



SUCCESS STORY

PRIME Field Agents Enhance Resilience

Training in VSLA facilitation opens up job opportunities



Guyo, on his way to a VSLA facilitation

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Guyo Buke,
PRIME field agent for VSLA

Guyo Buke Susana, 25, who lives in Miyo district of Oromiya Region, is a high school graduate but his education didn't prepare him for the better life he dreamed of. Given the scarcity of job opportunities in rural Ethiopia, jobs were not easy to come by. “I had no livelihood at all,” says Guyo, talking about how desperate he was about his future.

The USAID-supported Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) project's facilitation for the formation of village level savings and loan associations (VSLAs) brought hope for Guyo. In 2014, PRIME provided an eight-day training on standard VSLA methodologies and entrepreneurship skills. The training enabled Guyo to understand what the VSLA and private service provider (PSP) model is; how savings and internal loans work for communities and how to do VSLA individual self-screening, group formation and governance. Guyo was certified to serve as a field agent for PRIME, and his duty is to facilitate the formation of VSLAs in his kebele. The VSLA model is a self-managed and self-financed association formed voluntarily with the purpose of providing members with simple savings and loan services. Without these financial services, community members were forced to sell their livestock every time they have a small financial need, often at the wrong time and at the wrong price. They were unable to save regularly either.

Initially, Guyo's efforts of forming VSLAs were far from easy. He was met with resistance because community members were skeptical but with the knowledge about VSLAs and with the necessary facilitation and communication skills Guyo acquired in the training, he finally managed to make headway. In less than a year, Guyo has been able to facilitate the formation of eleven VSLAs. Given the trust he earned and the benefits members are obtaining from VSLAs, Guyo is confident that his work will be much easier.

Guyo invested the money he earned from members' contributions and the one-off incentive from PRIME in farmland and livestock, and his job as a field agent has given him hope for the future. Being part of a solution to a long-standing problem in his community has been a source of satisfaction and happiness. “My life has suddenly changed for the better, and my future is no more bleak” says Guyo happily.

PRIME has so far facilitated the formation of more than 96 such groups across Borena Zone, benefitting over 2050 households and enabling them to increase their capacity to generate income, meet their immediate cash needs and control their financial resources.