

# Climate Smart Initiative

## Story of Change: Mesaye

*Semada woreda, Amhara, Ethiopia*

Mesaye with her collected animal fodder for the dairy cow  
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.*

### Story Two



### Who is Mesaye?

She is the household head, with two children, farming a very small plot of land in Semada woreda, kebele 16, Abebet got/watershed, Amhara. Mesaye has been a PSNP beneficiary since 2006. She participated in three days of Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA)<sup>1</sup> meetings in November 2013 and is now a host farmer for a dairy production enterprise.

### What are the climate and environmental problems Mesaye is facing?

Although Mesaye cultivates her small plot of land – less than a quarter of a hectare – the impact of drought, shortage of rainfall and crop diseases means she does not produce sufficient crops to feed her family throughout the year.

### Summary:

Mesaye tells of the positive changes experienced since she engaged in the CVCA: both her understanding and that of the community's has changed now, seeing drought, rainfall and hailstorm hazards as consequences of climate change rather than acts of God; she and the community have realised that the impact of climate change requires them to diversify their livelihood activities. The CSI pilot activities to support livelihood diversification were taken up, with Mesaye becoming a host farmer working on dairy production. She is now able to start saving to protect her family from unexpected events.

<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.



### **Shifting understanding of the causes of climate change**

Mesaye explains: 'Before the CVCA meeting, I related climate change hazards to acts of God. But now I realise that drought, rainfall and hailstorm hazards are the consequences of the climate change effect.' The discussions also enabled her and the community to understand who is most vulnerable and the need to diversify livelihood activities in the face of climate change hazards.

### **Diversifying livelihood activities**

As a result of the first CVCA planning process, various pilot livelihood activities were introduced in October 2014: shoat-fattening, ox-fattening, improved dairy production, improved poultry production and beekeeping activities. For Mesaye, it was clear that she needed to implement additional livelihood activities in order to successfully feed her family throughout the year. She was selected by the community to become a host farmer for dairy production. They chose Mesaye as a vulnerable woman farmer, with available forage land, a willingness to engage with new technology and a lot of motivation. They were not disappointed.

### **Benefiting from CSI pilot activity funding**

A strong motivator for Mesaye was the financial support provided by CSI for the pilot dairy enterprises: birr 14,000 deposited in the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) bank account. Of this, birr 8,000 was to buy a local breed cow, birr 3,000 for dairy house construction, birr 2,000 for animal feed and birr 1,000 for vaccination services. Mesaye has now received her local breed cow and has used birr 12,000 to date in her dairy enterprise.

### **Starting to save to protect from unexpected circumstances**

Like the other 28 members of the VSLA, Mesaye has started saving money on a monthly basis (birr 5 per month) and currently has birr 20 in her VSLA account. She plans to use this saved money to protect her and her family from unexpected problems such as drought and reduction in dairy consumption and for medical treatment.

### **Training DAs and experts brings results**

Mesaye is quick to acknowledge not just the importance of the CSI funding for her success to date, but also the importance of the technical and training support provided by the Development Agents (DAs) and the kebele and woreda experts, who have all received CSI-Household Asset Building Programme (HABP) training and/or been involved in the CVCA process.



Mesaye with her dairy cow  
Photograph by Estifanos Tamirat

### **Planning for the future**

Mesaye is planning for the future, with savings in the bank. The cow will soon be artificially inseminated and in 9–12 months she plans to sell dairy products to schoolteachers and other civil servants in her local area. The future looks more optimistic – with regular group-learning sessions and field visits planned for other community members living in neighbouring areas.

