

Dhas Women Income Generating Group: A shining example of what unity and hard work can achieve, CARE Ethiopia, February 2010

Dhas Income Generating Group was formed in 2008 after seeing how well other similar groups in the neighboring community were doing. The group started with a membership of 35 members but this went down to 28 after a few members left the area.

“We started off by each contributing 100 Birr (about USD 10) in addition each member contributes 10 Birr (USD10) every month” says Chulukey Halo, the chairperson of the group and an active businesswoman and shop owner in Dhas.

Towards the end of 2008, the group was also selected for support by CARE International in Ethiopia with the support of the Enhanced Livelihood in the Mendera Triangle/ Southern Ethiopia (ELMT/ELSE) project.

“CARE trained us how to select healthy animals for trade, the basic principles of how to operate a savings and loans group and hay making for use during drought seasons” says Chukuley.



Some members of Dhas outside their office/CARE Ethiopia

Exchange visits to groups neighboring the community like Chancho, Mojo and Shoa were also organized where the women learnt about milk and meat processing and also shared marketing experiences. *“One key exchange visit that I really appreciated was the experience sharing visit to Negelle where we learnt how to purchase the best (healthiest) animals for sale”* explains Chukuley.

In October 2009, Dhas received 30,000Birr (USD 3000) as seed money from CARE. With this they bought 26 bulls for a total cost of 28,000 (USD 2800). *“We formed a purchasing committee and with the help of some of our male members from our community and the skills received from the training by CARE we were able to purchase healthy and marketable bulls”* explains Chulukey.

The group is now waiting for the prices to rise before they sell their livestock. They have distributed the livestock amongst themselves to care for them and have so far spent a total of 500Birr (USD 50) on salt and drugs. In addition 10 members have each received 1,000 Birr (USD100) loans which they are to pay back after three months with 50 Birr (USD5) per month interest.

"I took a loan and bought 3 sheep and goats (shoats) and so far I have made an average profit of 15 Birr (USD1.5) per shoat after selling two of these and retaining one for breeding." explains an excited Doba Goya who is one of the only two male members of the group and also acts as the treasurer of the group. The second man keeps the records as none of the women can write. *"At one point CARE paid a teacher for us to learn how to read and write and this went on for four months then stopped but we are still interested in learning"* says Chulukey

Another member, Diko Salo also got a loan and has benefited from it greatly. *"I bought three male shoats for trade and one female for breeding and milk. The males were 210 Birr (USD21) and I sold them at 250Birr (USD 25) making a profit of 40Birr (USD4) per shoat and I have reinvested this profits into the business."*

Diko and her husband decide jointly on how to use the money. She said he doesn't have a problem with her going to meetings or for exchange visits.

Dhas has provided a good model for surrounding communities and as a result several new groups have formed to help the members improve their lives including a group called Kayow, which is collecting and selling incense and gum.