

## Communities Helping their Environment and Land by Bridging Interests (CHELBI) Project

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## PART I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Communities Helping their Environment and Land by Bridging Interests (CHELBI) Project works in Konso, Alle and Burji woredas of Segen Area Peoples' Zone in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), and Teltele Woredas of Borana Zone in Oromiya Regional State. The goal of the project is to reduce violence among agricultural and pastoral communities in Southern Ethiopia by promoting sustainable natural resource management, land use planning and livelihood opportunities.

The program works towards its goal through the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** Facilitate people-to-people solutions to land and natural resource competition by creating opportunities for inter-community engagement around natural resource issues of shared interest.

**Objective 2:** Develop capacity and linkages among formal and non-formal institutions to facilitate and enforce inter-community agreements around sustainable natural resource areas of shared interest.

**Objective 3:** Facilitate market linkages for natural resource products and improved technologies that can sustainably enhance resource dependent livelihoods.

The CHELBI project operates in an area known as the Chau Bahir watershed, where six distinct ethnic groups are often competing over limited key livelihood resources – rangelands, farmlands, water points and forests. Konso farmers and Borena pastoralists' frequently engaged in life threatening conflict with each other as the Konso expand their farm lands into Borana's dry season grazing lands and occupy seasonal river banks for farming. The agro-pastoral Tsemay compete for access to farmland along river banks with both Konso and Alle. The Borena, Hamer, and Arbore pastoralists increasingly rely on resource-rich territories in their borderlands to feed and water their cattle, which commonly leads to escalated raiding and revenge-killing among the communities.

The project works to promote interdependence among pastoral and agricultural communities of the Chau Bahir watershed through sustainable natural resource management (NRM), land use agreements and livelihood opportunities. The natural resource management component of the project focuses on consensus-driven, sustainable management and utilization of key shared resources, land use planning and rehabilitation processes through people-to-people (P2P) facilitation approaches. The project also works with community based traditional institutions and local government structures to build their institutional capacity to promote and effectively facilitate multi-stakeholder natural resource management processes. Building on Mercy Corps' best practices and lessons learned in the area, CHELBI supports market linkages and value chains for input supply, livestock, and improved agricultural technologies that will build resilience of the target pastoral and agricultural communities for the increasing impact of climate change.

## PART II: PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### A. Project Accomplishment Summary

**OBJECTIVE ONE:** *Facilitate People-to-People solutions to land and natural resource competition by creating opportunities for inter-community engagement around natural resources issues of shared interest*

- Intra-community discussions in twelve kebeles of Konso, Alle & Burji woredas
- Woreda level reflection work shop in Konso and Alle woredas
- Environmental awareness raising events in eleven kebeles

**OBJECTIVE TWO:** *Develop capacity and linkages among formal and non-formal institutions to facilitate and enforce inter-community agreement around sustainable natural resource (NR) areas of shared interest*

- Capacity assessment for stakeholders (formal institutions)
- Capacity Building training for stakeholders
- Support to nursery sites

**OBJECTIVE THREE:** *Facilitate market linkages for natural resource products and improved technologies that can sustainably enhance resource dependent livelihoods*

- Environment friendly alternative technologies promoted (pit plastic storage bag & fuel efficient cookstove)
- Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Women Groups
  - Establishment of fuel efficient cookstove producer groups
  - Capacity assessment for existing cooperatives

### B. Program Accomplishments by Objectives

**OBJECTIVE 1:** *Facilitate People-to-People solutions to land and natural resource competition by creating opportunities for inter-community engagement around natural resources issues of shared interest.*

As part of people-to-people solutions to land and natural resource competitions, CHELBI supported a series of intra-community discussions and environmental awareness raising events that will pave the way to inter-community negotiations around shared natural resource issues. Intra-community discussions and woreda reflection meetings are aimed at identifying key issues and developing action plans for cross community discussions that will be facilitated in the coming months.

### ***Intra-community discussions***

Separate community level discussions among key community representatives: in the reporting period Mercy Corps facilitated separate community level discussions in twelve kebeles of Konso, Burji and Alle woredas (Birbirs, Mederiagizaba, Borkora, Arfaide, & Gelabo kebeles in Konso woreda; Eyena, Gergema and Kerkerte in Alle woreda; and Gemyo, Kilicho, Gera and Billa in Burji woreda). In these discussions a total of 466 key community representatives (314 male and 152 female) and 10 government officials participated from Konso, Alle & Burji woredas. The separate community discussions were facilitated among elders, youth and women groups through resource mapping exercises that aimed to identify key community issues from all groups of community.



Birbirs kebele women's group discussion

During the discussions, community members prioritized key challenges around shared natural resources and suggested ways forward for cross community engagements to improve relationships with neighboring community groups. The major challenge identified by all groups was the lack of formal agreements and management plans for shared natural resource access and utilization. In line with this the participants of the discussion also identified contested areas, buffer zones and highly degraded areas that need co-management plans and rehabilitation processes. During action planning sessions all community groups stressed the importance of bylaw development to enforce sustainable co-management of natural resources and to facilitate further discussions to handle issues that may arise over time.

Wider community level discussions: as a follow-up to the community level discussions with key community representatives, Mercy Corps organized wider community level discussions in twelve kebeles of Burji, Alle and Konso woredas (Kilicho and Gemyo kebeles in Burji woreda; Borkora, Abaroba, Arfaide, Gelabo, Maderiagizaba, Nalaya and Jarso in Konso woreda; and Eyena, Gergema and Kerkerte in Alle woreda). A total of 1,195 community members (914 male and 281 female) and 6 government officials actively participated in the process from Alle, Burji and Konso communities.

The wider community level discussion aimed to validate findings from separate community level discussions and to get buy-in for cross community engagement proposed by key community representatives. Across the board the community members confirmed key issues identified around shared natural resources and underlined the need for immediate cross community discussion for

improved relationships with bordering communities. At the end of community discussions the participants nominated members for woreda level reflection sessions that will consolidate woreda level issues before proceeding to inter community discussions.



Wider community discussion - Kerkerte



Wider community discussion - Eyena

### ***Woreda Level Reflection Workshop***

Mercy Corps facilitated two woreda level reflection workshops in Konso and Alle woredas. The Konso woreda reflection meeting was organized in Karat town from December 26 – 27, 2014 and the Alle woreda event was organized in Gewada town from December 28 – 29, 2014. In these two events a total of 172 community representatives (134 men & 38 women) and 12 woreda officials participated from Konso and Alle woredas. The woreda reflection workshop was organized to consolidate the outcome of community level discussions and establish woreda level NRM task forces that will coordinate upcoming cross community discussions and rehabilitation activities.

In the reflection workshop the participants discussed action plans for inter community discussion and established an NRM task force comprised of woreda level sector offices, elders, women and youth groups (10-11members). The participants also decided to establish an NRM task force at cluster and kebele level to facilitate community mobilization, community action planning and implementation of natural resource rehabilitation activities. In Konso, priority was given to inter community discussions with bordering Alle and Borana communities; and in Alle, priority was give to cross community discussions with Konso. Mercy Corps will organize inter community discussions between Alle and Konso communities in the next quarter and pre-arrangements for Konso-Borena cross community discussion will be finalized.

### ***Environmental Awareness Raising***

To ensure wider community buy-in and long term commitment to NRM agreements, community members require a clear understanding on the links between climate change, environmental conditions,

and existing land use patterns in relation to conflict contexts. In order to inform community discussion and action planning around shared natural resources with local and global environmental issues, Mercy Corps facilitated environmental awareness raising sessions in eleven kebeles of Alle, Burji and Konso woreda. The awareness raising activities were conducted in kebele administration compounds where a total of 743 community members (536 male and 207 female) and 8 government officials participated in the process.

The sessions highlighted causes and context of climate change, its impact on livelihoods, and trends in shaping the life and relationship of communities and their environment. Applying a trend analysis tool, participants of the session were given a chance to discuss and go through the environmental condition of their particular area over the last 40 years that helps them to easily understand how their environmental condition has deteriorated over the years. As part of this process, the participants identified common effects of deteriorating environmental conditions in their localities; which includes recurrent drought, flooding, loss of soil fertility, land degradation and decline in land productivity. Community members also identified the causes for this environmental degradation in their respective areas – like unwise use of natural resources, high population pressure, deforestation, poor agronomic practices, and absence of commonly agreed bylaws for access, use and management of shared natural resource areas. Further to this process, participants forwarded possible solutions to curb the spiral downward of environmental conditions. The participants underlined their commitment to mobilize their communities for rehabilitation and restoration of degraded areas in their localities. Cross community negotiation and action planning was identified as necessary next step for sustainable co-management of shared natural resource areas.



Environmental awareness raising event – Borkora kebele

***OBJECTIVE 2: Develop capacity and linkages among formal and non-formal institutions to facilitate and enforce inter-community agreement around sustainable NR areas of shared interest***

In the past, indigenous NRM institutions were effective at regulating resource access and resolving issues around shared natural resource. However the role of traditional institutions diminished over the years as formal institutions focus more on political boundaries in managing cross-community natural resource issues. The government-led NRM initiatives try to include communities in planning and executing natural resource management activities but the traditional institutions were not engaged in a systematic or meaningful manner that would boost the outcome of community action plans and bylaws.

In order to ensure legitimate, effective and functional institutions for sustainable co-management of shared natural resources, CHELBI supports capacity building and linkages among indigenous community institutions and formal NRM actors. As part of the capacity building processes, Mercy Corps includes traditional institutions in planning and executing natural resource management activities at all levels. A community bylaw development around shared natural resources also gives due attention to active participation and leadership of traditional NRM institutions. The bylaws developed at the community level will be presented to the woreda council to ensure legitimacy and create linkages between traditional and formal NRM institutions. CHELBI supported capacity assessments as an entry point to identify gaps and map out multi-stakeholder engagement approaches.

### ***Stakeholder Capacity Assessment***

During the reporting period Mercy Corps invited traditional NRM institutions to all community discussions around shared natural resources. They will also take center stage during upcoming cross community discussion among Konso, Alle and Burji communities. As an entry point for creating linkages and supporting institutional capacity building, Mercy Corps organized stakeholder capacity assessment sessions in three woredas of the project target areas – namely Alle, Burji and Konso woredas. The capacity assessment mainly focuses on the capacity of formal institution to support the shared natural resource management activities. Across all three woredas the following areas were identified as a major gap to support negotiation and rehabilitation activities around co-management of shared natural resources:

- Poor coordination with and participation of traditional institutions in NRM processes
- Lack of technical skill and materials – the woredas have limited skill in operating GPS and some local NRM committees do not have GPS at all
- Lack of sufficient technical capacity on different soil and water conservation techniques
- Shortage of seedlings to cover developed structures
- Limited information and knowledge on climate change, and
- Limited capacity in leadership and other scientific methods like estimating land carrying capacity, range land management and monitoring and evaluation techniques.

Mercy Corps will work closely with local government structures to address key capacity gaps and create linkages among different actors for sustainable co-management of shared natural resources and improved relationships among neighboring communities.

### ***Training on GPS, Climate Change and Watershed Management***

As per the outcome of stakeholder capacity assessment, Mercy Corps organized technical trainings for Alle, Burji and Konso woreda experts. The trainings were organized in the respective woreda centers in early December 2014 in which 86 experts from the three woredas participated. The purpose of the training was to enhance the skill and knowledge of experts and development agents on how to operate GPS and different techniques to be employed in soil and water conservation activities in watershed

development processes. Furthermore, the training was aimed at improving the awareness and knowledge of all participants regarding climate change issues at global, national and local levels. The GPS training was provided by experts from Arba Minch University, whereas training on soil and water conservation techniques was provided by experts from Gamo Gofa Zone Agriculture Office and climate change topics were covered by Mercy Corps staff. The training includes both theory and field work.



GPS training at Konso



Soil & water conservation training - Konso

### ***Support to Nursery Sites***

Mercy Corps continued providing technical and material support to Gergema, Arfaide & Kilicho nursery sites. In the reporting period, equipment and materials – like watering cans, rakes, shovels, line levels, measuring tape and poly bags were provided to all nursery sites. Currently more than 152,600 seedlings have been raised and are being managed until they are distributed to their final destination in April and May, 2015.

***OBJECTIVE 3: Facilitate market linkages for natural resource products and improved technologies that can sustainably enhance resource dependent livelihoods.***

### ***Promotion of Environment Friendly Alternative Technologies***

Pit plastic storage bag: In this reporting period, Mercy Corps purchased and introduced the first 50 pit storage bags and prepared for distribution to interested individuals in Konso and Burji Woredas through unions and private suppliers. Mercy Corps also supported two local business owners to link them with the plastic bag producers so that they can involve in supplying the product on the local market in Konso and Alle woredas.

Fuel efficient cookstove: During woreda level reflection workshops, the platform was also used to promote fuel efficient cookstoves. Guye Gahano, a woman from Fuchucha kebele who currently produces and sells fuel efficient cooking stoves shared her experience and demonstrated the fuel efficient cookstove for participants of Konso and Alle woreda reflection workshop. At the end of the event more than 30 participants decided to buy the cookstove and registered to receive the product.



Guye Gehano sharing her experience (fuel efficient cookstove)

### ***Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Women Groups***

Establishment of fuel efficient cookstove producer groups: In the reporting period, Mercy Corps supported the establishment of two fuel efficient cookstove producer groups in Alle and Burji Woredas.

The groups have a total of twenty five women members where 14 of them are from Kilicho kebele of Burji woreda and 11 of them are from Kerkerte kebele of Alle woreda. A five day technical training on fuel efficient cookstove production processes was provided for both groups in their respective kebeles. At the end of the training, all trainees took one fuel efficient cookstove to use it in their home and demonstrate it for their community. The Kerkerte producer group immediately demonstrated their products in Gewada market and managed to sell 6 fuel efficient cook stoves on the first day. Government sector offices also expressed their readiness to provide technical and legal support to the group in the legalization processes and marketing the products for wider community members. Alle woreda administration promised to support the Kerkerte producer group to construct a production and marketing building in the kebele located in the Arbaminch-Jinka highway.



Fuel efficient cookstove – Kerkerte producer group

### **PART III: PLAN FOR NEXT QUARTER**

***Objective 1: Facilitate People-to-People solution to land and natural resource competition by creating opportunities for inter-community engagement around NR issues of shared interest.***

- Finalize wider community level discussions in two kebeles
- Conduct woreda level reflection work shop in two woredas (Burji and Teltele woredas)
- Support inter-community dialogue among Alle, Burji, Konso and Borena communities
- Site selection for rehabilitation of degraded areas
- Community mobilization to implement community action plan to rehabilitate selected degraded areas
- Support exposure visit to areas with best practices in watershed management
- Facilitate community level environmental awareness raising events

***Objective 2: Develop capacity and linkages among formal and non-formal institutions to facilitate and enforce inter-community agreement around sustainable NR areas of shared interest.***

- Material and technical support to zone and woreda land use planning teams, water shade committees and nursery sites
- Support consultation workshop on the role of traditional institutions in supporting cross community NRM processes
- Facilitate training for multi-stakeholders on leadership and facilitation approach for shared natural resource negotiation processes
- Provide technical training on community resource mapping and land use planning, and
- Continue providing ongoing support for nursery sites

***Objective 3: Facilitate market linkages for natural resource products and improved technologies that can sustainably enhance resource dependent livelihoods.***

- Facilitate Economic Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA) for alternative energy and agriculture products
- Pit plastic storage bag distribution in selected potential kebeles, and
- Promotion and market linkages for energy efficient stove production

## PART IV: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

USG Indicator	LoP Target	Performance		
		Previous Semesters Cumulative	This Quarter (July-Sep 2014)	Total to Date (March 2014)
No. of USG-assisted facilitated events geared toward strengthening understanding and mitigating conflict between groups	57	16	27	43
No. of people from at risk groups reached through USG-supported conflict mitigation activities	23,000	469	2,576	3,045
No. of additional hectares under improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance	6,000	0	0	0
No. of policies, laws, agreements or regulations promoting sustainable natural resource management and conservation that are implemented as a result of USG assistance	6	0	0	0
No. of people receiving USG-supported training in natural resources management and/or biodiversity conservation	490	0	86	86
No. of micro-enterprises participating in USG-assisted value chains	30	4	2	6

## PART IV: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

### **Challenges:**

Busy government schedule: the wider community level discussion and inter-community negotiation processes demands active participation of government officials. However, government staff are becoming much busier as result of the upcoming elections. This is directly affecting the progress of the project activity implementation.