

Feed the Future Ethiopia - Livelihoods for Resilience Activity

Overview

The Feed the Future Ethiopia – Livelihoods for Resilience Activity, part of the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative, is designed to reduce food insecurity and increase resilience for Ethiopia’s poorest households. The five-year project complements and supports the government of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP)'s livelihoods component. A consortium led by CARE and comprising the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA), Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE), and the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) implements the project in 37 PSNP woredas of Amhara, Sidama, SNNPR, and Tigray regions with a total budget of USD 48 million.

Objective

The Livelihoods for Resilience Activity aims to enable 97,900 chronically food insecure households to graduate from the PSNP with resilience. It has taken lessons from its predecessor project, Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development (GRAD), to develop the following four sub-purposes:

1. Members of PSNP households have increased capacities for undertaking resilient livelihoods
2. PSNP households have economically viable and resilient livelihood portfolios
3. An enabling environment supports resilient livelihoods for PSNP households
4. Collaboration, learning and adaptive management processes enhance, scale up, or facilitate replication of impact.

Strategic Approaches

Village Economic and Social Associations (VESAs)

As a starting point, the project supports households in forming small, village-level groups called village economic and social associations. VESAs meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis to save and provide small loans to members of the group, thereby providing an entry point for small-scale financial services for households. Each VESA also has a social fund to which members contribute regularly, and which is used to support members who face a crisis or urgent financial need. The project facilitates discussions at the VESA level on financial literacy, gender norms, improved nutritional practices, and climate change adaptation, all of which are critical to resilience. VESAs also serve as the project’s entry point for financial literacy and business skills trainings, exposure to agricultural technologies and information, and linkages to micro-finance.

The project also facilitates the formation of youth VESAs whereby members participate in small-scale savings and lending activities to gain financial literacy and develop sound financial management skills as a foundation for future livelihood activities.

Tailored financial services

The Livelihoods for Resilience Activity builds financial inclusion through the following sequence: households start with savings and small loans through their VESAs, which enable them to make small, low-risk investments and begin building their livelihoods. Financial literacy and business skills trainings provide the foundation needed for households to manage their investments wisely. As their businesses grow and they repay their small loans, households become ready for larger loans from formal financial institutions. The project partners with local micro-finance institutions and uses a form of loan guarantee fund to buy down lenders' risks.

Livelihood pathways and youth empowerment

The project builds households' capacities to help them make informed decisions among various livelihood options. It provides tailored technical support to clients within households—including women, men and youth—along three livelihood pathways:

- **Crop and livestock:** The project supports nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart crop and livestock production through technology demonstrations and model farmers, technical trainings supported by video-enabled extension, and promotion of small-scale irrigation. These activities are complemented by market systems strengthening interventions.
- **Off-farm livelihoods:** The project leverages training curricula called Work Ready Now and Be Your Own Boss, developed by the Education Development Center (EDC), to build entrepreneurship skills in youth to enable them manage their own businesses. The project's *Hulu Bedej* micro-franchise initiative supports women to become saleswomen for fast-moving consumer goods such as soaps and nutritious foods.
- **Wage employment:** The project uses the Work Ready Now curriculum to build life skills and increase youth employability, and applies coaching and mentoring techniques to help youth look for jobs. Where appropriate, youth are linked to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutes for vocational skills training.

Inclusive market systems

Through the Innovation Fund, the Livelihoods for Resilience Activity supports local entrepreneurs in becoming “last-mile” service providers for key value chains in which households participate. These last-mile service providers include:

- Agro-dealers, who serve as retailers for agricultural inputs such as seeds, tools, and feed.
- Bee colony multiplication and technical service centers, which are run by PSNP clients who are successful beekeepers. These clients split bee colonies and sell them to other beekeepers, in addition to providing technical assistance and advice.
- Chick/pullet growers, who obtain day-old chicks from hatcheries and raise them to 45 days, then sell the young chickens to PSNP households engaged in poultry production
- Feed franchisers, who obtain concentrate feed and mix it with locally available feed ingredients in project implementation regions, to minimize transport costs and reduce the overall cost of feed for PSNP clients.
- Community vaccinators, who work with vet vendors to vaccinate chickens in their communities, with a particular focus on Newcastle Disease.

The project also strengthens marketing groups and cooperatives and facilitates market linkages where appropriate. By engaging with the private sector, the project supports the development of inclusive market systems that serve very poor households.

Gender equity and women's empowerment

The project recognizes social norms as part of the enabling environment for resilience, and applies CARE's Gender Equality Framework, which focuses on agency, relations, and structure, as its guiding principle for women's empowerment activities. The project builds an enabling environment for women's empowerment by identifying norms around gender roles, household workloads, and women's engagement in livelihood activities, and challenging VESA members and community leaders to reconsider them. The project also engages male role models to demonstrate that men's active involvement in household chores and workload sharing empowers women and makes households more resilient to shocks. Since 2019, the project has strengthened women's agency through a curriculum called **Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement (PACE)**. PACE is a life skills curriculum for women and female youth that was developed by Gap and is funded by the Gap Foundation as a cost-shared activity.

Nutrition and nutrition-sensitive agriculture

The Livelihoods for Resilience Activity promotes perma-gardening as well as poultry production to improve households' dietary diversity. Poultry promotion activities include training in low-cost poultry house construction and the provision of poultry vouchers, which cost-share some of the upfront costs of poultry production, and particularly the cost of feed for improved breeds, through linkages with private suppliers. The project's nutrition strategy also uses social and behavioral change communication and cooking demonstrations to enhance households' nutrition knowledge, with a special focus on pregnant and lactating women.

Climate change adaptation

Through an approach called Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP), the project collaborates with meteorological agencies and traditional forecasters to prepare locally tailored seasonal forecasts and advisories designed to help households make informed livelihood decisions at the start of each growing season.

Collaboration, learning, and adaptive management

The Livelihoods for Resilience Activity believes strongly in partnerships and collaboration with government institutions and other NGOs. Project leaders and staff coordinate closely with PSNP implementers at all levels to ensure synergy, provide support, facilitate joint learning, and leverage resources where possible. In addition, the project seeks to be dynamic and responsive to the opportunities and constraints that arise. The project's learning agenda places a particular focus on learning around resilience, financial inclusion, and women and youth empowerment.

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