

Annex 8 Human Interest Stories

1) We are addressing the challenges little by little

Yeshitu Yohannes, 38, is a representative of the west Belesa Women's Affair Office, and Serkae Terefe, 32, is the Chairperson of the Alemayehu VSLA group. The two women are actively engaged in the SWEEP project especially playing leadership roles in the VSLA group. Both of them witnessed changes in women's lives after CARE's intervention, financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).



Serkae Terefe (left), Yeshitu Yohannes (right), Addis Alem Kebele
Photo: ©2019 Manyahlshal Ayele/CARE

"The challenges of women are now being addressed little by little. Women own farming land. Before September 2018 when we worked with CARE to establish our VSLA group, we women were not used to attend meetings. The kebele or development leaders were discouraging women's attendance of public meetings. Our husbands did not give permission for us to be part of any meeting. If a woman went to her neighbours for coffee or so and the husband found the house locked, it often used to cause a conflict in the house. Some men even used to

beat their wives. Because of this, women in this area used to stay at home, relying on their husbands (if they had one) for their food and information as well. We did not go out to meetings or have any associations except those of the saint's days," said Yeshitu.

"In September 2018, CARE came to this area and helped us to organize the Alemayehu VSLA group. The group contained only volunteer women including those with disability. After the VSLA group was established, in November 2018, we went to the woreda for training. There, we learnt that we have equal property rights to those of our husbands, and that it is possible for women to engage in decision-making. That was revealing. During the training, we also discussed how to stop extravagancy, and how to keep our environment and ourselves clean, and so on.

Our group has 31 members and we contribute 20 birr per month. We also have time to discuss on matters that concern women and the household in general. There are changes now. Women are participating in household decision-making, some men are supporting household activities and some women engage in activities that used to be considered men-only; such as farming. Personally, I don't have a husband but I know my brothers who are living in this area are now working at home supporting their wives.

Men and women have started consultations. There is also a man who stopped seeing his mistress after he was convinced to stop at the SAA discussions. Looking at the success of women in the VSLA group, men also want to form associations," said Serkae.

2) We have enough grain at home

Naneye Bizuayehu, 25, lives in Wareb kebele with her husband and three children. One of her children is a 1st grade student but the other two are not ready to go to school.

Naneye is an active participant of the SWEEP project activities. When a team from CARE conducted a house-to-house monitoring visit and arrived at her house, Naneye just came back from a community meeting where people gathered to celebrate the declaration of their kebele being open defecation free. A kebele is declared open defecation free when the committee established by the government first at the kebele and then woreda level verifies that all households and institutions such as churches in the kebele have a latrine to use, and no faeces is observed in the surrounding.

Speaking about the challenges of not having a latrine, she said, “We used to relieve ourselves everywhere. When it was nearer to the house, the chicken used to eat our faeces. We then got sick when we eat the chicken. That is just an example. I used to take my children to the health centre every now and then and spent a minimum of 120 birr per month for myself and about 30 to 40 birr for my children. Whenever we went to the health facility, the Nurses said that we have worms. That was the main reason why we listened to the health extension workers and CARE people when they taught us to build latrines. What they told us about how bad hygiene practices encourage diseases was exactly what happened in our life. After I got the lesson from them, I told everything to my husband to convince him to construct a latrine. We constructed our latrine in October and starting from November, we did not see any abdominal cramps. We also eat chicken as we wished but did not see the previous problem. Another challenge was the privacy. It was not acceptable for women to defecate in day light. We had to wait until the sun is down to go to the defecation area. If anyone saw us defecating during day light, they gave us all sorts of names – shaming us and our spouses. So, when we got sick we used to do it inside our compound. We had no choice. But now, we can go to the latrine any time we want – be it sick or not.”



Naneye with her solar mobile phone charger (left) and demonstrating hand-washing next to her newly constructed latrine (right), Addis Alem Kebele. Hand washing after visiting a latrine is one of the behaviour change practices promoted during hygiene education sessions. Photo: © 2019 Manyalshal Ayele/CARE



Naneye is also the chairperson of the Habtamu VSLA group. With the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency, CARE established 51 VSLA groups in East and West Belesa, of which 7 are in Addis Alem Kebele. In the 2nd phase of VSLA formation, about 3 were also established in Addis Alem and will soon get the necessary training as well as technical and material support.

Habtamu - meaning the richest - VSLA group has 25 members who save 20 birr every month. When groups are established, group members agree and give a name to

their group. Naneye said, “We named our group Habtamu to express our joy and vision of being rich together. The group was established on 16 September and from 29 September, onwards we started to save 20 birr every month. I am the chairperson responsible to bring the group together and lead the group activities. I have never been in any meeting before – I used to occasionally go to church like other women in this village”.

CARE then took leaders of the different VLSA groups from West Belesa to Arbaya town for a training. “Following the training, I immediately started to practice the business idea. From the per diem I received during the training, I spend 800 birr for household consumption and bought clothes for my children. With the rest of the 1000 birr, I bought a sheep and after fattening it, I sold it for 1500 birr. From this money, I used 500 birr for household consumption and bought a female sheep with 1000 birr. She gave birth and I now have two sheep. That is not the only thing. I do different things. For example, I took a 500 birr loan from the VSLA group, added 500 birr of mine and bought a solar powered mobile charger with 800 birr and mobile cards with 200 birr. I now provide a mobile charging service to the community in my village. I charge 2 to 3 mobile phones per day for 5 birr each. I sell the mobile cards I brought from with a minimum profit. For example, I sell the 5 birr-card for 6 birr, and the 10 birr-card for 12 birr. In general, I get a minimum of 21 birr a day from mobile phone related activity. I also sell onions that I bring from Wareb, at the Robit market in Arbaya town. My husband is very happy now because I do not take grains from home to the market. I used to do that to buy other items such as salt, sugar, oil and cloths for the children and us. Now I cover all this from my profit. Because we used to sell the crops produced, we had food gaps until the next harvest. To cover that, we used to either borrow money or sell animals and buy food. This year we didn’t take any grain to the market and because of that we have enough grain at home”.

3) I did what used to be a man's job

Yeshalem Gashaw, 35, lives in Addis Alem Kebele of Getoye village. She has 6 children of whom 4 are still under her care. Yeshalem is a member of the Alemayehu VSLA group as well as the SAA group in her kebele. Alemayehu VSLA group has 31 members who save 20 birr every month. The group, not only has started to give loans to its members but the members also discuss and agree on what an individual member will use the money for. This is to protect members from loss of money by engaging in similar business activities at the same time. For example, if one woman engages in supplying grains, the other focuses on brewery – making local drinks. When it comes to cotton threading, although an individual woman takes the loan, all members support in threading. They wait until one woman's cotton threading activity is completed and completely sold or gone to the weavers. Only then, they start threading for another woman. In doing so, each member is supported during threading.



VSLA members in Addis Alem threading cotton for one of their members. Photo ©2019 Manyalshal Ayele/CARE

Yeshalem is one of the first groups of women who took a loan and bought cotton. “I took a loan two times. With the first loan, I bought 5 packs of cotton for 250 birr and my VSLA group members helped me thread it. I took the thread to the weaver, and received 4 *kutta* for it (woven cloth worn over the shoulders and upper part of the body) which I sold for 500 birr each. I then bought a couple of sheep; the mother will soon give birth and I will have 3 sheep. With the rest of the money, I’m selling different kinds of drinks – some I brew myself and the others I buy from the market. From this I’m getting 300 to 400 birr every 15 days. Later, I took a loan for 600 birr and used it to buy garlic seeds which I planted in my farm land. When the garlic is ready, I will be able to sell it for 5000 to 6000 birr.

I am also a member of the SAA group. In the group we discuss different challenges we have. It was after a discussion in the SAA group that I realized, I can re-construct my house. I spent so many winters suffering from the roof leakage in my house. At some point, I asked the men to help me bring wood to renovate my house, which they did. I then started digging the holes to put in the logs. Realizing that I'm being serious, my neighbours



Yeshalem Gashaw. Photo ©2019 Manyahlshal Ayele/CARE

also supported me and now my house is safe even during winter. I covered the cost of the roof, 300 birr, from my profit. Before, we struggled to cover even the school fee for the children, their clothes and exercise books. I used to tell my children to use their pen and exercise book economically. We have passed that level now. I used to borrow money to buy grain for household consumption. I don't need to buy grain this year and if I do, I don't need to borrow money. I will use my own money".

4) The water is not only clean but also tastes different

Most efforts from governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide access to safe drinking water, especially to the rural community of Ethiopia, end up being non-functional, which is mainly due to poor management of the constructed schemes. This forces communities to resort back to old and unprotected water sources such as ponds and rivers. This is also the case in East and West Belesa, where only 40% water schemes constructed, were found functional during CARE's June 2019 water inventory. In addition, there were challenges to the quality of drinking water for the rural community. To address these challenges, CARE, with the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency, distributed water filtration kits in its intervention kebeles of East and West Belesa woredas. The majority of the kits were distributed on cost sharing basis (25% community and 75% the project) with the exception of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, who were exempted from the cost sharing.

Wubsira Abebaw, 22, and her husband Geteye Molla, 28, live in Hamusit kebele with their 3 children. Wubsira and Geteye took the filtration kit paying 25% of the cost. “We get water from the river and used to consume it as it is. Because of that, we have not been healthy; especially my daughter used to get sick frequently. I had to take her to the clinic twice or three times a year paying between 70 to 160 birr for the medicine. Whenever I took her to the clinic, they tell us that she has worms. It’s now almost 7 months since we started using the filtration kit, and we don’t see that problem anymore,” said Wubsira talking about the filtration kit.



Wubsira and Geteye with their son. Photo ©2019 Manyahlshal Ayele/CARE

Tiruneh Sefefe, 62, has lost his sight about 5 years ago. He also lives in Hamusit kebele with



Tiruneh Sefefe and his daughter, Hamusit Kebele. Photo ©2019 Manyahlshal Ayele/CARE

his wife and two children. Because he lost his sight and his wife is not healthy, he mainly relies on the support of his two children (8 and 12 years of age) for his water and sanitation needs. “Thanks to CARE, I can now pour water from the filtration kit if I want to, though my children are happy to support me. But I can easily

recognize the water from the kit. Sometimes, when the kit is empty and I ask for water, my children give me the water as it is. I can tell right away. The water from the kit is not only clean but also tastes different,” says Tiruneh speaking about the water filtration kit he got from the SWEEP Project free-of-charge.