



# COVID-19 PROGRAMMING ADAPTATIONS

CRS Ethiopia has worked alongside government, partners, communities and other key stakeholders to adapt our programming to the rapidly evolving pandemic context



## Development Food Security Activity (DFSA)

### COVID-19 TELEPHONE HOTLINE

#### BACKGROUND

CRS' Development Food Security Activity operates in nine rural *woredas*, or districts, in Ethiopia's Oromia region, where access to COVID-19 information and prevention efforts may be limited due to remote locations, limited internet access, and difficulty accessing water and soap. Thus, CRS saw an urgent need to reach its rural DFSA clients with COVID-19 awareness and prevention information.

In addition to many other programmatic adaptations—such as distributing supplies for mandatory handwashing at all DFSA distribution sites and social behavior change (SBC) posters and banners—the DFSA received approval from the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, to create a free telephone hotline to share COVID-19 prevention messages with DFSA participants across nine *woredas* in the Afaan Oromo, Amharic and Somali languages. CRS launched the hotline in early May 2020, aiming to reach between 1,000 and 3,000 callers per month through a “pull” approach. “Pull” means clients call the hotline and select the message they want to listen to. As of June 25, CRS had reached 1,014 unique callers, with many making repeat calls, (3,271 in all). In the coming months, CRS will launch the “push” feature of this activity by sending SMS notifications to 3,000 beneficiaries with follow-up messages related to COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

#### USE OF THE INTEGRATED VOICE RESPONSE SYSTEM

CRS worked with integrated voice response (IVR) provider Viamo, with whom CRS already had a contract to run a mobile feedback mechanism at project distribution sites. CRS was able to launch the new platform, allowing listeners to call the hotline at their convenience, select from five USAID-sponsored and Government of Ethiopia (GoE) Ministry of Health-approved messages according to their interest, and repeat the messages as often as necessary.

#### Response to hotline

The community response to the hotline was generally positive. Most callers consented to receive future information from CRS about COVID-19, indicating that they were receptive to the hotline and interested in the information. However, one challenge noted by a health worker and a female PSNP client in Deder *woreda* is that airtime is needed for the first call. The DFSA is now working with Viamo to ensure there is no need for airtime at all.

*Woreda* government officials also welcomed the platform. CRS briefed them on the hotline's use and shared marketing materials via Telegram and WhatsApp. Mohammed Ibrahim, Head of the Deder Woreda Health Office, and Elias Ahmedkelif, Deder Woreda Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Officer, both reshared the materials on their Telegram accounts to further promote the hotline. They also reported to CRS staff that they appreciated this innovative way of accessing information.

1. CRS budgeted for 3,000 SMS notifications in the contract with Viamo, and can buy additional airtime as needed if requests for further COVID-19 information exceed 3,000.



**Woreda government officials have welcomed the new hotline, and the community response has been generally positive.**

The first phase of this activity offered a free mobile hotline number (0116190442) callers could dial to initiate the interaction. The hotline immediately calls them back so that CRS absorbs the cost of the call. When the caller answers the callback, they hear a welcome message and are asked to select Afaan Oromo, Amharic or Somali. They then hear an introductory COVID-19 message. The caller answers a series of brief demographic questions for monitoring purposes and selects one of the five detailed messages to listen to. After listening to a message, they answer a brief comprehension question, and have the option of repeating the message, choosing a new message or hanging up.

## HOTLINE IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION

Initially, CRS promoted the hotline at ongoing DFSA and Joint Emergency Operation Program (JEOP) food distributions in the Meki Catholic Secretariat and Hararghe Catholic Secretariat operational areas, focusing on the DFSA's nine operational *woredas*. From June 2020, CRS expanded promotion to DFSA-implemented Diversity for Nutrition and Enhanced Resilience, or DiNER, fairs reaching 5,000 PSNP clients. CRS staff also promote the hotline at project-supported health posts and *kebele* (neighborhood) offices, and during other project activities. CRS monitors this activity via an online dashboard that tracks overall call volume by *woreda*, message selection, and performance on the comprehension questions. CRS staff monitor the platform and send biweekly email updates to the field teams to track the progress of their promotion efforts. CRS also conducts frequent conference calls to review progress and coordinate next steps related to printing promotional materials, editing hotline content, and preparing for the second phase.

## BENEFITS OF IVR SYSTEM

- Callers can repeat messages as often as they like.
- Callers can select the type of information they are interested in hearing.
- CRS can gather data on the most popular messages and adapt future COVID-19 messages in response to demand.
- Callers can opt for the future “push” IVR function, with targeted follow-up voice or text messages to registered numbers with new COVID-19 information.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- Leveraging the existing Viamo agreement and platform allowed CRS to quickly launch the hotline and scale up rapidly. This adaptive management approach has proved valuable in this rapidly evolving pandemic.
- Posters and in-person demonstrations were needed to boost call volume. CRS is also considering local radio promotion.
- Regular check-ins at different levels enable efficient sharing of monitoring data, reflection on performance and challenges, and brainstorming of management adaptations. This activity requires a cohesive response across CRS food distribution, livelihoods and health teams, so frequent check-ins and coordination are vital at the field-office level.
- CRS is still determining an appropriate number of questions so clients do not hang up before reaching the COVID-19 messages.

## HOTLINE AT A GLANCE

Connected sessions	Completed at least one message	Completed detailed messages	Unique callers
3,271	2,379	1,046	951
When a client calls the IVR number, the number calls them back up to three times if they do not answer the first call. The 3,271 (87%) represents those who took the call and entered the platform.	Number of clients who listened to the introductory message on COVID-19. They represent 73% of all successfully connected IVR sessions. The remaining 27% hung up.	Number of clients who listened to at least one detailed message on COVID-19 and answered the related comprehension question.	Number of unique callers. Often, a person repeatedly calls from home with their family to listen to the messages.

## FUNCTIONAL LITERACY BOOKLETS FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

### INTRODUCTION

Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) is a government program that reaches out to adults and young people aged 15 and above, including women, the disabled and minority groups, with the goal of increasing literacy rates, promoting women's empowerment, improving participants' health, and raising the standard of living within communities.

The program consists of two six-month courses over two years. Topics also include gender issues, environmental protection, civic and ethical education, health, disease prevention, family planning, agriculture, economic empowerment

and saving, and nutrition. The training is provided in two cycles and those who complete it graduate with a certification. To ensure the quality of the facilitation and processes, *woreda* education office experts undertake regular supervision of each group and facilitator. The facilitators are high school graduates trained by government experts and use a manual developed by the education ministry.

The DFSA uses Government of Ethiopia functional literacy programs in its Community Conversations, Savings and Internal Lending Communities, livelihoods group and youth livelihoods group interventions. In FY20, the DFSA implemented FAL in collaboration with *woreda* education offices and *kebele* administrators through joint selection of FAL facilitators, training and monitoring. Since 2017/8, some 5,984 (4,221 female and 1,763 male) project participants have taken part in the program, of whom 2,870 (1,862 female and 1,008 male) graduated. The remaining 3,114 (2,359 female and 755 male) began attending the first and second cycle of the FAL program from February 2020.

### RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the related state of emergency declared by the government, gatherings of more than four people were not permissible. As a result, the DFSA FAL sessions were interrupted and the students remained at home without any supplementary materials to continue their studies independently.

### CHANGES AND ADAPTATIONS

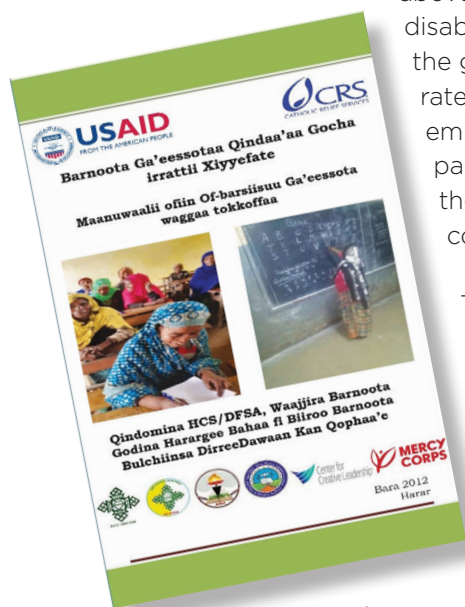
Thus, the DFSA pursued an adaptive management strategy to develop FAL booklets in collaboration with East Hararghe Zone education office, to offer participants the opportunity to self-teach. The booklets were reviewed by DFSA teams, and the Dire Dawa and West Arsi zone education office experts. Based on the existing government FAL curricula for first- and second-cycle literacy participants, they also included COVID-19 messages reminding readers to take care of themselves and their families.

The program has diverted its teaching from a face-to-face approach to home-based study with support from project staff and government stakeholders. It printed 4,000 booklets and disseminated these to participants.

Thanks to this adjustment, the FAL program has been able to resume, and demand-driven and context-specific initiatives facilitated strong collaboration between CRS, implementing partners and the government.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Adaptive management needs to be highlighted during project design and checked throughout project implementation.



DFSA Functional Adult Literacy booklet.

## FOOD ASSISTANCE: DOUBLE DISTRIBUTIONS AND RISK MITIGATION



1.5m

MORE THAN  
1.5 MILLION  
PEOPLE IN  
MORE THAN  
70 WOREDAS  
RECEIVE FOOD  
ASSISTANCE  
THROUGH  
JEOP/CRS

### CONTEXT

CRS leads a dynamic consortium of seven organizations implementing the Joint Emergency Operation Program (JEOP)—in Ethiopia's Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' regions—providing food assistance to vulnerable people identified every year through a process led by the Government of Ethiopia's National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC). JEOP/CRS is providing timely commodities and cash assistance to over 1.5 million food-insecure people in more than 70 *woredas*. JEOP also supports the identification of people in need and reinforces crisis mitigation and response through a robust early warning system (EWS) and market monitoring mechanism, hand in hand with the GoE.

### COVID-19 INCREASES FOOD INSECURITY

There is greater food insecurity due to COVID-19 and an increased need for food among project participants in the face of economic adversity, but decreased accessibility of target locations. The pandemic coincided with the lean season, and rains that have made remote field locations even harder to access.

Movement of people and commodities was compromised, transport availability decreased, and large gatherings of people at distribution points were not possible. Also, cash had to be quarantined and commodities handled differently. A first-come-first-served system was instituted, and the use of thumbprints to confirm receipt of commodities was suspended.

The project needed to access personal protective equipment (PPE) at scale, increasing costs. The MEAL system and Joint Accountability Mechanism (JAM) were affected by a reduction in field visits and suspension of community help desks in certain locations.

### RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

#### How COVID-19 necessitated adjustment to approaches

- **Government restrictions** Policies restricted movement, gatherings and transportation, while there was increased expectation among project participants for timely food delivery.
- **World Health Organization/Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines** PPE was required, the use of thumbprints was suspended, and there were requirements for individual scooping,<sup>2</sup> and cash handling and quarantine.
- **Economic impact of the pandemic** There was an increased need with a humanitarian imperative to continue programming. Price increases were also observed (market monitoring + seasonal change + lean season).
- **Donor guidelines** USAID provided support for double distributions, PPE to ensure the safety of staff and project participants, as well as handwashing stations and messaging to comply with local government guidelines and wider industry norms. USAID also required approval for use of funds for COVID-19-related measures.

### CHANGES AND ADAPTATIONS

#### Changes as a result of COVID-19

JEOP worked closely with regional, zonal and *woreda* administrations to prepare master beneficiary lists so that distributions were timely within movement restrictions. This was complemented, through an agreement with food assistance operators and government, by the provision of double rations to reduce the number of occasions on which people gathered. JEOP adapted operational procedures to support prevention, mitigation and control of COVID-19, ensuring that emergency assistance continued to reach participants in a safe and timely manner. The procedures were informed by the WHO, the Ministry of Health, the World Food Program and CRS global guidance for JEOP implementing partners to safeguard staff, project participants, service providers and other stakeholders.

2. JEOP uses both group distribution and individual scooping (measuring). For group distribution, participants gather based on their proximity, targeted family size and a bulk food ration is provided to their group. Group members divide the ration among themselves either supported by an assigned scooper, or independently overseen by JEOP staff. For individual scooping, JEOP-recruited scoopers are assigned by JEOP to scoop and distribute food rations to each household individually as per the payment sheet and family size.





JEOP adapted procedures to support prevention, mitigation and control of COVID-19, to ensure emergency assistance reached participants in a safe and timely manner.

Procedures included:

### 1. Cross-cutting concerns

- **Assessing transmission risk** Testing has been limited in Ethiopia, so JEOP operates under the assumption that anyone is a suspected COVID-19 case.
- **Humanitarian imperative** JEOP food assistance is lifesaving, so there is an imperative to carry out distributions despite the risk to staff, partners and participants.
- **Do No Harm** The following procedures were promoted and followed:
  - Stay home when unwell and seek medical advice.
  - Maintain physical distancing.
  - Follow recommended hygiene practices.
  - Wear non-medical masks.
  - Give special consideration to populations most at risk of developing severe illness.
  - Ensure those with symptoms self-isolate.
  - Engage in constant transparent communication with communities about distributions.
  - Follow GoE restrictions and request authorization for essential services.

### 2. Food dispatch from primary distribution point (PDP) to food distribution point (FDP)

- Permit entry to PDP by only specific individuals (PDP staff, transporters and porters, etc.) scheduled to support dispatch.
- Ensure hygiene of laborers, transporters and CRS personnel through handwashing or hand sanitizer at PDP entrance.
- Ensure health workers provide COVID-19 information, communication and educational materials.
- Ensure body temperature screening for project participants, transporters and CRS staff by qualified MoH workers. Those with a high temperature are isolated.
- Ventilate warehouses well during and after loading and unloading.
- Minimize the number of trucks at the PDP.
- Ensure transporters wash their hands at the PDP entrance.

### 3. Food distribution

#### a. Pre-distribution

- JEOP coordinates with regional, zonal and *woreda* administrations on master beneficiary lists (MBLs).
- JEOP has suspended project participant

verification and joint targeting through community meetings, and instead uses ration cards prepared using MBLs.

- Distributions are scheduled in consultation with GoE authorities.
- Ensure distribution teams arrive early to organize FDP layout, clearly marking access control, reception area, handwashing point, temperature screening point, verification desk, and ration collection points.
- Ensure commodities arrive at the FDP the day before distribution.
- Clean scooping materials with soap and water ahead of distribution.
- Signage is increased to manage queues and maintain physical distancing.

#### b. During and after distribution:

- Participants follow these steps: Handwashing, temperature check, reception/awareness session, ration card verification, food collection and departure.
- Partner staff, CRS monitors, project participants and government officials use handwashing or sanitizer at the FDP entrance.
- FDP staff and project participants are advised to maintain physical distance.
- Before distributions, scoopers<sup>1</sup> wash hands with soap and water, and wear gloves and face masks. Distribution is prioritized for the elderly; pregnant and breastfeeding women; and people with disabilities, to enable them to depart the FDP as soon as possible upon receiving their food rations.
- Encourage individual scooping to minimize crowding. Project participants depart the FDP upon receiving their rations.
- Encourage the use of phone hotline (not community help desk) to receive and address complaints.
- To minimize physical contact, the use of thumbprints has been suspended. Instead, participants are checked off a list.
- Physical post-distribution monitoring usually involves focus group discussions with community members, but these have been suspended due to COVID-19. JEOP instead reaches out to individual project participants via phone and requests their feedback. One limitation is lack of mobile phone access among project participants.

3. Scoopers are volunteers recruited from the local community, and paid on daily basis. They are not direct participants of JEOP food assistance, but may be youth members of project participant households.



# 1.36m

PROJECT  
PARTICIPANTS  
WERE  
SUPPORTED  
WITH FOOD  
COMMODITIES  
DURING  
ROUNDS  
1 AND 2

## c. Cash transfers

- Similar protocols were applied to cash transfers.
- Where food distributions continued, so did cash distributions.
- Assessments were conducted to adjust transfer values to account for the economic impact of the crisis.
- Financial service providers were trained, and cash was quarantined.

## CONCRETE RESULTS

- Between April and June 2020, JEOP distributed 68,260 metric tons (MT) of emergency Title II food to Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) project participants in 75 *woredas*, and 4,745 MT to internally displaced people/returnees in five *woredas* in Gedeo and West Guji. Title II commodities included bulk wheat, yellow split peas and vegetable oil, reaching an average of 989,399 participants per round. In addition, Corn Soy Blend (CSB+) was provided to 411,468 IDP/returnees.
- HRP 2020 distribution cycles were launched at the end of March amid growing concern over COVID-19. Rounds 1 and 2 were delivered as double distributions, and the process continued through Q4. The CY20 allocation with the highest number of participants was Rounds 1 and 2, during which JEOP supported 1,362,612 project participants.
- Cash in lieu of wheat was planned for Round 6, as per the seasonal calendar. However, given observed price increases in cereals in April/May (sorghum and wheat increased by 10% and 15%, respectively) coupled with COVID-19 restrictions, cash was replaced by commodities to ensure that project participants could access the entirety of their consumption needs.

## LESSONS LEARNT

### What worked well

- **Donor engagement** USAID was flexible in terms of funding for prevention measures. This was associated with its longstanding relationship with CRS in Ethiopia and globally, coupled with timely information sharing and transparency, HQ engagement and a united message at all levels.
- **Partner collaboration** The JEOP consortium has a collaborative approach,

promoting experience-sharing and collective responses to overcome obstacles. CRS shared tools and provided strategic guidance, adapting communication methods to meet the COVID-19 restrictions.

- **GoE engagement** GoE staff facilitated access and transportation, witnessed food delivery, and facilitated scheduling, allowing for temperature checks per MoH guidelines. The GoE was motivated to curb the spread, while ensuring that populations received lifesaving humanitarian support. JEOP has invested in solid government relations.
- **Transporters** Thanks to an existing network of private sector transporters, JEOP was able to maintain timely provision of commodities to areas most in need.
- **Participant engagement** Participants understood and adapted to the changing climate, and JEOP invested in communication to reinforce change.
- **Speed of adaption** JEOP drew on existing tools and resources produced by Humanitarian Response Department technical advisors, to quickly contextually adapt and roll out guidance.

### What did not work

- **Monitoring** Limited field travel and insecurity affected the MEAL system; this is something to improve in future.
- **Trainings** GoE regulations meant that many trainings were postponed; while some partners managed to continue, this was not in a uniform manner. JEOP needs to investigate remote training options (radio, SMS, loudspeakers, etc.).
- **Online communication** Internet challenges limited the uptake speed of online communication.
- **Support duration** Double distributions do not last 90 days (even though a single distribution is planned to last 45 days), in part due to partial family targeting, so participants are at risk in the third month.

## CONCLUSION

### Benefit to the target population

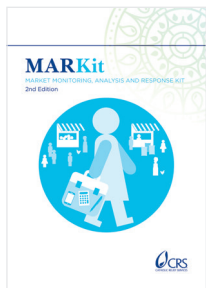
- Access to essential foodstuffs was maintained.
- There was reduced risk of virus transmission among project participants due to prevention measures.
- Hygiene practices improved at the community level.

### Recommendations for future programming

- Piloting repackaging into smaller individual-size units in advance of distributions to reduce time spent at PDP and reduce contamination. This would adapt the role of scoopers to packers, and would require pre-purchase of relevant packing materials.
- Piloting door-to-door distribution to reduce the need for highly at-risk project participants to leave their homes.
- Distributions on a first-come-first-served basis to reduce crowds and waiting time, and increase the safety of project participants (who are able to return home earlier).
- Explore remote training mechanisms.
- Adapt Joint Accountability Mechanism and monitoring to use phone communication to minimise physical contact during COVID-19.
- Monitor changes in transportation costs within the early warning system and market monitoring system.

## Joint Emergency Operation Program (JEOP)

# CONTEXT-DRIVEN RESPONSE: INTEGRATED EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS AND MARKET MONITORING



As part of the adoption of the MARKit methodology, market mapping for retail markets and selection of specific varieties of commodities for analysis was conducted.

### INTRODUCTION

In the face of COVID-19, JEOP has been adapting early warning systems (EWS) and market monitoring mechanisms to maintain operationality, respond to increased need, and increase uptake by sharing with wider audiences. In 2020, JEOP adopted the [MARKit](#) methodology, adding retail price monitoring to existing wholesale price data collection, and facilitating the analysis of the economic impact of the pandemic on JEOP project participants.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Main activities

- The JEOP EWS and market monitoring mechanism data collection takes place by field data collectors on a weekly basis in over 70 *woredas* at the partner and GoE level. In response to COVID-19, data collection has been phone-based, and adapted to include questions on how pricing was affected by COVID-19-related policies and procedures, and the impact of the pandemic on food availability.
- The system is designed such that data is sent by SMS, cleaned, reviewed, entered into the dashboard, and used to develop monthly open-access reports. The interactive dashboard allows users to filter data by timeframe, location and theme, facilitating targeted analysis. Reports highlight key findings in each area, and recommendations for practitioners.

- The JEOP EWS team conducted training at the *woreda* and *kebele* level for the GoE and community members on risk education, response action planning, fast-onset hazards, humanitarian principles and national targeting guidelines.
- As part of the adoption of the MARKit methodology, market mapping for retail markets and selection of specific varieties of commodities for analysis was conducted.

#### Collaboration

Collaboration was maintained among CRS, the GoE, consortium members, humanitarian actors, technical partners and data contributors through human resource sharing, tool creation, process development, data collection, analysis, dissemination and piloting.

- EWS focal points at the *woreda* level are paired (one each from partner and NDRMC), and the dashboard and reports used for GoE planning. As a result, JEOP contributed to seasonal assessments under the leadership of the NDRMC. JEOP is part of the Ministry of Agriculture task force.
- At a global level, JEOP is collaborating with the Cash Learning Partnership, [CALP](#), and JEOP presented learning from the MARKit methodology during a CALP webinar.



Information on desert locust swarms and unseasonal rainfall was shared with communities so they were mobilized for timely harvesting of crops.

## Resource implications

JEOP paid technical service providers and contracted Ethio telecom for a short code used to receive calls or messages. The EWS and market monitoring system relied on existing staff; including the CRS JEOP EWS TA, the JEOP ICT4D team, EWS focal persons at each partner level, JEOP officers, enumerators, and GoE staff.

## CONCRETE RESULTS

- Use of JEOP EWS data for the [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#) process in 2020 to calculate the number and location of affected people.
- Online interactive dashboard accessible to stakeholders at any time.
- Information was shared with local communities—e.g., desert locusts in 2020, or unseasonal rainfall in November/December 2019—so they were mobilized for timely harvesting of crops.
- Pre/post tests on community-level EWS trainings showed increased knowledge.
- Business development: Data from the EWS was used to influence the design of the JEOP rebid.
- Improvement in targeting: The JEOP accountability mechanism showed that targeting inclusion/exclusion errors are the primary cause of community frustration. Trainings on national targeting guidelines and principles of humanitarian assistance are taking an important step to addressing this. This is a long-term goal, as JEOP seeks to move toward galvanizing support for joint targeting.
- JEOP EWS' contribution to seasonal assessments supported allocation of project participant caseloads across geographic areas, and partners are using data to prioritize decision-making on actions.

## LESSONS LEARNT

### What worked well

- **Accessibility of data** The use of PowerBI facilitated access to data.
- **Adaption of the dashboard** The mechanism is easily updated by the JEOP ICT team, to include new tabs and adaptations.
- **Speed of data sharing** Data is updated monthly.

- **Capacity building** The system reinforces existing GoE structures rather than creating a parallel apparatus.
- **Low-tech, low-cost system** The system draws on a phone call and SMS system using regular phones. No additional physical infrastructure is needed. Ideally, SMSs feed directly into the PowerBI dashboard.
- **Experience-sharing** With country programs and partners, JEOP was regularly invited to present the system on a wide variety of forums.
- **Market monitoring** Increases the visibility of how food availability is affected by various conditions.
- **MARKit methodology** The adaptability of the system was demonstrated, an opportunity for testing CRS tools at scale. JEOP is the largest-scale example in CRS where the methodology can be deployed.
- **Donor engagement** USAID counterparts review the draft report each month and participate in dissemination sessions.

### What did not work

- **SMS system** This has been down for some months due to challenges with Ethio telecom and short code access, which delayed data sharing and increased the time required to prepare EWS reports and update the dashboard. Data collectors had to call in their inputs.
- **Consistency of community-based system** Reports from data senders are not consistently received on a weekly basis due to frequent priority changes at the *kebele* level, or breakdowns in connectivity. This results in an information gap.
- **EWS action plans** Following risk education sessions, communities anticipate financial support to put risk mitigation measures in place, yet JEOP does not have funds reserved for this purpose.
- **Integration with commodity distributions** Dashboard does not show the interrelation between price changes and when distributions took place or are planned.
- **Priorities** The EWS was not being used to inform scheduling/planning of distribution due to low engagement of program managers.
- **Data quality checks** The EWS needs to introduce a spot check system to verify data.



## CONCLUSION

### Benefits to target population

Every JEOP activity starts with an assessment, and all JEOP EWS focal persons were engaged and contributed data to identify the number of people in need in specific areas.

### Key lessons learnt

- Collaboration is key. High-level stakeholder buy-in is required for success.
- Timely data is essential for evidence-based programming.
- Simple, low-tech, affordable solutions are required for solid expandable systems with high levels of government engagement.
- The platform is flexible enough to absorb new components, for example, projections, prices of new commodities, desert locust swarms or early-onset hazards.
- When in-person monitoring is not possible due to conflict, road closures or disease, teams can collect data remotely by phone.

### Recommendations for future programming

- Feed new programs into the JEOP EWS and market monitoring rather than creating new systems.
- Set aside funds for EWS activities.
- Develop strategy to use data for knowledge management.
- Include data projections/forecasting in the dashboard.
- Tighten coordination with distribution teams to see how this affects the market.
- Improve data integration to ensure timely data collection and share-out. JEOP is trialing two parallel SMS functionality processes to resolve connectivity issues.
- Data update strategy: JEOP will continue to conduct dissemination and discussion sessions, involving partners in the analysis, and seeking to create grassroots engagement.

## Agricultural Seed Activity Project (ASAP)

## MARKET LINKAGES FOLLOWING CASH DISTRIBUTION



Project participants practice physical distancing as they await cash assistance to buy vegetable seeds in Kercha Inshe *kebele*, Kercha *woreda*, West Guji.

### INTRODUCTION

The Agricultural Seed Activity Project is a one-year project, funded by the USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), that targets more than 53,000 households and works with four partners to distribute cash assistance to families to buy farm tools, vegetable seeds, and coffee and *ensete* seedlings. Through our partner, Hawassa Catholic Secretariat, cash assistance is distributed to 5,600 households, among them 2,100 female-headed households (FHHs) that buy vegetable seeds and plant on homestead farms to complement household food security.

Markets have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is difficult for women to travel to marketplaces and access vegetable seeds. As a result, CRS, in collaboration with universities and the local government agriculture office, have made vegetable seeds available to project participants at cash distribution points using local vendors.

### RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

The program design aimed to distribute cash assistance enabling female project participants to buy vegetable seeds from any available source. However, a market assessment showed that, due to the pandemic, the market was not functioning normally. As a result, the project team decided to make changes to ensure participants could use the cash for its intended purpose.

### CHANGES AND ADAPTATIONS

Linkages were created between project participants and local vegetable seed suppliers. As a result, in all four *woredas* of Gedeo and Guji, more than 80% of female project participants gained access to quality, certified vegetable seeds in their respective *kebeles* from local vendors.

## LESSONS LEARNT

### What worked well

- Access to quality seeds was facilitated for women, and the distributed seed was certified with an 98% of germination rate.
- The COVID-19 risk was reduced by removing the necessity for participants to travel great distances in search of seed, when they may have spread or contracted the virus along the way.
- Associated transportation costs were saved.

### What did not work well

- There were not enough vegetable seed suppliers to meet the need.
- Vendors in some *kebeles* were located far from the *woreda* center, and bringing them to *kebeles* created challenges.

## CONCLUSION

When designing projects, it is vital to put in place, as far as possible, alternative options to cope in the event of unforeseen circumstances, such as the pandemic or other issues that may affect programming.

## Collaborative Action for Peace in Gedeo and West Guji

# COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS DURING COVID-19



With the instability Ethiopia is facing, on top of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to ensure communities do not lose their communal ties and continue to build positive relationships

## INTRODUCTION

CRS' peacebuilding programming responds directly to the social injustices that often drive violent conflict. CRS aims at strengthening horizontal social cohesion by building healthy relationships across groups from different races, religions and ethnicities, while transforming vertical social cohesion by improving the relationship between people and their governments.

Through the Collaborative Action for Peace in Gedeo and West Guji project, funded by the European Commission, CRS has been working to build social cohesion and reconciliation between the Gedeo and Guji communities. The project works with faith leaders, community leaders, women's groups, youth, and government agencies at the *kebele*, *woreda*, zonal and regional levels, as well as humanitarian agencies and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) to increase support and opportunities for youth to participate in peacebuilding, and increase the empowerment of community and faith leaders to actively promote social cohesion and reconciliation.

With the instability Ethiopia is facing, on top of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to ensure communities do not lose their communal ties and continue to build positive relationships. That is why CRS is engaging key local community actors to create systems that can address the root causes of conflict before they escalate into violence. Although implementation of this project has been delayed by six months due to the restrictions put in place by the Ethiopian government and

CRS Ethiopia to mitigate the COVID-19 spread, CRS' peacebuilding unit devised ways to proceed with the implementation of activities by enhancing collaboration with its local church partners.

## RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Amid COVID-19 restrictions, CRS' peacebuilding and protection team prioritized activities that did not require the gathering of people or travel to project areas.

## CHANGES AND ADAPTATIONS

CRS was able to complete the following activities by working with partners on the ground and with consortium members:

- Finalized preparations for logistics and selection criteria development to provide trainings on peacebuilding and conflict resolution to youth peacebuilders, schoolteachers and school heads, as well as married couples, through the Faithful House approach.
- Discussion was held with local government partners to revise our implementation plans to ensure COVID-19 precaution measures were taken when gathering community members for "connector" project selection, for example.
- Revised the implementation plan in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, and prepared an integrated implementation plan with consortium members. Revised budget to ensure costs related to COVID-19 outbreak are considered, such as renting more halls for trainings, face masks and hand sanitizer.



Ongoing communication helped CRS, consortium organizations and partners to prioritize project activities and prepare for project implementation that fully considered the COVID-19 context.

- The assessment to identify viable employment opportunities for youth in West Guji was facilitated by ensuring focus group discussions engaging 88 youths from 10 *kebeles* took place outdoors, and participants were provided with face masks and hand sanitizer. The assessment report will inform program decisions, while organizing and creating livelihood opportunities for 150 youths. As peacebuilding and conflict resolution trainings for youth peacebuilders, schoolteachers and school heads, and married couples are conducted by external consultants, finalizing the recruitment of these consultants allowed the team to move forward with the training immediately after restrictions were lifted on travel and gatherings. Selection of connector projects was finalized during this period through the selection of a few community representatives instead of gathering larger groups for community discussions. Our partners were able to facilitate the selection of five community connector projects (two

schools, two water points and one health post) in West Guji in collaboration with *woreda* and *kebele* administrative officials. Finalizing this process by conducting community dialogue with selected community representatives enabled the team to proceed with the construction of these projects without wasting any time.

## LESSONS LEARNT

Ongoing communication helped CRS, consortium organizations and partners to prioritize project activities and prepare for project implementation that fully considered the COVID-19 context. This helped the team use time during the COVID-19 state of emergency to finalize required tasks such as revising implementation plans, revising budgets to accommodate added costs to help mitigate COVID-19 transmission, and communicate revised implementation plans to church and local government partners. In so doing, the team was able to begin implementation as soon as restrictions were lifted.

## LESSONS LEARNT AND GOOD PRACTICES IN PROGRAMMING

### Peacebuilding and reconciliation approach



Youth peace ambassadors in Geddo and West Guji during training on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, social cohesion and trauma healing.

### INTRODUCTION

To facilitate a peaceful transition during the return of internally displaced people and to support peace efforts across *woredas* in East Hararghe, Geddo and West Guji zones, Irish Aid, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), CRS and its partners provided a sustainable peacebuilding response with the goal of empowering diverse community

groups (men, women, boys, girls and vulnerable groups) to actively promote social cohesion and reconciliation in those areas. Also, these projects attempted to address relevant cross-cutting issues such as gender, protection and human rights through community participation.

The project focused on strengthening the involvement of young people as peace ambassadors to create awareness and influence peers in their communities; and establishing school peace clubs to create awareness of the importance of peace so students can practice resolving their differences in a peaceful manner. The project also enabled communities to come together and identify connector projects such as water schemes, schools, hospitals and roads, to be used by both ethnic groups to strengthen inter-community relations and restore social cohesion through the projects.





The engagement of key local actors—such as government, community representatives, youth, women, religious and traditional leaders—throughout project implementation contributed to the project's effectiveness

## IMPLEMENTATION

There were ongoing consultations with zonal and *woreda* government officials, sector office heads and experts, and other implementing organizations and participant communities. These included:

- Consultative meetings with cabinet members and security forces.
- Capacity building and refresher trainings on conflict management and peacebuilding basics to engage diverse community actors.
- Establishing and strengthening peace committee structures and facilitating experience-sharing and peace dialogue forums and interfaith meetings.
- Establishing and strengthening school peace clubs.
- Providing trainings for youth peace ambassadors on a culture of peace and community engagement skills, and supporting them to engage with communities at the *kebele* level to implement community-designed connector projects.

## RESULTS

Training youth ambassadors, introducing community connector projects and establishing community peace committees had the following early impact:

- Local government officials and security forces began sharing information on security in their localities and communities.
- Schools reopened, and teachers and students resumed teaching and learning.
- Churches and mosques reopened, and believers began to practice their faith together.
- Roads and markets reopened, and conflicting communities began going to the same markets.
- Trust was rebuilt so communities could resume their normal life together.

A shared water point was one of the community connector projects in Gedeo and Guji.



- Displaced community members returned home and resumed their daily lives.
- Conflicting communities started using the same water points, encouraging communities to interact peacefully.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- The engagement of key local actors—such as government, community representatives, youth, women, religious and traditional leaders—throughout project implementation contributed to the project's effectiveness. These actors played a primary role in identifying vulnerable families within their communities, including internally displaced people and host community members to work with.
- Connector projects identified and built with the involvement and ownership of the community, ensured their sustainability. The community selected community members responsible for the proper management and use of the projects. Community water sanitation and hygiene committee (WASHCO) members were trained to maintain water points. The project also ensured that 50% of WASHCO members were women, and they were encouraged to take leadership roles.
- Future projects should consider sustainability by establishing a network with these communities.
- The team learnt the importance of two-way communication with youth peace ambassadors to provide peace and related messages as well as receive information with early warning and response implications.

## CONCLUSION

- Recognizing young people and women as peace actors accelerated the social cohesion and reconciliation process.
- Community connector projects helped resolve protection challenges in communities.
- Community connector projects provided communities with essential services and minimized gender-based violence. Women and girls, who were vulnerable to GBV when they travelled long distances to fetch water, no longer needed to travel as far due to the construction of community water points through the connector projects.

## Safeguarding and protection learning points



**It is important to raise awareness among community members on the CRS safeguarding policy, staff conduct and reporting mechanisms**

CRS is committed to ensuring that safeguarding and protection are well integrated into its programming so community members are protected from harm and abuse. The protection, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) teams have been setting up a country program hotline as a safe and accessible feedback, complaints and response mechanism for both sensitive and non-sensitive issues, and to ensure community members, especially vulnerable groups, can freely report any feedback and complaints.

- Focus group discussions conducted with women, men, girls, boys, and people with disabilities, to identify their preferred feedback channel for sensitive and non-sensitive concerns showed that mobile phones were considered easy-to-use, safe and accessible.
- CRS visited organizations with hotlines to gain insight into how these systems work.
- Consultations were held with two information technology companies—Netplus and eCom-technology—that set up hotline systems for other organizations. They provided information on set-up, operations and budget.
- The accountability manuals of CRS Ethiopia's Joint Emergency Operation Program, Development Food Security Activity and Feed the Future Ethiopia Livelihoods for Resilience – Oromia programs were reviewed. Discussions were also held with project teams to identify good practices and challenges. The discussions showed that establishing a CP hotline system was considered essential for community members to easily report their concerns.

The following were identified as important learning experiences that can inform plans for FY 21:

- In the development of proposals, it is important to allocate appropriate time and budget to protection and safeguarding activities. This allows projects to address the needs of all community members, especially vulnerable groups. However, the inclusion of protection and safeguarding activities may not be enough. It is essential to always set an indicator for these activities, so the activities will not be overlooked.
- Safeguarding and protection trainings have proved essential for CRS and partner staff. Feedback gathered from training participants showed that the trainings enhanced their understanding of the CRS safeguarding policy. Each staffer should receive such trainings as well as regular refresher trainings.
- It is important to raise awareness among community members on the CRS safeguarding policy, staff conduct and reporting mechanisms. Programs and projects have been raising awareness among community members in the program locations. Having information, education and communication materials is vital for effectively raising awareness among community members.
- The protection and MEAL teams are setting up a CP hotline as a feedback, complaints and response mechanism. Once the system is in place, it will facilitate the addressing of concerns raised by community members, especially vulnerable groups, confidentially and in a timely manner to ensure program quality.



## Farmer groups, networks and peer-to-peer training improve project implementation

Volunteer farmers demonstrate tree management practices in Dire Keletu kebele, Dodota woreda, Oromia.



**Volunteer farmers have significantly contributed to the process of land restoration by inspiring local farmers, demonstrating regreening practices, and advocating the benefits of land restoration**

### BACKGROUND

Reversing Land Degradation in Africa by Scaling Up Evergreen Agriculture (Regreening Africa) is a five-year project (September 2017 – 2022) that seeks to reverse land degradation among 500,000 households across 1 million hectares of land in eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In Ethiopia, the project aims to restore 200,000 ha of degraded and deforested land across the four regions of Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' by benefiting nearly 120,000 vulnerable households by improving their livelihoods and supporting them to become resilient to climate-related shocks. The project is being implemented in 23 districts in collaboration with *woreda* government offices. World Agroforestry (ICRAF) provides technical support and is overall project lead.

The project employs approaches and methodologies to promote widescale adoption of regreening practices through direct implementation and the leveraging of existing projects, institutions and government sector offices. To reach a vast number of community members with limited resources, the project considered the use of local farmer groups, networks and volunteer farmers (VFs) with excellent communication skills who are skilled in training and persuading other farmers to adopt regreening practices.

### OBJECTIVE

The project followed this approach to:

- Improve project implementation and increase the adoption rate
- Reach large targets in a short time, and improve peer-to-peer knowledge and skills sharing
- Ensure project sustainability by engaging community members
- Train volunteer farmers

VFs, farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) and conservation groups, and community-based organizations were trained on regreening practices such as FMNR, homestead agroforestry, tree planting, value chains, rural resource centers and nursery practices to implement regreening practices at scale.

From February 2019, a total of 180 VFs (132 in Tigray and 48 in Oromia) were trained in FMNR, homestead agroforestry, enrichment planting in area enclosures and pasture lands, and the establishment of woodlots on their farmlands. VFs are residents of the project target villages who were selected by their community to undergo intensive training by the project. Experts from the *woreda* government office and development agents were also actively involved in the selection and training of the VFs.

Trained VFs each train 20 neighboring farmers. As of September 2020, some 3,530 farmers (3,030 in Tigray and 500 in Oromia) had been trained, resulting in the adoption of regreening practices in the project areas.

## RESULTS

Regular field visits by project staff at different times of the year were conducted to verify the contribution of VFs and FMNR groups to land restoration and their catalyzing efforts in the adoption of regreening practices. Joint reflection and learning missions were organized and led by ICRAF. These comprised stakeholders including ICRAF and project staff, government representatives and National Oversight and Coordination Committee members.

Field visits and partner reports showed that VFs have significantly contributed to the process of land restoration by inspiring local farmers, demonstrating regreening practices, and advocating the benefits of land restoration. As a result, about 3,114 ha of land is under restoration. The project uses the Regreening Africa mobile application to monitor land restoration progress and the households involved. The role of VFs has stood out more significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as large regular trainings, workshops, field visits and exchange visits were severely constrained; community mobilization was completely halted; and partner staff visits to project sites reduced. During this time, VFs delivered training and conducted awareness-raising activities on regreening practices, and helped the project to achieve its Year 3 target. Without the engagement of VFs, the project would not have been able to train more farmers to practice FMNR, agroforestry, enrichment planting, and woodlot plantation. Also, the project was able to achieve its target with minimum costs and resources as large-scale training to reach farmers was canceled and instead training was delivered by VFs. To further increase the role of VFs in training and supporting local farmers to take up regreening practices, incentives for VFs included pruning tools, fruit tree seedlings, T-shirts and caps. Moreover, exchange visits were arranged in various areas to give VFs land restoration experience and to create an opportunity to learn from the success of others. On their return to their own village, they share their

observations and lessons with local farmers in their own language to further accelerate the adoption of regreening practices.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Using influential community leaders who are committed to supporting and leading their communities has worked well.
- VFs who were selected by the community based on a set of key criteria contributed significantly to speeding up the adoption of regreening practices in their villages and helped disseminate project messages.
- Working with grassroots volunteer leaders and organizations as frontline peer-to-peer extension workers, and handing over some project implementation responsibilities positively accelerated the adoption of the technologies the project advocates and ensures its sustainability. The approach created ownership of the project and confidence among farmers who were involved throughout the process.
- The sustainability of the extension services was enhanced because the VFs live in the community and the knowledge gained from the project will be retained locally.

## CONCLUSION

The Regreening Africa project has used VFs and FMNR groups to easily diffuse regreening practices and reach large farmer groups within a reasonable timeframe. In so doing, the project has successfully facilitated the adoption of regreening practices at scale and achieved its annual target amid the COVID-19 pandemic. VFs have been used to develop low-cost sustainable approaches to service provision that go beyond sharing messages to playing a key role in promoting farmers as the principal agents of change in their communities. These approaches enhance farmers' learning and innovation, and improve their capacities to organize themselves for more efficient diffusion of technologies such as regreening practices. During project development and design, engaging the local community to take the lead in project implementation will have the greatest impact on technology adoption and contribute to ensuring project impact sustainability. In addition, at times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, the local community can take the lead in project implementation and provide support when travel by project staff is restricted.



**Using influential community leaders who are committed to supporting and leading their communities has worked well**

## Cash transfers improve clients' well-being

### INTRODUCTION

Feed the Future Ethiopia Livelihoods for Resilience – Oromia is a five-year USAID-funded activity that runs until January 2022 and aims to support the livelihood options of chronically food-insecure households in Oromia region, with the goal of improving the sustainable economic well-being of Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) households in Arsi (Sire, Dodota and Ziway Dugda), West Arsi (Shala, Negele Arsi, Heben Arsi and Siraro), and East Shewa (Adami Tulo Jido Kombolcha and Boset). The Activity aims to assist 24,500 households to successfully graduate 18,375 of them out of the PSNP.



Some 8,321 households who actively participated in livelihood groups were targeted for multipurpose cash grants to support their family budgets and household resource plans

The objective of the cash transfer program was to mitigate the secondary economic impacts of COVID-19 by protecting assets, providing a source of finance for project-supported interventions, and creating safe spaces to do business. Based on multiple time-sensitive household needs, the Activity determined that cash transfers were the most appropriate way to support households in protecting their assets from the potentially devastating consequences of the pandemic on their livelihoods.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Some 8,321 households who actively participated in livelihood groups (LGs) in four *woredas*, namely ATJK, Dodota, Boset and Sire, were targeted for multipurpose cash grants to support their family budgets and household resource plans (HRPs) and provided with 1,400 birr (about \$40).

To prevent and minimize household vulnerability to COVID-19 infection during the cash transfers, the Activity selected distribution sites that were close to the communities, limited the number of staff and clients at distribution points, arranged distribution sites based on physical distancing standards, and equipped sites with handwashing stations.

To increase the number of women and persons with specific needs benefitting from the transfer, the Activity encouraged couples to review their household budgets and resource plans to determine how to

allocate the cash transfers, encouraged wives to accompany their husbands to collect the cash transfers when the husband was the registered head of household by the GOE, permitted women and/or persons with specific needs to delegate someone to collect the cash transfer on their behalf if they were uncomfortable or unable to travel to the distribution site, located the distribution sites close to their *kebeles* to minimize harassment or theft, and provided feedback-and-response mechanisms (FRMs) at each cash distribution.

In addition, partner agro-dealers and agricultural input suppliers were notified of the cash distribution schedule so they could promote their goods at distribution points and stock supplies of relevant inputs during the distribution weeks.

Reflecting on the need to adapt to the changing operational environment, the team took the following actions to strengthen the FRM for the cash transfers:

- Provided orientation to both MEAL and project staff on available FRMs
- Verbally informed arriving participants of the FRM options and directed them to posters with details, including phone numbers
- Confirmed that all telephone lines were activated and staffed.

During CVA implementation, 489 feedback items/complaints were received and responded to.

### LESSONS LEARNT

- Early and consistent engagement of partners and teams was beneficial.
- Using completed payment sheets with beneficiary names and, if possible, ID, allowed the staff of financial services providers to focus on distribution.
- Preparing cash amounts in envelopes was helpful for reducing the spread of COVID-19 infection and improving efficiency.
- Preparing safe distribution guidelines and training all stakeholders facilitated the process.
- Program and management flexibility enhanced adaptability.



## BEST PRACTICES FOR CASH TRANSFER PROGRAM

- There was daily photo sharing by the field team and feedback on shared photos.
- A cash and voucher assistance checklist was prepared and shared with the management team to enable them to make preparations.
- A daily debriefing of the cash distribution team was held.
- To facilitate physical distancing, gypsum powder was used to mark places for lining up, waiting areas, etc.
- Safe waste disposal was employed for the handwashing station so that water was discarded away from the public area.

### Feed the Future Ethiopia Livelihoods for Resilience – Oromia

## Adaptive management to adapt to drastic external shocks

Cash transfer clients line up at a distribution site using COVID-safe physical distancing measures in Sibafete kebele, Boset woreda.



The Activity had to adapt to fast-paced and drastic external shocks such as COVID-19, pests (desert locust and fall army worm) and intra-communal violence

### RATIONALE

The Feed the Future Ethiopia Livelihoods for Resilience – Oromia Activity had to adapt to fast-paced and drastic external shocks, such as COVID-19, pests (desert locust and fall army worm) and intra-communal violence.

### CHANGES AND ADAPTATIONS COVID-19

Following the first case of COVID-19 being reported in mid-March, the Activity moved quickly to remote working and engaging its partner by phone and email. Resources were redirected to new activities and existing activities were adapted. It also fundamentally changed how it interacted with community members. These approaches included:

- **Providing personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies:** To allow for key activities to continue, using CRS' cost share, the Activity purchased reusable face masks, disposable gloves, jerrycans and other equipment to project staff, government, service providers and livelihoods groups.
- **Reorganizing LG meeting modalities:** Representatives of LG management committees met with members individually to receive savings and provide loans. The Activity ensured a safe space for such meetings by providing jerrycans for handwashing and public awareness materials.
- **Revisiting trainings and key messages:** LGs were broken into groups of up to four participants. Training content was simplified so physical distancing could be respected, and videos projected using mini-projectors, and loudspeakers purchased or rented. Radio airtime was purchased to broadcast key messages.
- **Providing door-to-door services:** Staff and service providers went door to door where it was impossible to place LG members in small groups.
- **Arranging of public meetings/events:** COVID-19 infection mitigation measures were considered.



**A three-phase desert locust approach was developed: monitoring and reporting, preparation and mitigation, and recovery**

## PESTS

By coordinating with the DFSA program and securing additional funds, a three-phase desert locust approach was developed: monitoring and reporting, preparation and mitigation, and recovery.

In the monitoring and reporting phase, the team reached out to the Food and Agriculture Organization to participate in use of the eLocust3m mobile application, and attended Government of Ethiopia technical working groups. In the preparation and mitigation phase, technical teams revised crop and livestock technical trainings to promote mitigation measures such as managing pests, making silage and hay, and post-harvesting. Lastly, in the event of a widespread and devastating infestation, the team prepared recovery options which included cash, voucher, and/or in-kind assistance. A desert locust swarm was reported on October 30, 2020, in Boset, Dodota, and Sire. Government bodies have visited the affected *kebeles*.

## CONFLICT

In anticipation of potential conflicts arising due to the secondary economic impacts of COVID-19 and possible desert locust infestations, the Activity considered how to strengthen the three types of social capital: binding, bonding, and bridging. For binding, the Activity focused on conflict between spouses by revising the The Faithful House / Islamic Family House curriculum to emphasize how to reduce intimate partner violence. For bonding, LGs were encouraged to continue meeting safely to support each other by providing moral support and allocating social funds. For bridging, the Activity continued supporting the 3,000 trained Youth Peace Ambassadors in teaching others about conflict management and mitigation measures. With the COVID-19 crisis, the Activity focused on the new responses. A resurgence of communal violence at the end of June 2020 confirmed the need to refocus on social cohesion.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- Ahead of the national election, the Activity invested in conflict management and mitigation programming (i.e. Youth Peace Ambassadors), as well as identifying possible cash and voucher assistance delivery mechanisms. This enabled it to quickly revise its FY20 annual workplan and the provide cash transfers.
- Government of Ethiopia COVID-19 restrictions discouraged livelihoods groups from holding meetings. Accordingly, CRS SILC standards were reviewed to change seating arrangements, the number of LG members who attend, the frequency of meetings, and the modalities for collecting savings and disbursing loans.
- To ensure physical distancing, the team reviewed training content, and instructional videos were developed and loudspeakers purchased or rented.

## CONCLUSION

- All non-essential staff worked from home, and safety measures were instituted at the office, including the provision of PPE for all staff.
- To come to the office, staff required the prior approval of their supervisor.
- The internet allowance was revisited to facilitate remote work.
- The Activity established a Registry-based Randomized Clinical Trial, which coordinates the procurement or delivery of equipment and supplies to partners, facilitates the sharing of programmatic approaches by different projects, and manages complementary business development.