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Dear readers,

ActionAid Ethiopia (AAE) is member of the ActionAid International Federation. It envisions a poverty free Ethiopia where every person lives in dignity and prosperity through empowering communities to create change for themselves. It has been supporting the implementation of various development works in Ethiopia since 1989.

AAE aims at strengthening the organizational capability of people living in poverty and supports efforts towards achieving their development and humanitarian/emergency priorities. It works in partnership with community based organizations, local NGOs, the government as well as other development players. Its development priorities include; food security and emergency response, education and women development. Currently, it works across 15 intervention areas to support them modeling in the poverty eradication process.

This issue of our Newsletter carries news briefs and change stories from various locations where we work. Stories pertain to the organization’s priority areas of engagement. Stories of women groups who convinced communities to abandon harmful practices, women who shun cultural taboos to assume better life for respective families and that of women who braved old age and assumed self efficiency are among the stories incorporated in this issue.

The publication is meant to keep ActionAid Ethiopia works with community, its partners and supporters updated on our recent engagements.

We hope you will enjoy reading the stories of how our works in various parts of the country helped people change their lives for better. Your comments and feedback would be of key importance to improve our works.

Locations of Community Centred Development Areas

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of CCDPS</th>
<th>Distance from Adiss Ababa</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yem</td>
<td>264 kms</td>
<td>Southern Nations Nationalities &amp; Peoples’ Regional State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decha</td>
<td>480 kms</td>
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<td>Azernet Berbere</td>
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<td>Gena Bossa</td>
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<td>Kemba</td>
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<td>Kamashi</td>
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To generate learning’s and ensure its accountability to the people with whom it works in different parts of the country, to the government of Ethiopia as well as to its partners, stakeholders and supporters, ActionAid carry 2012-2017 strategy midterm performance review process.

The Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP) is held at two levels including community and federal level every year.

The Federal level PRRP 2015 was held 14 -15 August 2015, at the Red Cross Training Center. The representatives’ of communities, woreda and Regional level government bodies from AAE’s intervention areas and representatives of sector offices at Federal level, partners and staff of the organization critically looked into the organization’s country strategy 21/2 years performance.

In addition to reviewing AAE’s strengths and short falls during the period, the Participants also gave recommendations for incorporation in the upcoming plan of issues they considered AAE’s engagement would be beneficial.

Addressing the opening session of the meeting, Atlet Haile Gebre Selassie, ActionAid’s good-will Ambassador appreciated AAE’s engagement with peoples in remote inaccessible villages in different parts of the country. Haile expressed special appreciation to AAE’s development works focussing on women and children.

Haile also noted AAE’s works directed to raising community awareness and to change their attitude against harmful traditional practices as key component and prerequisite for social and economic transformation of communities.

Testimonies of positive changes in individual, family and community lives dominated the session which also draw important issues of consideration in future engagements of the organization.

Worji Mohammed (bellow) said “ActionAid organized women household leaders living in poverty in Seru, Oromiya Regional State and gave us loans which we used to buy goats. In the past, we used to rent our plots of lands out earning small money in return. Now, however, we understand the benefits of saving. We are even able to buy oxen. Thanks to Actionaid we have clean water nearby. This winter, in relation to the shortage of rain, ActionAid provided us with selected seed; hence, we are practicing in-line crop planting.”

SOME POINTS ON THE STRATEGY MIDTERM REVIEW
Llomitu Abebe, left, is a board Chairperson of a saving and credit cooperatives union in Decha woreda of SNNPRS. The union she leads incorporates 17 women’s basic cooperatives. Lomitu said that in addition to the economic transformation in her life, her leadership in the cooperative has earned her at most love and respect form her community. This, she said was the reason why her community elected her as member of Regional Parliament. She attributes her election to a regional parliament to the skills and capacity she developed through the support of AAE.

A religious leader from Azernet said. “We believe in the equality of women and men. We have to pass this message consistently to our followers and counter parts in order to have a lasting change on altitude that will have a big impact on the gender relationship.”

Asefa Gidey is 16. He is a member of a student’s club of Menkere School in Ofa, Tigray Regional State. The club has 39 members of which 19 are male. He said that his engagement with the club changed his attitude a great deal. “Unlike in the past, and of course against the tradition in our community, I help my mother baking injera and doing other household chorus. In the school, I along with fellow boys in the club advise girls against early marriage. To girls who attained the marital age and are desirous of marriage, we advise them to test for HIV before marriage. We also try to challenge parents not to marry off their daughters premature. Thanks to ActionAid, I am of use to my community,” he said.

Mohammed Nasser is the Administrator of East Azernet Berbere Woreda in the SNNPS. He said that his community and especially women and girls suffered due to harmful practices which were rampant in the area. “Now a day, there is a lot of attitude changing trainings. Things have improved. Also irrigation work supported by ActionAid, has enabled farmers harvest two to three times a year. Women were considered to be weak and dependent in our culture, now the change is big as they succeeded in leading huge institutions.”

He further noted that important points raised were also those helpful to revise our strategies including the need to engage in certain activities at federal level, working with youth and that all staff and partners should be champions of visibility sharing AAEs working modalities.

Expressing appreciation to the active participation and important recommendations of the attendants, Jemal said AAE will keenly review the suggestions and consider pertinent issues in its 20/17 plan and future strategies too.

In his closing remarks, Jemal said that the above and many more, testimonies of women leadership development in most of the AAE’s intervention areas, the fact that AAE supported women have assumed political leadership positions in areas like Decha is pleasant. Their participation in leadership has changed lives of respective families and communities. Women are enabled to share the decision making power over common property. The question is however, how we multiply the number of such inspirational empowered women in all the areas we work, how we can make sure that these best practices are replicated in areas we work and elsewhere.

Jemal went on to say, the fact that boys clubs have been great forums fighting violence against women and girls, testimonies of PTAs transforming schools, planning and executing together with community members, the growth of cooperatives in to union are all the pleasing reflections of the National PRRP.

A representative of the Federal Cooperative Agency (bellow) said, “It is amazing that AAE’s excellent deeds were not known at my office of the Federal cooperatives Agency. Recently, we took samples and carried studies on cooperative development works of many NGOs; we were amazed on AAE’s unique and effective ways of capacitating cooperatives. We want to partner with AAE in what it works in the field.”
2015 Global Action Week on Education: Decha

Ogeya Primary School community in Decha Woreda marked the Global Action Week on education raising awareness about early childhood care and education, improving quality education, sharing responsibility to meet education achievement of sustainable development.

About 200 participants consisting of teachers, school director, students, parents, community representatives, education sector management members were involved at the event. Welcoming speech made by Decha Woreda Finance and Economic Development Office Acting Head and school Director about the role and contribution of teachers, students, school administrators, parents and other community leaders on education strategies and development works.

Some of students sung expressing their gratitude to ActionAid supporting community development and enhancing education quality. Outstanding 15 female from grade 5 to 8, were awarded text books. Finally community representatives and parents suggested their ideas about the event and explained their commitment to contribute to the achievement of education strategies and goals.

Fatto is able to feed her family

Fatto, 42 has newly joined a Saving and Credit Cooperative supported by AAE in Seru Woreda of Oromiya Regional State. She explains what she gained from being the member of the Negaya Saving and Credit Cooperative as follows:

“I live in Bokie village of Seru woreda. I am a mother of 6 children including two females. I am very happy that my request for membership of the Negaya cooperative was accepted. My membership status has enabled me among other things to be nominated as a member of the executive committee of the cooperative, enjoy credit service, participate in dividend sharing, and the like. The loan I received from the cooperative has enabled me to cover costs of fertilizer and improved seeds while I was also enabled to buy an ox. This has liberated me from contracting my small land out for small share since I was not able to buy seeds, and fertilizer. In addition I had no ox for ploughing my land. This is completely changed currently. This year alone got 30 quintals of wheat from my small land since I used my own ox, seed and fertilizer that I purchased using the credit I got from my cooperative.

Hence, food security of my family this year is secured. I also sold the surplus and used the money for other purposes including financing my children’s school.”

AZERNET BERBERE

Actionaid changes the life of my family

By Alemnesh Tadesse

Gulte Detamo lives in Anfar kebele, in west Azernet Berbere Woreda of the Southern State. A mother of seven of which two are girls, Gulte is a member and a store keeper of the Afriban Saving and Credit Cooperative. Her cooperative is supported by ActionAid. Before joining the cooperative, her family led a hand to mouth type of life having no land and other means of income.

She joined the cooperative and first took loan of birr 200 which she used to rent a plot of land and start farming. Since then she kept on borrowing and re-paying every year with increasing amount and started to expand farming through land rental and even bought a plot of land.

Currently, her husband, Ato Nuredin is a model farmer. Gulte said, “I cannot thank ActionAid enough for changing my family life. Now we have built two houses and are no more in the old small hut. We have ox, sheep and land to cultivate and plenty of food. Apart from economic progress I have got public exposure communicating with various people at woreda government and serving the cooperative.”
Safe City initiative

Women’s dependence on the informal economy has been increasing with growth in size and number of towns and cities. The relationship between patriarchy and other social driving forces that underpin the kind of dependence of urban women and girls needs to be addressed with significant participation of women themselves. ‘Safe cities’ are places where the State, society and families and individuals work together to enable women and girls to lead dignified lives free of factors that inhibit their participation and enjoy the opportunities urbanization avails. Promoting safe city is a practical way to address problems of women and girls living in poverty in urban settings. Hence, the need to create the discussion around safe public spaces is an imperative way to ensure women’s and girls’ engagement in the process.

In a nutshell, safe cities mean safe public spaces where women and girls can move freely, without fear on streets and on work places while they are struggling to win their livelihoods. It also includes access to water and sanitation, electricity, transportation and other public amenities at residences and in public locations.

AAE launched its Safe City initiative in collaboration with Pro Pride (local NGO), on February 12, 2015.

In lieu of this, ActionAid – Pro Pride, forged a partnership to mobilize women living in poverty in Addis Ketema Sub-city, Addis Ababa. The launching of safe city agenda was held in the presence of women living in poverty organized into Self Help Groups, representatives of the sub-city administration and representatives of sector offices, schools in the sub-city, small and micro finance institutions, media, and that other stakeholders.

Speaking at the launching session Jemal Ahmed, ActionAid Ethiopia Country Director, noted that the old notions that restrict women to private sphere of life is being challenged on daily basis. Jemal said, women’s active participation even in the cities is restricted by detrimental attitudes, behaviours and practices. Hence, the Safe Cities agenda and its subsequent project are aimed at mobilizing women to overcome such setbacks. "ActionAid looks forward to the pro safe city actions to be taken jointly by women, government and partners including media,” he said.

After familiarizing participants with “Safe City” concept, Eleni Tekalign, AAE Women Development Specialist, noted that so far the “Safe cities” radio programmes and other deliberations have been bringing the problems identified to the attention of government and non-government organizations. These helped initiating discussions, mobilizing women and the community at large against attitudes, behaviours and practices that limit mobility and safety of women and girls. They also created synergy among stakeholders, and created space for women and girls to reflect and take action.

A total of 1000 women living in poverty will be empowered to overcome the problems through the project’s life span of three years. About 4000 people, half of them females will indirectly benefit by listening to the radio programmes and through earnings of the mothers/wives involved the 2,326,925.20 birr project.
**Water supply gladdens women’s hearts**

At the beginning of the Community Centred Development Programme about 12 years ago, water borne diseases was one of the deadly diseases in Yem Special Woreda. Women and children spent considerable time fetching water from distant rivers. Moreover, they wasted much time waiting for their turn in the long queuing at the water point. Many girls were forced to drop out of schools as well.

Zenebech Mersha, 40, a mother of 6 children, recounts her problems before the new water scheme was constructed. She said, My third son, Fitsum Gezmu, and I collected water for the family. He never had ample time to study his lessons as he spent most of the time going to the rivers to draw water. As a result, he did not perform well at school and he was unable to go to college/university. Somehow, he ended up becoming a mechanic. As a mother, I made a livelihood by making some local beverage. However, my business was often interrupted due to acute water shortage. Besides, my children usually suffered from water born disease and I had to spend a lot of money treating them here and there. But things began to take a new turn for the better after ActionAid organized a number of cooperatives and associations in our area. Immediately, I was given the chance to become a member in one of the associations.

All of us members engaged ourselves in identifying problems, sharing ideas and experiences in which the water issue was the main agenda. Different groups organized in the area joined efforts in lobbying different stakeholders in the locality. We approached, among others, AAE which responded positively and constructed shallow wells and solved our water problems.

My children now no more travel long distances to get water. We find water close to our homes and our children have no reason to interrupt their education. Thanks to ActionAid, everyone has access to safe water supply either at home or in the immediate neighbourhood.

More importantly, the water project is currently managed by only women. Thus, the community and the local government is starting to understand and change the perception that women are capable of managing such important and strategic asset if they are given the opportunity. This may pave the way for bringing women to leadership positions in social structures. We would like to thank ActionAid for its support.

**Water project visit: Gena Bosa CCDP**

A team consisting of Italian and Ethiopian staff arrived at Gena Bossa CCDP in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples State to visit the “water Project” in March. The clean water supply project is supported by a philanthropist in Italy. The visitors were warmly welcomed by both community and AAE staff in Gena Bossa. The AAE staff, a team of six men including the only female cook, found it a pleasant challenge to host and feed their Ethiopian and Italian guests. The male hosts shared duties and responsibilities equitably and served their guests as is appropriate. The result was that their guests enjoyed the food to their fill expressing their wholehearted appreciation. We never enjoyed such a delicious food even in Addis Ababa’ said Roberto, one of the Italian guests. Viva Gena Bosa colleagues!

Furthermore, everyone that approached the guests was quick to give testimonies about the wonderful contributions that AAE is making to the community there. Following are a few extracts from the interviewees.

Girma Kocho is a businessman in Decha area. Unlike many residents of the area, Girma is not a member of any of the saving and credit cooperatives or bee keeping associations or any other institution initiated or supported by ActionAid. Yet he says ActionAid’s advent to his village has improved his life in many ways.

He said, ‘Before ActionAid came to our area, we suffered from lack of basic facilities like roads, schools and clean water supply.” Not only has ActionAid helped us build some of the basic facilities but also enabled us to believe that development is possible.’
Gena Bossa Administrator testifies

Towards the end of the day, the team visited the Gena Bossa Woreda Administrator, Ato Berhanu Dulacho, for a brief interview. The team made the visit without any prior notice but the Administrator welcomed them warmly and offered to give the interview.

The team arrived to review the progress of constructions for the "Wash Project" which is financed by a benovalet Italian. The team posed questions including on the kind of relations that existed between the Woreda government and AAE working staff. The woreda Administrator noted that the project is meant to ease the burden of women, girls & children who queue up for hours to get water from the only source in town. The project, to be managed by women, is also meant to model women leadership development. The project will supply clean water to a total of 5189 people on its completion, the Administrator explained.

Ato Berhanu explained that the Woreda government had been deeply concerned about the water shortage and held frequent discussions with AAE. He said AAE responded immediately making possible the water supply which is greatly appreciated both by GenaBossa community and the local government. Explaining further, he said that previously available potable water supply met the needs of only 46 percent of the population. This created a lot of inconveniences and problems including frequent quarrels among users. The water project in the making is believed to help meet 100 percent water demand of the population and solve all related problems. It spares students from missing classes while mothers will be relieved from staying out late in the night queuing up for water.

"ActionAid has also been working with the Woreda community in the areas of food security, and education." The Woreda Administrator said adding, “the organization’s intervention in irrigation projects has enabled farmers to produce three times as against harvesting once a year during rainy season. The organization empowered farmers to form cooperatives and unions changing their economic and social status. Community members are now familiar with techniques of discussions seeking solutions to their common problems. ActionAid in collaboration with the media outlets in the area also facilitated conditions for the community to listen to radio programs on hygiene, nutrition and other pertinent issues in their own language. ActionAid has played a key role in reducing harmful traditions and beliefs."

Gena Bosa honey farmers organized

Adanech Asaro and her friends are now organized along new lines to get the most out of their bee farming. The farmers have previously practised traditional methods of bee keeping practices using old equipment and materials. She explained, "We secured this plot of land for our bee farm from the government and ActionAid provided us with improved bee hives and other honey processing equipment. Within months, we succeeded in producing 30 kilos of honey."

Adanech, a mother of three, also engages in teaching the new technology to her fellow members of the Association. She has 300 personal hives in addition to what she shares with other members of the association. She said, "This has helped me change my straw roof into corrugated iron sheets while the life of my children has been improved considerably." Adanech also produces grain and vegetable.

Concluding, Adanech said, "my association now aspires to buy a bus transporting locals to and from towns close by. We want to curb the acute transportation problem in the area where people have to walk for about three hours to reach the nearest town where they purchase necessities."

The Omo Honey Producers Association was originally formed with 11 farmers. Its members have now reached 40. Currently, the association also collects bee products of 66 individual bee farmers in the area. Members of the association process the product using modern equipment. Adanech said, "We extract good quality and quantity of honey and wax this way." Adanech is Vice-Chairwoman of the Omo Honey Producers Association. She attributes her good performance to the skills and confidence she obtained from the training offered by ActionAid.

Another woman, Haile Asebo, one of the association members who received training at the Wolayita Research Centre said, "ActionAid also gave us training while four of our members had been to Wolayita Research Centre for training. I have been in honey business for years before ActionAid intervened in our area and my return remained minimal all the time. Following the training I received, I am now skilled in transferring bees from hive to hive, purifying honey and extracting wax."
Women in community guardianship

The Menkere Women Group together with partners have succeeded in modelling a zone where community resists practices that affect physical, social and economic life of women.

Today, every woman in the community has control over the household resources and has entitlement. Rape, uvula cutting and abduction are also significantly reduced due to prevention and protection work done by the groups.

Women groups have been mobilizing collective efforts of women and girls, community elders, religious leaders and local government against patriarchy and its ill effects. The model has been empowering thousands of women and their allies against the harmful practices and beliefs. Sensitizing school community, law enforcement bodies, health institutions and developing district/woreda level women groups and networks has considerably reduced the mal-practices in the areas in which ActionAid operates.

‘Today, no marriage takes place without the knowledge and consent of the Women Group in Menkere,’ said Hadish Wondimu, a priest working closely with the women groups. ‘Originally, watch group members were considered as traitors violating the community’s customs and traditions. Now, however, the community considers them as social custodians and community guardians. Hence, they are trusted and respected,” he said.

Initiating the women watch group, AAE in collaboration with the kebele administration organized ten women selected from five rural and one urban kebeles. These along with seven community elders and religious leaders had attended awareness raising training against various forms of gender-based violence on the onset about five years ago.

Thanks to rigorous awareness raising and sensitization works as well as persistence of the group, they are enabled to forge collective actions including campaigns against harmful practices. These coupled with the various economic empowerment interventions by ActionAid have transformed the women who lived in abject poverty into community leaders and positive change agents. Testimonies of some of the leaders and members are outlined below.

Menkere Women Group

Chairwoman Assefu Kiros said, our Women Group was formed in 2001 with membership of 10 needy women. Members have now reached 27 including seven elders and religious leaders. Repeated awareness raising lessons were given on how to fight traditional practices perpetuating poverty among women.

School boy’s awareness raising clubs were formed in four schools sensitizing students and especially boys against gender-based violence. Boys have been part of the campaign and cooperate in tipping the Women Group members on individuals exercising harmful practices in schools and respective neighbourhoods. They fought early marriage by convincing parents not to marry off pre-mature girls.

Assistant Chairperson Letekiros Tegegn explained, ‘ActionAid selected the poorest women in the community, most of us single mothers struggling to meet the daily needs of families, as targets of its anti-poverty intervention. Most of us lived on selling firewood and water before ActionAid organized us into women groups. In addition to sensitization against the ill effects of traditional harmful practices, we were given financial and technical support to initiate a saving and credit cooperative. Every member was provided with seed money of birr 1, 800 which we used to buy sheep for fattening. Personally, I bought a sheep with an offspring. In three months, I fattened and sold the mother for 1,900 birr. The offspring also grew and gave birth to others some of which I sold already. I used the money to buy a cow. Recently, as we took the second loan, I bought additional five sheep.’

She said with a sense of proud satisfaction, ‘My life is totally changed. I now send my children to school. I have upgraded my small straw roofed house into a big iron sheet roofed house. Nowadays, slaughtering sheep in celebration of holidays like Christmas and Easter is a trend in my household. The same is true to all members of the Women Group. This was unthinkable to us in the past.’

Religious leaders

The role of religious leaders was key to the minimization of the different forms of harmful practices against women and girls. Some of them even violently opposed any attempts by believers teaching in churches or mosques. Priest Hadish Wondimu, Administrator of an Orthodox church in the area and associate of the women group said, “Lately, we were able to teach the congregation against the practices and this was a
great boost to our campaign against harmful practices," he added.

"These days the awareness of the community is improved very much. Parents consult the group when they think of marring daughters off. Every marriage is carried with the permission of the Women Watch Group. Before agreeing to a marriage proposition, the watch group members check the age and the interest of the girl. The girl comes with a letter asserting that she is 18 and above to the Women Watch Group.

In the beginning, the community tried to evade the women group. These days however they are considered as guardians."

Afeworki Retta Ofa Woreda Administrator

Afeworki observed, "ActionAid is our best anti-poverty partner in Ofa Woreda. It has already succeeded in ensuring food security of 3000 women and many more residents in the 10 kebeles. 'ActionAid is the mother of women in poverty.' The work opportunities it created for the youth have also been big support to the Administration. We are grateful and always ready to render every support in the execution of its anti-poverty initiatives."

The women group model has been adopted by the Tigray regional state which has already been working to replicate it in parts other than Ofa woreda.

Making up for time lost

Kopi Abreha, 32, is a leader of a vibrant Women Watch Group that ActionAid initiated in Hashenge, Ofa Woreda of Tigray Regional State. The groups’ extraordinary performance in transforming Hashenge into HTPs and violence free zone has earned the group an award from the Ofa government.

Kopi is a female house head. She has led the Hashenge Women Group for about five years now. The mother of three is a model farmer and an inspirational leader against harmful practices. Kopi is also the leader of Hashenge Women Flock Rearing Project funded by Faro Foundation as well as the association of fishers in her area. She has been practicing exemplary leadership mobilizing her community on traditional practices harmful to women and supporting women and youth in the area out of acute poverty through the cooperatives she leads.

Her multiple exemplary leadership roles as a woman grassroots community leader qualified Kopi for an experience sharing trip to Malawi, March 2015. She says that her Malawi experience boosted her awareness and confidence.

Asked how she balances the responsibilities as leader and member of many associations and the project, Kopi said, "I purposefully engage in as many associations to make up for the time I wasted before I got the awareness about advantages of involvement in similar associations. My daughters support me in the house chorus while my colleagues are a big support in the cooperatives."

The women sheep raring project initiated in Ashenge over four years ago supports 300 women. According to Kopi, members have managed to own up to 17 flocks so far. Kopi for one has 15 sheep as compared to none over four years ago. "I received four sheep as one of the first round beneficiaries of restocking project. I was able to transfer four offerings of these and now own 15 more. This doesn’t include what I killed in celebrations of holidays."

ANKOBER

Voices inspiring women out of poverty

Radio testimonies of empowered women are inspiring others out of poverty. The AAE supported weekly radio programme, "Setoch Simeru", broadcasts change stories due to AAE’s impact on women leadership development in rural Ethiopia.
According to Etifwork and her friends, many women in the area have started following examples of the radio listeners selling cattle on their own. “Women in the area are also showing interest to join us listening the radio broadcast,” she said.

“I for one started both fattening cattle and selling on my own after listening to similar stories of women elsewhere. The story gave me the insight about the business I could carry. I was happy as I learnt that I can sell my cattle as men do. Thanks to the women who shared their testimonies on the radio I have already started leading a decent life,” she went on to say.

Etifwork is a member in one of the listener’s groups in Gorgo village of Ankober district in the Amhara State. She is a single mother with two children. Before the advent of Padet, AAE’s partner to the area, in 2006, she used to sell traditional drinks.

Earnings from the business were not enough to feed her family that she had to toil to make the ends met. Besides, the business which is mostly associated with prostitution had been humiliating. The job also made women susceptible to gender based violence by customers who got drunk taking the liquor. HIV/ AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases were treats of Etifwork and other women involved in the petty trade.

“Padet came to the rescue of me and other women who earned their living from such lowly businesses. The organization intervened initiating saving and credit cooperatives in Gorgo and it provided us with skills training. With the help of seed money from the organization, we engaged in cattle and livestock fattening and other petty trades,” she said.

According to Etifwork and her friends, the “Setoch Simeru” broadcasts have also been raising their awareness against violence against women that are common yet never challenged evils here.

The national broadcast of change testimonies of individual women and family due to AAE’s intervention and empowerment towards sharing power at respective homes, organizations and communities have been on the air for about two years. Stories from women saving and credit cooperative, watch groups and other interventions in almost all the intervention areas have been entertained so far. The radio listeners briefly discuss learnings and possible actions after every session.

A total of 289 women in Ofa, Yem and Ankober CCDPs are organized in to radio listeners groups to actively listen the weekly broadcasts and share their learning back to their communities. The group members send their comments and feedbacks on the broadcasted content to the station that made the process more interactive.

**SEBA BORU**

**Hadhakule braves old age**

Hadhakule Dido is a member of Misoma Bore Obit Multi-purpose Agricultural Cooperative in “Seba Boru Integrated Community Development Program” supported by Women Development Organization-Rift Valley ActionAid’s partner operating in the area, in Oromiya Regional State. She narrates her success story as follows.

*My name is Hadhakule; I am 70 and have eight children. All are married. My husband died three years ago leaving little of assets behind. I tried to subsist myself vending vegetables but this did not work. Hence, I became dependent on my children.*

Lately, I was lucky joining Misoma Bore General-Agricultural Cooperative. Last year buying a share of Birr 1,000.00 from my saving. Fellow members of the cooperative motivated me to embark on maize and coffee business. I am now able to support myself. In addition, my active participation in mobilizing men and women to join the cooperative has increased number of cooperative members. Currently, the membership has reached 57 including eight females. Our capital has also grown to 240,000.00 birr from birr 25,000.00 at the beginning. In 2014, Rift valley children and women Development organization support has been enormous that not only I but every member of the cooperative appreciates. Personally, now I feel that I’m not old and dependent any more. I am rather growing energetic, confident and committed to improve my livelihood. Working with my friends who are elderly yet strong women like me keeps on inspiring and strengthening us all. I have a plan to construct a new house. I will also participate in building a store for our cooperative. I cannot thank the organization enough.
Clean water services

By Birkneh Twachew

Before 2004, most of the population of Kamba Woreda drank and used water from ponds, streams, and unprotected springs. As a result, children and women in rural Kamba suffered from waterborne disease. Furthermore, children and women spent (25 - 30%) of their time in search of water. This is made history now.

Among the hardest hit of the problem was Zakuna village, located at low land area of the woreda. Thanks to AAE’s intervention, currently, 60 households in the village are practicing irrigation farming and the number will increase to 200 households in the near future. Children no more miss classes and women do not need to spend hours in search of water. In addition, livestock now access water close by and farmers are enabled to produce forage for livestock even during dry seasons. Some of the peasants have also started crop diversification.

In the past, the up steam areas were covered with vegetation and the river was clean. People said that there were no significant health problem at that time. However, as the vegetation cover of the hill decreased and Kamba town expanded, the river water turned unclean because of contamination. Hence, this affected the villagers’ health.

Villagers attribute the positive change to AAE’s efforts of mobilizing Woreda Water, Mines and Energy Office, Donbe seru Women Water Association and the local communities. This availed clean water for the villagers of Zakuna through pipe extension and one water point construction. As a result, 107 dwellers including 55 females access clean water for sanitation and drinking.

Kamba

Awakened PTA members making a difference

by Hunegnaw Ayele

Members of Parent and Teachers Association (PTA) of Fallana Kedir Primary school in Kombolcha, eastern Ethiopia are renovating school systems and facilities.

According to Abdella Mumed, 60, the Association spent years of passiveness until AAE’s intervention helped them realize their role.

Abdella is the Chairperson of the PTA of the school that was constructed in 1983. The Association has seven members including a teacher who serves as secretary. PTA members now meet once a week to discuss, evaluate school’s overall situation and set new plans for the week ahead.

Of late, students never had a voice in the PTA school plans. Hence, the teaching and learning process was extremely poor and not interactive. The school had poor infrastructure with dusty classrooms, and broken benches, and stones as seats. Besides, parents lacked awareness on the advantage of education contributing for low enrolment and high dropout and absenteeism in the school.

According to Abdella, Pharo Education project did a lot to change the situation. He said, “It trained and capacitated us to improve our school management system, resource administration and community mobilization works. As a result, we embarked on renovating classrooms with the support of ActionAid, district education office and students. We also work to ensure proper discipline among school community (children and teachers) and help in raising school income. Moreover, we fight beliefs and practices forcing girls to miss education. We managed to strengthen the school girls club and succeeded in bringing girls who dropped out back to school. Our fund raising efforts helped the school to support orphans and needy children with basic educational materials such as exercise book, pen and pencils. We carry soil conservation works in school to prevent runoff from the school and protect the buildings from erosion by mobilizing school area communities. We are aspiring to make the school a model in many aspects especially in girl’s participation as we did previously.”

Abdella went on to say that the Pharo project has supported construction of a block with 4 classrooms, renovated a deteriorated block and provided the school with 200 combined desks. According to Abdella, this attracted drop outs to resume school.

Abdella said, “The Association has a plan to fence the school compound to ensure children’s safety and security.”

Kombolcha
Workensh Asha, 35 is a resident of Zakuna village in Kamba. She is a mother of 8 including 4 females. She said: “access to clean water service has been serious problem. I grew here and all through my life water was critical problem. We used water from rivers, ponds and springs. However, springs and ponds dry up during dry seasons. Hence, we mostly depended on river flowing crossing Kamba town. Some time we travel an hour fetching the unclean water. We always suffered from diarrhea and stomach ache. Health problems incurred medication cost and affect our productivity.

Now, all is gone and no more sanitation problem. The construction of water in our surrounding has made our life pleasant. Our children have adequate time to attend their education and women have ample time for social life, economic engagement above all, our health is improved.

I am grateful to those who rendered the construction and availed clean water. May God blessed them all.”

Partnership subdues Gully

Passa Peasant Association is located in a semi-arid zone where moisture is a limiting factor for crop production, livestock and sanitation. Crop failure because of erratic rain hampered lives of the farmers in the area in the past. Before 30 years an irrigation scheme was constructed. But a gully caused by unwise farming system and flash floods from above catchment made it unbeneficial.

AAE in partnership with district Agriculture Development Office and Passa Peasants Administration reconditioned the small-scale irrigation scheme stretching over 50 meters with flume work with all partners performing different tasks to realize the scheme.

Irrigation association members excavated the earthen canal and directed the water to respective farm land. District Agriculture office covered costs of poll, pipe pillars strengthening the flume, sand and stone for foundation work while ActionAid Kamba program contributed Birr 506,584.42 for flume construction, training, internal support and office and store construction.

Ayinate Ziba, 36 and a father of one daughter lives in Passa village. He narrates the small-scale irrigation benefit while he was shelling his maize in borrowed farm filed.

“I could not find enough words to express my feelings, I felt as though I am born again and I thank ActionAid and other supporters. I don’t have irrigable land in the command area. However, thanks to my elder brother, he gave me a quarter of hectare to grow maize. I produced 15 quintal and sold 11 quintals for 3500 birr. I am so happy to have this amount of money during dry season which was not the case before. I have also food for my family. I will also produce more from the rain-fed land in other areas if the rain starts on time.

As you see, we are preparing the land to sow it again with maize and vegetable to increase our production. We missed this opportunity unlike our neighbours beyond the gully for the last 30 years. The community tried to cross the gully with grooved wood in the past this was washed away the first shower of rain. The gully surrendered this year and our community has got the chance to produce 2-3 times per year. My elder brother gain 14, 000 birr from irrigation maize harvest on 1.5 hectare land in addition to the household food.

My future plan is to rent irrigable land from the communal land down in the command area and produce cash crops like onion, tomato and pepper in addition to maize. Thank you for your support. It revive our hope for better future to use the resource we have here and we never observed before.”
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 Nuggets

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Newsflash 2015 | 18
አምች ያለን ወንድ እይትን ከስተወስ ከተርጉም

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