

Climate Smart Initiative

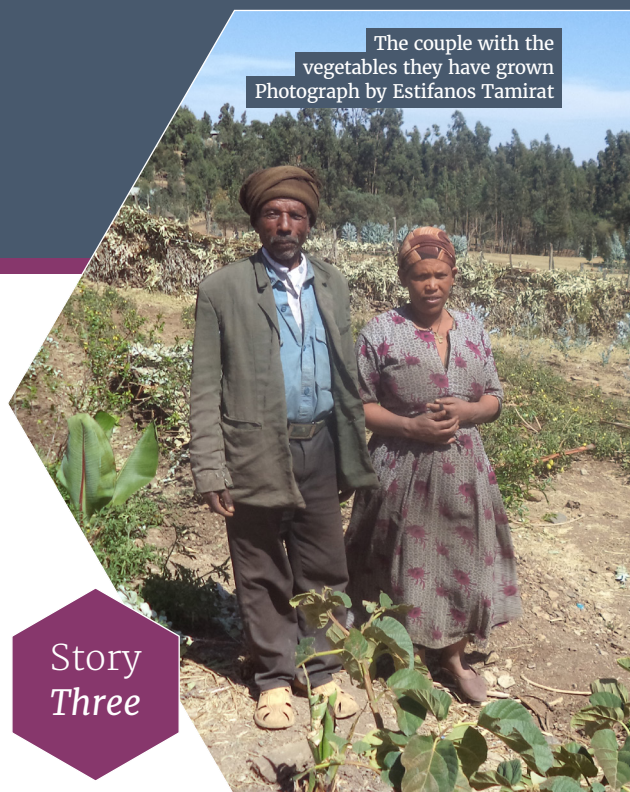
Story of Change: Ayale and Berlie

Tach Gayent woreda, Amhara, Ethiopia

The couple with the vegetables they have grown
Photograph by Estifanos Tamirat

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.



Who are Ayale and Berlie?

They are a married couple, with five children, living in Mesawenit got, kebele 02, in Tach Gayent woreda. The husband, Berlie, has traditionally farmed teff and wheat crops along with some vegetables. He has been a PSNP beneficiary since 2005, becoming a HABP beneficiary in more recent years. His wife, Ayale, participated in the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA)¹ meetings, and Berlie is now part of the CSI pilot ox-fattening enterprise.

What are the climate and environmental problems that Ayale and Berlie are facing?

They could not cover their family's annual food requirements, with their crops affected by fluctuating temperatures, shifting timings of rainfall (late and early onset), drought, flood hazards, poor soil fertility, hailstorms, forest degradation and crop pests.

Summary:

The changes started after Ayale attended the CVCA meetings and shared her findings with husband Berlie. Participation in the CVCA led to Ayale and the community becoming aware of climate change hazards and resolving to strengthen their response by planning new activities. What Ayale learnt through the CVCA was shared with her husband, leading to changes in household activities, such as constructing an additional water well, expanding their vegetable area and improving vegetable production, leading to enhanced family income. To further diversify their income, Berlie is now part of the CSI pilot ox-fattening enterprise. Ayale's involvement in the CVCA and her new knowledge enabled her to participate more actively in household decision making, decisions that might in the past have been made by her husband alone.

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.



Changing priorities in order to tackle climate hazards

Ayale participated in the three days of CVCA meetings, selected for the focus group of women from male-headed households. She says: 'In that meeting we discussed about the effect of late entrance and early onset of rainfall on crop production activities, the flood hazard on farm lands and incidents of crop pests and the impact on crop production in our locality. We also discussed fluctuation of temperature, hailstorm and forest degradation by comparing the past and current situation of our locality.'

Before CVCA, community members were already using soil and water conservation techniques, tree planting and changing the type of crops grown in order to cope with different hazards. During the CVCA, participants resolved to strengthen their response to climate hazards by: planting forest seedlings on farm and degraded areas; constructing bunds on farm lands; and building water collection structures to use for vegetable production, for domestic water consumption and animal watering.

Sharing new knowledge, taking joint decisions

Soon after Ayale returned home, her husband Berlie asked her about the meeting. She shared the learning and the new activities proposed by the participants to combat climate hazards. Berlie and Ayale agreed to construct an additional water well on their farmland. He reflects: 'Though my wife has contributed to decision making in the past, her involvement in joint household decision making is increasing since her participation in the CVCA meeting. For instance, she has advised me on the type of crop to be grown and on the selection of early maturing varieties to be sown.'

Taking up new activities as a response to climate change

As agreed, Berlie constructed the additional water well, with financial and material support from CSI (for cement, sand, accessories such as rope, and payment for skilled labour) and technical support from woreda experts. The new water well and pump enabled him to extend the land dedicated to cultivating a range of vegetables, such as tomatoes and cabbage. He reports higher yields due to the additional water, and enhanced income for the household. Berlie is proud that other farmers living in the surrounding area are visiting the water wells he constructed and the vegetable plots he and Ayale are cultivating.



Berlie with the pump for his new water well
Photograph by Estifanos Tamirat

Planning a sustainable future

In the long run, Berlie hopes to become self-sufficient through his and his family's efforts in increasing vegetable production. In further efforts to diversify their livelihood, he is now part of the ox-fattening CSI pilot group enterprise established in his kebele through joint CSI-HABP planning. Alongside the other 10 in the group, he is now saving as part of the Village Savings and Loans Association (VLSA), to help protect against future risks.

