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“My life has changed completely”

Guyo Kela (48) and his family, like most people in Moyale Woreda in Ethiopia, are pastoralists who also do some farming during the rainy season. Two years ago he joined CARE’s RESET Plus project, a decision which he says has completely changed his life.

“I am not even joking,” Guyo laughs. “Everything is different. For one, my wife and I share household responsibilities now. I even learned how to cook!” A simple household chore, which only a couple of years ago was unthinkable to men.

The RESET Plus project implemented with CARE, has contributed to this change in Guyo’s community over the past years, supporting the empowerment of women and girls and improving access to family planning services. Local village savings and loans associations’ (VSLA) and Social Analysis and Action (SAA) meetings have served as a platform for discussing topics like savings, diversification of income, but also decision-making in the household, family planning, FGM or other harmful practices like early marriage. The SAA is one of CARE’s approaches through which individuals and communities explore and challenge the social norms, beliefs and practices that shape their lives.

Guyo, like other men in his community, started engaging in household activities as a result of his involvement in an SAA group. He started taking over chores traditionally performed by women, like collecting firewood or fetching water. “When my wife is not at home or busy, I milk the cows, clean the house or feed and look after our children,” Guyo explains. “I used to worry that others would make fun of me, but now I am confident.”

Guyo’s participation in these group discussions has helped him gain a better understanding of how some social traditions and norms were harming the community. “I am now aware of the consequences of early marriage,” Guyo says. “I don’t want to harm my daughter, so I have decided not to marry her at this young age.” His daughter will now enjoy a privilege Guyo himself didn’t have: access to education. “We used to only send our boys to school, and the girls were at home helping their mothers. But now both of our boys and girls attend school equally.”

Previously, brokers were getting paid to convince girls to drop out of school and get married. According to Guyo, through a communal effort, this practice is now in decline: “Four marriage proposals were cancelled after intervention by our SAA group. Additionally, girls have started to report marriage proposals to their schools.” A huge success for Guyo and his SAA group. That’s why Guyo wants to maintain the momentum and continue teaching his community about harmful practices based on the trainings he has received from RESET Plus.

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