioned 366 times):

It is evident that the role of the government in ensuring food security is irreplaceable. This suggests a focus on governmental institutions, food security policies, and activities concerning the urban productive safety net program. It underlines the role of the government in addressing food security and supporting those in need of its emergency support during the time of food insecurity crisis. It also points out the endeavors and concerns about the level of adequacy of government measures and interventions to ensure food security. However, participants noted that there were delayed responses to food insecurity situations. A woman from the first FGD noted the following:

> *The Ethiopian government provides emergency support to citizens after foreigners arrive and start supporting the affected citizens by the crisis. This leaves me wondering how an individual or organization from outside intervene and starts providing emergency food assistance to the needy prior to the arrival of my government. In my view, the Ethiopian government seems to respond to crises only after receiving attention from foreigners (FGDB1P2).*

Basically, the government has three legal obligations in connection with the right to food, which include the duty to respect, protect, and fulfil. This means that the government must respect people's current access to food, protect against interference by outside parties, and proactively facilitate people in exercising the right to food in time of natural and manmade disasters(Gizachew et al., 2023). However, the participants of the study have vividly expressed their view about the failure of the government to carry out its duty of fulfilling the right to food. They noted that governments are expected to provide direct support to needy people when they face uncontrollable circumstances that impede their ability to access food by themselves. In this context, a beneficiary of UPSNP from FGD2 has expressed her discontent as follows:

> *When you provide advance notice to the government authorities prior to the occurrence of accident, no one will respond to you and there is lack of quick response even after the emergence of the disaster. I am telling you the truth that the nearby neighbors are much better to cooperate with you, provide you food and clothing, and support you in times of loss of property due to fire or any similar accident. In my opinion, it is the duty of the government to take care of me. However, when I faced a difficulty, the neighbors are the most easily available source of support (FGDB2P5).*

According to FAO's food right guidelines, State Parties are required to promote good governance as an essential factor for sustained economic growth, sustainable development, poverty and hunger eradication and for the realization of all human rights including the progressive realization of the right to adequate food(FAO, 2005). Moreover, Article 2 Sub Art 1 of the ICESCR stated that each State Party should undertake steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving the progressive realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures(UN General Assembly Resolution, 1966). As per the spirit of the aforementioned covenants, government bears the primary responsibility to ensure food security for its citizens at all times by all possible and legitimate means within the limits of the country's resources.

3.3 Analysis of the qualitative data using the good food security governance framework

As noted earlier, the good food security governance refers to the formal and informal rules and processes through which public and private actors articulate their interests and make, implement and sustain decisions aimed at achieving food and nutrition security (FAO, 2011a). FAO proposed seven principles in the working analytical framework for governance for food security. These principles include the rule of law, participation, transparency, responsiveness, accountability, equality and fairness, and effectiveness and efficiency. It also recommends that these seven dimensions for the governance framework for food security are all possibly relevant, although in differing dosage and combinations. It was suggested to replace efficiency and effectiveness with professionalism, quality and evidence-based decision; to replace the principle of equality and fairness with gender equity, and to add empowerment as deemed necessary (FAO, 2011a). As indicated at the methodology of the study, the FAO's governance framework for food security was used as an analytical framework to assess the Ethiopian food security endeavors through the UPSNP. All the seven elements of the analytical framework for governance for food security are discussed as follows in comparison with the issues discussed during the sessions with study participants.

3.3.1 Rule of law

UPSNP beneficiaries who participated in focus group discussion reflected diverse opinions regarding the presence of rule of law in the practical implementation of the UPSNP. One of the participants expressed that there was a problem with the practice of the rule of law, which was manifested in the inclusion of the rich and the exclusion of the poor during the targeting process. Another participant from FGDB1 indicated that the presence or absence of discrimination in the targeting process differs from committee to committee. Some committees are doing their jobs in a good and lawful manner whereas others are biased (FGDB1P6). Moreover, a KII participant from the FDRE Ombudsman institution noted that efforts are made to include the relevant committee members from the community and names of the targeted or selected UPSNP beneficiaries are usually posted publically. However, the authorities confirmed that people who should not be beneficiaries of the UPSNP were found selected to be beneficiaries (KII-Ombudsman). During the KII with authorities of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, they underlined that:

> *Discrimination is not acceptable by any means and the government must fulfill minimum obligations accordingly and it shall take the necessary steps like formulating relevant laws and policies to curve the problem of targeting (KII-EHRC).*

In this regard Messay *et al*., (2019) agreed that high non-poor households were included in the process of targeting. Additional study result also concurred that the PSNP's implementation process has been facing various challenges including bias in area selection, the exclusion of the poor in favour of the rich (Fekadu & Ignatius, 2009; Gizachew et al., 2023). Another research indicated that about 71% of non-beneficiary households who have experienced food shortage were excluded from the PSNP(Assefa, 2008). Furthermore, another study indicated that there was inclusion and exclusion of households for socio-political reasons(Rahmato et al., 2013). Additional study on the issue indicated that exclusion was emerged as the first cause for appeals and complaints across all the regions and respondents strongly stressed that they felt they were excluded, despite having met the targeting criteria of the PSNP (Hoddinott et al., 2011). One can easily understand that the findings of this study align with the previous studies in that there were

problems in the targeting process manifested by inclusion of the rich and exclusion of the poor.

3.3.2 Participation

The Lideta Sub city food Security and Job Creation authority during the KII denoted that the community is mandated with 100% freedom to participate in the targeting process. No government authority intervenes in the targeting process and the targeting committee is diversified consisting of women, physically impaired and aged people in the community (KII-LSFSJC). A participant from the FGDB1 has substantiated the idea of the sub city authority by saying following:

> *Yes, certainly! There is participation in our case. Throughout our engagement in the urban productive safety net program, we actively participated and contributed ideas to the issues raided in different times. We voluntarily provided updates to the program coordinators about workloads and tasks that required more attention. We participate in substantive discussions with the program coordinators beyond the mere submission of work done data/report. When we go to work, the Woreda representatives usually accompany which provides a forum for productive discussions. We both share valuable knowledge to each other throughout these discussions, creating a learning atmosphere that benefits both (FGDB1P1).*

With regard to participation, almost all the beneficiaries and graduates of UPSNP who participated in the four FGDs unanimously agreed that there is active participation and consultation with program coordinators. The UPSNP beneficiaries noted that there are meaningful discussions and strong culture of participation with the supervisors. They denoted that they received answers to their requests within reasonable period of time. Some others said their participation is highly appreciated and valued. A beneficiary from FGD2 expressed it as follows:

> *I personally attended various meetings at different levels by raising not only my own issues but also those of my colleagues and in fact, the issues we raised during meetings were beneficial for the later round of discussions, so our participation was remarkable. For example, we raised questions about the delayed distribution of shoes, gloves, and overalls, and the issue was immediately addressed (FGDB2P5).*

According to the findings of Dessalegn Rahmato, the acquisition of both new assets and skills by the study participants stemming from their participation

in the PSNP but there was poor level of involvement of beneficiaries in the PSNP in making decisions about the specific type of public work activities(Rahmato et al., 2013). Another research study revealed that there were variations in the implementation of the PSNP, especially in terms participation(Dejene, 2019). There appears to be considerable variation in the extent of community involvement in the selection of public works programs(Cochrane & Tamiru, 2016).

3.3.3 Transparency

During the KII, the authority from Addis Ababa City Administration Food Security Coordination Directorate indicated that there were problems of reaching the intended population by the time when the UPSNP was launched in 2017. At the beginning, there was a predetermined plan to address 70% of the urban community regarding the commencement of the program. However, the food security office later recognized that a considerable number of the urban community in the city remained uninformed about the announcement of the UPSNP, although the program's commencement announcement was being aired on Television. As a result, the office began using other alternative means of communication like using the nearby Woreda administrations in all sub cities to disseminate the information.

On the other hand, the authority from the Lideta Sub City Food Security and Job Creation office emphasized presence of transparency in the implementation of the UPSNP because the selection and targeting committees responsible for identifying the UPSNP beneficiaries were established by the community itself. Moreover, the selected beneficiaries by the targeting committees were posted on the notice board at each village and reviewed by the community. The authority further substantiated his idea by highlighting the presence of financial transparency within the implementation of the UPSNP. As explained, the payment process has been designed to minimize direct physical cash contact. What was being done was that the program finance officers check the attendance and uploaded it in the Urban Payroll Attendance System (UPAS) then, the money was transferred to each beneficiary bank account on the 25th day of each month. Finally, the beneficiaries go to the bank and withdraw 80% of it after leaving 20% voluntary savings. The rest of the FGD participants asserted the presence of transparency from the targeting to the graduation process of the UPSNP.

In this regard, a study by Messay *et al*., (2022) concurred that financial transparency and accountability activities are carried out for the program budget, and reports are delivered on time and with an acceptable standard. However, another study indicated that there were delays in payment as witnessed by both implementers and beneficiaries which adversely affected the implementation of public works and the benefits of program participation(Rahmato et al., 2013). One of the core principles of the safety net is fair and transparent client selection. In all of the communities, current clients and graduates voiced concern regarding the lack of transparency and clarity about client selection and graduation (Cochrane & Tamiru, 2016)

3.3.4 Responsiveness

Responsiveness is one of the fundamental manifestations of the presence of good governance in the practice of government activities. This entails responding to requests, complaints, and criticisms on time (Grossman & Slough, 2022). The participants in FGDB1 have a variety of opinions about how responsive the program coordinators were in the implementation of the UPSNP. For example, Participant 1 from the FGDB1 stated that that they were given shoes and gloves, with a plus an additional pair, when they joined the UPSNP. However, Participant 2 indicated that their request for shoes did not have immediate response and there were not enough gloves and they were wondering why they have not given the necessary public work requirements; Participant 3 stated that their request had been delayed at the sub city level as their supervisor had already reported the issue to the sub city office. According to participant 4, they did not receive timely delivery despite the shoes have arrived at their center. Additionally, Participant 5 stated that they had made a request for gloves and shoes that have not yet been fulfilled. Lastly, Participant 6 recalled that they were told to get the necessary equipment but they have not received them yet (FGDB1P1-P6). It is evident from the discussion that the majority of the participants in the discussion tending towards the government's lack of responsiveness to their demands.

Like in FGD1, the participants in FGD2 provided a variety of perspectives on the government's responsiveness to UPSNP implementations. Some of the participants stated that the government responds to demands immediately and that they have received timely support, especially when it comes to addressing shortages of resources like gloves and facemasks. While some other

participants stated that they were satisfied with the government's responsiveness. However, a few of them emphasized the need for additional support, like the provision of shoes. The FGD3 participants reported that, both during and after their participation in the program, they have been requesting the government to solve them various challenges they have been facing. For example, Participant 1 in FGD3 stated that when requests were made, they were promptly addressed. However, after graduation, there was frustration with the unresponsive nature of the government as Participant 2 expressed it. According to Participant 3, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenge to start a business. Consequently, they were forced to consume their capital, which was planned to start business after graduation. There was a hot discussion whether the program had made significant changes in the lives of the program graduates and beneficiaries or not. Some participants thought that the program brought significant changes, while others said it was nearly hard to make such a claim. For example, Participant 4 claimed that the majority of the people have undergone positive changes but many of the UPSNP graduates who participated in the discussion were found jobless and they wanted to rejoin the program despite there is no platform to entertain their aspiration due to inadequate resource (KII -LSFSJC).

During the FGDB2 session, participants discussed the benefits of the trainings provided to them by the program and the impact it brought on their lives. For example, participant 1 highlighted the value of the trainings provided freely (because the training cost is covered by the program), which empowered individuals who could not afford to pay for such trainings. The participants agreed that the safety net program had contributed to building their capacity and increasing their economic capacity, particularly through access to food. Participant 3 mentioned that they had benefited from the UPSNP, and Participant 4 expressed gratitude for the program's support in meeting their financial needs. Participant 5 also shared that she has benefited from the training program in terms of building life skills. Participant 6 emphasized the benefit of the training on time management and punctuality as she becomes self-disciplined after graduation.

During the FGD5 and FGD6 discussion sessions, one of the participant from the waiting list of individuals who will be joining the UPSNP indicated the

inclusion and significance of extra provisions like workplace health insurance to guarantee access to medical services. She expressed as follows:

> *What should be addressed and included as an additional scheme in the UPSNP is the health insurance for public workers in the event of the workplace accidents. When the program beneficiaries face an accident while sweeping the cobblestone in the field or digging the ground for urban greenery activities, they will fall sick, and without health insurance, they may lack adequate money to cover the treatment facility expenses at the health centers (FGDWL1P3).*

Previous studies concurred that the responsiveness of appeals mechanisms at the Woreda and kebele level is generally slower than it should be((Sharp et al., 2006)

3.3.5 Accountability

Accountability is one of the foundations of the concept of good governance; without which, no government in the world could aspire to be a good government (Fallon Jr, 1997). One of the programs of the government which requires the principles of accountability is the UPSNP. As a result of which, FGDs were held among the study participants with the need to get their reflections about accountability in the actual implementations of the UPSNP in the Lideta Sub city. In general, the UPSNP beneficiary participants who took part in the FGD1 unanimously agreed that accountability is important for the success of the program in general and for their individual life in particular. They discussed about the practice of accountability in the implementation of the program in the Lideta Sub city and stated that they believed in the presence of accountability in the UPSNP operational implementations and expressed their commitment in reporting any misconduct activities even committed by their supervisors. One of the participant in the discussion said:

> *We have the responsibility to get our rights respected and obligations carried out, so if there are problems of misconduct in the operational implementation of the UPSNP, we will go to the concerned office and request them to fix the problem. Even in the situations that our superiors commit any act of misconduct, we are aware that a higher authority will hold them accountable upon our report (FGDB1P6).*

FGD2 participants' discussed the significance of accountability, both at individual and within the hierarchical structure of the UPSNP, and recognised

the support they receive from their superiors. The participants in the discussion stated several aspects of accountability within the UPSNP. They stated that 90 days' absence from public work would be followed by cancellation of the beneficiary from UPSNP. They noted that such harsh measure also applies to their superiors as they would be held accountable for their actions if they did something wrong.

Participants in the FGD3 stated that there was accountability in the operation of the UPSNP, and any arbitrary absence would result in warnings and salary deductions for the days missed. The participants indicated strong confidence in the accountability system, and they were prepared to hold their superiors accountable for any wrong actions or decisions. They also discussed the necessity of accountability and transparency, as well as the role of superiors in sustaining an accountability-driven work environment in the UPSNP's actual operations. In FGD4, participants extensively discussed on the essence of accountability that prevailed in the UPSNP operation at their time and how everyone was accountable for any misconduct, regardless of the position they assumed in the program's structural hierarchy. Furthermore, participants in FGD5 and 6, those on the waiting list, expressed their desire to hold everyone accountable for unacceptable behavior. Additionally, they stated that they are mindful of the consequences of being cancelled from the UPSNP due to workplace misconduct.

Previous studies in this regard showed varied results in that the degree of accountability in PSNP targeting varies throughout Woredas; in certain Woredas and kebeles, the targeting processes have gained substantial support from the community and are largely transparent. Conversely, targeting processes have been more disputable ambiguity, and top-down in some Woredas and Kebeles but in the second year of the program, there has been a noticeable improvement in the targeting process, accountability and transparency in nearly all instances(Sharp et al., 2006).

3.3.6 Equality and fairness

UPSNP beneficiary participants in FGDs 1 and 2 discussed on the significance of empowerment and what it means for supporting women in overcoming their limitations and realizing their potential. They spoke about the value of receiving life skill trainings through the UPSNP and how it gave them the tools they needed to make positive changes in their own lives. They

also raised concerns about practical challenges, like limited resources to startup businesses. The UPSNP graduates emphasized that there was no act of discrimination during their time of engagement in the program. They underlined that the trainings had a significant impact on their lives. They recognized and appreciated the role of the UPSNP in enhancing economic empowerment and capacity building for the graduates.

The FGD participants from the waiting list discussed about the objective of the UPSNP, which is to enable low-income people to better their lives and make them food secure. However, there were differing views on the presence of justice and equality. While some participants thought that variations in leadership caliber might prevent equality from being completely realized, others thought that the program is just fair. Given the PSNP resource limitations during the first years of the PSNP, almost all regions exercised a partial family targeting approach(Hoddinott et al., 2011)

3.3.7 Effectiveness and efficiency

The program beneficiaries namely the participants of FGDs 1 and 2 emphasized the importance of the efficiency and effectiveness to the practical operation of the UPSNP. They were grateful to the introduction of the program and its administrators and funders. However, many of them were concerned about the inadequacy of the startup capital and working premises after graduation. One the other hand, the graduates of the program were resentful of their fate as Covid19 was declared as a global pandemic immediately after the release of the startup capital following their graduation. Consequently, many of the graduates were not able start business instead they were forced to consume the released working capital due to the closure of business activities due to *stay at home campaign* to protect Covid19 and some of them bought fixed asset like television and furniture by expending the startup capital. The demographic data also indicated that the absence of efficiency and effectives of the program with the reference of the graduates of the UPSNP in Lideta sub city as many of them were jobless at the time of data collection.

During the discussion, many of them noted that they wanted to re-join the UPSNP despite there is limited resource to entertain their request and there are people on the waiting list to join the program for their first time. In this regard, the program has failed to avoid dependency syndrome. As per the

previous studies, the cause of appeals that were repeatedly mentioned is related to the delay of transfer and payments. Despite some improvements in this regard, respondents expressed their frustration with the delay of transfer of payments(Hoddinott et al., 2011). This is a contrasting result discussed so far in this study findings.

4. Interpretation of results

In the key informant interview conducted with the sub city authority confirmed that the beginning of the UPSNP has brought considerable number of achievements which include work culture improvement, increased females' participation, and the creation of strong social interaction among the community, clean and green environment and improved income generation of the graduates (KII-LSFSJC). Messay *et al*. (2022) also identified a number of achievements of the program it has brought to the program beneficiaries including consumption smoothening; reduced risk of famine-induced deaths and forced migration; environmental conservation; infrastructure development and asset protection. Other studies identified that the Ethiopian PSNP meaningfully reduced drought impacts by 57% while simultaneously lowering the national poverty rate by 2% (SPEC, 2021; Tareke, 2022). Prior studies identified a considerable number of challenges for the governance for food security in Ethiopia in general and in Addis Ababa in particular (Messay *et al.,* 2022). This study also identified a number of challenges facing the governance for urban productive safety net program in Lideta Sub city of Addis Ababa City Administration.

One of the challenges facing the UPSNP graduates is the absence of working premises. Prior to 2023, the urban poor in general used tent shelters and mini-shops commonly known as Ye-Arkebe Sukoch[10] as a working premise. However, in 2023, the city administration removed all the tent shelters from all areas of the city for the reason of beautifying Addis Ababa City as it is the home for African Union, Economic Commission for Africa and many embassies and diplomats of the international community(FAO, 2023) These demolished tents have been used as a working premise for many graduates of the UPSNP in particular and the urban poor in the city in general. As far as

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[10] Ye-Arkebe Sukoch or Arekebe Shops refer to the shops built in the city during the reign of Arkabe Oqubay as a Mayor of Addis Ababa City Administration from 24 January 2003 – 9 May 2006

food right is concerned, the researchers acknowledged the importance of exploring an alternative working premise before dismantling of the tent shelters. During the KII with the city and sub city authorities, the issue was discussed and they replied that permanent shed or working premise would be built in different areas of the capital city like the one in Akaki and Kolfe sub-cities.

The other challenge, which affected the governance for urban food security, is the presence of conflict in the country. The closure of main roads leading to Addis Ababa and the hostage of truck drivers many times limited the mobility of primary food items. This, in turn, raised the price of consumer goods that make it unaffordable by the urban poor in general and the study subjects in particular. The absence of follow-up after graduation is also the other challenge. In an interview with the Ethiopian Ombudsman Authorities, they said that they conducted assessment on the UPSNP and proved by their own assessment of the inadequate support after graduation and the inconsistent training as the challenges for the governance for food security. In this regard, the Authority of the Addis Ababa City Administration Food Security Coordination Directorate said that there is improvement in training delivery as the World Bank has already signed agreement with an international organization to change the training frequency from once in a month to twice in a i.e. in every 15 days.

Maladministration is the other great challenge for the UPSNP operation. There has been bias in targeting the beneficiaries manifested in terms of inclusion of the rich and exclusion of the poor. There were also problems with the targeting committees as they commit bias to exclusively benefit their families. The community members were also the other sources of the problems as they hide their household utensils and furniture to be assumed extremely poor and then to be targeted or selected to the program. Dependency syndrome is also another visible challenge as confirmed by the sub city food security and job creation authority and the program graduates themselves. During the interview, the sub city authority said:

> Due to the high range poverty in the city, the dependency syndrome is very high, as a result, many UPSNP graduates wanted to re-join the program but due to limited resource such request was not entertained by the sub city (KII-LSFSJCO).

The idea that since the payments are so low, the government is effectively fostering dependency since no one is actually able to 'graduate' and overcome food insecurity based on their participation in the program(Zerai et al., 2019). Another challenge, which threatened the UPSNP, is working capital inadequacy and budget diversion of the training. In an interview with the authority of the Ethiopian Ombudsman institute, they noted that the budget of the training of the UPSNP was usually diverted to other activities of political in nature. In addition to this, the program graduates use the startup capital to buy fixed assets than using the fund for the desired objective. In this respect, the city and sub city food security authorities stated that the primary challenge they faced in the governance of the UPSNP is the inadequate amount of grant provided to the graduates from the program which is six hundred dollar (USD600). Considering the current cost of living, this startup capital is equivalent to birr 34,127.70 (calculated based on the exchange rate as at April 24, 2024, which is 56.8795 birr per USD) is truly insufficient and challenging to start business using it (KII- LSFSJCO & KII-AAFSCD).

Covid-19 also posed another challenge on the effectiveness of the UPSNP. The Ministry of Health announced that the first victim of Corona virus was reported in Ethiopia on 13 March 2020(MoH, 2020). In fact, constructive measures which were taken by the city administration to reverse the challenge of Covid 19 has saved the lives of many program beneficiaries. However, many of the graduates of the UPSNP were forced to stay home and consuming the working capital granted to them to start business. Due to this reason, many of them became jobless and their tendency to re-join the UPSNP is increasing from time to time. In addition to this, Covid-19 forced the city administration to extend the 2020 UPSNP beneficiaries graduation by 3 months.

5. Conclusions

By recognizing food security as essential to human existence and a fundamental human right, the study underscores that the government and individuals alike have a responsibility to combat systemic food insecurity. Despite the study participants unanimously agreed food as a basic necessity, their perspectives diverged regarding its provision. Because some of them emphasized that individual effort is the means to achieve it while others stressed it is the obligation of the state under international human rights law like UDHR and ICESCR. The role of the Ethiopian government in facilitating

food security through the UPSNP remains critical despite there are still operational challenges, including biased targeting, delayed responses to crisis, and weak post-graduation support and follow-up.

The research findings disclosed tensions between empowerment and dependency which are exacerbated by structural barriers such as the impacts of Covid-19, budget diversion and insufficient startup capital. Some beneficiaries reported benefits in skills and income through UPSNP initiatives, yet others emphasized how inadequate capital and demolished workspaces perpetuate reliance on aid. These contradictions underscore the need for governance reforms to strengthen transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.

External shocks like COVID-19 and ongoing conflict further expose vulnerabilities in the UPSNP underscoring the need for adaptive social protection schemes. Integrating emergency funds, health insurance for public workers, and real-time adjustments to transfers linked to inflation or pandemic-related lockdowns would enhance resilience. In order to bridge the gap between systemic support and individual autonomy, sustainable livelihoods must replace dependency. Food security would be reinforced as the result of both individual effort and systemic justice in equitable transfers and secure working conditions were implemented concurrently. Boosting startup funds in conjunction with post-graduation consistent followup and technical support can help beneficiaries overcome financial obstacles.

Eventually, institutionalizing all principles of good food security governance is critical to transforming the UPSNP. Revising its implementation manual to embed FAO-endorsed frameworks including efficiency and effectiveness, equality and fairness, accountability, responsiveness, transparency, participation, and the rule of law would facilitate the program's successfulness. The current program implementation manual of the UPSNP overlooked to incorporate accountability, rule of law and transparency which are critical to its full-fledged success.

6. Recommendations

To address systemic challenges and transform the Urban Productive Safety Net Program into a sustainable initiative, the overlooked good food security governance principles, endorsed by the Food and Agriculture Organization, such as accountability, rule of law, and participation shall be incorporated into

the urban productive safety net program implementation manual as. This can be achieved by establishing independent audits and public expenditure tracking systems to curb corruption and empowering communities through oversight committees and participatory feedback mechanisms. Strengthening institutional alignment with national legal frameworks will further safeguard beneficiaries' entitlements and reinforce the rule of law, fostering trust in the program's fairness and effectiveness.

Building resilience requires integrating adaptive social protection systems that anticipate and respond to shocks such as inflation, pandemics like Covid-19, or conflict. Incorporating emergency funds, health insurance for public workers, and dynamic payments including startup capital adjustments tied to real-time inflation indices can ensure continuity of support during disruptions. Such measures not only protect vulnerable populations but also enhance the program's capacity to adapt to evolving risks without compromising long-term goals.

Transforming beneficiaries from dependency to sustainable livelihoods demands a focus on empowerment activities. This requires not only increasing startup grants to match current living costs but also pairing financial assistance with vocational training, mentorship, and post-graduation monitoring and follow up.

Finally recognizing the right to food as inseparable from the right to decent work is critical for guaranteeing food security. Program reforms and revisions should consider the current socioeconomic dynamics, safe labor conditions, equitable access to UPSNP and ensuring beneficiaries' dignity. Embedding these issues into the program's revision process reinforces its role in advancing both immediate food access to beneficiaries and broader social justice.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this study.

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