

# SUSTAINABILITY OF PARTICIPATORY SCENARIO PLANNING

## BACKGROUND

Strengthen PSNP4 Institutions and Resilience (SPIR) is a USAID-funded programme being implemented from 2016 to 2021. SPIR shares Government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) goal of "Resilience to shocks and livelihoods enhanced, and food security and nutrition improved, for rural households vulnerable to food insecurity." The programme seeks to address this through multi-sector interventions providing livelihood training and livelihood options, investment grants, capital transfers, access to micro-finance, natural resources management, adaptation to climate change, improvements to early warning systems and skills training. CARE Ethiopia is an implementing partner in a consortium led by World Vision, alongside Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA). CARE is responsible for implementing SPIR in East Hararghe and West Hararghe zones of Oromia region, reaching 124 kebeles and 106,181 direct beneficiaries.

Participatory Scenario Planning is a multi-stakeholder process for sharing and interpreting seasonal forecast information to develop plans and make decisions, and is a core activity in the SPIR project for building resilience to climate change at multiple levels. The blending of indigenous and meteorological forecast information to develop likely seasonal scenarios provides valuable information for programme participants to make livelihood decisions. This learning brief shares reflections from project participants and raises a key issue of sustainability of this process.

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## Introduction

In the Oromia region of Ethiopia where the SPIR project is being implemented by CARE, communities have experienced increased weather variation in the Belg season (February to May) and Meher season (June to August) over the years. As households depend on the rains during these periods for their annual agriculture production, this is a critical impact of climate change. Community members speak repeatedly about seeing less rains than typical during the season, delayed rains, heavy



rainfall followed by none, no rains at all, erratic interruption in rains and unexpected rain during harvesting time.

For small-scale farmers, these changes in seasonal patterns can quickly result in failed crops and food insecurity if misjudged decisions and timings are made. Planting too early, too late, too much or the wrong type of crop for the weather can mean a whole season without food for many families. If whole regions are unprepared for a seasonal shock or divergence from typical rainfall and weather patterns, then widespread lack of food can escalate into food insecurity and become a humanitarian emergency. **In the regions where CARE works, 95% of livelihoods are dependent on the seasonal rains**, thus the anticipated rainfall pattern for the season is critical information for household survival.

But these seasonal variations are not unpredictable. The Ethiopian National Meteorological Agency (NMA) has strengthened the quality of seasonal predictions and strengthened forecasting capability at sub-regional levels with support from the World Meteorological Agency, donor agency programmes and research partners. The production of improved forecasts and climate information services and the roles and coordination among stakeholders and users of this information are being outlined in the Ethiopian National Framework for Climate Services and the Ethiopian Government National Adaptation Plan<sup>1</sup>. In rural communities there are long-standing techniques used by traditional weather forecasters who interpret signs from nature and the surrounding environment to predict upcoming weather. However, the increasing unpredictability caused by climate change has made it harder to rely on these approaches alone. Combining scientific and local methods of forecasting can generate enough information for households to make decisions on what and when to plant, and thereby increase their likelihood of good harvests.

CARE's Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) approach helps communities and farmers obtain good information in a way that enables them to make decisions and prepare for the upcoming season. This co-production process brings together stakeholders to share weather predictions and seasonal forecast information drawn from scientific and traditional sources and local knowledge, collectively analyse the information, develop potential scenarios for the season, develop action plans for most likely scenarios as well as scenarios with lower probabilities, generate advisories for different sectors and stakeholders, and agree communications methods for disseminating forecasts and advisories.

## Approach

This learning brief shares some of the experiences with PSP through the SPIR project. In September 2019, focus group discussions and key informant interviews were undertaken to explore the impact of the PSP process.

1 Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy – National Adaptation Plan. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2019. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Documents/Parties/NAP-ETH%20FINAL%20VERSION%20%20Mar%202019.pdf>

## Discussions were held in East and West Hararghe zones of Oromia region where CARE is implementing SPIR, These included:

### 2 Traditional Forecasters

1 non-PSNP participant (to assess access to information of those not involved in SPIR)

3 Kebele Early Warning Committees (between 6-11 members per group)

3 Woreda Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Committees<sup>2</sup> (between 2-8 members per group)

The kebele committees comprise community representatives who are themselves farmers and agricultural decision-makers, while disseminating this information to others they also use the information to make decisions about their own farms.

In all the three Woreda, PSP workshops have been conducted twice to date through the SPIR project – once for the Meher and for the Belg seasons.

## Participatory Scenario Planning – a brief description

PSP is a CARE-wide approach to support decision-making across different sectors using seasonal climate forecasts, and is centred around co-production of seasonal user-centred climate information services.<sup>3</sup> The PSP approach has been documented and implemented in Kenya, Ghana and Niger, and adopted by the Agriculture Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP) of the Kenyan government in all 47 counties in Kenya, and by CARE and other organisations in a total of 12 countries.<sup>4</sup>

In the SPIR Program the PSP process brings together meteorological officials, woreda-level government departments, traditional forecasters, community leaders, kebele early warning committees and agricultural extension services to co-produce user-centred climate services. During a 2-day workshop before the Belg or Meher seasons, these stakeholders exchange seasonal climate information from traditional and scientific sources and develop a harmonised seasonal forecast using all the data and knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Participants then interpret the seasonal forecast into three probabilistic hazard scenarios (most likely, second highest and lowest probability – which are included in local contingency planning) and assess risks posed by the hazards in order to develop impact scenarios. They then discuss the local implications of the impact scenarios considering the status of food security, natural resources, livelihoods and

2 The three woredas were Girawa, Kurfe Chelle and Gemechis.

3 Co-production in African Weather and Climate Services, Case Study: Participatory Scenario Planning for Local Seasonal Climate Forecasts and Advisories. Future Climate for Africa and Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (2019). <https://futureclimateafrica.org/coproduction-manual/downloads/WISER-FCFA-coproduction--case-study-5.pdf>

4 Practical Guide to Participatory Scenario Planning: Seasonal climate information for resilient decision-making. CARE International (2017). <https://careclimatechange.org/practical-guide-to-participatory-scenario-planning-seasonal-climate-information-for-resilient-decision-making/>

5 Decision-making for climate resilient livelihoods and risk reduction: A Participatory Scenario Planning approach. CARE International (2011). [https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/CC-2011-ALP\\_PSP\\_Brief.pdf](https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/CC-2011-ALP_PSP_Brief.pdf)

different sectors. Actions for each scenario are then discussed and developed for different sectors. Communication channels are agreed to disseminate the information to decision-makers at all levels and the wider community. These channels may be woreda and kebele early warning committees, traditional forecasters, Village Economic and Social Associations (VESAs)<sup>6</sup> – and communicated through meetings, letters, community gatherings, leaflets, mobile phones, etc.

The PSP approach goes beyond provision of weather forecasts to users of climate information. Forecasts may not be usable for decision-making and planning for the agricultural season if they are not tailored to the impacts on particular sectors, if they are not specific enough to make localised decisions, if they are not clear about the probabilities (the likelihood of the forecast), and if they are not trusted by stakeholders. PSP addresses these issues:

- Rather than solely relying on meteorological information (which is often too generic), PSP synthesises local traditional methods and scientific information to create more reliable forecasts reinforced by a wider range of information.
- Because different stakeholders work together to harmonise and agree on the forecasts, greater trust is built in the information generated, and stakeholders have greater confidence and ability to communicate the information.
- Different scenarios are developed with different probabilities of forecasts (e.g. very likely, less likely, etc.) so that people are not caught unprepared if the most likely forecast does not materialise as predicted.
- Local risks and potential impacts of these scenarios in different ecological zones are discussed among local stakeholders, countering the problem that meteorological information is often not specific enough in very discrete regions or tailored for decision-making.
- Participants work together to develop advisories for the different scenarios, in order to translate the forecast information into specific actions that farmers, households, government departments, extension workers, the media, etc. can take.

### Insights from SPIR Participants on the Participatory Scenario Planning process

During the six focus group discussions with the kebele and woreda level committees, participants explained in detail the process of conducting the PSP workshop and the specific roles of different stakeholders in the workshop. They all felt that PSP is valuable from their different perspectives – some woreda DRM committee members said it enabled them to have a closer relationship with kebeles, community members stated that they were able to make better planting decisions, the two traditional forecasters felt their expertise was validated and were pleased that this forum gave them equal respect among scientists and official domains (e.g.

<sup>6</sup> VESAs are self-selected groups of 15-25 households, brought together as a foundation for all economic and social activities with in SPIR, VESAs act as an entry point for savings and lending, financial literacy and business skill trainings, learning climate smart agriculture techniques, linking to microfinance & input/output markets, early warning information, seasonal forecasts and advisories, and other livelihood interventions. [https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/spir\\_vesa\\_learning\\_brief-final.pdf](https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/spir_vesa_learning_brief-final.pdf)

government sectors, regional meteorological services). All expressed the view that this process generated more usable forecasts with less uncertainty, and equipped them at the community, kebele and woreda levels to be better prepared for upcoming seasons.

In the three woredas visited, the PSP forecast for the current Meher season was for delayed rains. Many farmers interviewed had planted their crops later in the season based on the advice developed through the PSP process which was disseminated by agricultural extension officers. Rains in the areas had indeed started late and was continuing longer than usual, so the prediction were largely accurate for the season – thus farmers were anticipating successful harvests from following the advisories developed through the PSP. They expressed the level of uncertainty and potential crop failure that could have occurred if they had not had these forecasts and advisories available.

Farmers, kebele and woreda committees felt that the process enabled information to be much more specific to their localised areas. Some interviewees named nearby weather stations which provide generic information for the sub-region that is broadcast on local radio but does not provide localised predictions, thus farmers did not feel this information was helpful. The process of gathering kebele and community members to discuss the PSP forecast from the work shop and contextualise the information according to the specific risks and trends in their geographic area was felt to tailor it to their area and make it useful for their household decision-making.

Interview participants mentioned multiple ways in which the PSP information is used for decision-making and planning. Farmers mentioned choosing different types of crops or different planting regimes based on the predicted rainfall patterns. For example where it was predicted the grazing lands would be flooded farmers planted different forage crops that can withstand rains, and because of delayed rains this Meher season farmers could chose to grow longer germinating sorghum than early maturing beans. Community members who are not involved in SPIR or PSNP are also able to access this information and use it to make decisions. A farmer indicated that the information through PSP is provided to all community members and enabled him to sow his crops later in the season because of predicted delayed rains, even though he is not a SPIR participant, Woreda committee members, who are representatives of different government sectors (such as agriculture, water supply and sanitation, communications, livestock and food security), indicated they are using the seasonal forecast and advisories to inform their sector annual plans and emergency plans.

When considering how PSP could continue when SPIR is no longer active, the woreda committees were unable to provide any suggestions. As they had only delivered two PSP workshops it is still a relatively new activity within the programme. However the benefits came across clearly from the committees and community members, who felt more confident in making decisions and being prepared, and sector officials who felt their annual planning was better informed.

### Sustainability of Participatory Scenario Planning

The woreda DRM committees have demonstrated leadership and enthusiasm for the PSP process, and have been strong advocates of the value it brings at woreda, kebele, community and household levels. However, the ability to continue PSP

activities without funding from the SPIR project is a key issue for sustainability.

Through SPIR, PSP is being implemented in the 15 woredas of the project, and learning has been captured on the impact of PSP on SPIR project participants.<sup>7</sup> In other regions of Ethiopia, CARE has been introducing PSP in projects over the past eight years, such the USAID-funded Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) (2012-2017) and Livelihoods for Resilience (2016-2021). These experiences in Amhara, Tigray, SNPFR and other zones of Oromia have shown similar results in terms of woreda, kebele and community benefits, across sectors and at all levels of planning and decision-making.<sup>8</sup> An impact study of PSP in CARE Ethiopia's PRIME project, which facilitated PSP processes in 24 woredas in Afar, Somali and southern Oromia, demonstrated improved decision-making for climate-resilient livelihoods and integration of disaster risk reduction into community planning and decision-making.<sup>9</sup> It was also demonstrated that the improved access to climate information promoted a shift in livelihood practices which improved resilience to seasonal shocks and variation.

However, what is evident through CARE's experience is the uncertainty of sustainability of the PSP process. It is unclear how well PSP has been adopted into woreda level-processes after projects end. Similarly, as there are currently no committed funds or legal or policy mandate for PSP to continue after SPIR ends in 2021, the continuation of this valuable process is at risk. It is recommended that discussions should be initiated with woreda DRM committees to decide if they feel this is a valuable process to adopt institutionally – if so, then to understand what challenges they face in adopting PSP within annual planning processes and explore possible options. This could involve:

- Building capacity of woreda and kebele level officials to facilitate and train others on the PSP process internally, to reduce reliance on external actors and ensure that woredas can continue to lead the process even with turnover of committee members. Activities to be explored could include developing woreda level manuals, sensitisation of woreda leadership, training of trainers' sessions.
- Mainstreaming PSP into woreda level development planning (i.e. inclusion of PSP workshops in community action plans or part of contingency planning and DRM planning)
- Sensitizing higher-level sector ministries through evidence-based learning of the value of incorporating PSP into government development programs and sectoral planning processes. This could be through the development of implementing guidelines or DRM policies to make it required input into the planning cycle of the different sectors (e.g. agriculture, water and sanitation, health, livestock, food security, etc.).
- Engaging with other projects, agencies and organisations that are promoting use of climate information services to explore how woreda-level seasonal forecasts can be institutionalised into national policy.<sup>10</sup>

The value of seasonal forecast information has been expressed by many stakeholders at different levels, not only in SPIR but in other projects in Ethiopia and other countries. While the benefits are felt immediately each season in better decision-making and planning, as well as helping build resilience to future shocks and stresses, its value in building climate resilience will only continue for as long as the PSP process is sustained.

7 Participatory Scenario Planning and preparing for climate change. CARE International (2019) [https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/spir\\_learning\\_brief-ppsp.pdf](https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/spir_learning_brief-ppsp.pdf)

8 CARE Ethiopia – A decade of program learning series: Participatory Scenario Planning. CARE Ethiopia (2019). [https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/care\\_ethiopia\\_-\\_a\\_decade\\_of\\_programming\\_learning\\_series\\_-\\_participatory\\_scenario\\_planning.pdf](https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/care_ethiopia_-_a_decade_of_programming_learning_series_-_participatory_scenario_planning.pdf); and Livelihoods for Resilience: PSP: a tool to help households prepare for weather shocks [https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/participatory\\_scenario\\_planning\\_success\\_story\\_grad2\\_2019.07.30.pdf](https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/participatory_scenario_planning_success_story_grad2_2019.07.30.pdf)

9 Impact Assessment on Climate Information Services for Community-Based Adaptation to Climate change – Ethiopia Country Report. C4 EcoSolutions (2017). <https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ALP-Ethiopia-CIS-Country-Report.pdf> ;

10 In Kenya, it was a partnership with the Kenya Meteorological Department, the Agriculture Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, and CARE International that led to the PSP process being adopted in all 47 Kenyan counties in 2014. Impact Assessment on Climate Information Services for Community - Based Adaptation to Climate change – Kenya Country Report. C4 EcoSolutions (2017). <https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Kenya-Climate-Services-Report-ALP-May-2017.pdf>

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