



IMPROVING AND SUSTAINING FOOD SECURITY IN ETHIOPIA

ETHIOPIA



Umer Mohamed, a model farmer, explains how he taught others to adopt agroforestry practices using his farm as an example. Farms are fed by water captured from a community-constructed sediment storage dam. Read more on Page 3. Photo by CRS staff

The CRS Development Food Security Activity is running from September 30, 2016, through September 29, 2021, and has three purposes—PSNP systems strengthening, economic livelihoods, and maternal and child health and nutrition, including water, sanitation and hygiene—with gender and youth as a cross-cutting purpose; as outlined below:

- Women and youth have increased access to and control of community and household resources (cross-cutting purpose)
- The Government of Ethiopia, or GoE, and community systems respond to reduce communities' and households' vulnerability to shocks (Purpose I)
- Households improve their sustainable livelihood and economic wellbeing (Purpose II)
- Pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 years, have improved nutritional status (Purpose III)

Overview

The CRS DFSA in Ethiopia is funded by the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Food for Peace to sustain and build on the previous food security improvements achieved under the Productive Safety Net Programme, or PSNP, the Government of Ethiopia's rural safety net for food-insecure households. Now in its fourth phase, the PSNP has expanded from its traditional emphasis on food and cash transfers for work and maternal and child health and nutrition, to include gender, youth and economic livelihoods (on-farm, off-farm and wage employment pathways). The goal of the CRS DFSA is: *Food, nutrition and livelihoods security of households and communities improved and sustained.*

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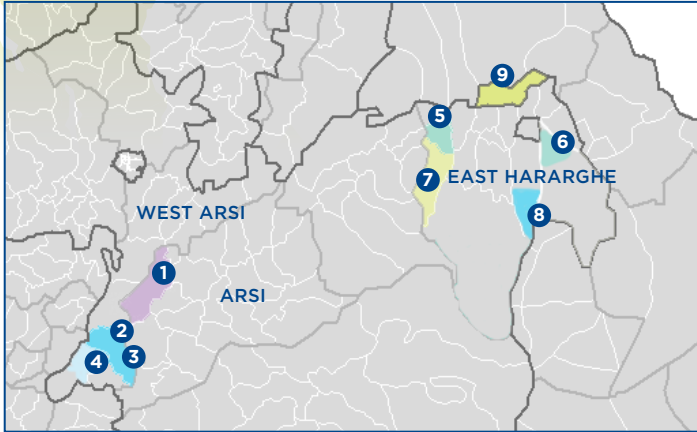


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ETHIOPIA

Development Food Security Activity operational area



Arsi

1 Ziway Dugda

West Arsi

2 Heben Arsi

3 Arsi Negele

4 Shala

East Hararghe

5 Deder

6 Babile

7 Malka Balo

8 Midega Tola

9 Dire Dawa

The activity is implemented in the zones of Arsi, West Arsi and East Hararghe in Oromia region and Dire Dawa city in nine districts, or *woredas*: Ziway Dugda, Arsi Negele, Heben Arsi, Shala, Deder, Malka Balo, Midega Tola, Babile and Dire Dawa. The DFSA operates in four livelihoods zones and plans to serve 240,525 PSNP households.

The activity is managed and implemented by a consortium led by CRS as the grant holder, with implementing partners Mercy Corps, the Ethiopian Catholic Church Social & Development Commissions of Harar and Meki Catholic Secretariats (HCS and MCS) and the Center for Creative Leadership. CRS also works closely with Save the Children on improving the nutrition of women and children in four *woredas*, as a complement to its USAID-funded Growth through Nutrition program.

240,525

NUMBER OF PSNP HOUSEHOLDS THE CRS DEVELOPMENT FOOD SECURITY ACTIVITY AIMS TO SERVE

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Message from the Chief of Party

On behalf of the Development Food Security Activity team, I am delighted to present the first DFSA newsletter, to be published twice a year to highlight achievements and key lessons learned from activities.

The last 2 years have been a busy time of startup, planning, assessments and trainings, as we geared up to provide services to DFSA participants, and then began implementation.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication of CRS and partner colleagues for their role and support in the design, preparation and implementation of the activity, and their readiness to serve the rural poor in Ethiopia.

CRS is also grateful to USAID's Office of Food for Peace for its continued funding and support, which has enabled us to fulfil our commitment to helping our program participants realize their potential. With solidarity and support from all engaged in this activity—the households we work with and support, the Government of Ethiopia and USAID—we will continue moving toward more resilient and food secure communities.

Stay tuned for the next edition to be published in April 2019!

Thank you
Shane Lennon



Community-built dam improves farmers' livelihoods



The dam (above) enables increased groundwater discharge (above right) even when the river runs dry. *Photo by CRS staff*

Like much of rural Ethiopia, the residents of Kurtu *kebele* in Dire Dawa experience low agricultural productivity, soil erosion and water shortages. The DFSA aims to support the construction and rehabilitation of structures to strengthen community watersheds, and promote water and soil conservation practices that farmers can use to increase productivity.

PSNP client Umer Mohamed lives in Kurtu with his family and is an active participant in the DFSA. The community has helped construct check dams, hillside terraces, soil bunds and other structures. Kurtu residents built a sediment storage dam that slowed runoff, increased silt deposits upstream, improved water infiltration, raised the water table and increased groundwater discharge.

Farmers are now celebrating the increased land and water available for agriculture and irrigation. The dam also reduced flooding downstream and the time needed to fetch water for drinking, cooking, washing clothes and feeding livestock. This freed up women's time to attend counseling on nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Up to 100 households directly benefitted from the dam's construction.

PSNP clients were also organized into livelihood groups and received training on marketing and natural resource management, or NRM. Trainings are run by government field extension workers and community members trained by CRS and partners.

In one such group, Umer learned about growing nutritious foods and the benefits of NRM techniques to boost production and conserve soil quality. He diversified his production by intercropping fruit trees with staple crops, and uses cow dung as organic fertilizer. In the first harvest after applying these techniques, he was able to earn an additional US\$550 from 2,500 kgs of tomatoes. He has now built embankments to protect his land from runoff and is well known locally for his adoption of soil conservation practices. Umer was chosen as a model farmer and now teaches others.

By supporting the construction of similar water and soil conservation structures, and helping farmers apply best NRM practices, the DFSA continues to strengthen community watersheds to improve livelihoods, food and nutrition security.



“Getting water in this sandy river bed was very difficult, especially during the dry season. After constructing the dam, there is now more water and I am using it for irrigation. I am also growing different crops such as tomatoes, sugarcane, coffee, papaya and orange to conserve soil quality. Because of the dam, I now have enough water to irrigate all my crops.”

Umer Mohamed
Kurtu *kebele*, Dire Dawa

Couple communication builds stronger households



The Faithful House Program helped Gamedhi Dhabi and Husna Shebrahim improve their decision-making around food and livelihoods security for their family. *Photo by CRS staff*

Safina Worja and Kelil Mohamed were married 7 years ago when they were 15 and 18 years old, respectively. They live with their two children in Arsi Negele *woreda* and are DFSA participants. In partnership with Mercy Corps, MCS and HCS, the activity uses CRS' Faithful House Program, or Islamic Family House, to provide a safe environment for couples to discuss their relationships and enhance joint decision-making.

Before participating in the training, their relationship was stressed. Kelil observed the negative impacts of divorce in his community, and was willing but hesitant to participate in the training. Previously, village elders and friends had intervened when there were problems. Now, he and Safina use their newly acquired communication tools to resolve issues and discuss household matters.

Local religious leaders have now communicated their interest in the trainings and have observed that they are in line with Islamic teaching.

Model couple Abdi Nureh and Iftu Usmaile have trained 35 couples in the Faithful House Program, which reinforces ideas such as love and respect, which are critical to the marriage relationship. Along with 18 other couples from different *woredas*, Abdi and Iftu were chosen as a model couple to attend a training in the capital of Addis Ababa in January 2018 because of the respect they hold in the community.

After the training, each couple was responsible for mentoring 10 further couples in their community, who were then responsible for another 10, and so forth. The DFSA aims to reach 5,000 couples by 2021.

Before Husna Shebrahim and Gamedhi Dhabi did the 3-day training, they were on the verge of divorce. Married for 12 years and with 6 children, it would have been devastating for their family. They are now happy and committed to their family. Honing their communication skills is enabling couples to work together to improve their decision-making around food and livelihoods security.



Model couple Iftu Usmaile and Abdi Nureh (above) use liquids to demonstrate communication, first pouring oil into water to show they do not mix, to represent a family in which there is no love and agreement. They then pour water into cola to show that, although there are differences of opinion, in a family where there is love and respect, couples can come together to discuss their issues and reach agreement. *Photo by CRS staff*



After couples training, Safina Worja and Kelil Mohamed now discuss household matters together. *Photo by CRS staff*

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“By talking to my wife, I realized how much work she had. I started to share more of the responsibilities with her, fetching water, cleaning the home”

**Kelil Mohamed
Boku Wolda kebele**

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Adult literacy classes empower women



Adult literacy student Amina Shankur leads the class in reciting the alphabet. *Photo by CRS staff*

PSNP client Shunkaa Calii from Arsi Negele *woreda* is the primary caretaker of her family and struggles as an uneducated farmer facing drought, degraded land and limited access to seeds, tools and training for improved production and income.

Shunkaa joined a DFSA livelihood group, but felt she lacked the skills to take part in discussions. She couldn't write her name or take down phone numbers, find the room she needed at the local clinic, read signs in the road or record her weekly savings.

After completing a 6-month adult literacy class aimed at boosting confidence and encouraging active participation in saving and lending activities, Shunkaa realized how important it is for women to know basic reading and writing.



Bedri Kedir, second left, with three of her students on graduation day. *Photo by CRS staff*

The class is taught by facilitators from the same or a nearby community. Bedri Kedir, 22, is a facilitator helping her elders learn basic math, reading and writing. She received training from DFSA staff on functional literacy teaching techniques as well as on agriculture and water, sanitation and hygiene. She uses the class to promote positive behavior change for improved livelihoods and health.

Bedri has seen her students go from having no knowledge of how to count, tell time, add or subtract, to being able to count their earnings, note contributions to savings groups and record savings. Their ability to budget has improved their participation in groups and built their confidence, and their husbands now entrust them with money and record-keeping.

When buying shoes for their children, Bedri's students used to measure the foot with string and take the string to the shopkeeper. Now, simply being able to read the shoe size themselves has helped transform their lives.



Shunkaa Calii demonstrates her literacy skills by writing down a neighbor's phone number. *Photo by CRS staff*

1,542

LIVELIHOODS GROUP MEMBERS, 710 OF THEM WOMEN, COMPLETED BASIC ADULT LITERACY TRAINING

“These community members raised me. Now, I must help them improve their skills in basic math, reading and writing, so that they can do simple tasks independently. I can see that they are happy. They are even more respected now in the community and in the home.”

Bedri Kedir
Literacy facilitator
Wahil kebele

Widening opportunities for youth



Fardusa Abdale Samatar, 17, was a participant in the DFSA career fair and was inspired by the career opportunities available to women. *Photo by CRS staff*

Over 70 percent of Ethiopia's population is below the age of 30. With dangers of prolonged drought and eroded farmland, youth must consider how to earn an income beyond traditional farming livelihoods.

CRS, Mercy Corps, HCS and MCS conducted trainings on work readiness, soft skills and effective job application, to prepare 395 college graduates and technical students to seek employment. They also organized two career fairs for 281 high school students to meet with professionals in medicine, engineering, information technology and teaching.

Awel Umer Aleye, 23, recently graduated from Dire Dawa University. He lives with his mother, a laborer, and younger brother in Dire Dawa. An exceptional student, Awel studied midwifery and did well in his exams. But finding a job

was difficult as he did not know how to write a resume and cover letter or prepare for interviews. He spent 3 months unsuccessfully applying for jobs. After attending the DFSA work readiness training, he found a job at the Federal Military Hospital.

Fardusa Abdale Samatar, 17, a ninth grade student from Dire Dawa, attended one of the fairs, where she met Meseret Mane, a female engineer. Hearing of Meseret's journey inspired Fardusa, who said that in her community, girls her age were often encouraged to drop out of school and marry. Fardusa hopes to also become an engineer.

Through such trainings and events, the DFSA continues to support people like Awel and Fardusa to achieve their dreams and secure a livelihood.

Improving nutrition through collaboration

CRS and Save the Children have partnered in Ethiopia to improve the nutritional status of women and children. The agencies implement USAID-funded programs that overlap in the four woredas of Ziway Dugda, Shala, Arsi Negele and Heben Arsi.

For a coordinated approach and to maximize resources, the two agencies meet regularly to discuss areas of collaboration, develop action plans, share materials and conduct trainings and joint supervision of government and project staff.

In FY 2018, the agencies jointly trained more than 500 government field and health extension workers, and designed promotional material and messaging on the health and nutrition of women and children. Over 6,300 participants of the two programs attended cooking and learning sessions to help mothers and households prepare diversified, nutritious foods.

Also, 278 government health extension workers, teachers, community field workers and kebele (neighborhood) managers were trained in appropriate household water treatment methods, while 170 government field and health extension workers were trained in homestead gardening.

Youth volunteerism inspires social change



Youth volunteers rebuilt a bridge that is vital part of community infrastructure. Photo by CRS staff

In Ziway Dugda *woreda*, river bank erosion caused by flooding threatened to destroy a bridge connecting communities on either side of the river. Thousands of people would have been cut off from markets, cities and main roads, and unable to maintain their way of life. As part of the DFSA, youth in Ziway Dugda were able to save the bridge and became role models for other community members.

One of the DFSA's priority areas is to enhance youth engagement and participation in their communities. Through a youth volunteerism program implemented by Mercy Corps, MCS and HCS, youth volunteers were mobilized and trained on the benefits of volunteerism, and spent 5 days planning and participating in volunteer projects in their communities.

In Ziway Dugda, this included repairing the bridge and river bed maintenance, while other volunteer projects included mobilizing school

materials for vulnerable children, raising awareness on reproductive health, tree planting, sanitation and cleaning activities, and home construction.

The motto "volunteerism is not a choice, it is a responsibility" was used during the closing ceremonies of the trainings, and the sentiment has continued to inspire youth and their communities to engage in volunteerism. Youth volunteers in both Arsi Negele and Ziway Dugda have given volunteerism trainings to other members of their communities and have planned additional volunteer activities.

Youth volunteer Dibora Alemu in Arsi Negele said, "We will teach youngsters about volunteering and be role models." In Ziway Dugda, local government official and volunteer Gisha Aga said, "In a short period of time, without any experience, we can build change."

"Youth saved the bridge, and our lives."

Abdela Kedir
community member
Ziway Dugda



A family rehomed

In Arsi Negele *woreda*, Sendno, Adanech and their three children were left homeless when their house was destroyed during the rainy season. Without shelter, the family was often sick. After volunteerism training, 60 youth built a new home for the family. Initially the community was hesitant to provide the youth with the tools and materials needed to construct the home. But, inspired by the young people's activities and with a better understanding of volunteerism and its benefits, the community provided the necessary tools and materials, and even joined the youth in constructing the house.

Key activities and highlights in FY2018

The DFSA supports the Government of Ethiopia and community institutions and systems to ensure PSNP clients graduate from the PSNP program and have the resources, services and capacity to lead a food secure life.

PUBLIC WORKS

The DFSA supports the government's PSNP by providing its clients with food and cash assistance from January to June in exchange for their participation in public works activities designed to reduce vulnerability to shocks and build resiliency. These mainly involve constructing, rehabilitating and maintaining soil and water conservation structures.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

DFSA supports access to social infrastructure and services, such as the construction of community roads, bridges, classrooms, homes for teachers and government field workers, latrines, childcare centers and livestock health posts.

Highlights

- In collaboration with *woreda* government offices, 12 social infrastructure projects were completed and will be handed over to local government and communities. Another 13 are under construction and 9 are almost complete.
- 126 watershed committees developed risk profiles and watershed development plans.
- Gabion check dams (36,243 m³) and stone check dams (4,153 m³) were constructed.
- Activities such as creating hillside terraces, soil or stone bunds, micro basins, trenches, compost pits, and cut-off drains on 2,682 ha of land.
- 2.09 million tree seedlings were planted on degraded watershed areas.
- 3,739 ha of degraded land was rehabilitated using area closures.
- 430 km of access roads were constructed.
- 17,476.23 MT of food was transferred to 252,712 PSNP clients and contingency participants.

LIVELIHOOD GROUPS

The activity organizes community members, mostly farmers, into groups where they are trained in the CRS Saving and Internal Lending Communities, or SILC, methodology. They are also trained in employment skills and other off-farm activities as a way to diversify their livelihoods. Livelihood group members are provided with climate-smart agricultural inputs and linked to agro-dealers and marketing agents.



A farmer sows maize seeds in Hurufa Lole kebele.
Photo by David Snyder/CRS

DINER FAIRS

Diversity for Nutrition and Enhanced Resilience fairs serve as a venue to distribute seeds, livestock and tools to PSNP clients, and reinforce messaging on production, nutrition-sensitive agriculture and gender issues. Participants receive vouchers to buy inputs based on their household needs.

Highlights

- 1,114 livelihood groups were established collaboratively by GoE and DFSA, with a total membership of 28,735 (14,430 women/50 percent).
- 26,385 members (13,393 women) have applied the SILC methodology.
- Since most of the livelihood groups members are illiterate, DFSA provided basic adult literacy training, which was completed by 1,542 members (710 women).
- Life skills, work readiness and job application trainings were provided for 160 technical students and 235 college graduates (87 women). The training helped job-seeking youth to develop resumes, interview skills, a professional work ethic and workplace norms.
- 27,993 (11,543 women), 95 percent of the project's annual target, participated in DiNER fairs. Both crop and livestock inputs were provided based on needs and agroecology. A total of 40 vendors participated in 90 market centers.
- The activity chose 10 percent of livelihood group members who were categorized as ultra-poor for livelihood transfers. Credit is not an option for these people, including landless youth, female-headed households and extremely vulnerable PSNP clients. Each of these received \$200. Each client completed all the required technical trainings, including the development of business plans.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION

The activity has developed and adapted tools to encourage behavior change for improved nutrition. Trainings are provided to implementing partners then cascaded down to government staff and communities. They cover implementation of community-led sanitation and hygiene programs, health and nutrition activities for mothers and newborns, community-based management of acute malnutrition and simple household water treatment. The activity engages community leaders, including teachers and school committees, in promoting these messages.

Highlights

- Training on nutrition-sensitive agriculture, including homestead gardening, for 88 health facility workers, agricultural officers and *woreda* health office staff, to improve agricultural production, dietary diversification and alternative food systems.
- Disseminated 29,893 educational materials to convey critical nutrition-sensitive messages under the social behavior communication change approach.
- 61 midwives and nurses who are working as maternal and child health experts (35 women) were trained in Minimum Activities for Mothers and Newborns, or MAMAN.
- 62 health facility workers (14 women) were trained in Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition, or CMAM, accentuating the importance of screening and active case management for children under 5 years and pregnant and breastfeeding women at both health facilities and outreach sites.
- 62 *woreda* health office experts and health facility workers, including 17 women, trained in infant and young child feeding.
- In FY18, the DFSA distributed 6.65 million water purification sachets for increased access to clean water.
- 6,337 participants (4,989 women) attended 127 cooking demonstrations and learning sessions at health posts, schools and community areas, with support from the health extension workers. Participants included pregnant and breastfeeding women, the elderly, and health development agents. This activity resulted in mothers and households acquiring more knowledge, skills and awareness of preparing diversified food from locally available ingredients.
- To conserve forests and fertile land, as well as protect the health of mothers and children under 5 years, the DFSA promotes the use of fuel-efficient stoves. The activity has trained producer groups to construct stoves and sell them to community members at a reasonable price.



Community conversations bring people together for discussion of key issues in a safe and welcoming environment. *Photo by CRS staff*

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Community conversations bring people together for discussion in a safe and welcoming environment, emphasizing gender and youth issues. Routine monitoring showed that these groups were actively engaged in resolving social problems that affect women and girls through community action. This includes mobilizing labor to support widows with farming; encouraging families to send girls to school; sensitizing community members to avoid female genital mutilation; promoting the importance of women's role in decision-making; and securing agreements on women's and girls' inheritance rights.

THE FAITHFUL HOUSE/ISLAMIC FAMILY HOUSE

Through the CRS-designed The Faithful House/Islamic Family House (TFH/IFH) program, DFSA is helping couples improve their communication and build resilient, more equitable relationships for stronger households, and improve women's participation in decision-making.

YOUTH GENDER CLUBS AND YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM

School gender clubs encourage peer-to-peer learning and a safe platform for youth to develop their leadership and life skills. DFSA also implemented youth volunteerism activities in FY18. A training of trainers on youth volunteer management was provided to 121 participants (29 women), 134 percent of the annual target. The objective of the training was to strengthen the capacity of DFSA implementing partners and government stakeholders to effectively mobilize and manage youth volunteers for community development, and to enhance the personal development of the youth targeted under the DFSA program. The participants have been actively engaged in mobilizing and recruiting youth volunteers to serve their respective communities.

Highlights

- 47 community conversations groups were established.
- DFSA community animators conducted 317 sessions on gender and youth empowerment with broader community members.
- DFSA disseminated 50 audio toolkits to organized livelihoods group and community conversations discussions. The toolkit includes material on gender and youth-responsive approaches.
- 996 youth (250 women) with different backgrounds from all DFSA *woredas* were recruited to provide voluntary services.
- 92 couples participated in workshops to train couples in the TFH/IFH approach so that they can become role models/facilitators. The training was cascaded to 939 couples and 154 community leaders.
- 45 school gender clubs with 1,850 members (half of them girls) were established.
- 192 (80 percent of target) traditional leaders (30 women) were trained in how men and boys can support the empowerment of women and girls, focusing on unfair gender norms, values, roles, and change opportunities.
- 438 women are leading livelihood groups, SILC meetings and community conversations groups
- 1,600 women and youth leaders (1,392 women and 208 men) have attended literacy classes for 6 consecutive months, and 1,520 (95 percent) graduated from the program.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING (MEAL)

Annual participant survey: The team executed its first annual participant survey in FY18. The DFSA has completed data analysis and generation of indicator estimates. A detailed report will be presented in January 2019.

Development feedback and response mechanism: In January 2018, the DFSA developed a manual on how to implement a comprehensive feedback and response mechanism. As a result, the partner reported that 83 percent of the complaints that came through the mechanism were addressed within 1 month of being recorded. Depending on the success of the mechanism, the DFSA MEAL team will work with the GoE to facilitate the adoption of the mechanism in handling feedback from PSNP clients.

Interactive voice response (IVR) pilot: In cooperation with Humanitarian Network International, the DFSA piloted a participant feedback-handling mechanism called interactive voice response. The mechanism is an automated, toll-free hotline that allows clients to provide feedback through a voice-assisted menu in their respective local languages. Pilot feedback showed that the number being used for the hotline was too long for people to memorize and the script longer than necessary. DFSA shortened the script and refined the feedback-handling process. Discussions are underway to ensure consistent messaging.



Participants are trained in monitoring and evaluation.
Photo by CRS staff

Collaboration, Learning and Adapting plan development: To guide the process of learning, CRS DFSA uses USAID's Collaborating, Learning, Adapting (CLA) model and tools, along with CRS' MEAL policies and procedures. DFSA works with learning partners such as government ministries and offices, national and international universities, and other USAID-funded implementers. In May 2018, CRS conducted a workshop to develop a joint CLA plan. World Vision and CARE Ethiopia staff attended to strengthen collaboration efforts.