



SNAPSHOT

Training Leads to Improved Irrigation Management

CIAFS-trained agent of change uses new skills to engage community, and increase irrigated land area



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Thanks to Mastewal Ejigu using the leadership tools he learned from USAID-CIAFS training, his community now fully supports a new irrigation system, increasing access to water for 701 farmers.

"If we facilitate better engagement and catalyze cooperation for planning and managing resources, more farmers will benefit."

-Mastewal Ejigu, Coordinator for PASIDP

One of the major challenges that Mastewal Ejigu Ademe faces when addressing resource management concerns is lack of community engagement. As a coordinator for the International Fund for Agriculture Development's Participatory Small-Scale Irrigation Development Program (PASIDP) within the Amhara Bureau of Agriculture, he noticed that his irrigation project was not progressing because of a growing distrust among community members. Farmers were reluctant to embrace new technologies because they associated them with sources of conflict, and stakeholders did not understand the underlying issues.

In May 2011, Mastewal had the opportunity to attend a leadership training led by USAID's Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security (USAID-CIAFS) project. Mastewal used knowledge from the training to build consensus on project goals among people of all genders and age groups in two pilot communities in Amhara: Upper-Quashni and Tinishu Fetam. USAID-CIAFS's trainees had learned and practiced key skills needed for successful project implementation including cultivating community involvement, setting goals, identifying root causes for barriers, and promoting action among stakeholders.

Mastewal applied the participatory principles he learned during the training to determine the reasons for community discord. Through talks with community members, he realized that lack of vision, self-reliance, coordination, collective planning, strategic thinking, equity, inclusiveness, and a sense of urgency were some of the barriers to development. After identifying the issues, he worked with colleagues and developed tools to address them. Using these tools, Mastewal led participatory sessions to strengthen community involvement and ownership, significantly enhancing communication among community members and other key stakeholders. The result was an increased sense of project ownership among beneficiaries, and better community commitment to completing the project.

As a result of Mastewal's efforts and the improved coordination, irrigable land has increased in trial areas. Nearly 701 farmers now have access to irrigated water for their crops in Upper-Quashni.

"Through my own experience, I have learned that if we facilitate better engagement and catalyze cooperation for planning and managing resources, more farmers will benefit from the development of irrigation and water resources," Mastewal said after witnessing the results of intensified community involvement.

To date, USAID-CIAFS has provided training on leadership, entrepreneurship, and competitiveness to 663 public sector employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and regional Bureaus of Agriculture in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray, and 281 members of the private sector and civil society. The trainings have improved the capacity of these agents of change and empowered them to transform their businesses and communities, improving agriculture and food security.