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# Overcoming Chronic Famine and Drought

Three years after severe drought conditions affected close to 14 million Ethiopians, rural communities are still struggling to recover. Despite improved humanitarian conditions, poor agricultural habits and dangerously depleted natural resources have compounded the issues leading to chronic drought in many parts of the country.

Since CHF International began working in Ethiopia in April 2004, we have established ourselves as a leader in mitigating complex emergencies by focusing on livelihood recovery and employment generation. Currently, CHF International is implementing three grassroots programs throughout rural regions of the country:

### Emergency Livelihoods Recovery (ELR):

While addressing the urgent needs of the most vulnerable populations, the ELR strategy is based on the principle that for communities to go from relief to development, it is necessary to involve them in short-term food and income generating activities, while simultaneously establishing plans that mitigate the impact of future droughts. ELR has four main objectives:

- > income diversity by creating streams of rain-fed agriculture;
- > increased agricultural productivity through the use of improved soil fertility and management;
- > improved asset management, resulting in increased revenue; and
- > improved water resource, security and management.

ELR aims to reach over **35,000 people** in the heavily drought affected regions of Western Ethiopia.

### Southern Seed Fair Program (SSFP):

SSFP is serving rural communities and vulnerable households by improving access to seeds and equipment for



Thousands of young boys and girls who once had to spend hours each day walking to distant water sources are now free to spend their time in school because of CHF International's livelihood improvement programs in Ethiopia.

the cropping season, combined with necessary training and extension services. One of the main components of the program is organizing "seed fairs," where local suppliers provide target beneficiaries with seeds and rural farmers can participate in technical and health awareness trainings.

### Generating Employment and Building Independence (GEBI):

The GEBI program was developed to support the Ethiopian Government's Productive Safety Net Program. The overall goal is to reduce the number of poor people who require food or cash assistance from the government and other sources. The program strategy focuses on sustainable development, including an emphasis on adding value to the full range of agricultural and non-farm products, and exploring the role of markets and marketing in supporting household income.

GEBI is targeting **71,500 chronically food-insecure people** in seven districts, to increase their self-reliance and improve their access to diverse sources of revenue.

### Safe Water and Improved Sanitation in Somali Region (SWISS):

In addition to the long-term programs being implemented, this five-month program will bring an estimated **184,000 people** safe water, improve hygiene and sanitation in four regions in the Somali Region of Ethiopia.

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### Success Story: Helping Communities in Southern Ethiopia

In the southern region of Ethiopia, communities have suffered from harsh drought conditions for decades. Most households depend on cash and food assistance programs for survival. As a result, life expectancy rates are decreasing rapidly, children are malnourished, and most have little hope for the future.

In response, CHF International recently launched the Generating Employment and Building Independence (GEBI) program in the regional capital of Awassa, in Ethiopia's Southern Nation Nationality and People's Region. CHF International, in collaboration with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the regional government, and the local districts (*weredas*), is focusing on linking the chronically food-insecure population to local and regional markets. The program works to generate employment and build citizens' economic independence by assisting the Ethiopian government in implementing and strengthening its new Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), a major donor-government collaborative effort that aims to reduce food insecurity and hunger by providing food or cash to people who participate and work in the initiative's public employment programs.

CHF International held an event to celebrate the launch of GEBI, which was co-hosted by the regional government's Food Security Department and attended by representatives of the regional government and seven local *weredas* (districts). The event was very successful, as it was the first time the regional and *wereda* governments discussed the progress and challenges of the PSNP. Many unresolved issues regarding the PSNP, such as the transferral of wages to GEBI's poor and undernourished populace were clarified.

GEBI allows members of the participating communities to enhance their agricultural productivity through improved technologies. Bee-keeping and poultry production have been introduced to the local population, so they can sustain regular incomes and reduce their dependency on cash and food assistance programs. A number of activities, such as the construction of wells to improve community access to water, methods to irrigate their fields, and special ploughs to increase the land's ability to retain moisture, have also been promoted within each community.

The new technologies have resulted in one of the most successful crop seasons the communities have ever had. Farmers and other beneficiaries are selling their produce to their communities, contributing to the area's economic growth. The region has benefited greatly from CHF International's training programs, which is enhancing their chances for future success.

### By April 2006, CHF/Ethiopia's Programs had helped:

- > 5,300 chronically food-insecure households involve themselves in sustainable agricultural production;
- > 971 households diversify their income and livelihoods in drought-prone regions;
- > 730 households acquire small livestock for nutrition, income-generation, and trade;
- > 4,278 households acquire improved varieties of vegetable and cereal seeds;
- > 240 households receive training in integrated small business, health and sanitation practices.



The GEBI Program is creating sustainable market linkages for disadvantaged potters in rural areas. This Designers and Artisans Bazaar in the capital city connected potters to organizations and galleries that now interested in purchasing and displaying the crafts.



CHF's programs in rural Ethiopia are helping farmers replant deforested land and improve long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector through a range of activities, including the Southern Seeds Fair Program (SSFP).