

Livelihoods for Resilience Activity



“Poultry made me rethink my plans to migrate”

Engaging in improved poultry production as a value chain activity in rural Ethiopia is an activity that pays off. Komah is one of the successful PSNP clients who has earned impressive incomes from poultry production. Her story, narrated below, tells how poultry can change the livelihood of the poor if it is properly adopted.

Three years ago, Komah Seyoum, a 25-year-old single mother of two living in Tigray Region, was considering drastic measures to make ends meet. “I was so frustrated to be dependent on my poor parents for so long. My husband left me five years ago. I was keen to try migration to turn my situation around for the better, although my parents opposed the idea,” she explains. The migration she was considering was to the Middle East to work as a maid—a risky endeavor with no legal protections, which would have required leaving her children behind.

Today, Komah’s ambitions are more local, but she has good reason to hope. With support from the Livelihoods for Resilience Activity, she and 26 of her neighbors established a village economic and social association (VESA) named Senay—meaning “fine” or “good” in Tigrigna—which serves as a platform for the project to facilitate discussions and trainings on various social and economic issues. She received training on financial literacy, value

chains, and climate change adaptation as well as gender and women empowerment, and began to build a vision for her future. “All the trainings are useful,” she explains. “I was particularly impressed by how engaging in poultry can generate a good income within a short period of time. I also witnessed the success of a VESA member who started poultry a bit earlier.” Each VESA member started saving a minimum of 20 birr per month to provide small loans to one another.

Seeing the success of her fellow VESA member, Komah did not hesitate. She constructed a poultry house from locally available materials, and, following the instructions she had received in her training, equipped it with all necessary facilities (feeder, drinker, foot bath, egg laying nest and exercise yard). Using a combination of a VESA loan and money from her parents, she bought 70 chickens for 4,000 birr (USD 120), which she fattened for three months. The return was good “I earned a total of 12,000

birr (USD 358) net profit in just three months by selling most of them during a holiday. Having a proper chicken coop, feeding and vaccinating the chickens regularly contributed a lot to my success,” she explains.

The wise Komah used her income as a springboard to engage in other activities. She started selling beer and soft drinks for her neighbors. She bought four sheep for fattening. She also engages in grain retailing during market days. Three years after joining the project, Komah’s life and livelihood have changed significantly.

“I have 16,000 birr (USD 477) savings in the bank, nearly 3,000 birr (USD 90) in a rural savings and credit cooperative (RUSACCO), and 1,050 birr (USD 31) in the VESA. I can buy clothes for my kids and myself at any time. We also have eggs regularly in our meals as I have 18 egg layer chickens. I’m ready to buy more chickens.”

In addition to saving, Komah has constructed a better house. But for her, the most important change is her increased confidence in her own self-reliance. “I feel that I can further change my livelihood for the better. Some of my neighbors and my brother are learning from my success.”

Poultry value chain interventions

Poultry production provides an opportunity for food insecure households to improve their nutrition through the consumption of eggs and to increase their incomes through the sale of eggs and chickens. Often, poultry is managed by women, and the income from this activity is controlled by women, who then reinvest it in household nutrition and the education of their children. Improved breeds currently being promoted in Ethiopia provide an opportunity for households to gain significant economic and nutrition benefits from poultry production.

Despite the opportunities, raising chickens is not without challenges. Poultry production requires building a chicken coop that has a secure indoor space for chickens at night as well as a protected outdoor space for fresh air and scavenging, in addition to equipment such as feeders, drinkers, space for egg laying, etc. Other costs include the purchase of pullets and feed. Taken together, these upfront costs can prevent households from engaging in this profitable and nutritious activity. The supply of pullets (young chickens) of improved breeds is also limited, and many rural households do not have access to them. Furthermore, there is a large productivity gap between PSNP households (whose chickens produce 80 eggs each per year on average) and model farmers (whose chickens produce up to 288 eggs each per year). These challenges include high mortality rates for chickens, limited knowledge and skills, limited access to concentrate feeds/vitamins, and major fluctuations in egg prices throughout the year due to Orthodox Christians’ fasting seasons.

The project seeks to minimize these bottlenecks through the following major interventions:

- Improving access to poultry feed, improved breeds, and health services by **linking agro-dealers with poultry feed suppliers**, providing Innovation Fund support to pullet growers, and training vet service providers and community health vaccinators (an upcoming activity)
- Increasing **uptake of improved poultry production** through the provision of poultry vouchers in some areas
- Increasing **competitiveness of target households** in poultry production through hands-on training to frontline staff who support them directly and the facilitation of farmer-to-farmer learning using model farmers, demonstrations, and experience sharing events
- Creating **inclusive market systems** for PSNP households by establishing multi-stakeholder platforms at cluster level and strengthening collaboration and coordination of key private and government sector actors of the poultry value chain.
- Establishing and strengthening poultry farmer economic and marketing associations (FEMAs) to help farmers **aggregate input demands**, share knowledge, and more easily access market outlets.

To date, nearly 16,600 project clients (of whom 9,500 are women) have engaged in the poultry value chain.

About the Livelihoods for Resilience Activity:

The Feed the Future Ethiopia – Livelihoods for Resilience Activity is part of the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative. The five-year project is designed to help up to 97,900 chronically food insecure households to graduate with resilience from the government of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program. A consortium led by CARE and including the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA), Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE), and SNV implements the project in 37 PSNP woredas of Tigray, Amhara, and SNNP regions.

