



Young Women Can Do It!!

MELCA-ETHIOPIA



Stories of Change from Suba Project Area





MELCA-Ethiopia

Vision:

To see healthy and prosperous people that preserve their bio-cultural diversity

Mission:

To work for healthy ecosystems, resilient communities and critical young generation through developing and institutionalizing innovative approaches and experiences

Goal:

To increase the adaptive capacity to social and ecological challenges of communities and contribute to the creation of a healthy ecosystem.

Project background

MELCA-Ethiopia is a non-governmental, non profit making legally registered charity organization operating in Ethiopia. While the organization holds a broader goal of supporting communities to conserve their bio-cultural diversity, it has devised four program areas that would enable it move toward its broader goal. The program areas are Agro-ecology, Environmental Governance, Child and Youth Empowerment and Eco-friendly Livelihood Improvement Schemes. MELCA is currently implementing its programs at six project areas in 5 regional states of Ethiopia.

As part of its Child and Youth Empowerment program, MELCA is implementing a youth focused project called “My Life My Choice (MLMC)” in its Suba Sebeta project area in Finfinne Area Special Zone of Oromia Regional State.

The overall objective of the project is to create conducive environment for empowerment of youth, especially young women, through reduction of poverty, tackling early marriage, creation of favourable conditions to keep them in school and reduction of inequality in education and enhancement of their entrepreneurial skills.

The project focuses particularly on ensuring the success of boys and girls in school by enhancing awareness of their families regarding provision of equal opportunities for both boys and girls, providing them basic educational materials, a friendly school environment and provide them tutorial supports.

Stories From In School Young Women Can Do It Club

Obse Taaddasee is a 16 year old girl living in Holeta town, Goro Keransa kebele. She is a grade 8 student in Goro Kerensa primary school. She is a member of Young Women Can Do It (YWCDI) in the school. Obse expressed her story as follow:

“Before I joined a club called Young Women can Do It that MELCA-Ethiopia established in our school, I was a shy girl. I could not express my idea to my families, teachers and classmates. Even I keep myself isolated and was far from social life. I did not know my rights. I also did not give value for education and as a result my academic performance was poor. After I joined the club, I participated in different trainings and awareness raising discussions. As a result, I learned to express myself confidently in and out of school. I also started to share my ideas and participate actively in meetings. I learned a lot about my rights and duties from the various forums I participated in. Unlike the previous times, I now claim my rights publicly and seek legal measures if any one tries to violate my rights. Correspondingly, I also pay due attention to undertaking my responsibilities and respecting others’ rights. My attitude towards education has



Obse Tadesse



Obse Tadesse



2

3

also changed completely and I now dedicate most of my time and attention to learning more. As a result I am able to improve my academic performances. I ranked 3rd in my class Last year. So I would say my participation in YWCDI club has been an eye opener for me. My life has been changed a lot since then.

At the end my message to girls like me is that they should learn to shape their future life now. I advise them to participate in school and out of school clubs like YWCDI and use other opportunities to learn about their rights and express their ideas.

Finally I would like to thank MELCA-Ethiopia for providing me with an opportunity that has opened a new chapter in my life. I used to be a careless and pessimist girl. But now I am seeing bright futures.”

Diribe Girma is a 17 years old girl living in Foata Mintille Kebele of Wolmera woreda in Finfinne Area Special Zone of Oromia Regional State. She is a grade 9 student in Burka Harbu Secondary School. She completed her primary education in Foata Mintille primary school found in a rural village called Hula Foata and moved to Holeta town in September 2018 to pursue her secondary

education. She has been a member of Young Women Can Do It club in the primary school and also joined the club in the current school.

While attending primary school in the rural village, Diribe was a victim of early marriage that happens in many parts of rural Ethiopia and negatively affects the life of thousands of young girls. She tells the story of the early and forced marriage she faced and how she dealt with it as follows:

“I faced difficulties and many challenges in my community. According to the tradition in my community, parents of a boy who want to get married send a letter to parents of a girl that they want to have for their son. So, a letter of request for marriage was sent to my family while I was in grade 8. Early marriage is still one of the most common harmful traditional practices in my community.

After the marriage letter came, my family told me to stop my education and get married. I told them that I do not want to get married but want to continue my education. They insisted I should get married or else leave their house. Then I reported the case to the Young women Can Do It club that



Diribe

4



5

MELCA Ethiopia has established to empower girls in the school and to which I also belong. Then the club and the school administration in collaboration with local Kebele administration tried to convince my parents to drop the issue of my marriage and allow me continue my education. Yet, my parents were so stubborn to change their decision. And so the mediation remained useless. Finally my parents chased me out of their house. They thought that, if they chase me out, I might accept their offer of marriage. But my determination was to continue my education. I took my grade 8th national exam while I was facing this challenge and waiting for the result for passing to grade 9.

When the results came, I scored good passing result and decided to move to Holeta town, which is about 40 kms from my rural village, to continue my education. My club members supported me all the things I needed to move to the town and continue my education. MELCA-Ethiopia also encouraged me and supported me.

Now I'm attending my education in grade 9 in Burka Harbu secondary school in Holeta town.

After learning that I am firm in my decision and determined to continue my education, my parents became somehow softer on the issue of getting me married. Therefore, I'm now continuing my education and also made peace with my family and they are supporting me to continue my education.

I have resisted all these challenges and overcame them mainly because of the empowerment I got in Young Women Can Do It club. My participation in the club made me to learn many things including the rights of women and young girls. I have also learned that my life would be better if I am educated. This all happened because of the attitudinal change that happening in me and the school environment as a result of our participation in the club and the issues we discuss on in the different forums. I know many young girls including my friends have become victims of early and forced marriage and HTPs and dropped out of school. I believe the future will be much better for our younger sisters in the rural areas including my village.

Finally, I would like to thank MELCA-Ethiopia and my club members who were beside me and supported me to continue my education.”



Tinsaë Hailu

Young Women Contributing to Protection of the Environment

Tree gudifecha (literally means adoption) is new approach for engaging the youth and community members in tree plantation and management so as to contribute to the betterment of the environment.

Tinsaë Hailu is a 16 years old girl living in Holeta town, Goro Keransa kebele. She is in a grade 8 student in Goro Kerensa primary school. She is also a member of Abdi Young Women Can Do It club formed and supported by MELCA-Ethiopia and one of the club members who participate in the “Tree Gudifecha”. She expressed her experience and impression in the approach as follows:

“I’m a member of Abdi Young women Can Do It club. I took two seedlings from the club to care for and grow. I planted the seedlings in the compound where I live and I water them seedlings in the morning and afternoon. The seedlings grew fast. I always visited them on my return from school. The more they grew, it pleased me to sit beside them and enjoy their odor. Since I know

about the “Oromo Gudifecha culture” I considered the seedlings as family members and cared for them accordingly.

One day when I came from school, I saw that a branch of one of my young trees is broken. I cried and asked my mother who did that. She replied she does not know. I believed it is her fault and quarrelled with her. I did not talk to her for three days. This shows the level to which I am impressed by the tree Gudifecha culture. The approach helped me to be more attached to trees and nature.

Finally I would like to thank MELCA Ethiopia and My club for showing me a life in connection with trees/nature. It is because of them that I obtained awareness in tree plantation and management, about the benefit of tree in fighting climate change effects.”



Young Women Overcoming Poverty



EdlamBekele

Edilam Bekele is a disabled young girl living in Holeta town. She is 23 years old. She has been affected by Poliomyelitis during her early childhood that caused permanent paralysis to one of her legs. She lives with her mother, father and brother. Edlam became a member of self-help group formed by MELCA in Holeta town some three years back. Edilam compares her life before and after she became a member of the group and expresses her feelings as follows.

“I am disabled but I can do anything if I get the opportunity! My life was full of hardships before two years. I was even considered a burden by my family members since I am disabled. One day MELCA Ethiopia came to our kebele and held community meeting to organize young women in to club and Self Help Group. I did not attend the meeting because nobody told me that there is a meeting. On the next meeting I heard that MELCA was also raising awareness of the community to let disabled people to join the clubs and self help groups.

The people in my kebele administration agreed to get my name included in the list of names of women registered for self-help group formation. Then I became one of the disabled young girls included in one of the self-help groups formed in the town. Then together with my group members, we formed a self-help group called “Hamile gudina”. After becoming a member of self-help group, I also became a member of the out of school Young Women Can Do It club that was formed in the town.

After becoming a member of the group and club, I obtained different trainings and awareness raising forums that built my moral to be engaged in income generating business and also enhanced my social integration. Together with my group members we decided to open a beauty salon in our area. I took training on bookkeeping and became a cashier of our business. This increased my moral and confidence that I can do. The Young Women Can Do It club has also provided me with many supports that I needed to start the business. With this moral I am able to save about 1500 ETB and borrowed 3,000 ETB and 4,000 ETB for 1st and 2nd cycle from my group and started my own beauty salon business. Now my business is



10



Meseret Digafe

11

growing fast along with my confidence and my income is also increasing from time to time. I have reached a stage where I can also support my family.

The other thing I would like to thank MELCA Ethiopia and young women club supported me in facilitation with local administration and effectuated container for beauty salon business. Now I have own business with legal working license called “Edelam & her friends’ Beauty Salon”.

Meseret Digafe is 28 years old girl. She lives in Holeta town, Birbirsa Siba kebele with her husband and three children. Meseret is a member of Bedane Self Help Group that MELCA Ethiopia has organized to support unemployed young women and mothers to be engaged in income generating activities. She explained about her story as follows:

“Before I joined Bedane self help group, I was a poor with economic challenges to raise my three children. I used to work as maid in peoples houses, but the income I have been getting was not insufficient and life was very difficult.

After I became a member of my self-help group, I engaged in poultry business with the start up capital I borrowed from the group. Although I am interested in being engaged in poultry business, I faced a problem of getting a place where I keep and raise the chicken. Fortunately, MELCA-Ethiopia in collaboration with the local administration provided me with a place and wooden boxes that help to keep the chickens. This solved all my problems of the big start up capital I needed for the poultry farm. Then my group provided me birr 2000 loan that I used to buy 60 chickens.

In a couple of months after starting the business, I started to collect 30 to 40 eggs per day from my poultry farm and my daily average income has raised to birr 122 and my monthly income has grown to birr 3,400. This is great change for me. Now I am able to send my children to school. I am also participating in many social and economic forums designed to empower women. The different trainings and awareness creation forums have enabled me to develop self-confidence. Previously, I thought it would be impossible to do for a woman like me to be engaged in such business and become successful. But now I have that confidence of “I can do it”.



12



13

I got awareness on saving and credit, and able to save 200 ETB per week and currently my saving in bank account has reached more than birr 4,000. I have a monthly ‘Equb’ of birr 100 and birr 50 special saving every day. I also deposit birr 15 per week as a regular saving in my group. This is a paradigm shift in my life. Now I planned to borrow the next step loan and expand my business more.

Currently, my business has a fixed asset estimated to be birr 40,000 and my working capital is has reached birr 8,000. In addition to these, I now have 2 milking cows and 1 calf as my asset holdings.

My advice to other women is they should not be hopeless and undermine their potential of doing things. Being hopeless makes one vulnerable to all sorts of problems and exacerbates one's sense of being helpless. Women can do even more than men especially when they are organized. We have to also learn and develop the culture of saving, as it is the key to expanding and reinforcing our engagement in any income generating business. Finally I would like to thank MELCA-Ethiopia for providing me with the opportunity

that has enabled me bring such change in my social and economic life”

Demekech Mechale is a 30 years old woman living in Holuta town, Birbirsa Siba kebele. She is a widowed woman having to children. She is a member of the self-help group that was formed three years back with the support of MELCA and engaged in petty trade. Demekech explains her story before and after formation of the self help group as follows:

“Before joining the self help group, I lived a subsistence life with earning I used to get by working as a daily laborer in a flower farm. In addition to being so small, the income from this work has also been seasonal. There are times when the farm does not want us as laborers. Because of this, I was a woman who used to face many social and economic problems. I could not feed my children let alone sending them to school. I can be considered as one of the poor of poors in my area. One day, I heard information about formation of Self Help Groups by MELCA-Ethiopia and also saw the success of some women who are members of Self Help Groups. So I decided to become a member of one of the self help groups with a hope to



Demekech



overcome poverty. After I became a member of the self help group that is engaged in petty trading, I got a loan of birr 2,000 from my self-help group with a grace period of one month grace period for 4 months to start petty trade of selling consumables like coffee grain, pepper, and spices in the local market. After I invested the money in my small business I started to earn good income and able to repay my loan. Now my group evaluated my repayment and allowed me to get a second round loan of birr 4,000 for a period of 10 months. Now I am getting good income for my family and have also bought a cooking gas stove, house furniture. Apart from that my monthly saving has reached birr 300 and I have more than 3,000 ETB in my saving book. Now I am able to feed my children three times a day and sending my children to school.

In addition to the economic empowerment, the different trainings I got as a member of the self help group brought many changes in my life. They have opened my eyes and enabled to see things from different directions. I am a women living with HIV/AIDs. Before joining the group I have no courage to tell to anybody about my health situation because of fear of being marginalized. But after I joined my group and took different trainings

and awareness workshops organized by Young women can Do It clubs organized by MELCA Ethiopia, I decided to expose myself and now I have started to share my experiences and to teach my community about HIV so that they learn from my life. I obtained confidence to express my idea and speak in front of others at public gatherings.

Being a member of the self-help group helped me to improve not only my economic status but also my social. As such I am very happy now.

I want to thank MELCA-Ethiopia, the organization that has showed me a different and better way of living in my life.



MELCA-ETHIOPIA

THE DEVELOPMENT
FUND (DF)

