



PROGRAM OVERVIEW The USAID funded Strengthen PSNP4 Institutions and Resilience (SPIR) Program, led by World Vision in a consortium with CARE and ORDA, is intended to help households in the PSNP4 program achieve long-term food security. Through a combination of savings, diversifying their sources of income through economic activities, and skills training that can help them graduate from food assistance, SPIR supports 526,444 direct project participants in the Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR regions of Ethiopia.

VESA A Village Economic and Social Association (VESA) is a group with members from 20-30 households, brought together as a foundation for all economic and social activities supported by the project. The “Youth” VESA is a new program piloted by SPIR which brings together the children of PSNP4 households as a self-selected group of peers who save together and support each other. Organizing PSNP4 youth into VESAs is a cost-effective way of delivering services and technical support to a previously underserved population. In SPIR, Youth VESAs serve as an entry point for: financial literacy and business skill trainings, as well as linking youth to vocational training and job employment. Youth VESA members can directly engage with employers and identify training opportunities that align with their career goals. In addition, Youth VESAs build social cohesion and capital and are a safe and fertile environment for training/discussion on social and cultural norms that provide a venue for social cohesion.



Maruf Dawed, a Youth VESA member, proudly claims that one day he is going to have a photography studio. He is very clear about this path to that goal. “I started with one chicken that I bought with a loan from my parents. I also bought some seeds and farmed my parents land and with that income, I bought another chicken. I will sell the eggs and when I have enough money, I will buy a goat for shoat fattening. I have a short-term business plan, but I want to get educated and own my own photo studio.”



Ask Hamalma Kefala what she wants for her life and she smiles shyly and responds “I want to own my own beauty salon.” This quiet but self-assured girl of 19, sits among her peers in the Youth VESA that she joined only 3 months prior. Hamalma, like the 25 or so other young men and women in her VESA, aspires to move beyond the food/cash support that she and her family receive as part of the PSNP4, the government safety net program that serves the poor and extreme poor in the Oromia region of Ethiopia.

The Youth VESA is perhaps one of the most innovative and forward-looking aspects of the SPIR Program, as it focuses not on the productive adult clients of the PSNP4, but on

stemming the cycle of poverty that has entrenched generations of Ethiopians. Using the same principles of cultivating a culture of saving among PSNP4 households, SPIR also places a deliberate focus on targeting the Youth in PSNP4 households, helping them channel their energy towards envisioning and cultivating the skills to climb out of poverty.

The Youth VESA formed by SPIR brings together 20-30 youth aged 15 – 29, to develop “soft skills” that facilitate their readiness to learn the same skills in business and financial management that their parents learn. What makes the Youth VESA different is that each member develops a personal development plan that brings together their aspirations for their own futures with the skills and training that they need to achieve those goals. In the Abdi boru Youth VESA in Arba rekete kebele, Chiro woreda, all members started with an initial investment of 15 Birr, mostly earned by loading unloading cargo and given to them by their parents. Using this as starting capital, the group meets weekly and each member saves 10-20 Birr per week. Members are motivated to earn enough to save and take on jobs in petty trade at nearby markets. Each member of the VESA has an individual personal development plan that outlines the steps they need to take and the skills they need to enter the job market. For

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some this means starting their own business and for others, the program will link them to technical and vocational educational training (TVET) so that they can learn a trade and develop work ready skills.

Almost all the members of the Youth VESA begin engaging in economic activity by rearing poultry and selling the eggs. The quickly learn how to save their profits through the VESA and invest in the next level of IGA, shoat fattening, which leads to cattle and oxen fattening.

SPIR has organized over 88 YVESA having 1622 members (926 male and 696 female) number of Youth VESAs across three regions of Ethiopia; Amhara, East and West Hararge. The program works with each member of the VESA to link them to local employers, training programs, and local businesses so that they learn the soft skills (financial management) as well as the hard skills (technical skills/job training) that can help them establish their identity outside of their families. Almost all of the youth in the Abdi boru VESA were clear that they want to move out of their parent's homes, earn their own livelihoods, and start their own families. They also state proudly that their participation in the VESA has earned them new respect in their families. "I share the skills I learn in the VESA with my parents and they share what they learn in their VESA with me. In this way we support each other" says

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Temima Abraham. She also wants to take the skills she has learned in her mother's kitchen and start her own business. "I can make Shiro, Vegetables, Porridge, Spaghetti and injera, and with the skills I am learning in the Youth VESA, I am saving my money to start my restaurant."

The SPIR project is teaching the vulnerable youth in PSNP households how to plan for their futures. But perhaps more importantly, it is helping them dream big and giving them the skills to make those dreams a reality.

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