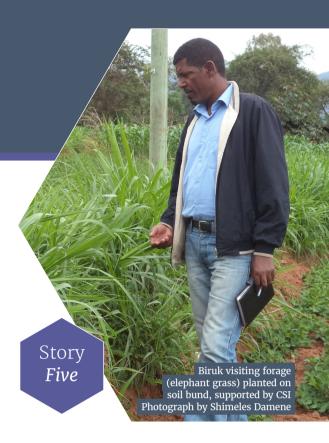## Climate Smart Initiative
Story of Change: Biruk Legesse, Daru Labu Woreda HABP Expert
Daru Labu woreda, Oromiya, Ethiopia

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
Five

Biruk visiting forage (elephant grass) planted on soil bund, supported by CSI
Photograph by Shimeles Damene

Who is Biruk Legesse?

He is the HABP expert for Daru Labu woreda and CSI focal person. He has been actively engaged in two rounds of Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA)[1] training and fieldwork.

What are the climate and environmental problems that Biruk Legesse is facing in his woreda?

Shortage of rainfall, erratic rainfall, water shortages, crop failure, crop yield loss, crop disease and pests, livestock diseases and death, livestock feed shortage and the clearing of bushes and trees, leading to soil erosion.

Summary:

Biruk Legesse shone out as an example of an expert bringing about change in his woreda as a result of his intensive engagement with CSI. He has used his considerable new learning on climate change to better support the community to become more resilient and prepared for climate shocks. His new understanding of the vulnerability of poor women and rural youth has been integrated into the regular HABP plan. He has taken the initiative, and is proactive in introducing some of the CSI pilots into five non–CSI kebeles and incorporating climate change–related topics into regular government trainings for Development Agents (DAs) and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

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.

PSNP
Productive Safety Net Programme

Increasing understanding of climate change leads to better-informed communities

During an interview, Biruk Legesse shared many insights into the impact that intensive engagement with CSI and CVCA has made to his day-to-day work: 'I was involved in two rounds of CVCA training and fieldwork. My understanding has significantly improved as a result. I now know that the continuous clearing of bushes and trees and extractive use of communal land and farmland, without conservation, are among the key factors contributing to climate change. I have now the capacity and initiative to provide communities with pertinent information related to resilience building to shocks.'

Understanding of vulnerability leading to planning changes

Biruk stresses the importance of his new understanding of 'vulnerability': 'I now know that poor women and rural youth are among the key vulnerable groups and we started to include these in the regular HABP plan. The CVCA process improved our understanding of vulnerability differences among community members. Prior to CSI, I used to associate climate change vulnerability with lack of soil and water conservation but now I understand that it is a lot more and needs actions to diversify livelihoods, focus on short-maturing crops, feeds and perennial crops to improve adaptation. Previously, we used to focus on individual public works [PW] activities but now we give more emphasis to integration with asset building and contribution to risk reduction'.

Biruk discussing with CSI beneficiaries
Photograph by Shimeles Damene

Taking the initiative on introducing CSI pilots in non-CSI kebeles

Realising the value of the CSI pilots, Biruk takes the initiative: 'I have already contributed to the scaling up of some of the working CSI pilots into five non-CSI kebeles. The CVCA process and trainings increased my awareness of the possible risks that might threaten community livelihoods, which alerted me to be committed and actively engage in expanding CSI learning to non-CSI kebeles too. These pilots include introducing short-maturing crops, women's home-gardening groups, linking beekeeping with area closure, and planting forage on Productive Safety Net Programme [PSNP] public works soil and water conservation structures, such as on bunds and check dams, which have not been planted before.'

Spreading the learning

Biruk is fired up by his new learning, but he is not the only one: 'I have also tried to include some climate change-related topics into the regular government trainings for DAs and SMEs. Other colleagues that have participated in the CVCA exercises are also exerting efforts on CSI activities and expanding CSI learning.'

Pushing leadership for further support

With his eyes on the future, Biruk explains that for significant change to come about, government leaders need to take the initiative: 'The attention given to climate change among our leaders seems inadequate. After the CVCA process, PSNP/HABP activities were replanned and made climate-smart. However, the existing PSNP/HABP planning process in non-PSNP kebeles is "business as usual".' Biruk calls for: 'Firm support and commitment from our woreda leaders to push forward the climate change agenda and ensure integration into local development efforts. This is because these leaders have the authority to enforce the development agenda and lead the woreda plan, monitoring and evaluation.'