

COLLABORATIVE ACTION FOR PEACE IN GEDEO AND WEST GUJI PROJECT



Zerihun with his customer on duty and the family

**A STORY OF THE YOUTHS SUPPORTED
WITH LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES**

Project outcome	Increased support and opportunities for youth to participate in peacebuilding
Project output	270 youth supported in alternative livelihood opportunities
Project activity	Recruit and provide livelihood support to 270 youth

In June 2018, conflict erupted along the border areas of Ethiopia's Gedeo zone in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's region (SNNP) and the West Guji zone in Oromia region. This had serious negative impacts on people's psychosocial and economic wellbeing, causing severe disruption to local livelihoods. Many houses were burned, buildings and farms were looted and the resilience of people in both communities was significantly reduced.

Consequently, World Vision Ethiopia, in collaboration with World Vision Australia, commenced an EU-funded project to help restore social cohesion and promote reconciliation among the two communities.

Among many activities designed to achieve this goal was providing livelihood support to 270 youth in conflict-affected areas through income generation activities. In four districts in Gedeo Zone, 120 youth, including 42 girls, were selected to receive materials to help them start income generation activities. This followed a screening process undertaken by district officials and community leaders. World Vision Ethiopia then identified which business area each of the selected youth was interested in pursuing. Most of the youth selected were displaced from conflict-affected areas who had previously run small businesses.

Andualem Felek, aged 26, was among those selected to take part in this project. Before the conflict, he was a barber. So the project provided him with equipment to restart his business.

"I have got one swing chair, two scissors, two male-hair cutting machines, three combs, two big mirrors, one kilogram [of] cotton and one litre of alcohol," explained Andualem.

Andualem and his wife Alem have two sons, aged three and five. He is the family's sole breadwinner. He said that before the conflict he used to earn 200-300 Birr (around US\$4.60-\$6.95) per day from the barber shop he opened in the town of Kercha in West Guji Zone after moving there from his home in Gedeo Zone.

He recalled what happened when conflict erupted in the region back in 2018. "It was on March 13, 2018 at 10 PM when the conflict broke out in the town where I was living. Groups of community members, mainly youths, came to my house and destroyed all my household utilities. Then I ran away in fear to my friend's house along with my family. I saved my family's life and mine too by hiding in my friend's house."

During the violence, Andualem's house, from where he operated his barber shop, was burned to the ground. Two hair-cutting machines, two swing chairs, one shaver, working clothes and other materials were destroyed. After being made homeless, the family left West Guji Zone and returned to Gedeo Zone where they settled in a house provided by district officials. But without the means to earn income, Andualem could barely feed his family.

After a while he started cutting hair again, working for another man in the community who had his own fully equipped barber shop. But he couldn't earn enough income to meet his family's needs. This changed after he was able to branch out with the equipment provided by World Vision.

"When I was working with the guy, I could not get 50 Birr per day as we shared the income together. But, after the project intervention, I'm able to get 80 to 120 Birr per day."

Andualem says his main challenge now is electricity supply, which is cut from time to time, affecting his ability to provide barber services.



Andualem with his customer on duty. Picture Source: Project Staff

Zerihun Sisay, aged 31, is another young person who has benefited from this project. Also a barber and father of two young daughters, Zerihun and his family were forced to flee when violence erupted in his village in West Guji Zone.

"It was one o'clock local time at night when the conflict started in our [village]. My family and I were at home when we heard big gun sound from outside. Then after while we evacuated into a forest by leaving our house because [of] the fear of gunshot," Zerihun explained.

"My father was killed during this conflict and [I] left all my properties there. I didn't have anything when I left ... I just only saved my family and my life."

The family hid in the forest for the whole night before seeking safety in the nearest town where they stayed for eight days. There were acute shortages of food and water among the displaced people who had gathered there.

Zerihun and his family left West Guji and settled in a town in Gedeo Zone's Kochore District. There they received emergency food rations and household items from World Vision to help them resettle.

Like Andualem, he started working for another barber in the town, but could not earn enough from his share of their earnings to even cover his family's rent.

"I had swing chairs, cuttings machines, big mirrors, shavers, scissors, generators and other working tools. However, I lost all of them because of the conflict," said Zerihun.

"I was praying and begging God at a time when World Vision Ethiopia screened me [for the project]."
After receiving two hair cutting machines, two swing chairs, two big mirrors, four pairs of scissors and one litre of alcohol, Zerihun was able to re-establish his own barber shop. Now he can earn up to 80 Birr on market days and between 30-50 Birr on a normal day.



Picture 2: Zerihun with his customer on duty and the family
Picture Source: Project Staff

Adualem and Zerihun are among four young barbers to benefit from the project and four young women who received support to open beauty salons.