



Ethiopia's PHE *Spotlight*

Integrated Practical Success Stories and
Challenges from the Field

Relief Society of Tigray (REST) PHE Site
in Raya, Southern Tigray



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INTRODUCTION

As the PHE Ethiopia Consortium our mission is to “enhance and promote the integration of population, health and environment (PHE) at various levels for sustainable development.” We have been striving to fulfill this mission and to provide coordination and capacity building to our members ever since our creation in 2008, in accordance with recommendations following the 2007 “PHE Integrated Development for East Africa” conference. Our organization has since grown in size and responsibility, and we are now involved in a number of activities including enhancing cooperation and networking between government agencies and NGOs, building capacity and increasing PHE resources for members groups, facilitating experience and idea sharing, and organizing advocacy and teaching activities to strengthen awareness and utilization of the PHE approach in Ethiopia. In addition, PHE Ethiopia Consortium is directly involved in several PHE pilot sites throughout the country. One of these sites in the Raya Azebo woreda of the Tigray region is run by the Relief Society of Tigray (REST).

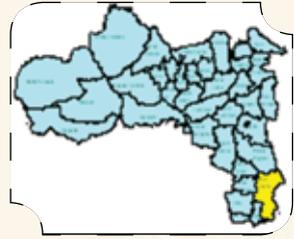


*Ebo/Abnet kebele in
Raya Azebo woreda*

REST is a large Ethiopian NGO that has been working on relief, rehabilitation and development projects throughout Tigray since 1978. It was initially created to provide emergency assistance to people in the liberated area of Tigray who were suffering from civil war and drought: although the scope of their work has since changed (it is now focused more on development than relief efforts), their commitment to the most vulnerable people of the region persists¹. Their organizational mission is “to contribute to the eradication of poverty in Ethiopia by promoting livelihoods on a sustainable basis within the context of stimulating wider economic dynamism and growth within the Regional State of Tigray”². Their use of an integrated watershed approach to development, combined with their influential existing health and environmental programs, made them an ideal candidate for the PHE pilot site, which is currently nearing the end of a three year Packard Foundation grant³.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Raya Azebo is an arid, drought-prone and densely populated woreda in the Southern zone of Tigray. In 2007 it had a population of 135,870 (a 55% increase from 1994), evenly distributed between men and women. 11.8% of this population is urban, and 95% are involved in agriculture⁴. The REST project is implemented in three kebeles: Ebo/Abnet, Bala and Genete, which have a combined population of 20,473. These kebeles, like the Raya woreda itself,



Raya Azebo in Tigray

were chosen as project sites because of their relative food insecurity, poverty and vulnerability. Of 114,858 people over the age of five who were surveyed in the woreda in 2007, 81,643 had never attended school⁴. According to 2005 DHS data for Tigray, the total fertility rate in the region was 5.1, child mortality was 42/1000 and 2.1% of tested 15-49 year olds were HIV positive (2.6% of women)⁵. In addition, many people have no access to proper nutrition and sanitation. Given this rather dire situation it was thought that the implementation of development projects in Raya Azebo had the most potential to create a positive impact on the lives of its inhabitants. REST has been working in the region for many years, and has implemented many successful health and environmental programs.



Project sites in Raya

The PHE approach fits very well into the REST woreda-level watershed model that has been implemented at this site since 2005. A watershed by definition is an area of land where runoff from rainfall is drained through a common confluence point. From a socioeconomic standpoint, this area is unique in terms of people, their livelihoods and their use of natural resources. The watershed model aims to target developmental efforts to this defined area and population. It uses kebele-level implementers committees (a development agent, health extension worker, education committee representative and peer educators) to draft integration plans that holistically address health, family planning, livelihood, conservation, water and agriculture. These kebele-level plans are approved and compiled by a technical committee at the woreda level and then implemented by the government, with



Farmers at work in Raya Azebo

coordination and ancillary support provided by REST. By doing this, REST ensures that activities can eventually continue without them and can thus be sustainable in the years to come.

THE WATERSHED APPROACH TO PHE INTEGRATION

The overall goals of the Raya project focus on improving livelihoods and food security using interventions targeting health, water, education, women’s empowerment, natural resource improvement, irrigation and road construction. The Raya site is also part of the REST and USAID Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) which means that, due to its chronic poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity, it receives food and money in times of need in addition to other services provided by the watershed program that improve livelihoods and resilience to external stresses like climate change. Furthermore, it is one of two woredas in the PSNP Plus program, which means that community members are provided with additional methods of closing their food gaps, including fattening programs for livestock, and provision of quality cereal packages.



Entrance to the Dibirik Biye watershed zone

“In Raya, REST is trying to integrate issues of population, health and environment in a more precise and focused manner than in our other project sites... here, our different interventions work more closely together to create comprehensive and value-added results. This is the point we want to make.”

Tsehaynesh Abay,
Head of the REST Health Department

In accordance with the watershed approach and supported by the PSNP, all aspects of PHE are addressed in REST’s Raya project area. Health services and education are provided through government health centers, which are expected to cover 25,000 people and to oversee two health extension workers at each of their five health posts in addition to community health workers: REST strengthens these programs through capacity building and material support. Under the PSNP program, the four basic tenets of health services covered include family planning, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and sanitation. In addition, closure areas have been created for environmental conservation and erosion control infrastructures like terracing, trenches, bunds, percolation ponds and gully reclamation. Potable and irrigation water access has been increased using flood diversions, boreholes, groundwater irrigation and mini-dam

construction. There are nurseries that provide seedlings to farmers, programs to improve and diversify livelihoods, and associations promoting gender and youth empowerment. Finally, roads, bridges and markets have been created to facilitate all of the other community activities. More importantly, all of this has been done in an integrated manner.



Closure areas demonstrating vegetation growth after 1 year (front) and 2 years (back)



Former deep gully now green, fertile and productive of trees and fruits after construction of a gabion check dam

EXAMPLES OF PHE INTEGRATION IN THE WATERSHED

Youth Friendly Services at the Bala Health Center:

Bala is a kebele at the border of Afar, with youth who are especially migratory and vulnerable. This vulnerability is reflected in their high HIV prevalence relative to youth in nearby areas. In 2009, a health center in Bala town was set up to complement the 3 health posts and health extension workers in neighboring kebeles in providing the sixteen components of the basic health service package pertaining to reproductive health, family planning, hygiene and sanitation, HIV/AIDS prevention, maternal and child health and nutrition. However in addition, due to the initiative of its director Leah Haile and the support of REST, schools and influential community members, the center in Bala also provides Youth Friendly Services (YFS) to try to reach the community's vulnerable youth. Students attend these services at the health center, attracted by the facilities (such as the Packard-sponsored TV, educational materials and furniture), their trust in the health workers, and the sense of community they find there. They learn about health, family planning and HIV as well as agriculture, farming and other aspects of PHE, and then relay this information to their parents and friends. During market days, they even use a microphone to teach their community about topics like using bed nets, raising poultry, and getting HIV testing.

“YFSs are especially successful for students, because they learn many things and teach their parents to live healthy lives. They know about agriculture, they know about health, and especially HIV. This is making a difference.”

**Leah Haile,
Director of the Bala Health center**

In addition to providing services, the YFS program at the Bala health center offers “shai/bunna” (tea/ coffee) and other gatherings where youth get together to talk about important issues, and to form close relationships. Overall, the youth friendly services provided by health centers like the one in Bala are a strong example of PHE integration working to improve the quality of life for a particularly vulnerable segment of the Raya population.



Youth gathering for a “shai-bunna” ceremony at the Bala Health Center through the YFS Program

Data has been carefully collected by the health center over the past year and a half, and Leah is confident that subsequent research findings will reflect the improvements in health and service utilization that she has seen in practice.

Health service and education outreach to community farmers:

Farmers and agricultural workers make up a large segment of the Raya population, and it is especially important to optimize their health in addition to providing livelihood-related services. It is also essential to the PHE approach that they understand the importance of family planning. In Raya, health workers and development agents (DAs) work together to achieve these integrated goals. Farmer training centers in the Raya kebeles give technical support to local farmers on cash crop production, forage development and reforestation, but in the REST project areas DAs who train the farmers also discuss issues like family planning with their clients. They talk about the stress that having many children puts on a family in terms of income, and in terms of their ability to feed everyone adequately. When needed, they refer these farmers



Farmer training center in Raya

to health education workers for more information. In turn, health education workers often refer their own clients to the DAs for advice on sustainable farming techniques and food availability issues. This is an excellent example of the strong level of collaboration and mutual support which is encouraged by REST that developed and exists between government sectors in approaching the health, environment and livelihoods of target community members in Raya.

“Because of the watershed area and projects there is a new opportunity for farmers to get the health education and services they need”

Berhe Gashaye,

Head nurse of the Bala Health Center

“Environmental, Family Planning and Health” clubs in schools:

At many primary schools in Raya, students are actively involved in clubs focusing on a variety of issues including HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, gardening, literature, leadership and gender. This is certainly true for the Eyob primary school in Bala, where many active clubs are organized and run by teacher Debes Gebreyesus. The students at this school also have a community garden, which they all work on for an hour every Wednesday. They use the vegetables and fruits produced to bring income to the school, and to provide clothes and supplies to community children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. They also take lessons about farming and nutrition home to their families, along with advice on topics like family planning and HIV transmission. The club members at Eyob are also very familiar with the concept of PHE:

“Population, health and environment must be addressed in an integrated way. With no sound environment there can be no health and no people. For example, to get rid of malaria we must clean our environment and for this we need conservation efforts. If we do this, we will have healthy people. And if we have healthy people, we can have a healthy country”

**Eyob school HIV/AIDS club leader
and member**



School club members and their garden

Students like these are very educated about development issues and act as community educators. They are empowered, passionate and motivated to change the community they live in. When asked about their future career goals, they said: *doctor, pilot, professor, engineer...*

PSNP food for labor programs that promote ecologic conservation:

As part of the REST development model, the community is actively involved in project activities and implementation. Through a participatory approach, project labor is enlisted from the community itself, and paid for with food. This provides supplementary income to families in the form of nutrition, which contributes to individual health. It also means that community members take ownership of the site's projects and efforts to conserve their environment. Among other things, these efforts include:



Community members working on gully reclamation

- Creating bunds and trenches to collect rain runoff, which not only breaks the force of flood waters to prevent soil erosion, but also allows water to collect underground and percolate to farmlands.
- Working at one of Raya's seven nurseries to grow seedlings for distribution to farmers. These trees can later be used to make local houses, or to provide fruit like mangos, papayas, avocados and bananas. They also enrich the soil, and promote reforestation with indigenous species.



Women working at the Bala seedling nursery for food

- Building mini-dams and gabion check dams to provide water to livestock and stream irrigation to farms. Whereas previously the damages from floods were mitigated by creating blockades with felled trees, the gabions now do this without requiring deforestation, and with more efficacy and longer lasting results.

“By just working here, we are improving our lives and livelihoods ”

Reda Tasew,

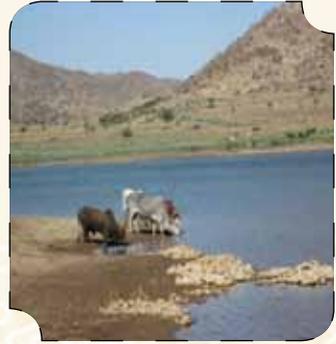
Seedling nursery technician

There are also similar food for labor public work programs for Community Resource Persons (CRPs) who disseminate health education messages to the community. In many of these programs (especially the seedling nurseries), women are employed with great frequency, to empower them in their homes as

breadwinners for their families. For all these laborers, their work simultaneously improves their community and their individual well-being.

Environment conservation efforts that improve livelihoods:

As expressed by Reda Tasew, many of the environmental conservation activities described above improve the livelihoods of community members. This is not only because of the PSNP public works program which provide supplementary pay in-kind to laborers. More importantly, many of the same interventions that improve the environment also make it more productive for the men and women who depend on it for their livelihoods. For example the use of closure areas, where grass must be cut and carried to cattle rather than letting them graze freely, allows shrubbery to regenerate in order to provide a more sustainable source of land and food in the long term. Another one of the most successful interventions has been in terms of irrigation. The Bala dam, like others in the area, was constructed about two years ago. Previously, there was no water in the dry season for human or animal consumption, let alone crops. Now, after the dam's creation, there is more ground water and the new formation of many streams throughout the farmlands.



*Top: New Bala dam collecting water
Bottom: New stream formation for farmland irrigation, pictured during the dry season*

Farmers can now grow irrigable crops like vegetables and fruits, which can be harvested more often than rain-fed sorghum and teff and sold for profit or consumed as nutrients. Harvests are also now much more drought-resistant, which is extremely important in historically food-insecure Raya (and Ethiopia as a whole) to prevent disaster and hunger in the face of continued climate change and global warming.

“There was no irrigation here at all two years ago- but now you are looking at a green fertile area in February! [the dry season]. This is the positive impact of all our conservation activities”

Yishak Desta,
REST's Raya Project Coordinator.

Empowerment and enhanced risk taking by farmers, women and youth:

The community participatory method of achieving developmental goals certainly empowers community members who engage in project activities. This empowerment is increased by clubs, associations and entrepreneurship trainings that bring groups like women and youth together to share ideas and become more productive members of society. In addition, empowerment is promoted by giving people the tools that they need to take risks and to take control of their own lives. One example of this in Raya is their “weather index” crop insurance project in Genete, described in the next section. There is also a Village Saving and Loan Associations which provides farmers with financial services and encourages them to save money. Another example is the fattening program under the umbrella of PSNP Plus, which helps community members to buy livestock, fatten them, and sell them for profit. This increases their financial assets and encourages them to engage in market-based activities. For one farmer, this program has provided an invaluable source of supplementary income:



Training for the PSNP Plus livestock fattening program

“Last cycle [2-3months] I fattened 5 sheep/goats and sold them for a 400 birr profit. Now I have bought 4 more sheep and have used the extra profits for my home, and for school expenses for my children ”

Zewudu Kebede,

farmer and beneficiary of the PSNP livestock fattening program.

Zewudu also continues to run the farm he had before, but now gets additional teff seeds through the program that he says have very good yield. Because of his successes, he has told his friends about the program so they may also have an opportunity to gain from it. Another PSNP beneficiary, Genet Alamu, identified herself as very poor, and the single mother of a woman-headed household. Last cycle she bought and sold four sheep for a 500 birr net profit.



Female beneficiary of PSNP plus

“I don’t have a house of my own yet, but with this money I hope to save enough to get land and to build a house for myself and my two children.”

Genet Alamu,

single mother of two children, and beneficiary of the sheep fattening program

Genet also uses crop-sharing land to farm teff, and used program seeds last year to grow enough food for herself and her children.

Crop insurance and other programs that improve livelihoods while building climate change resilience:

Global climate changes that are increasing atmospheric temperatures and altering rainfall patterns cause water shortages and soil erosion, threatening the already fragile ecosystem in Raya and the rural communities that depend on the land and rainfed agriculture for their livelihoods. Currently, only about 8% of Tigray’s cultivated land has access to irrigation water, which makes it highly vulnerable to the effects of drought. In addition, a mountainous and largely deforested topography makes the area susceptible to damage by flood waters, which erode farmlands and worsen an existing level of land degradation. The poor in Raya also have limited access to alternative means of income and to adequate healthcare: these conditions exacerbate their vulnerability to climate change as they often lack the strength or means to deal with major climate risks.

Through its watershed program, REST is working to build better adaptive capacities and infrastructures to protect Raya’s rural households from the impacts of climate change. One example of this is their “weather index” crop insurance project, which is an innovative market-based risk-financing system, designed and supported by REST and Oxfam America. This system differs from traditional crop insurance systems in the sense that it depends on rainfall data. If the rainfall in an area is below an agreed threshold, the insurance system compensates farmers. Unlike a traditional crop insurance system, this does not require the insurance company to visit rural farms to determine premiums or assess damages, and thus payments can be made quickly and with minimal transaction costs. Through this program, known as the Horn of Africa Risk Transfer for Adaptation (HARITA), approximately 1,558 farming households have been supported in three pilot woredas, including Raya, since 2009. Like many of REST’s other public works projects, even poor farmers can pay in labor if they don’t have cash in exchange for protection against the risk of drought-related crop failure.



Automatic rain gauge for weather index crop insurance

“REST believes that adaptation to climate change must primarily focus on reducing local vulnerabilities in order to ensure better community capacity and resiliency to climate stresses”

Dr. Mulugeta Berhanu,

Head of the REST Environmental Department

In addition to crop insurance, the irrigation and water harvesting infrastructures previously described help protect against drought and water shortages in Raya. The public works improving soil and water conservation help control land degradation and strengthen it against the forces of flooding and erosion. Income generating activities and improved public health programs also indirectly affect climate change resilience, by decreasing the overall vulnerability of the Raya community. Finally, empowerment programs like the Village Saving and Lending Associations contribute as well, by offering people a new financial safety net in the face of natural disasters.

PROGRAM SUCCESSES

The contribution of the REST program and government efforts to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty in Raya Azebo is clear. What is even more remarkable is their success at achieving a development approach to Population, Health and Environment that is truly integrated. This integration is reflected in the story of Reda Tasew, the seedling nursery technician who uses the health center, gets family planning methods for his wife, and has three well-spaced children who are all in school. It is evident in the Bala village of Jimma, where all homes have bed nets, their own toilets and liquid waste collecting systems due to the extensive project educational activities. In Jimma, it is particularly reflected by the Manaradav family, whose female head had six children, but whose daughter only had two because she understands the importance of family planning. This family has land for farming rainfed sorghum and teff and gets coffee and papaya seeds from the seedling nursery. This year they finally had a successful harvest, which they attributed to “the construction of a dam upstream that provided downstream irrigation”. All of these women are also part of women’s development groups, where they are able to receive and disseminate educational messages to better their lives.

“The best thing that has happened from all this is that we all have much better health- the health staff are bringing about important behavioral changes and many trainings have been provided in every village. Because of this, in the past 2-3 years there has been a huge change It is not yet complete, but we have a fantastic vision of where we are going.”

Member of the Manaradev family in Jimma village

The integrated PHE approach is also reflected by the story of Genet Alemu, the single mother of two who is profiting from the PSNP Plus livestock fattening program. She uses family planning from a health post and will not have more children, “because I want to help these children that I have to properly grow.” She also is the chairwoman of a women’s development group in her village and is a member of the Women’s Association.



The Manaradev family in Jimma village



Tigabo brothers working on their spring onion farm

Finally, we see the fruits of integration benefiting the Tigabo brothers who, thanks to the new Bala dam, streams and irrigation have such productive farming yields that they are self sufficient and do not need to take jobs working for others.

PHE CHALLENGES

On February 5-12, 2011, REST held a PHE integration workshop and training for about 45 members of the Raya woreda and kebele government and community. During this workshop, they evaluated PHE integration activities in the woreda, and discussed the challenges faced in implementing them. The main challenges raised by these government leaders, as well as community members and REST project participants include the following broad categories:

- Addressing family planning at the same pace as health and environment: The population growth rate in the Raya community continues to outgrow improvements in overall health and environmental productivity. Family planning must therefore be addressed more aggressively to ensure that population pressures do not hamper progress made in the other areas of PHE and overall development. One of the ways in which REST hopes to do this in the future is by utilizing and mobilizing women, youth and development groups to promote the utilization of integrated FP/RH services..

➤ Implementing woreda-level integrated plans in practice at a kebele level: While plans for projects are integrated well at a woreda level, workshop participants cited inadequate capacity at the kebele level to understand and carry out the same level of integration in their developmental activities. They also cited slow community uptake of programs due to a lack of awareness about the benefits of PHE integration for development and poverty reduction.

➤ Funds and supplies: One of the main limiting factors identified by workshop participants and community members for providing all of REST’s intended services was inadequate transport and, to a lesser extent, staffing and supplies. However as pointed out by Tsehaynesh Abay, using the PHE approach is in fact an important step towards using existing funds from all projects and donors more efficiently. It is therefore economically beneficial to use PHE even more as a core concept, and to facilitate linkage and collaboration between all key players and donors and their respective interventions in Raya.

➤ Monitoring and evaluation: As with many developmental projects, monitoring and evaluation must be strengthened in Raya in order to appreciate best practices and make changes where needed to maximize program efficacy and impact. At present, health data is collected by the health centers, and baseline data on nutrition and sanitation was collected at all REST safety net woredas a few months ago.



Data collection at Bala Health Center

➤ Sustained momentum: Workshop participants mentioned strong initial momentum to integrate PHE activities, but efforts that fade with time when trainings are not held often. Therefore, continuous follow-up with government and other stakeholders is necessary to maximize project effectiveness.

LESSONS LEARNED AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The REST project site in Raya Azebo has started to achieve true integration of its developmental activities in an effort to tackle poverty in Tigray. Despite some of the challenges mentioned, the project has succeeded in improving health outcomes, increasing family planning use, empowering women, youth and farmers and rehabilitating the environment to improve livelihoods, food security, land productivity and resistance to climate change. Efforts are truly collaborative, with a close partnership evident between government sectors, NGOs and the local community. Indeed, government participants of the REST workshop acknowledged that they now understand the PHE concept clearly,

and appreciate its overall importance. In the future REST hopes to address some of its challenges by conducting refresher trainings to sustain government level commitment, increasing woreda-level capacity and resources, strengthening family planning and monitoring and evaluation activities, and continuing to build awareness in the community about the importance of tackling issues of population, health and environment in an integrated way. They also plan to scale out their integrated program to three more safety net woredas during the next Packard grant cycle, to replicate the successes seen in Raya.

SOURCES:

1. Towards a Food Secure Future: The Strategic Plan 2006-2010 of the Relief Society of Tigray. http://www.rest-tigray.org.et/files/strategic_plan_2006-10.pdf
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Raya Estimates at a Glance*:

- 98% - of program staff trained to provide RH services to adolescents
- 66% - of reproductive age women (15-49) receiving family planning services
- 15% - of deliveries conducted by SBPs
- 8 health centers & 12 health posts
- 1756 insecticide-treated bed nets used properly per month
- 314 people given ORS for diarrhea in 1 mo
- 40.4% women given 2+ doses of TT vaccine
- 89.6% children fully immunized before 1 yr
- 53% of households with access to an improved water source
- 44,163 ha of cultivated land
- 38,795 ha of closure area
- 31 check dams created in 1 yr
- 1.75 million tree seedlings produced in 1yr
- 333.15 qt of improved teff seeds used in 2009
- 16,380 household loan and credit users (3,420 of these are women)
- 11,150 PSNP beneficiaries using household credit package
- 52 existing primary schools
- 2 existing secondary schools
- 70% road density
- 40 new roads constructed in 1 yr
- 9 electrified deep bore holes created, providing safe water for >5,500 households and >11,000 livestock

* estimates from Bala HC and REST Coordinating Office

INTERVIEW WITH TEKLEWOINI ASSEFA

PHE Ethiopia: Can you please introduce yourself?

Ato Teklewoini: My name is Teklewoini Assefa, the Executive Director of the Relief Society of Tigray (REST). I am also the father of three children.

PHE Ethiopia: Can you tell us about briefly your project? When was REST established and what were its objectives at establishment?

Ato Teklewoini: The Relief Society of Tigray is a local grassroots organization originally established in 1978 to serve the humanitarian needs of a population affected by civil war. Today, REST is the largest operating non-governmental NGO in the Tigray region, where it is implementing an extensive and integrated relief, rehabilitation and development programme. The overall REST goal is to reduce a currently high level of chronic food insecurity among poor and vulnerable rural households in Tigray by strengthening household livelihoods, improving health and educational statuses, promoting empowerment especially of woman, improving water security and promoting the sustainable management of natural resources.

PHE Ethiopia: What, in your opinion, are REST's major achievements or successes since establishment?

Ato Teklewoini: Some of REST's key achievements include:

- Saving hundreds of lives during the civil war through emergency relief
- Increasing food security and self-reliance of households in Tigray
- Reducing vulnerability of the region to natural disaster
- Diversifying agricultural products to improve economic viability
- Reducing land degradation through an integrated watershed approach
- Increasing access to health care, water, sanitation, family planning and mother and child health
- Reducing the rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Tigray
- Improving access to basic education particularly for young girls
- Creating opportunities for active participation by the poorest populations



My general opinion is that REST's original commitment to the poorest and most vulnerable populations laid the foundation for its activities today. As a result REST has facilitated successful interventions for over 30 years which have changed the lives of many vulnerable people in Tigray.

PHE Ethiopia: How do you approach PHE conceptually?

Ato Teklewoini: REST has been implementing a watershed approach to integrate its programs at the woreda and kebele level through its woreda coordination offices and government line offices. now we are strengthening that linkage operationally as a system in Raya as a model site through the support of Packard Foundation .

PHE Ethiopia: How/when did you start the PHE integrated approach in Raya?

Ato Teklewoini: The PHE approach in Raya Azebo was started in 2005, mainly focusing on adolescent reproductive health.. The program has been implemented in schools through Environment, HIV/AIDS and Family Planning, Reproductive Health and other clubs. Particularly, we work on environment protection by supporting vulnerable adolescents in income generating activities (IGA). In addition, REST works on integration through the Safety Net Program health component, focusing on the four pillars of family planning, nutrition promotion, environmental health and HIV/AIDS prevention, and integrating these into soil and water conservation efforts using things like environment rehabilitation activities during public work days and house-to-house visits through Community Resource Persons trained on health care delivery. As a result of those integrated interventions all activities will give value to each other and bring comprehensive value added results to the family, community and the ecosystem of the surrounding.

PHE Ethiopia: What are the differences between the Raya development approach and the approach used in other projects you implement?

Ato Teklewoini: We are implementing the watershed approach mainly in safety net woredas. What makes the Raya –Azebo site different is that it gives more focus to the integration of population, health and environment and helps government leaders to focus on the issue of population growth in relation to environmental protection and to integrate it into development programs conceptually and operationally.

PHE Ethiopia: Do you plan to scale up the Raya PHE approach?

Ato Teklewoini: Yes with the Packard and other REST programs we are

planning to scale up, specifically into 3 other Safety Net Woredas during the next Packard grant cycle. At this level I want to thank and appreciate Packard Foundation's strong support for the integration approach.

PHE Ethiopia: What other kind of interventions do you implement?

Ato Teklewoini: Other kinds of interventions are water and sanitation development, environmental rehabilitation and agricultural development, water resource development, health and education with special target to women & livelihoods.

PHE Ethiopia: What is REST doing to affect climate change adaptation?

Ato Teklewoini: As described in the body of this Spotlight, REST believes that adaptation to climate change must primarily focus on reducing the current level of local vulnerability in order to ensure better local capacity and resiliency. Although the resources and time required to build effective adaptation to climate changes in Tigray are immense, the integrated watershed development advances made so far by REST's PHE project are laying the foundation for better adaptive capacities against future climate change. The various irrigation and water harvesting infrastructures developed through safety net public work programs are increasing access to agriculture water, and in turn contributing to improved local capacities in managing drought related disaster risks. Similarly, the public work actions on soil and water conservation including terracing, gully reclamation and reforestation measures are helping to control land degradation and contributing to improved local adaptation capacities related to current and future risks of flood and erosion hazards. Our income generating and health-related activities also have important implications for building household resiliency to climate change by reducing their vulnerability to shocks. The Village Saving and Lending Associations and Weather Index Crop Insurance systems promoted by REST will also have a direct impact on peoples' resilience to climate change by providing support in times of climate or other shocks.

PHE Ethiopia: How many beneficiaries do you reach? (Women Men)

Ato Teklewoini: We reach 3 million people, 30-40% of whom are female.

PHE Ethiopia: How is your partnership with the government?

Ato Teklewoini: Our partnerships with the government at all levels (federal, regional, woreda and kebele) are very strong.

PHE Ethiopia: How many staff members do you have?

Ato Teklewoini: Nearly 700 staff.

PHE Ethiopia: Who are your donors?

Ato Teklewoini: Our key donors include USAID, the EU, the Development Fund of Norway, the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), A Glimmer of Hope, Water Charity, the Packard Foundation, Pathfinder International, JSI/L10K, etc

PHE Ethiopia: What are your organizations major challenges?

Ato Teklewoini: The main challenge, as for many aid-dependants NGOs, is maintaining a secure resource base. We face competition for a shrinking resource pool, dominance of international players in shaping the development of the landscape, shifting donor priorities and strategies, and increasing tied and conditional aid to direct changes in governance, democratization and stability.

PHE Ethiopia: What are the lessons we can learn from REST's history and development approach?

Ato Teklewoini: Some of the lessons we can learn from REST are:

- The need for continuous commitment to the most vulnerable populations
- The importance of building grassroots capacity and partnerships (which is the key to sustained development)
- The need for integration and coordination to maintain extensive community engagement throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects to enhance project outcomes and impacts.

PHE Ethiopia: How do you evaluate your work?

Ato Teklewoini: Within the planning and co-ordination departments a monitoring and evaluation unit carries out the following:

Monitoring

- Performance monitoring by project participants and local work groups
- Monitoring through periodic progress responses
- Monitoring through field visit evaluations

Evaluation

- Internal (on-going)
- Formal (impact) evaluations are primarily designed to measure the impact of the project by assessing changes that have come about and the proportion of these changes attributable to the project.

Community based evaluation

- Communities play an essential role in many evaluations. On a regular basis the woreda and kebele watershed committees facilitate an evaluation process which brings together the majority of community members.

PHE Ethiopia: Describe your relationship with PHE Ethiopia Consortium. Are there any things that need improvement?

Ato Teklewoini: Yes, PHE Ethiopia consortium is doing well in terms of integration, but it has to work more on its ability to raise funds for PHE integration activities, mainly to create capacity at a grassroots level, and document the success stories on the ground.

PHE Ethiopia: Do you have any final messages about REST and/or PHE that you want to share?

Ato Teklewoini: PHE Ethiopia Consortium and REST's partnership for understanding the need and contexts for the PHE approach are central to the success of the programme, and needs to be strengthened to the maximum. Thank you.

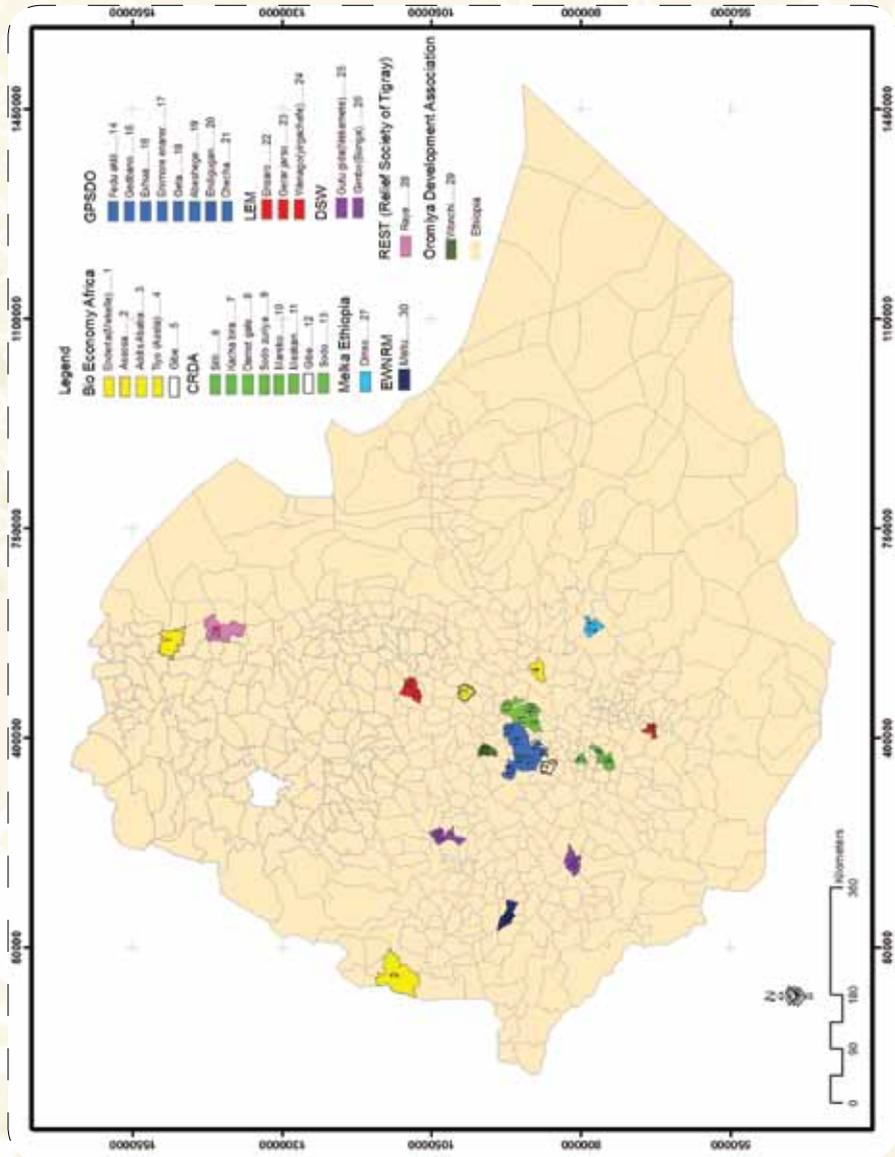
Thank Yous:

The creation of this Spotlight issue would not have been possible without the help of sister Tsehaynesh Abay and Yishak Desta, who introduced me to the work of REST in Raya and were extraordinarily generous with their time and expertise.

About Ishani Pathmanathan:

Ishani Pathmanathan is a student at Tufts University School of Medicine, where she is pursuing her MD/MPH. She served as a PHE-Ethiopia intern from Jan-Feb 2011, and helped to edit and write reports like this issue of Spotlight.

Ethiopia: PHE Sites





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