



GRAD: Graduating Out of Social Assistance And Into Long-Term Food Security

About GRAD

GRAD is a five-year USAID-funded project designed to build on the Government of Ethiopia's *Productive Safety Net Program Plus* (PSNP) project. PSNP was a previous USAID-funded initiative that demonstrated the potential for safety nets to support extremely vulnerable, food insecure populations.

Led by CARE and implemented through a partnership of local and international organizations, *GRAD* seeks to bring change on multiple levels including: economic opportunities, financial services, agricultural extension services, women's resiliency, nutritional status, and climate change resiliency, while creating a sustainable environment that is collaborative and inclusive for participants, in order to graduate families out of social assistance programs, and create long term food security for communities in Ethiopia.

The project activities are designed to incrementally increase households' participation in diverse economic activities, while also strengthening and facilitating linkages between GRAD participants and input suppliers, service providers, and local/regional markets. The program also includes activities aimed to build household and community resilience by building income and asset bases. GRAD engages men and women to promote gender equality and create more equitable outcomes.

To achieve its overarching goal, the project interventions deliberately build on the evidence and success of the PSNP project in the past, while also deliberately correcting its strategic deficiencies and aligning with updated food security policies of the country.

Innovative Approaches

GRAD will accomplish its goal by implementing the following strategies:

1. Enhance livelihoods options of chronically food insecure households in highland areas;
2. Improve community and household resilience;
3. Strengthen enabling environment to promote scale and sustainability;

GRAD also works through the Village Economic and Social Association (VESA) group model, which is designed to help poor households save money, gain access to loans provided by the group, and access loans from microfinance institutions. Because of the high female membership in VESA groups, this model is an ideal mechanism for improving women's access to credit and

Program Name:

Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development (GRAD)

Program Country: Ethiopia

Timeframe: Dec 2011 – Dec 2016

Budget: US\$ 23.4 million

Donors: USAID

Beneficiaries:

GRAD works with chronically food insecure households in 16 districts of Amhara, Tigray, Oromia and the SNNP Regions of Ethiopia.

65,000

Number of households the project aims to help graduate from government-run Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP).

\$365

Amount the project aims to sustainably increase annual household incomes over the five-year project through a sequence of interventions used to create resilience.



Midterm Results

Economic Opportunities

70% of targeted households were involved in Value Chain Activities and 65% of VESA members have formal microfinance credit.

Financial Services

GRAD created 2,591 VESAs, with 57,175 members.

Women's Resiliency

Most participants reported that women had increased household decision-making abilities. Women made up 36% of the participants trained on improved technologies and/or agricultural practices, and 39% of participants linked to output markets were women.

Nutritional Status

Essential Nutrition Actions trainings were held for 54,029 households. Also, 15,147 households were trained on dietary diversity and 16,366 households were trained in food preparation for children.

Climate Change Resiliency

84% of households adopted at least two practices associated with climate change adaptation, and 96% have adopted at least one practice including early maturing crop varieties, moisture conserving practices, and drought tolerant crop types and varieties.

Enabling Environment

86% of participants aspire to graduate. GRAD has cultivated collaboration with many different organizations attributing to the success of the project, which will hopefully lead to loan policy reform in the future.

Interventions

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Building on local traditions, the project establishes Village Economic and Social Associations (VESAs). VESAs are the focal point for most project interventions and provide a cohesive environment for introducing savings and credit, financial literacy, small business planning/management, and other economic skills, in ways that are accessible to both women and men. Through the VESAs, community members are trained in activities that help build resilience and on how to engage in one of five major value chains. After receiving loans from VESAs, GRAD households work with project support to access larger and longer-term agricultural loans from formal microfinance institutions (MFIs).

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

GRAD uses awareness raising sessions and positive role models to improve attitudes and practices towards women. To assure structural change, the project works with key government actors (such as Ethiopian government health and agricultural workers) to raise awareness of gender issues, analyze key challenges to gender equality and food security, and build strategies to create gender equality.

Nutritional Behaviors

GRAD recognizes that good nutrition plays a critical role in human development and long-term household livelihood security. To complement Ethiopia's National Nutrition Program, the project provides training sessions in the VESA. Men and women learn a variety of good nutrition practices in these sessions, including exclusive breast-feeding in addition to complementary food for children over 6 months of age.

Climate Change Adaptation

Increasingly erratic weather patterns in the Ethiopian highlands are having a negative impact on agricultural production and household income. GRAD uses climate information systems to share information with communities about climate risks. It also introduces adaptation tools such as small scale irrigation and fast maturing or drought resistant crops.

Aspiration to Graduation

GRAD will not succeed if targeted households either do not believe they can graduate from government (PSNP) assistance or simply do not want to do so. Working to improve household understanding of graduation processes and imperatives is critical to sustainability. Exposing households to successful PSNP graduates and helping them initiate profitable activities that can replace the PSNP food or cash assists in motivating project participants to graduate.



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