

### ***Regenerating pasture to protect core breeding animals in South Omo, Ethiopia***

In 2016/2017, there was severe drought in south Omo Zone of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region of Ethiopia, specifically Hamer, Dassenech, Bena-Tsemay and Maale districts. VSF Germany, with support from ECHO, implemented cash-for-work activities on the rangeland. The objective was to transfer cash through availing employment opportunities to drought-affected families who had exhausted their livelihood assets, so they could earn income and cover their basic household needs. Besides cash injections, the project provided training on rangeland rehabilitation practices, provision of agricultural tools and grass seeds for sowing on degraded rangeland. Rangeland rehabilitation practices included – but were not limited to – enclosure of rangeland for rest and regeneration, bush thinning (only invasive species), and making physical and biological conservation structures to hold running water to improve moisture during the rainy season (such as check dams, stone/soil bands, etc.).

A total of 200 hectares of rangeland were rehabilitated in Maale, Ben Tsemay and Hamer districts. Out of 50 hectares of rehabilitated rangeland in Bena Tsemay district, a total of 27,550 bales of grass hay were harvested in two rounds during the project period, with an estimated cost of \$207,266 USD. From the total harvested hay, 15,540 bales were distributed for the targeted communities to feed lactating and pregnant cattle near their village, in order to avail milk for children. The remaining bales of hay (12,010) were stored for the upcoming dry season to protect core breeding animals.

#### Testimony from participants

My name is Suruwa Loporoy. I am a mother of two daughters and four sons living in Delegnimore Kebele of the Dassenech district, South Omo Zone of SNNPR, in Ethiopia. I lost my livestock due to recurrent drought in my *woreda*, Dassenech, in the year 2016/2017. Because I lost my livestock and was severely affected by the drought, I was selected as a participant of the VSF Germany Emergency project. The selection was done via agreed sets of criteria where my community members, *kebele* administrators, *woreda* government representatives, as well as VSF Germany project staff, discussed and agreed on the participants. In this project, I participated in fodder development activity in our *kebele*, Delegnimore, with my group members.

The project provided us with in-kind support for our fodder production, which included agricultural tools, water pumps, grass seeds, and fuel. I and my fodder group members also participated in cash-for-work activities in fodder land preparation, such as bush clearing, canal works and seeding, and day-to-day follow up of irrigated fodder production. We, as irrigated fodder group members, harvested a total of 2,082 bales of grass hay from five hectares of land, which was used by all members to feed their core breeding animals, protecting them from the effect of drought. Furthermore, the groups collected a total 1,317 kg grass seed. From the total fodder production, I managed to get 265 bales of hay and 59 kg of grass seed. I sold the seed for ETB 17,700 (\$648.11) and bought four bulls for fattening using the grass harvested from the

fodder bank. I sold two bulls after fattening (conditioning for a period of one month and half) for a total of ETB 20,000 (\$732.33). Now, the remaining two bulls are also ready for sale, and I am expecting to get more income for my family.

I am enlightened by this activity of fodder production and fattening, and committed to continue my business, as the second harvest of our fodder is also in good stand. I thank both VSF Germany and the donor for supporting and implementing this project, which has changed my life. I managed to get income for my household and was able to cover my children's expenses at school.

**Source:** Information provided by Veterinaires Sans Frontieres Germany (VSF Germany), Ethiopia Country Office.