



PERMA GARDEN

Source of nutrition and cash

The USAID funded SPIR Program, led by World Vision in a consortium with CARE and ORDA, is intended to help households in the PSNP4 program achieve food security for their households through a combination of savings, diversifying their sources of income through income generating activities, and skills training that can help them graduate from food assistance. This complementarity is core to the success of the collaboration between the GoE and the USAID funded SPIR Program. SPIR supports 526,444 direct project participants in the Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR regions of Ethiopia.

In order to increase access to diversified nutritious foods and improve nutritional status of program participants, SPIR/CARE promotes homestead food production, especially in families with children under 2 and pregnant and lactating women. Being able to produce food at home, especially more diverse and nutritious options, makes it easier for families to have healthy diets year-round.

92 Government of Ethiopia development agents each work with 30 target families to provide seeds, rakes, and a watering can, as well as training on how to do perma gardening. Together, they reach 1,229 program participants. Each participant received between 16 g and 20 g of vegetable seeds (beetroot, tomato, swiss chard and carrot). In addition, the home gardening kits (watering can and rake) were provided in West Hararghe for perma-garden beneficiaries.

Development Agents get training in other agricultural techniques that help families produce more nutritious food at home. CARE worked with DAs and women to train them on poultry rearing, sanitation for keeping chickens at home, and how to successfully market poultry. SPIR/CARE evenly distributed 5,454 chickens and 12,271.5 kg of poultry feed amongst 909 selected female program participants, 6 chickens and 13.5 kg of feed each. Evidence so far shows that the chickens have helped improve both income and nutrition. Out of the total eggs produced, families consume about 44 percent consumed and sell 56 percent in market.

In order to protect the chickens from a major disease called Newcastle, SPIR/CARE facilitated a vaccination campaign at six kebeles of Chiro and six kebeles of Gemechis woredas.

Always thinking of the whole value chain, the project also aimed to help women create sustainable ways of feeding their chickens. In West Hararghe, SPIR/CARE distributed 100 g of alfalfa seed to 580 program participants (465F: 93M) engaged in poultry production. Families can plant the seeds in their backyards to feed the chickens as a good source of vitamins,

minerals and protein.

Another key concern for families is sanitation. 23% of children under 1 year old suffer from diarrhea in Ethiopia—more in communities with poor sanitation. SPIR organized training for 137 people, including DAs, on personal and environmental sanitation. This included CLTSH interventions, solid waste disposal (animal manure) and water quality management by using SPIR/CARE consortium training materials.

Wendiye Gone has been the Development Agent in Welargi Kebele for the last 5 years, ever since he graduated from college. He supports 324 families in 8 villages. He spends a lot of his time travelling, because the area is very steep and villages are far apart. Still, you can see he loves his job. His favorite part is the permagardens, because it was something totally new for him. “We didn’t know about this before in our area. Since I did the trainings for communities, lots of farmers have started gardens and are growing vegetables. That means families are getting better, healthier meals. Their nutrition is better. Pregnant women can eat vegetables, and they couldn’t before.”

It’s not just the 30 farmers SPIR worked with. The idea is starting to spread.



“Once the community saw the kinds of benefits families with permagardens got, they started to copy it in their own homes. Lots of people have permagardens, and see that it’s improving their nutrition.”

Wendiye sees the agrodealers making a big difference. “Before, people couldn’t buy seeds. Markets were far away and seeds were too expensive. If they could find anyone selling seeds, they would have to spend 250 Birr (\$9 USD) on a packet designed for a huge farm. Now they can buy smaller packets with the local agrodealer. That only costs 10 Birr (0.40 USD), and is the amount of seeds they need.

Another activity Wendiye sees making a difference is the poultry farming. Families have access to eggs, which means kids are eating them more often and growing faster. “I work with Kedire Teha and Mero Reshid, who have twins. You can see on the kids faces that they are eating eggs most days. Even though they are twins and would usually be small, these kids are healthier bigger than others in the community. I love to see how different they are. Before, families who had eggs would only sell them in the market. They never used to eat vegetables before. But we don’t just teach people to produce food, we also teach them how to use that food at home to be healthier.

It’s not easy to make the change. It’s a challenge. People have assumptions that are hard to sway. They assume that you sell eggs, you don’t eat them. You have to help people change behavior. By helping families produce more eggs, they can eat them and still have eggs to sell, so incomes are going up, too.”

Integration between components

To improve agricultural production and resilience, SPIR/CARE worked with DAs to connect public works projects through PSNP with land regeneration. This included a three-day technical training on innovative soil and water conservation technologies for 203 people. The training shared new learning on consortium best practices/technology and improving natural resource management and use under the changing climate. DAs went on to train 414 people to improve degraded land, and public works projects have regenerated 1,258 hectares of land so far.

Challenges

The permagardens and poultry farming have been a big success, but there are still challenges. Water scarcity and the distance to water sources makes it hard for families—especially women—to get enough water for their gardens. The distance to markets to buy seeds and sell products is still a challenge, especially in the context of limited transportation options. Finally, this pilot phase is still a relatively small percentage of the district. It's reaching 30 households out of the 289 that are a part of PSNP.

Wendiye says, “I wish we could scale up these activities to everybody. Right now, we don’t have the capital or resources to reach all of the farmers who could benefit.”



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