



**FOOD FOR
THE HUNGRY**



SASIGA, ETHIOPIA

MID HIGHLANDS

2019 YEAR END PROGRESS REPORT

PREPARED BY
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INTRODUCTION

Food for the Hungry (FH) Ethiopia continues its commitment to graduate communities out of poverty by implementing the Child Focused Community Transformation (CFCT) integrated community development program. This year, the nine communities of the Sasiga Mid Highlands (MH) marked the half-way point on their journey to graduation. Multiple program activities in the areas of education, health, livelihoods, and leadership training continue to improve lives.

Unrest and political instability in the region has been a challenge during the year, causing some delay in

program implementation. However, good communication and a stable relationship with the government allowed program activities to be completed as planned by the end of the fiscal year.

As the nine communities of the Mid Highlands enter into the second half of their journey to graduation, a strong team spirit and collaboration between dedicated FH staff and motivated community members continues to drive the success of the program towards a future of self-sufficiency.

EDUCATION

FH Ethiopia continues to work toward improving access and quality of education in Sasiga. One standard school block containing four classrooms was built in the community of Wara Kura and was furnished with 80 desks, four chalkboards, four teachers' chairs, and four teachers' tables. This new school block provides a conducive learning environment for 240 students, with 60 students in each classroom. Additionally, 668 reference books have been purchased and distributed to ten school libraries. Communities built three school latrines at the Galo, Nano Sanbata Dure, and Galo Janja primary schools with separate blocks for boys and girls in each school. FH distributed learning materials and school uniforms to over 1,660 of the most vulnerable children in the communities, enabling them to continue their education.

Along with well-provisioned classrooms, physical fitness and social interaction among the students are key components of education. During the first half of the year, physical education materials including footballs, volleyballs, nets, pumps, and whistles were provided

to 16 schools, and sports clubs were organized for competitions among the schools as well as between communities. Even school teachers had an opportunity to get involved in various sports. The provision of sports equipment also encouraged an increase in the number of children who use the school playground.

In addition to sports, students competed in various skills such as handicrafts projects and general knowledge. At the end of the year, winners of all categories received awards supplied by FH; the Sasiga District Education Office and Sasiga District Youth Offices attended the awards ceremony.

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All 16 schools within the region have developed environmental clubs for 477 children, where they receive training on environmental protection and awareness. After training, the trainees responded to the problem of environmental protection in the school and their own backyards. The schools are currently working on planting trees on school property that will help with shade and change the ecosystem of the school compound.

Partnering in the Sasiga MH has led to an encouraging improvement in the number of girls registered for school, and in the 2019 academic year, the number of girls and boys were almost equal. Seventy-four local leaders (29 men and 45 women) are learning about the value of girls' education in order to create awareness among families about the necessity of educating girls. Almost all of the families receiving these messages have started sending their girls to school.



One community built a new school building containing four new classrooms. This helped solve the problem of overcrowding in the classrooms and provided a more conducive environment for learning.



HEALTH

Providing clean water through developing wells and springs protects families from water borne diseases and intestinal complications. It also decreases the workload of women and girls who are often forced to travel long distances to fetch water from unprotected streams.

Having reached the mid-point of their journey towards self-sufficiency, Sasiga MH continues to work on the provision of clean water to improve the health status of each of the communities. This year, new springs were capped in Galo Janja, Oda, Gamane, and Haro Gudina with a total of 200 households impacted. Members in each of the communities participated in construction by collecting local materials and by providing food and shelter for the contractors. Community leaders are already reporting an improvement in the health of children and families within their communities.

Water committees service each of the new water points to protect and administer the spring. These committees

were trained by experts on how to maintain and repair the water points.

Many houses in Sasiga MH are home for both families and their domestic animals. These living arrangements increase exposure to communicable diseases and parasites and are particularly dangerous for young children. During the first half of the year, home management training took place where 183 community members (49 men and 134 women) learned about the benefits of separating domestic animals from their living spaces. In follow-up visits during the second half of the year, FH staff observed that many of the trainees had improved their housing by separating their domestic animals from their living space.

Inadequate personal and environmental hygiene remains high and training in this area continues to be a priority. Along with the household management training, FH conducted sessions addressing sanitation



Access to water is one of the highest priorities in the Sasiga MH. It increases sanitation in the community and enables new hygiene practices such as handwashing. It also benefits women and girls who would otherwise spend hours a day walking to an unprotected water source .

and hygiene practices. During the Environmental and Personal Hygiene training, 403 community members (217 men and 186 women) learned about personal hygiene and environmental sanitation and 320 latrine slabs were provided to targeted households. The provision of the latrine slabs has had a significant impact on the communities. Once the training was complete, even those trainees who had not received latrine slabs were determined to construct their own toilets.

Traditionally, women in Sasiga MH prepare food by cooking over open fires within the home. Exposure to smoke leads to respiratory diseases, particularly among women and young children. To improve the process of food preparation, 202 community members (40 men and 162 women) learned how to build and use fuel efficient stoves which reduce smoke in the home. Community members also built kitchen shelves to keep dishes and utensils clean. Along with theoretical training, the trainees constructed a sample stove, and committed to preparing their own mud stove and shelf in their homes. Consequently, those community members using fuel efficient mud stoves and shelves have reported improved health in their families. A side benefit to this initiative is the reduction of firewood being used, improving the issue of deforestation in the area.

Those using fuel efficient mud stoves and shelves in their home have reported improved health in their families.



Fuel efficient stoves have cut down on smoke-related illnesses in homes. By eliminating the amount of wood burned and smoke produced, the community benefits from better health and the land can recover from deforestation.



LIVELIHOODS

Organic agriculture is a holistic farming system implemented in Sasiga MH to combat soil degradation prevalent in many communities. Ineffective farming techniques have contributed to land poverty, resulting in poor crop production, land infertility, high acidity levels in soil, and termite infestations. All this contributes to ongoing food insecurity in the Sasiga MH.

Sustainable agriculture is economically viable, resource efficient, and environmentally sound. In an effort to raise awareness on exploitative agricultural practices and how to combat them, 170 farmers (142 men and 28 women) received training this year on new farming methods including the use of zero or minimal tillage instead of plowing the land. Since this training first began five years ago, the community members have been able to see a noticeable improvement in the soil and resulting yields. With training and support from FH staff and local government, community members are working hard to ensure a future where no one goes hungry.

Bio-intensive gardening is about growing as much organic food as possible in the smallest amount of space.

It involves first reclaiming the land in order to support sustainable production. “Redemptive agriculture” is a biblical approach to bio-intensive gardening where farmers learn to care for the God-given resources using redemptive agricultural tools. FH trained 238 farmers (210 men and 28 women) this year and, despite the labour-intensive nature of this technique, they began implementing the tools they learned to improve land fertility. Most of the farmers were very successful working on crops.

Deforestation (in large part as a result of using wood and charcoal stoves) has decreased fuel sources and caused water and soil erosion, leading to lower crop yields. To combat this trend, 210 households (195 men and 15 women) received training on biogas technology. This technology reduces deforestation, provides a clean energy source, and eliminates the need for indoor cooking fires. Methane gas from animal manure is captured and used as fuel before the remaining manure is used as compost for fertilization. Four participants have already begun preparing biogas systems at their homes with support from the government.



Raising cattle can be a major source of income for many families. By selling the milk and breeding cattle, their ability to increase their wealth grows exponentially.

Despite receiving a quality education, many young people still struggle with unemployment. In order to combat this, youth are encouraged to create jobs rather than simply seek jobs. Teachers from local universities were brought to Sasiga MH to spend three days working with 94 young people (69 men and 25 women) teaching them about entrepreneurship. The youth developed skills in collaboration and prepared business plans for their projects. Additional government funding then helped facilitate the start of micro enterprises in their respective communities.

Beekeeping is not a new concept for the communities of Sasiga MH and the indigenous trees are a wonderful resource for supporting hives. Modernized beekeeping practices can assist in improving hive yields and help to ensure sustainable success. During training sessions this year, 95 farmers (91 men and 4 women) developed skills in managing modern bee hives, colony transfer, queen rearing and splitting, protection and cleaning of beehives from insects, harvesting techniques, and wax preparation. FH staff were very encouraged when one participant took the initiative to develop his own modern beehives from local wood, started harvesting honey, and became very productive. Knowledge transfer leading to behavioral change is a key component in the journey toward self-sufficiency.

In order to boost income generating activities and increase food security for the most needy families, FH provided 200 kgs of coffee seeds and 1,000 grafted avocado seedlings to farming families in the communities for both home consumption and to sell for income. Additionally, 176 of the most vulnerable households were provided with a sheep, the offspring of which may be sold. Each recipient was provided with training in the care and raising of the animals.

FH staff were encouraged when one man took the initiative to develop his own modern beehive from local wood.



Goats have proven to be an efficient source of income for many families in the Sasiga Mid Highlands.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

In order to foster a sense of ownership and encourage self-sufficiency, local leaders organized the contribution of labour and skill to each project within their region. Community participation is not simply about the contribution of material resources, but also about using the knowledge and experience already existing within the community.

As most of the preachers within the nine communities of Sasiga MH are not professionals, FH works with church leaders to improve their capacity to be biblically oriented leaders. Biblical training and spiritual support is provided in order for leaders to have sufficient training to equip their members to contribute to physical and spiritual development within the communities. The trainees were selected from 19 congregations and trainers were invited from a Bible College in the town of Nekemte. During training, 76 church leaders (68 men and seven women) were encouraged in their faith and gained new leadership skills. The passage chosen for the training was Ephesians 4:1-6, which encourages believers to be unified in the Spirit through peace and to be humble, gentle, and patient with one another, bearing with one another in love.

Leadership training was provided to 102 participants (89 men and 13 women) to create strong leaders within the community and equip them to positively impact the people they serve. More than 85 percent of the leaders have begun to implement the principles of good governance in practical ways within their communities by modeling character traits such as humility, transparency, respect for human rights, and service to the community.

Natural and man-made disasters are increasingly common and training in the practice of early warning and preparedness techniques is essential for a community's leadership. FH trained 117 community leaders (98 men and 19 women) on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies and organized early warning committees in the participants' communities. The committees will work on preparing early warning plans and organizing the members of their communities. With this knowledge, the community leaders can focus on reducing vulnerability in the communities, ensuring that they are resilient to any type of disaster. These leaders receive monthly training and support in the learning process, helping to reinforce the knowledge gained in the sessions.



IMPACT STORY

A Sweet Life Ahead

Yosef is an Ethiopian farmer with a situation typical of many others in his community. He's overworked, he has a family to support, and he's stuck in a hand-to-mouth cycle of farming and living.

But like so many of the hard working farmers in his community, a small amount of support can be what allows them to break free from the cycle of poverty. In 2017, Yosef saw an opportunity in beekeeping. With an additional source of income, he could provide better for his family. And bees wouldn't drain his energy the way working in the fields would.

Yosef describes his journey into beekeeping: "FH Ethiopia trained me on beekeeping and management. They

also provided a modern beehive and all the necessary accessories. This year I could harvest 20 kilograms of honey from a modern beehive. That's four times the harvest of a traditional beehive!"

Having an efficient, passive form of income has made all the difference for Yosef. With his extra income, he's inspired to work on a larger scale and he's planning on expanding his beehives. Since seeing his success, his friends have also started beekeeping.

The farmer who once felt trapped in the cycle of poverty has a life of new ideas ahead of him.



THANK YOU

FH Ethiopia, FH Canada, and the communities of Sasiga Mid Highlands thank you for your continued support of their journey from stuck to thriving. Your faithful generosity is helping thousands of families and their children live healthier and more hopeful lives.