

COORDINATED RESPONSE TO EMERGENCY NEEDS OF IDPS, RETURNEES & HOST COMMUNITIES

Echo funded life- saving multi sectoral project in Gedeo Zone, SNNPR , Ethiopia



Funded by
European Union
Civil Protection
and Humanitarian Aid



Save the Children

World Vision



PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2018, there were two waves of conflict-induced displacement that occurred in Gedeo zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) and West Guji zone in Oromia National Regional State. The first wave in April displaced 300,000 people, and the second in early June displaced over 642,152 people in Gedeo and 176,098 people in West Guji zones. Among the displaced were 57,818 under five children, and 21,503 pregnant and lactating women (Gedeo Zonal Health Department's assessment, June 2018).

To respond to this humanitarian crisis, a Life-saving Multi-Sectoral Emergency Response project was designed targeting 793,094 affected people through integrated approach to provide access to sufficient and safe water, increase awareness on sanitation and hygiene practices given the congested temporary settlements with risks of epidemics, and improve access to basic curative and preventive health services.

A consortium with Save the Children as the lead and World Vision International (WVI) as member responded to the humanitarian crisis.

The principal objective of the project was to contribute towards saving lives through integrated, equitable and safe assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Gedeo zone, SNNPR.

The Specific objectives were to provide:

1. Increased access to sufficient and safe water, awareness of sanitation and hygiene practices
2. Increased access to basic curative and preventive health services for IDP camps & host communities through facility-based and temporary clinic outreach
3. Increased access and utilization of quality CMAM and IYCF-E services
4. Standard emergency shelter and non-food items (NFIs) for IDPs to improve their coping mechanisms with the critical humanitarian situation



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Sustaining a health facility's access to clean water

When ethnic conflict broke out in neighboring West Guji zone of the Oromia region in 2017 and 2018, millions fled their villages and settled across Gedeo zone in Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). Only in Banko Gotiti, a small village in Gedeb district of SNNPR, "more than 94,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) settled in 12 IDP sites [and] you can imagine how overwhelming it was for our health center already serving a host community population of 22,654 people," said Tamirat Lule, Director of Gutiti Health Center. That means more than fourfold of the village's population stormed into the village with critical food, water, medical, nutrition and shelter needs that required emergency assistance.

"The caseload was too much to manage, and hygiene was a huge concern at the time with disease outbreaks looking highly likely to take place," Tamirat remembered the scary scene. Initially, water was carried to the IDP sites and the health center on donkey-carts, too little for the immense need.

It was also delivered by small vehicles until the humanitarian response in the area started rather well. The most important support, however, came in the form water trucking services that Save the Children, through the ECHO funded Life-saving Multi-Sectoral Emergency Response for IDPs project in SNNPR's Gedeo zone, was able to provide for three months to seven of the IDP sites and Gotiti Health Center on a regular basis. "It meant the world to us," Tamirat said. "As you know, so many infections are caused by lack of hygienic practices in health facilities like ours, and the water Save the Children provided to us helped us to do our life-saving job properly."

Stepping up the support, Save the Children, which is the lead and implementing partner of this ECHO funded project, rehabilitated a local water source in Banko Gotiti by installing a generator and a surface pump. Save the Children then connected the system to an existing pipeline heading to the reservoir at Gotiti Health Center, which needed fixing to avoid leakage. "We also built collection chamber for it, and now the health center accesses water in all its OPD rooms and laboratory," said Nathaniel Fola, Project WASH Coordinator for Save the Children in Gedeb district. As the project closes soon, Nathaniel said "we will properly handover the water facility to the community. Apart from the health center, the spring water source has a great potential for the community to use it to meet their household drinking water needs."



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“Now that I don’t have to walk for hours to collect water, I can go back to school” : Haimanot’s Story

Haimanot Yohannes, 22 and a resident in Hanchabi village in Kochere Woreda of Gedeo zone in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR), found it difficult to continue her education beyond grade 7. She used to spend three hours of her day walking to fetch water until the ECHO funded and Save the Children led Life-saving Multi-Sectoral Emergency Response for IDPs project intervention by World Vision in SNNPR’s Gedeo zone, developed a shallow well water source near her home for communal use.

A mother of two, Haimanot had to drop out from school to take care of her children any way, but she said chances are that “if I didn’t have to walk hours to collect water daily, I would still have continued going to school.” Now that both her children started primary school, Haimanot hopes, she will go back to school because she has more hours saved from fetching water from afar.

According to Tadesse Meka, Head of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committee (WASHCo) established and trained by the project, some 60 households whose women and girls had to travel for two hours on average to access clean drinking water from the newly built water source nearby. “The shallow well changed our lives for the better. Most of the women and girls don’t walk more than 10 minutes to fetch water because of the clean drinking water we access nearby,” Tadesse explained. As Head of the WASH Committee, Tadesse makes sure that the villagers use the water responsibly and with no damage to the facility. “We took training on how to manage the water facility properly. We have two shifts for the community to collect water at 7 am to 9 am in the morning, and 3pm to 6pm in the afternoon. That way, we prevent overuse and depletion.” Before tens of thousands of IDPs returned to their places of origin from Hachabi, “they shared the water resource with us equally, and it helped us to prevent diseases outbreaks that could have occurred from lack of access to clean water in the crowded settlement,” Tadesse recounted.

Now that the IDPs largely returned home, the community in Hachabi continued to effectively use the water resource, keeping the source and its surroundings clean. For the responsible and hygienic use of this facility, World Vision’s training to the WASHCO members, and the committee’s mobilization activities in return have been instrumental. According to Dereje Mekonnen, Emergency WASH Officer with World Vision, his organization built eight new shallow wells and rehabilitated seven others in Kochere district through the ECHO funded consortium project led by Save the Children.



A rehabilitated water source changes life for the better: Tirunesh's Story

Tirunesh Kebede, 50, is a mother of nine who lives in Sakaro Sado Kebele of Gedeb Woreda in SNNPR's Gedeo zone. She witnessed tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the neighboring West Guji zone suddenly crowding her village following the intercommunal conflict in the area since 2017. One of the challenges during this mass displacement period was critical shortage of clean drinking water. Let alone for additional thousands, "even we, the villagers, had to walk 40 minutes a day for one round of water collection," Tirunesh recounted. That was because the shallow well water source that was built in her village in 2012/13 was no longer functional after serving the community for five years. Essentially, the malfunction of the water facility coincided with the coming into the area of an overwhelming crowd of IDPs in critical need of water, among other things.

Save the Children, through the ECHO funded Life-saving Multi-Sectoral Emergency Response for IDPs project in SNNPR's Gedeo zone, replaced the entire pumping system to enhance the on-spot shallow well and keep it working again so that IDPs, returnees and host community enjoy nearby access to clean drinking water. "Every day, women like me and girls in this village worry over the long way we had to walk to fetch water. It took much of our time that we could have used to take care of our children and other house chores," Tirunesh said. The rehabilitated water source has changed life for the better in Sakaro Sodo village and "it now feels like I collect water from home because I don't even walk five minutes to get water" she added.

Save the Children trained the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committee (WASHCo) in Sakaro Sado to manage this communal water point as well as mobilize the community to engage in optimal hygienic and sanitation practices. Tilahun Boneya, Head of the WASH Committee in the village understands that "this water needs proper management and we can run short if keep it running all the time. So we have shifts for the community to fetch water only from 8:30 am to 10:30 in the morning and from 4pm to 5:30 pm in the afternoon." He also leads the villagers' sanitation activities to keep the shallow well and its surroundings clean all the time. "Soon, we will fence the source to prevent the water from any risk of contamination by animals and passersby," Tilahun pledged.



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WASH support for a cleaner and safer health center

Kisha Health Center in Kochere district of Gedeo zone in Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) is a public health facility for a catchment population of 37,118 people in the area. The last two years, it also served so many internally displaced persons from neighboring West Guji zone in Oromia region until most went back home. Patients and their caretakers used the old makeshift toilet in the health center that was made of corrugated iron sheets.

"Only four out of the six seats in the old dry latrine functioned. Frankly, it was far from clean and had no septic tank to collect the sewage from," said Taye Kasu, Health Post- Health Centre Linkage Officer at this facility.

In 2019, World Vision, through the ECHO funded and Save the Children led Life-saving Multi-Sectoral Emergency Response for IDPs project in SNNPR's Gedeo zone built a new latrine with separate rooms for male and female patients and caretakers, replacing the makeshift toiletry "that was falling apart," Taye said. The new latrine also has a wash stand with soap for users to wash hands after toilet use, and "it helps to prevent bacterial infections and other health hazards in our health center." Taye hopes the health center will manage the sewage properly because "the new latrine has a septic tank extended to it and collecting sewage in time won't be an issue any more."



Water is no longer an issue : Atalelech's Story

The Kebele 02 residents in Bule, a small district town in Gedeo zone of SNNPR in Ethiopia, were happy that some ten years ago, the local Water Office developed a spring water point in their neighborhood for closer access. However, according to Tilahun Teshome, WASH Officer for Bule Woreda Water Office, the water point went out of order before it served them even for one year and the water volume decreased. Still, when an influx of IDPs arrived in Bule the last two years, those in two of the 10 IDP sites set up around the small town used the little water they found in this facility that was "screened positive for a bacteriology test at the time," said Addis Bekele, Project WASH Officer for Save the Children.

In 2019, Save the Children through the ECHO-funded life-saving consortium project for IDPs in Gedeo zone rehabilitated this facility. "Essentially, we built the collection chamber to increase water volume and put a concrete spring box and new pipeline system in place," Addis explained. "We also created a concrete laundry stand by the water source for the community."

Atalelech Tesfaye, 18, has made it her regular chore to come to the water source to wash clothes. "When I washed clothes at home, I always ran out of water and had to come here to collect more. Sometimes, I even leave some clothes for later wash if I was too tired to fetch water. Now, I can keep washing here as much as I want because water is no longer an issue," said she.



Starting from Scratch but hopeful: Aynalem's story

At 35, Aynalem Feleke is a mother of seven children. She says that in April 2018 she and her family ran for their lives from Gedeb Gubeta, a small village in Gedeb Woreda of SNNPR's Gedeo zone because of ethnic conflict in their village and beyond. Exactly after one year, she returned home as relative calm reins. But Aynalem says she was shocked to see that all the false banana and water berry plants in her farm were violently uprooted. "We're trying to start life from scratch. I and my husband are busy farming this rainy season and we may recover from our losses fast," she aspired.

When she returned home in April 2019, Save the Children provided Aynalem with some WASH and other non-food item (NFI) support through the ECHO funded life-saving project. "Save the Children gave me quite a few items including water Jerry can, plastic cloth washing tub, bucket and a hygiene kit. Those really helped to restart life after a year of family's ordeal," said Aynalem.

The project also rehabilitated three shallow wells in Aynalem's village and she added, "We have no issue with access to water anymore and I'm very happy about that."

As the new academic year approaches, Aynalem said she can't wait to see her children go back to school. "I want them to perform well and see a brighter future for them," she said.



Health workers vigilance as life is what is at stake: Wondimagegn's story

Little Wondimagegn, two, was made to experience a full stretch of what Save the Children, through the ECHO funded Life-saving Multi-Sectoral Emergency Response for IDPs project in SNNPR's Gedeo zone, do for severely malnourished children. That was because his life is what has been at stake. According to Tigist, his 25-year old mother displaced from neighboring Kercha district in West Guji zone who now settles in Banko Tatato Kebele in Gedeb Woreda of SNNPR's Gedeo zone, Wondimagegn fell ill a month ago (July 2019). "He lost weight, but he did not lose appetite. I was puzzled and went to the nearby health post in the village. They gave me PlumbyNut and he ate well. But he kept losing weight and was referred to Banko Tatato Health Center," Tigist recounted.

At the health center where he received ten days of care and treatment, Wondimagegn seemed to feel better sooner. He could sit up on his own again. He gained weight slightly, and according to Abera Negese, Stabilization Centre Nurse at Banko Tatato Health Center, "Wondimagegn's response to our treatment and care was encouraging and his edema level or body swelling dropped by a point." Everything looked fine until he lost all his appetite again and developed severe dermatitis. His suddenly worsening condition raised a high level of concern among the nurses at the Stabilization center and they referred him to Dilla Referral Hospital in the zonal town.

Now at the referral hospital, Wondimagegn's is showing some improvement, but his doctors will need more time to help him and ensure his recovery. "I am lucky to have amazing support by the nurses and doctors all the way from the health post to the health center and hope my little boy recovers in the end. I leave that to God who I know always comes to my rescue," said Tigist, struggling to hold her tears back.

Ever since Save the Children established the Stabilization Center at Banko Tatato Health Center in February 2019 through the ECHO funded emergency project, some 63 under five children of IDPs, returnees and affected host community members were admitted for intensive nutrition and medical support. Many were discharged at the center and some like Wondimagegn were referred to Dilla hospital for further care. In the process, the health post-health center-hospital linkage played a vital role in ensuring that these children fully recovered from their severe malnutrition with medical complications.



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Handwritten notes on a whiteboard, including a list of names and a table with columns and rows of data.



Enabling a health center to provide emergency health and nutrition care: Frehun's story

Frehun Ayele is a Public Health Officer and Nutrition Focal Person at the Health Centre in Beloya, a small village in Kochere district of Gedeo zone in Ethiopia's SNNP region. The health facility had to manage additional caseload the past year as a huge influx of IDPs came to the area from neighboring Guji zone in Oromiya. "It was initially challenging for us to provide proper care and treatment for severely malnourished children who developed medical complications," said Frehun.

In February 2019, World Vision through the ECHO funded and Save the Children led consortium project, established a Stabilization Center (SC) within Beloya Health Center where children with medically complicated severe acute malnutrition (SAM) received nutrition and medical support. Over five months between February and July, Freh said "some 22 under five children who were critically malnourished were admitted to our Stabilization Center. Some stayed two weeks, others were discharged faster after we ensured that their condition improved. Then we send them to outpatient therapeutic program (OTP) sites at health posts where they continue receiving care until they fully recovered," explained Frehun.

The project also set up a kitchen with basic cooking utensils and provides caretakers with food as long as they stayed with the children admitted at the SC. "Our referral linkage was also very important," continued Frehun and "we followed up with seven of the children we referred to Dilla Referral Hospital all of whom were discharged after they have fully recovered."

As the project is coming to an end, the rains have come, IDPs returned to their places of origin and returnees and host communities are less malnourished. Six months since establishment, Frehun rejoices saying he cannot believe his eyes that all the beds in Stabilization Center supplied by the project are now vacant and there has been no single admission for a month. .



Enabling a health center to provide emergency health and nutrition care: Frehun's story

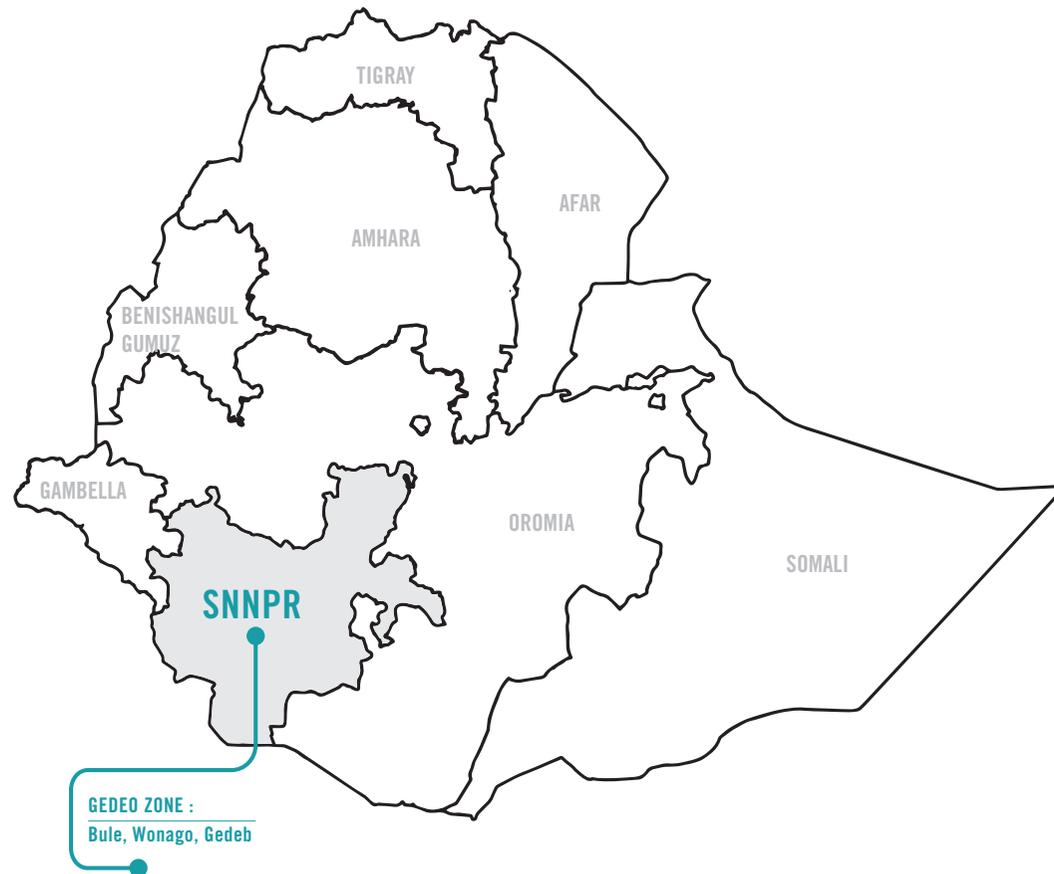
A year ago in April 2018, Frenesh, 28, had to flee Michicha, her village in Kercha district of West Guji zone in the Oromia region with her husband and three children because of the inter-communal conflict there and beyond. One year on, her husband is back leaving their children with her. She says, "he insisted that we stay here because all our Inset [false banana] farm was destroyed during the conflict." A daily laborer in Michicha, Frenesh's husband sometimes sends her some money but that money too small to do anything with and comes occasionally. Since they were displaced from her village and came to Gotite, a rural village in SNNPR's Gedeo zone, Frenesh has a seemingly unlikely ally to work and live with – her husband's other wife who also has three children with him. "It is common in our culture, in fact she and I help & understand each other more than he helps us both," Frenesh said.

Like her husband, Frenesh is a daily laborer in her new settlement, but her income is too little to provide enough for her children. Within a few months' time, her youngest child, one-year-old Alemitu, was severely malnourished and admitted twice to the Stabilization Centre at Banko Tatato Health Center, which Save the Children, through the ECHO funded Life-saving Multi-Sectoral Emergency Response for IDPs project in SNNPR's Gedeo zone, established and supports with medical and nutrition supplies. According to Abera Negesse, SC Nurse at Banko Tatato Health Center, little Alemitu's medically complicated severe malnutrition manifested similarly in both admissions. She had dysentery (diarrhea with blood), vomiting and dry cough. "Her sunken eyes, slow response to skin pinch and weight loss were all vital signs that she was critically malnourished," Abera said.

After one week of care and treatment at the Stabilization Center in her latest admission, Alemitu is well into recovery. Her weight improved from 6.5 to 7.3 kilograms and her arm's circumference increased from 10.7 to 11.6. She no longer has diarrhea, vomiting, dry cough and dehydration "We will only keep Alemitu here for two days at most until she is used to the nutrition rich food because she will continue eating some more at home until she fully recovers," Abera said. Abera also said he is grateful to Save the Children's support through this ECHO funded emergency project. "The nutrition and medical supplies were extremely important to help malnourished children of IDPs, returnees and host community here to recover from their critical condition.", he said.

Frenesh hopes her baby grows well to serve God and become a successful businessperson who will support her family in the future."

IMPLEMENTATION AREAS



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