

# Climate Smart Initiative Story of Change: Tesfay

Ahferom woreda, Tigray, Ethiopia

Tesfay on his land  
Photograph by Negash Berhanu

*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  
Twelve



## Who is Tesfay?

He is 76 years old, and head of a household of two in Maihambar watershed, Endalashen kebele, Ahferom woreda, Tigray. He is a PSNP and HABP beneficiary, who was involved in the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) community discussions in March 2014.

## What are the climate and environmental problems facing Tesfay?

He is facing recurring drought, erratic rainfall, hailstorms and flood. These challenges are in addition to his limited livelihood options, particularly as an older man, and the limited household labour available for him to draw upon.

## Summary:

Tesfay was struggling with the impacts of erratic rainfall, flood and drought, but it was only through the CVCA validation process that he became aware of the role of backyard irrigation. He could not only turn his problem of flooding into a solution to drought, it could provide a much needed livelihood option. He constructed a micro-dam and is now able to grow vegetables and better conserve his backyard soil. He is an inspiration to other older community members.

<sup>1</sup> 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.



### **Changing understanding on the need to adapt to climate change**

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Tesfay was facing the impacts of erratic rainfall, flood and drought when CSI came to his watershed. He agreed to be a focus group discussant as part of the CVCA process, and engaged in every stage up to and including the validation process. His newfound understanding of climate change hazards inspired him to adapt his current practices. During the validation process, the presenters of the proposed CSI pilot activities talked of backyard irrigation designed to help poor female-headed households adapt to climate change. Tesfay paid close attention when they explained that backyard irrigation was designed to deal with the problems of erratic rainfall and drought.

### **Changing practices can turn problems into solutions**

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At this point in the pilot activities presentation Tesfay stopped in his tracks: 'I realised I needed to change the flood coming into my home into an advantage, which I was then considering a hazard. Therefore, I decided to work on micro-dam construction and produce vegetables, which I have started, and plan to plant perennial crops like oranges, starting from ... next summer.' Even though he is not receiving any funding from CSI, he is quite clear how valuable his engagement has been with the programme: 'I had no micro-dam at all before and I had never thought about working on garden/backyard irrigation before engaging in CVCA discussions.'

Tesfay is now an inspiration to other community members, and has exciting plans for new planting as a result of the irrigation and better soil conservation.



Tesfay speaks of his experiences  
Photograph by Negash Berhanu

