

Emergency Agriculture in Action: Restoring Food Systems, Livelihoods, and Nutrition in Crisis-Affected Communities of Ethiopia

Across drought, conflict, and flood-affected areas of Ethiopia, the disruption of agricultural systems has severely undermined household food production, livestock assets, and nutrition outcomes, leaving vulnerable communities increasingly dependent on humanitarian assistance. In response, Positive Action for Development (PAD), with support from the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), and the Dutch Relief Alliance, implemented integrated emergency agriculture interventions across Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions. These interventions combined the provision of improved crop seeds, agricultural tools, livestock restocking, forage production support, voucher-based livestock treatment services, system strengthening, capacity building, and nutrition-linked cash assistance to enable households to restore production, protect assets, and improve food consumption.

In 2025, PAD reached 209,400 people through integrated agricultural response interventions across the Oromia, Somali, and Amhara regions.

Improved Crop Seed and Agronomic Support: PAD supported vulnerable farmers in Lasta Woreda affected by conflict and El Niño-induced drought with improved Kuncho teff seeds. It also assisted drought-affected agropastoral in the Shebelle Zone of the Somali Region, conflict-affected returnees in West Ethiopia, and flood- and drought-affected farmers in Siraro Woreda of the Oromia Region. In consultation with local agronomists and the beneficiaries themselves, early-maturing and drought-resistant seed varieties were identified and procured from certified suppliers following laboratory testing. Seed provisions were further complemented by technical guidance to ensure proper utilization and enhanced productivity. This support enabled farmers to significantly increase their yields, most of them harvested more than double their previous production, while also securing seeds for the next planting season and generating crop residues for animal feed. Yilak Mamo, a 35-year-old beneficiary in Lasta Woreda, explained: *"I am grateful that the seed came on time. We have got enough harvest, and now I see hope for the next season."*



Photo: Yilak Mamo harvesting his teff field after receiving improved seed support from PAD

Similarly, in Siraro Woreda of Oromia Region, drought-affected farmers received improved haricot bean seeds along with agronomic support. Among them, Worke Lema, a 51-year-old mother of six, harvested five quintals of produce from a small plot, selling four quintals and using the income to purchase food, support her children's education, and invest in livestock. Reflecting on the impact, she explains, *"Now I have food for now, seed for next season, and livestock for the future."* These experiences demonstrate that timely seed provision, combined with technical support, can rapidly restore household food production and strengthen economic recovery.



Photo: Worke Lema (right) with her haricot harvested

Restocking Strengthens Resilience and Livelihoods: Building on crop support, PAD also provided targeted livestock interventions, including restocking, forage seed distribution, and veterinary service strengthening.

In Ziquala Woreda (Amhara Region) and Siraro Woreda (Oromia Region), vulnerable households, particularly women-headed households and those with malnourished members, received livestock and complementary forage seeds to ensure sustainable feed availability. A total of 1,855 livestock were distributed across the two woredas.

For example, Ehitwey Cherkos, a 49-year-old single mother supporting ten family members in Siraro, received five goats and forage seeds. Through effective management, she increased her herd to nine animals and generated income from livestock sales, which she reinvested into her livelihood. This also improved her family's dietary diversity.

As she explained:

"For the first time, I am planning for the future, not just surviving."

These outcomes highlight how integrated livestock support enhances productive assets, improves nutrition, and strengthens resilience—particularly for vulnerable households.



Photo: Ehitwey Cherkos Sitting with her goats at her homestead. (Tsitsika Kebele, Ziqualla Woreda, Ethiopia)



Photo: Restocking in Siraro Woreda for 135 drought affected vulnerable households

Emergency livestock health service support integrated with durable solutions: Additionally, PAD provided support to several drought- and conflict-affected areas, including Zequala Woreda and Lasta Woreda in the Amhara Region; Siraro Woreda, Gida Ayana Woreda, and Sasiga Woreda in the Oromia Region; as well as Shebelle Zone in the Somali Region. PAD also provided a Voucher-Based Livestock Treatment (VBLT) system to address critical gaps in access to veterinary services.

In pastoral areas of Gode Woreda and Berano Woreda, where livestock health is directly linked to food security, vulnerable households received vouchers that enabled them to access free, high-quality animal health services delivered by trained Community Animal Health Workers. These livestock health supports help prevent disease outbreaks, reduce animal morbidity and mortality, improve body condition and productivity, and strengthen drought resilience and draught power.



Photo: Vaccination campaign and Voucher Based Livestock treatment service at Shebelle Zone

Abdulahi Sugul Ali, a pastoralist from Yehas Jemal Kebele of Gode woreda in Somali region, described how recurrent drought had weakened his livestock and increased disease prevalence, threatening his family's survival. With limited access to reliable veterinary services, losses had become common. Through the VBLT intervention, his animals received timely treatment and preventive care, leading to rapid recovery. As he explains, *"My animals are now healthy... they are no longer dying. This support protected our way of life."* This intervention demonstrates that accessible, community-based livestock health services are essential for protecting pastoral livelihoods and sustaining food systems during crises.



Photo: Abdulahi Sugul, Gode Woreda Yehas Jemal resident and VBLT Service Beneficiary

In addition, PAD constructed three veterinary clinics in Ziquala Woreda and rehabilitated others in intervention woredas. These facilities, together with existing veterinary centers across the Somali, Amhara, and Oromia regions, are equipped with essential veterinary drugs and equipment, enhancing the quality and reach of animal health services. PAD also installed solar-powered vaccine refrigerators in the clinics, a critical component for supporting effective livestock vaccination campaigns and expanding service coverage across the woredas in a sustainable way.



Photo: Veterinary Clinics Constructed in Hagereselam Kebele of Zequala Woreda



Photo: Veterinary Clinics equipped with essential veterinary drugs and Equipment (Tsitsika Kebele of Zequala Woreda)



Photo: Veterinary Clinics equipped with Solar refrigerator (Hageresalam Kebele of Zequala Woreda)

Importantly, PAD's approach also integrated agriculture with nutrition-sensitive support to address the underlying drivers of malnutrition. In the Somali Region, vulnerable households were supported with both crop seeds (maize) and Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), complementing ongoing therapeutic feeding programs implemented by partners. Lin, a mother of seven in Gode Woreda, faced a life-threatening situation when her child was diagnosed with Severe Acute Malnutrition. While her child received treatment, Lin was supported with cash and seed assistance, enabling her to purchase diverse food and cultivate maize for her household. This combined support ensured both immediate access to food and longer-term food production. As she recalls, *"Due to the support, now there is food in our home... my child is healthy and strong again."* The household's food consumption improved significantly, with meal frequency increasing from one or two meals to three meals per day, reducing the risk of relapse. This case clearly illustrates that linking agriculture with cash and nutrition interventions is critical to sustaining recovery and preventing malnutrition recurrence.



Photo: Lin Muktar, age 45, and her daughter, © Abebe Agonafir

Across all intervention areas, PAD's integrated emergency agriculture approach has delivered strong and consistent results, including the restoration of crop production, the rebuilding of

livestock assets, improved access to veterinary services, and strengthened household food consumption and resilience. By aligning interventions with seasonal calendars, ensuring timely access to quality inputs and services, and linking agriculture to nutrition outcomes, these programs have enabled vulnerable households not only to survive immediate shocks but also to begin rebuilding their livelihoods. The evidence underscores a clear message for humanitarian actors and policymakers: emergency agriculture interventions are life-saving, cost-effective, and essential for breaking the cycle of food insecurity and dependency in crisis-affected contexts.

Lessons Learned from Emergency Agriculture Interventions:

The implementation of integrated emergency agriculture interventions across diverse crisis-affected contexts in Ethiopia highlights key lessons aligned with the priorities of the Global Food Security Cluster, particularly around timeliness, integration, resilience, and systems strengthening.

- Timely, seasonally aligned support is essential for effectiveness. Delivering inputs in line with agricultural calendars enables households to restore production within a single season, while delays significantly reduce impact and prolong dependency.
- Integrated programming enhances food security and resilience outcomes. Combining crop production, livestock support, veterinary services, and cash assistance allows households to address immediate food needs while rebuilding livelihoods, in line with FSC multi-sectoral response approaches.
- Protecting livelihood assets is life-saving in pastoral systems. Livestock-focused interventions—including restocking, forage support, and Voucher-Based Livestock Treatment (VBLT)—effectively reduce livestock mortality, sustain productivity, and protect household food and income sources.
- Decentralized, community-based services improve access and sustainability. The use of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) and investment in veterinary infrastructure strengthens last-mile service delivery and contributes to long-term system strengthening.
- Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is critical to sustained recovery. Linking agricultural support with cash assistance and nutrition services addresses both immediate food consumption gaps and underlying causes of malnutrition, reducing the risk of relapse.
- Targeting the most vulnerable improves equity and impact. Prioritizing women-headed households and economically vulnerable families ensures assistance reaches those most in need and strengthens household food security outcomes.
- Climate-resilient inputs and practices strengthen adaptation. The use of drought-tolerant, early-maturing crops and forage production supports households in managing climate shocks and maintaining production.
- Linking emergency response with resilience and durable solutions is key. Strengthening local capacities, veterinary systems, and extension services promotes sustainability, supports self-reliance, and aligns with the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach.

Strategic Recommendations for Emergency Agriculture and Livelihoods

1. **Promote Integrated Programming:** Maintain the combined provision of crop production support, livestock restocking, veterinary services, and nutrition-sensitive interventions, as this approach has proven to strengthen household resilience, food security, and nutrition outcomes.

2. **Target the Most Vulnerable:** Prioritize households at highest risk, including women-headed households, families with malnourished members, and those with limited productive assets, using evidence-based vulnerability criteria to ensure support is both effective and equitable.
3. **Ensure Access to Quality Inputs and Services:** Provide certified, climate-resilient seeds, early-maturing crops, forage seeds, livestock, and timely technical guidance. Expand community-based veterinary services and voucher systems to protect livestock assets and enhance productivity.
4. **Link Agriculture to Nutrition:** Integrate agricultural support with nutrition interventions, including cash assistance and dietary diversification, to prevent malnutrition relapse and strengthen household food security.
5. **Invest in Sustainable Infrastructure and Capacity:** Strengthen veterinary clinics, solar-powered vaccine storage, and local extension services to ensure long-term access to essential animal health and agricultural support.
6. **Promote Climate-Resilient Practices:** Support early-maturing, drought-resistant crops, forage production, and climate-smart livestock management to increase household resilience to recurrent shocks.