

Pasture for the Year:

Ready to Face Drought

Author:

Mengesha Amare

Editor:

Makeda Yohannes

Kilintina Derseda is a small drought-prone village in Dewe district of Afar Regional State where Support for Sustainable Development (SSD), with the backing of CARE Ethiopia, implements the Partners for Resilience (PFR) Program. The people of Kilintina Derseda are pastoralists who move from place to place throughout the year in search of pasture for their livestock. Due to an unstable lifestyle, for years, the community could not access various social services such as schools and health services.



PfR through community consultations prioritized the major causes of hazards; land degradation due to overgrazing was at the top of the list. To restore the rangeland eco-system and increase livestock feed availability, a decision was made to rehabilitate the rangeland. Awareness raising sessions about the importance of rangeland were organized by PfR after which the community selected an area for closure and management. The community was prepared for the task through Rangeland Management trainings including skills on enclosing, enrichment, utilization and management. They were equipped with the necessary farm tools for the task. The beneficiaries are members of the community selected according to the criteria set including poor families, and hard working and ethical members of the community who can influence others.

By enclosing the rangeland they produced hay to be used as feed for animals during the dry season. The committee that was established to follow up on the proper use of the rangeland formulated a local bylaw to ensure proper use of the rangeland. Through this process, a total of 120 ha of land in the Dewe district was enclosed and rehabilitated, benefiting a total of 320 households. Kilintina Derseda alone, 20ha of land was rehabilitated growing a variety of grass species, benefiting 80 households for hay-making. According to the local bylaws, the community could feed their animals only through a cut and carry system to avoid damage to the pastureland and maintain its sustainability.

Aman Humed (50) a father of 5 is one of the beneficiaries and a member of the committee. Even though he owns a plot of land, he and his family were able to stay in their home village for only a few months during a year. He explains that as soon as the dry season begins, pasture for the livestock runs out, so he takes his family and cattle to the next available pasture land sometimes even as far as other districts. This is the traditional coping mechanism for a pastoralist community.

He was selected as a beneficiary based on the criteria set by the community. He attended the training on rangeland management provided by PfR staff and experts from the local authority office. He said,

"In my village we have land with a lot of potential to be developed and sustain our livestock throughout a whole year but since we lacked knowledge on how to manage it, we simply overgrazed it"



Aman continued to explain about the improvement in soil fertility and reduced erosion saying,

“Now thanks to the training we are aware how we can effectively use the available land in our village, we used to lose our soil even to the littlest rain as the degraded land was easily eroded. But now erosion is less and even the fertility of soil has increased”

The community manages the communal land and uses the product from it based on the agreed terms. Those who own private lands also have the opportunity to fence their own lands separately but without hindering the communal rangeland management system to earn extra income by making hay.

According to Aman the Kilintina Dereseda community is strictly following the local bylaws of the rangeland management because they have seen the positive benefits of having hay available for the dry season, and a more fertile land.

“Since we started to remain still in our village throughout a year, we have already began to send our children to school and we are even frequently accessing health facilities nearby ... if a person breaks the rule and brings his/her cattle to graze within a closed land s/he pays a penalty fee of Birr 300 per cattle, we have been able to implement this because of the changed attitude of the community and support of the local authority.”

Since PfR began supporting this project in Kilintina Dereseda, economical changes are already being witnessed in the lives of the community. Especially for those who own private lands, fencing it has created a big business opportunity. Aman has benefited by working hard both on the communal land and on his private land. This allows him to make enough hay for his own livestock for a year and sell the surplus for extra income. This is the first time Aman has earned extra income in his life. Furthermore, since the animals are not subjected to traveling long distances in search of pasture and are well fed, their productivity has also increased.

“Thanks to PfR I have been able to properly feed my animals and even sell the leftover. Especially now that it is a dry season the government is planning to distribute hay for those who did not produce adequately so I am currently negotiating with them how I can provide my products for sale. I earned quite a good amount (Birr 10,500) last year by selling hay to the government for distribution to drought affected areas and I look forward to do the same next year. Our livestock are more productive than ever before as they are well fed and comfortable”



Lessons learned

- Now that the beneficiaries of PfR are producing hay to be used during the dry season, a more settled life is becoming common in Kilintina Dereseda village. Even those who did not engage in hay making, can now access it during the drought period by purchasing from those who produce a surplus. The Dry season is no longer a time of displacement for most of the community members, rather they are now enjoying a more economically comfortable life as a fruit of PfR's support.