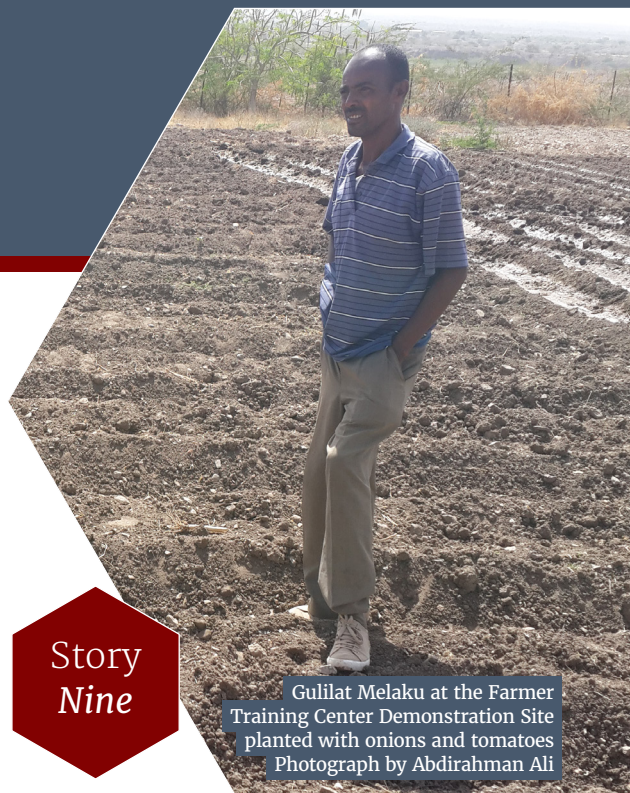


Climate Smart Initiative Story of Change: Gulilat Melaku, Development Agent

Shinile woreda, Somali, Ethiopia

The Climate Smart Initiative (CSI) was launched in July 2013, as an adjunct to the existing Government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and Household Asset Building Programme (HABP); two of the key mechanisms of the Government to tackle food security issues and related rural livelihoods strengthening.

CSI was designed to pilot approaches that consider climate change within this larger, established context, working within existing Government approaches and cycles. This Story of Change provides an example of how CSI has affected an individual or a household.



Story
Nine

Gulilat Melaku at the Farmer Training Center Demonstration Site planted with onions and tomatoes
Photograph by Abdirahman Ali

Who is Gulilat Melaku?

He has been a Development Agent (DA) for eight years, the last five years in Barrak kebele, Shinile woreda. His diploma in livestock and crop production helps his work with this agro-pastoralist community. He has been very engaged with CSI including the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) process¹.

What are the climate and environmental problems facing Gulilat in his kebele?

This is a semi-arid area, and the main problems facing this agro-pastoralist community are decreasing rainfall predictability, increased rainfall intensity, shorter rainy seasons, increasing frequency of drought, spring source water scarcity, crop pests, livestock diseases, earth worms, invasive trees and human disease (malaria).

Summary:

Gulilat Melaku shares the story of how, as a DA, he has brought about change in the face of difficult and changing climatic conditions in his watershed. It all started when Barrak kebele became a CSI kebele. Gulilat's understanding of climate change has improved greatly as a result of CSI-provided training – he has in turn passed on this new learning through specific sessions on climate change while training farmers. As a result of CVCA the community is planning new, climate-smart activities to respond to the great challenges of climate variability and risks. While the implementation of CSI activities has been delayed, the community and their DA, Gulilat, have eagerly pushed through the new activities themselves.

¹ The Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CVCA) is a tool developed by CARE to analyse the implications of climate change for lives and livelihoods. CSI has carried out two rounds of CVCA within the programme, adapting and amending from one round to the next, and then extracting learning from these processes to produce suggestions for "climate smarting" the annual PSNP planning process.

CSI has been implemented by a consortium of organisations, led by CARE Ethiopia, and including Cornell University, Dadimos, FARM Africa, IDS, IICD, Itad Ltd, Jimma University, MMA Consulting, Mercy Corps, ORDA, REST, and SNV. In late 2015, CSI is closing down; leaving a legacy of learning and insights about "climate smart" and what it means, from the household reality to the highest level of policy making.



Story of Change: Gulilat Melaku

Facing up to difficult and changing climatic conditions

Everyday Gulilat faces difficult and changing climatic conditions as a DA: decreasing rainfall predictability, shorter rainy seasons, increasing drought frequency and increased rainfall intensity. Vegetables, fruits and cereal crops are cultivated alongside the rearing of livestock, such as sheep, goats and camels. But increasingly, the crops are failing. According to a farmer in Barrak kebele: 'Since 2005, rains have been erratic, and when they come they are too heavy and they destroy our crops.' Their practice of small-scale and rain-fed irrigation is insufficient, leading these agro-pastoralists to question the suitability of agriculture for them.

Improving understanding of these changing climatic conditions

Barrak kebele was selected as one of the three CSI pilot kebeles. Gulilat explains how he has eagerly engaged with CSI in order to better support his watershed in the face of its many challenges: 'My knowledge about climate change was improved as a result of CSI ... I didn't have that understanding of it previously ... I have received three different trainings on climate change since CSI was started.'



Nursery site planted with improved variant onions and shanty variety tomatoes
Photograph by Abdirahman Ali

Changing agricultural practice on the ground

Gulilat reports that during the CVCA planning process the community began thinking differently. They were planning different, more climate-smart activities, in response to the environmental challenges they identified during their focus group discussions. These include compost preparation, water spring development and rehabilitation, enhancement of other existing water sources, use of new improved seeds like early-maturing varieties, enclosure developments for livestock, and range and pasture preservation measures.

Taking the initiative

The CSI programme had started implementation of some activities, such as compost preparation and area enclosures, but other activities were yet to be implemented. Rather than waiting, Gulilat took the initiative and pushed forward changes: 'I got some improved seeds from the local non-governmental organisation [NGO] called PWO and piloted them in the Farmer Training Center [FTC] demonstration sites and now farmers are learning from the demonstration site and starting to adopt these technologies. This change was as a result of the climate change training from CSI even though their inputs and implementation were delayed.'

Passing on the learning

Gulilat explains how his approach to training has changed since CSI came to his kebele: 'Previously, before CVCA, when I was training the farmers in the Farmer Training Center, I haven't included the issue of climate change but now I include climate change topics/sessions when training them.' This change would not have been possible without the CSI training he received: 'My knowledge, attitude and practices changed after I received the CSI training.'

