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 **FARM AFRICA**



LIVELIHOODS FOR REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES



► Livelihoods for refugee and host communities

► 2018-2022

► Somali National Regional State, Ethiopia

Project overview

► Equipping groups dependent on aid with the knowledge, resources and access to markets they need to become self-sufficient.

► Strengthening local governance systems for grassland management, allowing communities to address over-grazing concerns.

► Training communities to manage pastures and herds during hot weather spells.

► Conducting research into sustainable grazing levels.

► Building irrigation canals and reservoirs to revitalise degraded lands.

Resilient farming systems

► The project designed and installed a solar-powered irrigation system to turn areas from dryland into productive farmland.

► Project participants, dependent on aid and livestock, received training in how to grow maize and other crops for their own consumption, as well as cash crops, like onions.

Finance and business

► Connecting farmers to agribusinesses that supply seeds, irrigation equipment and spare parts needed to kick-start commercial production.

► Establishing Village Saving and Loan Associations, where farmers unite to save and make funds available to invest in each other's businesses.

Our donors and partners

Farm Africa worked with Mercy Corps and ARRA as part of a broader Sida-funded project run by the World Food Programme.

This project was based in two districts, Dolo-Ado and Bokolmayo, in the Somali National Regional State where people rely on livestock and food aid to make ends meet.

The project brought refugees and Ethiopian hosts together to address common challenges: environmental degradation, climate change and poverty. The Ethiopian Government provided host and refugee communities with access to previously unused land.

LESSONS LEARNT

This project has provided opportunities to capture lessons useful for future project designing and implementation.

Undertaking assessment work at inception phase: The assessment studies conducted at the inception phase of the project has enabled us to understand the context, define feasible project interventions and to recommend appropriate livelihood options.

Government support: The support of the government for a successful project delivery is crucial. In the context of this project, the local government has demonstrated its commitments to development allocating irrigable farming land to members of the host and refugee communities.

Project approach: Bringing members of the host and refugee communities together, the project has proven that both communities could build resilience and enhance their livelihoods working jointly. Results achieved at the project startup in generating cash from the production of high-value crops like onion have encouraged the communities for better execution.



IRRIGATION COOPERATIVES ARE BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER TO COMBAT CLIMATE EXTREMES

Long-lasting environmental degradation and scarcity of water and grasslands are causing friction between host and refugee communities in the Dolo Ado woreda of the Somali region in Ethiopia. The woreda is among the provinces that hosts refugees from Somalia. This has put additional strain on the area, which has already been severely impacted by recurrent climate extremes.

Farm Africa designed a Livelihood Promotion and Resilience Building project, funded by the Swedish government through WFP, to bring pastoralist communities (host and refugee) together to address these challenges.

Irrigation cooperatives were set up by Farm Africa and Mercy Corps in two kebeles, Buraminow Yehasu and Helewim Godbokol, to bring life back into degraded grasslands and to train farmers on how to manage pastures during hot spells. Farm Africa and Mercy Corps are working with these cooperatives to design and install solar-powered irrigation systems.

The Hormud Cooperative is one of these groups. It embraces host and refugee communities in equal numbers. Members

claim that this has helped them to work together and make themselves self-sufficient. The group has been allocated 500 hectares of common farmland and has worked with the project team to build temporary irrigation canals to grow crops. For the first time in their lives, these pastoralists are able to harvest maize and collect watermelons on their own land.

“The start is very encouraging. We are excited with the 350 quintals of maize we have produced through irrigation,” said Sheik Abdikadir, a member of the Hormud Cooperative. “The project backed us to build our own temporary irrigation canal and gave us a pump to draw water to our farm from the Genale River.”



In line with providing agricultural inputs and a solar pump, the project equips cooperative members with climate-smart agricultural skills. It also links cooperatives with agricultural agro dealers and union cooperatives to access markets to sell their yields.

“The cooperative members have shown us their desire for change and have contributed their indigenous knowledge,” said Mr Abdiwali, Project Coordinator.

According to Mr Abdiwali, with all the support received, the Hormud Cooperative has become so successful that they are seen as a benchmark among other existing livelihood projects in the Dolo Ado woreda. “This has its own implications in improving the economic development and livelihood status of both the host and refugee communities.”

In addition to using the first harvest for household consumption, members of the cooperative earned income secured from the sale of animal feed (maize straw) getting from 5000Birr per person (\$97).

“This means a lot to cooperative members, it helps us meet our financial needs and household expenses. For instance, I supported my relatives with the money I got. I was able to buy food for my extended family as they couldn’t afford it due to the severe drought we faced this year,” explained Abdi Abdulahi, cooperative member and Chairperson of Helaweyn kebele.

Using the project’s links to market to sell their crops, the cooperative expects to earn a good amount of profit from the sale of its next harvest, onions. It also plans to boost its production by growing maize, bananas, rice and other cash crops. To make this practical, they made requests to the local administration for additional farmland.

Reflecting on the success of the project over the last year, Mr Abdi Abdulahi commented, “Farm Africa is a part of the Godbokol community. We put our trust in the organisation as it has proven its practical commitment. The staff spent their weekends and holidays working with us. That is how we achieved this together.”

MEET SAYNAB AHMEDNUR

For Saynab Ahmednur, 50, a widow with four children, life has been full of challenges. As the head of her family, she strives to provide them with food and better shelter. The children rely on her to buy them school materials, uniforms and clothes. Medical expenses of the family members also fall to her. She is the one who manages responsibilities at home and at the farm.

Saynab, who was born and raised in Godbokol, Helewin kebele, farms crops and animals for a living. She produces maize, sorghum, onions and tomatoes on her two hectares of land. She farms traditionally, doing all the work manually using a pick axe, cultivator and machete. Her productivity is low.

Her challenges are not limited to lack of farming instruments and inputs. The effects of climate change have exposed her to crop

losses as well, keeping her return low, meaning she was unable to afford family expenses. For this reason, she works as a daily labourer, although it doesn’t bring in much additional money.

Now, Sayneb has the opportunity to improve her farming techniques. The livelihoods promotion for host and refugee communities project is helping her take her productivity to the next step. Being a part of the Hormud Irrigation group, she is now able to access a tractor, a water pump generator and seeds. Working together with other cooperative members, Saynab has been involved in the production of maize, watermelons and onions on the half hectare of land she was given.



She describes the support group members are given:

“Each member got farming land, we produce maize and onions. I remember, there were many challenges the first time we started work. On the first round, we grew maize but the heavy rain damaged our plants. The production was very low, discouraging many of us. Nevertheless, that doesn’t mean we didn’t benefit from maize production. We were able to get food for our family and forage for our animals. We didn’t make money in accordance with our plan.”

The second production season was different for Sayneb, who succeeded in producing onions, and was able to benefit from the market facilitated by Mercy Corps, one of the project implementing organisations. She was able to earn a good amount of profit.

After solving her problems, she built a new house for her family.

“The second production season, last year, was very different from the earlier. We grew onions, the harvest was big and fruitful. Similar to my co-members, I earned enough income to build this new house. I am very happy my family has a better shelter.”

Adding value to her animal farming, Sayneb has also been able to grow her animal farming activity, investing more from what she has earned. The family gets a supply of milk more regularly than in the past; the goats have multiplied to 27 in number and she also has two cows.

“They give my family milk. Also, whenever I need money, I could get some selling one or more of my goats.”

Sayneb continues: “Alhamdulillah! (Thank God!) Now, I am so happy I got my children this nice house, we used to live in an old shack.”



However, as there have been challenges in enhancing their produce, Sayneb and her villagers are still facing the challenge of lack of access to markets. For instance, last harvest season, Sayneb produced maize with the hope of making money, but the market price was not high enough to repay her effort. Thus, she decided to keep it.

“I wanted to make money from the sale of my maize production, but I couldn’t. I have stored it at home hoping I will get a better market so that I could get money in return,” Sayneb said.

If the shortage in proper markets continues and she can’t get support, Sayneb fears that she will go back to her life being a labourer. She worries that she will not be able to feed her family with the money she earns as a daily labourer. Sayneb tells her concern:

“If the lack of market continues, I am afraid my life would be like those difficult years. You know, as a farmer, I produce crops and feed my family. Saving some from my household

consumption, I take it to the market and make money. That is how I buy household commodities and cover other expenses. What will happen to me if I do not get a better market? I would do the same again: I would be forced to borrow or take goods for credit. But, the question is, what if the crops fail? How can I pay money back if I am not getting better markets? Of course, what I have been doing is working as a daily labourer for others who have better income. I get some money taking care of their farms, but, that is not enough to repay my loans and provide for my family.”

Underscoring the importance of the two factors of increasing production and access to markets in improving the livelihoods of farmers, Sayneb reflects on her personal success. “Your life gets better when you produce more and get a market for your production. See the difference, this is how I built this new house. I earned 60,000Birr (\$1,500) by producing onions, thanks to Farm Africa. I got a good market and made money.”

MEET MOHAMMED SALAH

For Mohammed Salah, a father of six, going through tough challenges, it seems life brings opportunities to reward his patience. Though war forced him to leave his home town, the move has brought him blessings. He joined the livelihood for host and refugee communities project to become a farmer. For a man who used to be a broker and a construction wood seller back home in Somalia, it was a big change.

Nevertheless, the help he got from members of the host community and the training he received from the project encouraged him not to worry. He moved forward, convincing himself that no one inherits life skills but rather, people learn from others. His wife's support was a major encouragement. His wife, Mrs Rukia Ali says: "Though farming was a new experience to my husband and myself, I didn't hesitate to go for it."

Mohammed with his fellow members in Hormud irrigation cooperative received training on techniques of climate-smart agriculture.

"Thanks to the project, the training I received helped me overcome the challenges. Also, friends from our cooperative were

helpful and willing to teach. They taught me some farming skills: how to plough and how to make earth canals. Besides, the encouragement I got from my wife made me devoted and successful," said Mohammed.

As a part of the cooperative, the project facilitated getting him a half hectare of farming plot and all the necessary materials to irrigate. "The project has helped us get farming plots, a motor pump with fuel, fertilisers, a tractor, pesticides, maize and onion seeds."

Wanting to see the result of his new life experience, Mohamed worked hard day and night. Like his fellow farmers who taught him farming skills, he became successful earning profits from producing onions, maize and watermelons.

He no longer wants to lead the same life he has been living since he arrived at the Helewin refugee camp in Dolo-Ado, Ethiopia. After discussions with his wife, the first thing he did was rejuvenate the old house they have been living in and building their own toilet. "With the support I got, I am able to change my life. I maintained our old house and built a toilet. My family didn't have a toilet."

The couple is determined to sustain the improvements they have gained. They have planned their future with small businesses: owning a commodity shop and rearing goats. "My wife and myself are making money selling goods. Similarly, we have 22 goats. We are able to have all these because of the project. It helped us secure our own sources of incomes. Thank you, Farm Africa!"

The fate of Mohammed's family would have been working for landlords if he was not supported by the project to produce and diversify his sources of livelihoods. Mohammed said that he would continue with Burgibasi, a widely practised and traditional way of working as a labourer for land owners. The landlord gets an equal share of yields that the labourer produces by investing their knowledge, money, time and energy.

"Life would have been different if I was not supported by the project. Like other people in my village, I would be working for landlords for a very small income, we call this Burgibasi, a way you share your produce 50/50 with landowners. But, in my case, now, with the support of the project, all my production belongs to myself. I am not required to share with others unless I want to. I own my harvest. The project has brightened our hope," said Mohammed Salah describing how the project has made a difference to his life.

Revealing her feelings on their success, Mrs Rukia Ali, Mohammed's wife says: "Thank God, we have succeeded. Now, we can buy milk for our children. I am happy we have peace and hope now. We have a source of income and a future. We are busy planning how to develop our income more. We are working hard to buy camels. We have started a way to success and we won't be stopping, I thank Farm Africa for supporting us."

Mohammed called on all involved actors in the project to continue extending support to community members. He passed on this message requesting more interventions until farmers like him are able to support themselves:

"We would like to grow more and we need your support, please continue supporting us. Let me explain: at this stage, we, members of the cooperative, are like someone who is in its infancy period. Infants need continuous support and follow up until they get on their feet. We are working hard to change our lives. Thus, thank you for all you are doing, I would like to ask for continuous support. We need you and we need more training."



A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR MERIEM'S FAMILY

Forty-five-year-old mother of six Meriem Mohammed Ibrahim lives with her husband and children in Helewin refugee camp in Ethiopia. Escaping war and the effects of climate extremes, her family members left their homeland, Somalia. It has been ten years since they set up life in the camp. Over these years, the survival of her family has relied on food aid from humanitarian organisations. This had been challenging for her family, which used to have various sources of income back home. Before they left, Meriem and her family used to farm crops and animals, both of which were difficult due to war and the shortage of rain.

Hoping to meet the family's basic needs, Meriem and her husband tried different alternatives to increase their income and make their life better at the camp. Finding

someone with farming land from the host community, Meriem made a deal to produce crops and share the yields equally with the land owner.

"Agreeing with my husband, we used to rent farmlands and produce crops. We do every farming activity from the beginning to the end. We plough, sow seeds, take care of the weeds, do the harvest and everything but finally the whole produce will not be ours. We share it with the owners," Meriem explained.

Meanwhile, good news came to Meriem. She became a member of Hormud cooperative set up by Farm Africa and Mercy Corps, which has helped her gain access to farming lands and agricultural inputs and to produce her own food.

The project provided support to both refugee and host communities to boost crop and vegetable production and increase their incomes. A water pump generator with fuel to do irrigation, agricultural seeds, pesticides and technical support on the practice of climate-smart agriculture were among the support given to cooperative members. Meriem recalls the time she joined the project:

"It has been three years since I joined the Farm Africa project, which has supported us to fully benefit from our own produce. Like my cooperative members, I was given a half hectare of land. Within the last three years, I have produced maize, watermelons, tomatoes and onions in different seasons." Working hard, Meriem started to meet the needs of her family by earning her own income. She was able to improve their accommodation by building a new house.

"I made 80,000Birr (\$2,000) from onion production in the last harvesting season. I am so happy I built a new house with corrugated iron. It cost me 40,000Birr. The old house is a hut and very small for my family. It was about to collapse, rainwater leaked in through the roof, and we were exposed to wind and dust. I am so delighted I own a new house, I have curtains inside making it beautiful, my children are safe now."

Meriem is visualising a bright future. She plans to own family businesses rearing goats and opening a commodity shop.





BESHIR BECOMES A FARMING ROLE MODEL

Beshir Tahir, a goat keeper and crop producing farmer, has been working with the project in the Dolo Ado district of Somali region. He mainly produces maize, sorghum, fruits and vegetables.

Bashir lives in Buramino kebele with his wife and three children. Sources of income for the family come from three hectares of farming land and goat rearing. However, Beshir was not able to earn enough to provide for the family.

“My annual income from all my sources was not enough. Sometimes, I needed to look for additional earnings as the produce is not sufficient. Those times, I worked as a daily labourer taking care of other people’s farms. This got me 300 or 400Birr (\$10) per day. I ploughed their farmland, did the weeding, including all farming activities and they paid me on a daily basis,” said Beshir.

For a long time, with the traditional way of rain-fed farming with oxen, Beshir was not able to increase his production. With the support of the project, he has started

practising irrigation farming on half a hectare of farming land.

Farm Africa provided the farmers with the tools and inputs they needed, including a tractor. Beshir explains: “Before joining Farm Africa, I used to plough with oxen, but now, I do this with a tractor. This has increased my harvest significantly. I have started to produce twice a year. My harvest from maize this year was 10 quintals. I have kept half of it for our household consumption and I sold the remaining five quintals for 3,500Birr (\$87.50).”

Beshir is a member of Hormud Cooperative, which was set up by the project to help farmers produce crops and vegetables using an irrigation system that draws water from Genale river.

“The project has brought a big difference to my production. Now, my farming practice has changed. It helps us get necessary farming tools; my colleagues and myself have access to a tractor any time we want to plough. This has increased our production significantly.”

Members of the cooperative including Beshir received training on climate-smart agriculture as well as irrigation farming. Applying the skills he learnt, Beshir has been able to increase his production. Using market linkages facilitated by the project, for the first time in his farming life, Beshir managed to earn 100,000Birr (\$2,500) from his onion production in the 2020 harvest season.

“On the first round, we all produced maize, and onions in the next season. I bought a motor pump generator for 50,000Birr (\$1,250). I have a unique name for my generator, I named it after Farm Africa, because I am excited and grateful to the organisation.”

Beshir continues: “I bought the generator aiming to expand my farm so that I could boost my capacity to own a private firm. With the rest, I bought farming inputs including seeds. For the first time in my life, I am able to get money in thousands. I had never experienced such a success before. I am wealthy now, I have 100,000Birr. Thank God!”

I am a role model in my village and people talk about my achievement all the time.” This was not the only success he reaped. Before producing onions, Beshir earned income from farming maize, which he invested in increasing the size of his goat herd.

“With the money I earned from maize production last year, I bought five pregnant goats. Now, they have all given birth, multiplying to ten. Those are blessings summing up the total number of goats I have to 17. Whenever I run out of money to provide my family, I could sell one or two of them, and get money. These clothes I have on are bought with money I made from my onion production. I bought clothes for my children and wife as well.”

Encouraged by his results, Beshir has plans to expand his irrigated farming by growing coffee and garlic using water from Genale river. To villagers who admire his success, Beshir replies they would be much more successful than himself if they work hard.



THE STORY OF MOHAMMED

Mohammed Nur, 64, and a father of 15, is from Somalia, Kismayo. He is living in Helewin refugee camp in Dolo-Ado district in Ethiopia. Back at home, he had alternative sources of income providing for his family. He used to be a broker and also an animal farmer rearing camels, cattle and goats. However, the recurrent weather extremes and the effects of continuous war forced him to flee.

It has been three years since Mohammed left his home hoping to save the lives of his family. Armed groups participating in the then war, asked Mohammed to allow five of his 13 sons to join the fight. He was disturbed at their demand but they kept pushing him though he declined. Realising the armed people wouldn't let the family live peacefully, Mohammed

decided to escape, aiming to protect his sons. Their journey to the Helwin refugee camp was not easy as the family didn't have sufficient money to buy food.

Luckily, within seven days of their arrival at the camp, he got the opportunity to join the livelihood promotion project by Farm Africa and Mercy Corps. The project had just launched, facilitating the setup of irrigation cooperatives. Mohammed became a member of Hormud cooperative, joining people from both the host and refugee communities. The membership helped him get training on boosting crop and vegetable production through irrigation. The project also supplied farming inputs including maize, onion and watermelon seeds.

Together with his co-members, on a half hectare of land temporarily given to each individual, Mohammed grew watermelons and maize. Mohammed's family were happy with their yield of 12 quintals of maize and 500 watermelons at their first harvest. The second harvest was bigger, earning him 100,000Birr (\$2,500) for the 96kg of onions he produced. He was able to sell his produce using the market value chain facilitated by the project. That enabled Mohammed and his family to earn a profit and buy two camels.

"The value of camels is big in our tradition. They give milk surviving dry seasons. Camels' milk is very expensive on the market. On the other hand, I could sell one out with good prices if I need to earn money," said Mohammed, speaking of the benefits he could get from camels.

Mohamed was happy to be able to cover the medical expenses of his wife who had fractured her leg and had to seek medical treatment.

"The total expense I paid for her treatment was near to 60,000 Birr (\$1,500) and also, I have money to buy her nutritious food for a fast recovery." Speaking of the project, Mohammed describes his feelings: "Life would have been different if I couldn't be a part of the project. I wouldn't have enough money."

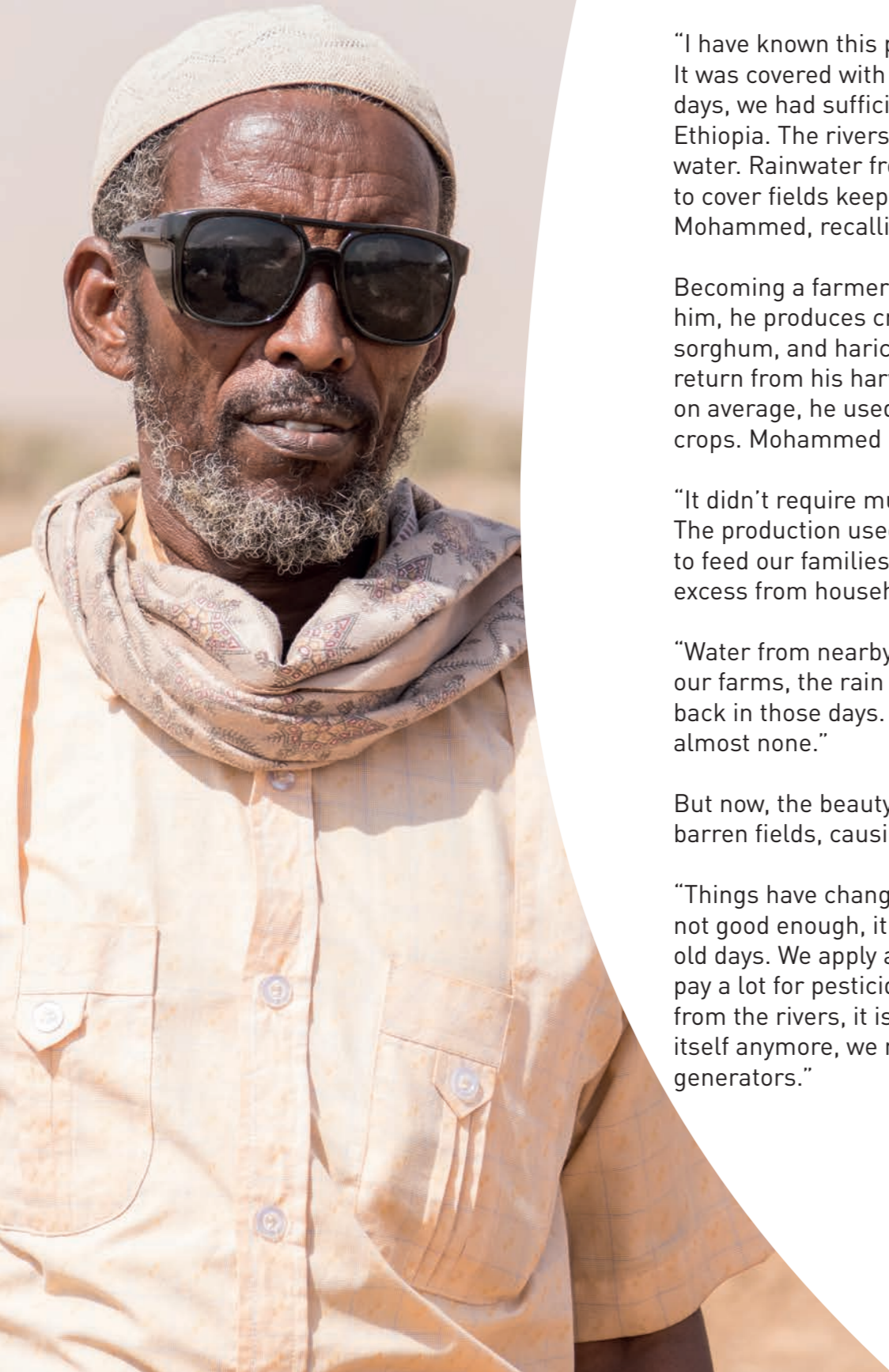
Mohammed compares the change to his family's life, remembering the first days of their arrival:

"I remember the first weeks of our arrival here, we had difficulties of adopting the new life style. I was depressed in many aspects: socially and economically. I didn't have relatives; my pockets were empty. As a father who is responsible to provide, I was unhappy and was looking for options to make money.

"Thank God! Now, I have some to give my family and plan my future to own a food processing firm. I thank you for all!"



MOHAMMED HASSEN SEES A BRIGHT FUTURE



There have been significant changes in Helewin, the village where Mohammed Hassen was born and raised. He has lived there since his birth more than 50 years ago and half a century of memories of his beautiful neighborhood are still fresh in his mind. The big fruit trees he used to eat from and the fields he used to play in were covered in green. He has not forgotten streams from nearby rivers flowing through farms in the village.

“I have known this place well since childhood. It was covered with many fruit trees. In those days, we had sufficient rains across our country, Ethiopia. The rivers used to have abundant water. Rainwater from the highlands used to cover fields keeping the soil wet,” said Mohammed, recalling the past.

Becoming a farmer like his parents before him, he produces crops, particularly maize, sorghum, and haricot beans. He enjoyed the return from his harvests producing twice a year; on average, he used to collect 40-60 quintals of crops. Mohammed explains:

“It didn’t require much effort to harvest in bulk. The production used to be more than sufficient to feed our families and we used to store the excess from household consumption in Bekars.”

“Water from nearby rivers used to pass through our farms, the rain pattern was good enough back in those days. The cost of production was almost none.”

But now, the beauty has changed drastically to barren fields, causing him sorrow.

“Things have changed these days, the yield is not good enough, it is far less than those good old days. We apply a lot of labour and have to pay a lot for pesticides. We need to draw water from the rivers, it is not coming to our farms by itself anymore, we require fuel for water pump generators.”

What has been happening? Why did we fail to improve or keep that natural beauty as it was? Such kinds of questions keep popping into Mohammed’s mind, leading to restless days. “What happened to our village is a good example; it has been a long time since people started to destroy resources. I remember, this area was covered with forests and there were many wild animals in it. But people including those from other areas kept cutting trees and killing animals. Thus, the fields have become bare. Not only this but it also has affected our productivity highly.

“Now, it is very different, threatening our survival. I assume the problem we are having across Ethiopia is the result of climate change.”

Mohammed believes the rapid growth in population has been the major contributing

factor to the climate change he mentioned. “The root cause to this change seems to me growth in population. In the past, the population size was not as big as nowadays. We have a fast-growing population. This affects the environment negatively; this is what I have observed in my life.”

Yet, Mohammed Hassen, has not given up on his home village and country to regain the natural beauty. He envisages greener fields and hills. “But,” said the bold Mohammed, underscoring what this needs to achieve:

“We need to stand together and work hard for a long-lasting solution. We have to take care of the soil, rotating crops, avoiding chemicals as much as possible, applying organic fertilisers: compost. Regarding this, I would like to thank Farm Africa, it is doing great!”



Farm Africa through its Livelihoods for Host and Refugee Communities project in Somali region has been supporting Mohammed and others to rehabilitate the environment by applying climate-smart agriculture techniques. Also, by setting up irrigation cooperatives comprised of the host and refugee community members, the project has enabled individuals including Mohammed to take care of their resources and boost yields. He has become a member of Hormud cooperative helping him grasp his ambitions for his family and village. Drawing water from the nearby river, Genale, Mohammed and his friends are able to grow crops, fruits and vegetables. The project provided them with a water pump generator, farming inputs and technical training. By taking advantage of the skills and support in availing market chains, Mohammed has become one of the successful farmers, maximising yields while caring for the environment.

“I have earned good income from my onion production this year (2020/21). I got 100,000Birr (\$2500) from 50 quintals.”

Mohammed is able to meet the demands of his family with his profit from onion production. He is glad he managed to solve his big concern with his 18-year-old son who used to be jobless. He set him up in a family business buying a

motorcycle for 50,000Birr (\$1,250). Before that, the son had become depressed, losing interest in life. He kept trying to migrate abroad through Libya and his father Mohammed was worried at the thought of losing his child. To his relief, let alone saving his son’s life, now, he has got an additional source of income.

“Now, he is busy engaging himself in the transportation business. He has decided to stay, I am happy he is not leaving us. He earns additional income for the family as well; he is supporting me in providing for my family. He is the one who covers our household expenses, my worries are gone and I am planning to grow our business by buying a truck,” Mohammed said.

Eventually, indicating areas which need more intervention such as access to markets, Mohammed called on the project to extend its support helping them sustain with their effort.

“I wish we, members of the Hormud cooperative, would increase our production more. We would work late at night if we got a power bank to store energy from the solar panel. The other things we need are a tractor and concrete canal. The concrete canal would allow us to have access to irrigation. I am sure, we will bring change within a short time. Thank you in advance!”

“On the first round, we all produced maize, and onions in the next season. I bought a motor pump generator for 50,000Birr (\$1,250).”



Beshir Tahir



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