

5

ENGAGING WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURIAL FARMING BUSINESSES

POPULATION GROWTH AND THE CUSTOMARY PRACTICES OF SUB-DIVIDING LAND AMONG CHILDREN HAVE SEEN THE AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD'S FARM SIZE SHRINK AND PRODUCTIVITY DROP. WEATHER EXTREMES CAN DRAMATICALLY REDUCE HOUSEHOLD SAVINGS AND ASSETS AND ENDANGER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PARTICULAR ARE AFFECTED BY THIS DUE TO LIMITED ACCESS TO LAND, SAVINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES. THIS UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS FAVOURS MEN AND RESULTS IN AN INCREASED VULNERABILITY OF WOMEN TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT, AND SUBSTANTIALLY LIMITS EFFORTS TO OVERCOME RURAL POVERTY.

The Climate-Smart Agriculture project targeted women in rural areas, where there are limited economic opportunities and women bear the burden of unpaid care work and domestic responsibilities. The project targeted poor women who are members of chronically food-insecure families and who have minimal asset bases, marginal livelihoods and a high vulnerability to climate change.

In 15 woredas, project activities aimed to engage women in climate-adaptive agribusinesses such as poultry, sheep and goat rearing; develop their financial literacy; and improve access to saving and credit services. These activities enable women to become economically empowered, key decision-makers within their households, and contribute towards the economic growth of their communities.

This project designed tailored activities that address the key issues women face. It also contributed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), and aligned with both Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) targets and Irish Aid's strategy.

Eight of the 15 woredas targeted by the project are drought-prone, food insecure areas targeted by the productive safety net programme (PSNP). It is clear that specific activities and active participation from the communities are required in order to engage with women, so that their vulnerability to climate change can be tackled.

CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

The five-year Improving Smallholder Livelihoods through Climate-Smart Agricultural Economic Development project aimed to alleviate poverty and build resilient, sustainable livelihoods in Ethiopia's SNNP and Oromia regions.

Funded by Irish Aid, a consortium of SOS Sahel Ethiopia, Self Help Africa, Vita and Farm Africa worked with more than 50,000 households, with a particular focus on poor farmers, women, children and landless youth. This booklet is one of a series of seven focusing on each of the project's key components:

1. Small-scale irrigation
2. Cooperative-based seed multiplication systems
3. Mango value chain development
4. Ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change
5. Engaging women in entrepreneurial farming businesses
6. Promoting CSA through revitalising Farmer Training Centres
7. Promoting fuel-saving stoves

 **FARM AFRICA**

 **Self Help Africa**

 **SOS SAHEL
ETHIOPIA**

 **Vita**
Building Sustainable Livelihoods



ACTIVITIES

The women who took part in this project were engaged in asset building through the creation of goat and sheep rearing, beekeeping and poultry enterprises. Poultry production was favoured over goat and sheep rearing due to the lower emission of methane per kilogram of poultry meat production, compared to that of sheep and goat meat.

The project aimed to create gender and nutrition-sensitive sources of income for women and their families by:

- Providing pullets and cockerels to enable women to start poultry keeping businesses.
- Organising Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and building women's institutional capacity.
- Providing training and extension support on improved poultry husbandry, nutrition, savings and credit utilisation and business skills.
- Creating a local supply base for pullets and cockerels by supporting a day-old chicken raising business.

KEY WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT INTERVENTIONS AND COVERAGE 2014-2019

- 4,120 women (of whom 2,847 were PSNP targets) engaged in poultry farming.
- 1,018 (998 of whom were PSNP targets) engaged in sheep and goat rearing.
- Women's engagement in low carbon and nutrition-sensitive livelihood alternatives.
- 140 women were organised into groups engaged in providing teff threshing and maize shelling services.
- 10,515 women (67 of whom were PSNP targets) got viable saving and credit services from VSLAs initiated by the project.
- 5,921 women got experience of undertaking decision-making roles through their participation in 60 SACCOs supported by the project.

KEY RESULTS

Women's incomes increased on average by 800 Birr a month from the sale of eggs.

Households' nutrition improved.

Women's savings and ownership of live assets increased.

Women's self-esteem and acceptance in the communities improved because of their economic improvement.

RURAL WOMEN ENGAGED IN ENTREPRENEURIAL POULTRY BUSINESSES

Vita organised 159 women into seven poultry production and VSLA groups in three target woredas: Arba Minch Zuria, Mirab Abaya and Bonke. The main objectives were to empower women through the creation of sustainable and alternative income sources, and develop a saving culture among women. The groups were given training on poultry production and management and received 90% subsidised 45-day-old poultry.

Each woman was given 15 chickens in a ratio of 11:4 pullets to cockerels. According to data collected from the beneficiaries, on average households collected 46 eggs per week. The women's incomes improved by an average of 800 Birr a month from the sale of eggs. Households also consumed five to six eggs a week themselves.

The provision of poultry support was complemented with access to savings and credit services. These activities enabled women to own their own businesses, with full decision-making power. In addition, these interventions have been successful in supporting women's immediate cash needs, which are scarce at times when agricultural production falls short.

The key factors to the success of results achieved included:

- A complementary blend of assets, finance and training.
- Better institutional set-up for partnership at the district level.
- Flexible style of VSLAs' approach ensured active participation of women.
- Convincing husbands to support the activities.

With regard to poultry businesses, the relatively low investment required to start the business, the quick return on investment, and the possibility of getting daily income from the sales of eggs have encouraged women to actively engage in poultry keeping. Every day, the women received eggs and every week they sold the eggs in the local market at prices almost equal to those at bigger markets nearby.

The project promoted poultry breeds that, with sufficient feed and good living conditions, lay eggs every day. The ability to earn a daily income is in stark contrast to many other agricultural income streams where earning is seasonal. This enables women to access and control money for their regular household costs.

A recent follow-up report from Bonke woreda revealed that members of the VSLA group are consuming eggs on average once every three days. Currently, members have saved about 15,000 Birr in their joint account.

During a 2018 performance review and outcome evaluation focus group participants stated: **“Together our ideas and voices are heard in the community. Due to our increased incomes, we're less dependent on our husbands to provide for our domestic needs.”**

In the first six months of 2019, three of the poultry groups in woredas Vita operated in changed to day-old chicken rearing business cooperatives. Most of the women have been able to transform to other businesses such as dairy cow, sheep and goat rearing or have opened small shops to improve their household assets.

The link between the day-old chicken rearing and Ethio chicken, zonal fish and livestock department is fantastic. Ethio chicken committed to clear follow up and offering services like vaccines, feed and day-old chicken delivery. Due to this, Ethio chicken has opened a branch office where the project was being delivered and has assigned technical personnel.



KEY LEARNING

The improved poultry has a high feed consumption, which can challenge some households, especially those that are poor. Throughout the region, there has also been a shortage of specific poultry feed. All poultry are susceptible to disease, to some degree, and poultry farmers have to travel long distances to access veterinary services. There remains a need for further research into the most appropriate and suitable breeds for the locality and a need to bolster input and service providers.

The targeted women have received a good, timely return on investment. The 2018 project evaluation and focus group discussions undertaken with sample households and targeted women all indicate that women's engagement with viable on- and off-farm agribusinesses increased incomes and increased children's development. Most of the targeted women invested their income in their families, paying for healthcare, better nutrition and housing for their children.

Keeping poultry requires only a small amount of start-up capital and the local community has indigenous knowledge of raising poultry. These two factors combined allow women who were not targeted by the project to engage in the production of improved poultry breeds by buying improved eggs and hatching them with local hens.

This indicates that the activity could be scaled up within the community quite easily and the provision of some additional support, as signalled by the government, could facilitate significant expansion.

Ongoing training and support are required to strengthen the biosecurity of poultry farms. Even though poultry production is manageable at small-scale and poor household level, swift disease outbreaks can result in egg and poultry losses. Improving biosecurity on poultry farms is fundamental to preventing and controlling poultry diseases and attaining better results. Contingency plans for restocking poultry during such unprecedented cases can avoid achievement shortfalls.

Setting up VSLAs and linking women with microfinance institutions can facilitate credit access, which not only provides a strategic safety net for times of need but also enables those who want to expand their poultry production further to invest. Ahead of this, support and guidance in conducting an economic feasibility study and assessment of opportunities and constraints (a cost-benefit analysis) of poultry businesses is critical. Aligned with this, business development support services and links to markets should be facilitated.

