

Strengthening Ethiopia's Nutrition Services

CASCADE has played a pivotal role in strengthening Adolescent, Maternal, Infant, and Young Child Nutrition (AMIYCN) services in Ethiopia by supporting the Federal Ministry of Health in the development of AMIYCN guidelines and training manuals. These resources are designed to improve nutrition outcomes by providing standardized guidance for healthcare providers, ensuring the delivery of quality nutrition services to women, adolescents, and young children across the country.



The project has enhanced the capacity of health professionals in the Amhara region, specifically in South Gondar Zone health facilities across four woredas, through training-of-trainers sessions on AMIYCN practical demonstrations, and clinical attachments. To advance the implementation of the national food and nutrition policy and strategy, strengthen multi-sectoral coordination, and monitor progress, CASCADE has facilitated review meetings and collaboration with multi-sectoral nutrition implementation committees. These efforts have contributed to improved service delivery, optimized resource mobilization, and enhanced knowledge-sharing among stakeholders. Furthermore, they have helped address implementation challenges and gaps, fostering a more integrated and sustainable approach to improving nutrition outcomes for adolescents, mothers, and young children.

STORIES OF CHANGE



Aligned with Ethiopia's Food and Nutrition Policy and Strategy, CASCADE has significantly improved the registration of pregnant women, lactating mothers, and adolescent girls for essential nutrition services, where tracking was previously minimal. This progress enhances access to screenings, growth monitoring and promotion services, iron and folic acid supplementation, and counseling focused on the production and consumption of healthier diets, contributing to better maternal and child nutrition outcomes. Health facilities have established model AMIYCN gardens and plans for breastfeeding corners.

Mr. Belay Fentie, a child health and nutrition expert in Lay Gayint Woreda, highlighted the program's impact:

“ CASCADE has strengthened collaboration among the health, agriculture, and finance sectors, improving health facilities' ability to provide nutrition services. Due to AMIYCN training, screenings for malnutrition in children aged 6 months to 5 years and in pregnant or lactating mothers have increased significantly. Additionally, adolescent nutrition services have been introduced, ensuring that all adolescent girls receive guidance on healthier diets. These initiatives are critical in breaking the cycle of intergenerational malnutrition and equipping facilities to address severe cases that were previously overlooked due to lack of awareness.”

Through CASCADE's capacity building initiatives, government health officials are now better equipped to support health extension workers in conducting cooking demonstrations that teach the preparation of diverse, safe complementary foods for young children. At a local health post, pregnant and lactating mothers actively participated in these sessions, gaining practical skills to improve child nutrition. By strengthening AMIYCN through training and multi-sectoral collaboration, CASCADE is reducing malnutrition and promoting healthier food consumption, driving lasting improvements in food and nutrition security.

Enaye Fentie: Improving household nutrition and building resilience

CASCADE introduced the Social Analysis and Action (SAA) approach to promote gender equality and improve nutrition by adapting manuals, providing training, and engaging communities through grassroots group formation. SAA focuses on shifting norms and attitudes towards shared responsibilities, empowering both men and women to improve household nutrition and resilience.

Mrs. Enaye Chanie, is a 35-year-old a mother of two boys and three girls and a member of “Selam Argeiew” SAA group from “Angot” Kebele in Libokumkum Woreda. She shared her experiences in about improving household nutrition and building resilience through gender equality.



“ We have learned a lot about nutrition in the past, but the biggest knowledge I got from this discussion is the health problems that women's work overload at home causes.”

She highlighted how overburdening women with household chores negatively affects their health, ultimately impacting the family's well-being.

Enaye's shift in perspective has transformed her household dynamics.

“ Now, my husband shares household activities (such as) fetching water, and collecting firewood,”

she said, highlighting the positive change in shared responsibilities. This shift has created a more balanced and healthier environment, where both boys and girls are treated equally and encouraged to help one another. The change has eliminated the previous gender division of labor, fostering a more inclusive and collaborative approach within the family. By sharing household tasks and promoting healthy habits, her family is better equipped to face challenges. This approach creates a balanced environment, fostering healthier lifestyles for her children. Involving both parents and children in household work strengthens the foundation for sustainable nutrition and resilience, setting a positive example for others in the community.



Priest Bogale Asres: Challenging Tradition

Priest Bogale's Journey to Promoting Nutrition and Breaking Fasting Myths (complete abstinence from food and liquids or avoidance of animal-based foods for a period)

Social Analysis and Action (SAA) is one of CARE's models for gender transformation. It is a community-led social change process through which individuals and communities explore and challenge social and gender norms, beliefs and practices around healthier food consumption that CASCADE seeks to address. Priest Bogale Asres, a respected spiritual leader in Chechiho Kebele, Lay Gaynt Woreda, and a member of both the Megenagna SAA group and the Kebele SAA Core group, has undergone a profound transformation. A father of three boys and five girls, as well as the spiritual guide to 23 households in his community, he was once a firm believer in traditional practices, including the idea that pregnant and lactating mothers should fast.



Before his involvement in the SAA group, Priest Bogale explained,

“ I preached that pregnant and lactating mothers should also be fasting as part of their spiritual duties.”

However, after engaging in discussions as part of the SAA group, he began to challenge his own biases and beliefs.

“ The more I listened to the discussions, the more I realized that fasting during pregnancy and lactation is harmful,” he shared.

He understood that mothers need proper nutrition to stay healthy and support the growth of their children.

Now, Priest Bogale is actively sharing this newfound knowledge with his “Soul Children,” encouraging them to support pregnant and lactating mothers by ensuring they receive nutritious food instead of fasting.

“ I now tell my children that mothers must not fast; they need to feed themselves and their babies with nutritious food,” he said, reflecting on his new understanding.

Inspired by these insights, Priest Bogale plans to bring this message to his entire community.

“ Next time, I will teach the congregation at church about the importance of proper nutrition for mothers and children,”

I will teach the congregation at church about the importance of proper nutrition for mothers and children,” he stated, committed to sharing his lesson with others. Through this shift in perspective, Priest Bogale is helping to create a healthier, more informed community, encouraging people to break away from harmful traditions for the well-being of all.



Achash Wale: Empowering Change Through the CASCADE VSLA Model

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) empower women by providing access to savings and loans, enabling them to invest in agriculture, small businesses, and diverse income sources. This financial independence enhances their ability to improve food production and nutrition within their households. The CASCADE program focuses on enhancing resilience in rural communities by introducing the VSLA model, which empowers women, improves access to resources, and breaks down barriers to financial independence. Ultimately, the program fosters long-term sustainability for women and their communities. As of September 30, 2024, VSLAs have saved \$11,620 distributed \$10 in loans, and accumulated \$962 in a social fund to support newborns and mothers with better nutrition. A total of 1,337 members (1,158 women) are engaged in nutrition-focused income-generating activities.



Achash Wale, a 50-year-old grandmother from Amba Mariam Kebele in Laygant District, became a member of the “Eyesera Yalema” VSLA, where she took a \$4 loan to purchase five chickens, starting a small poultry business.

“ I never imagined that such a small investment could change my life,” Achash shared.

“ Now, I have 20 chickens, and the eggs feed my family while the income helps us thrive.”

Her small venture soon grew into a flourishing business, with Achash selling eggs at the local market.

With the support of the VSLA, Achash was able to diversify her sources of income by using the proceeds to buy vegetable seeds and plant a garden in her backyard, ensuring a consistent supply of fresh, nutritious food for her grandchildren.

“ I am now able to grow my own food, and my grandchildren are healthier because of it,”

Achash said. This not only improved her family’s food security but also aligned with CASCADE’s goals of building resilience and promoting women’s empowerment.

“ Through the CASCADE program, I’ve found a way to secure my family’s future and become financially independent,” Achash added.

Her success exemplifies how the VSLA model can foster economic independence, better nutrition, and greater resilience, enabling women to take charge of their futures and create lasting change in their communities. Through CASCADE’s support, Achash has not only enhanced her family’s economic and nutritional well-being but has also built a foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable future.

Further Information

<https://www.care.org/our-work/food-and-nutrition/nutrition/cascade/>

Contact Information

cascade@carenederland.org



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

