

# Newsletter

Issue 14 December 2025

## About this newsletter

The purpose of the SWR Ethiopia RAISE-FS newsletter is to provide relevant information on the latest developments and current issues in the Ethiopian food system and the project support activities.

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have been taken place between Oct and Dec. 2025

## Empowering media voices: Training journalists to drive change in food safety and nutrition

In an effort to raise public awareness about food safety and nutrition, SWR Ethiopia's RAISE-FS project, in partnership with Bahir Dar University (BDU), organized a three-day training programme for 15 media professionals from the Amhara region. The programme sought to equip journalists with the information, knowledge and resources needed to promote safer food systems and improved nutrition policies.

Professionals from Amhara Media Corporation (radio, TV, newspapers, and social media), Amhara Region Communication Bureau, Fana Broadcasting

Corporation, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (ETV) and BDU's Community Radio attended the training programme, titled "Empowering Media Specialists: Training in Food Safety and Nutrition."

The main objectives of the training were to raise awareness among media professionals about food safety risks and nutrition issues, pilot advocacy tools and gather lessons for further intervention. The training focused on bridging the gap between complex

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## Empowering media voices: Training journalists to drive change ...

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scientific ideas and concepts and accessible and understandable public messaging.

### **Hands-on training: from basics to broadcast simulations**

The workshop began with an interactive session that introduced foundational topics such as nutrition basics, dietary requirements, malnutrition causes using the UNICEF framework, and food safety, including risks like mycotoxins in crops and mitigation strategies from Bahir Dar University. On the second day, participants examined the links between nutrition and factors like development, education, poverty, and conflict, engaging in group activities to create advocacy content for various media platforms. The final day featured plenary presentations on maternal-child nutrition, mycotoxin risks, and stunting.

Participants reflected positively on the program, noting it provided valuable insights into nutrition and food safety, especially the under-discussed issue of food contamination. Many highlighted the need

for accessible education and communication efforts to raise public awareness about food safety hazards. For most attendees, the training was an eye-opening experience that enriched both their professional and personal understanding of these critical topics.

### **Commitments for change: from workshop to airwaves**

Before concluding the training sessions, participants from the web and newspaper group promised frequent coverage on their social media platforms and in the Regional Bekur Newspaper. While the TV program team promised to resume the programme, they used to have under the Seqota Declaration, TV news promised in-depth programs on food-related topics. Radio experts, on their part, indicated to continuing parts that support maternal nutrition and university-validated technologies.

### **Follow-up is scheduled:**

Participants are required to create at least one program within a month, which will result in a meeting to discuss

achievements, difficulties, and plans for cooperation after some time.

### **Post-training follow-up and monitoring workshop**

In December 2025, journalists participated in a follow-up workshop to strengthen their skills in reporting on nutrition and food safety. The event served as a platform to revisit key lessons from previous training, evaluate their reporting progress, and address challenges. Participants shared their work, including stories and programs on topics like nutrition and stunting, which were disseminated through various media channels such as radio, television, and digital platforms. Guided by experts and collaborating with stakeholders from health, agriculture, trade, and regulatory sectors, they assessed the impact of their content and discussed strategies to enhance public awareness. The workshop concluded with the creation of a strategic action plan to prioritize nutrition and food safety in media narratives, aiming to foster greater public engagement and advocacy.



## Transforming waste into wealth: The innovative journey of Bereketab Kataro

In a world grappling with environmental degradation and the harmful effects of plastic pollution, innovative solutions are the need of the hour. One such inspiring story comes from Ethiopia, where a young innovator, Bereketab Kataro, is turning banana farm waste into eco-friendly paper bags. Bereketab is not only making strides in sustainable development but also creating opportunities for farmers and reducing waste.



Bereketab Kataro, with his products

The initiative is supported by the Youth Challenge Fund under the SWR Ethiopia RAISE-FS Project, which aims to empower young innovators from Mekelle, Bahir Dar, Hawassa, and Haramaya Universities. The fund supports individuals with expertise in agriculture, agricultural engineering, and environmental sciences by providing financial and technical support to transform innovative ideas into impactful business solutions. Out of 12 awardees, Bereketab Kataro's project stood out for its ingenuity and potential impact.

### The vision behind the innovation

Bereketab Kataro, a graduate in chemical engineering, had a vision to replace

traditional plastic bags with environmentally friendly alternatives. His idea is to create paper bags using fibres extracted from banana pseudo-stems; an often-overlooked agricultural byproduct. This innovation addresses two pressing issues: reducing the environmental impact of plastic bags and repurposing banana farm waste, which can otherwise foster disease pathogens.

The Youth Challenge Fund, designed to empower young innovators from Ethiopian universities, recognized the potential of Bereketab's idea. After rigorous evaluations by experts, he was awarded a grant to kickstart his project. This funding enabled him to purchase small-scale machinery,

secure raw materials, and cover operational costs.

### The reason behind the innovation

Bereketab's idea stemmed from his M.Sc. thesis work, where he discovered that the sheath of banana trunks contains 60% cellulose—an essential component for making paper. This percentage is significantly higher than other organic materials he tested, making it an ideal raw material for paper bag production.

The process involves extracting fibre from banana trunks, pulping the fibre, dissolving

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# Revitalizing lentil production in Gumbichu woreda, Oromia region

In a collaborative effort to revive Ethiopia's once-thriving lentil production, the SWR Ethiopia's RAISE-FS project has been working jointly with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) and Bishoftu Agricultural Research Centre (BARC) to scale up lentil innovation bundles in Gumbichu woreda. This initiative, in partnership with local stakeholders, aims to tackle the pressing challenges that have constrained lentil cultivation and productivity over the past two decades.

## The decline of lentil production

Lentils were historically a key cash crop and an essential component of crop rotation systems in cereal-dominated areas such as Ada'a and Gumbichu woredas. However, the widespread outbreak of fungal diseases and other lentil pests, coupled with poor agronomic practices and limited access to improved varieties, led to a sharp decline in lentil production. Farmers were forced to abandon lentils, shifting instead to continuous cereal farming dominated by wheat and teff. The decline in lentil production has had far-reaching consequences. Ethiopia, once a major lentil producer, became a net importer of the crop, incurring significant foreign currency costs.

## Lentil innovation bundle

The lentil innovation bundle includes improved lentil varieties, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, and strengthened agricultural extension services. By targeting critical leverage points in the lentil production system, the initiative aims to restore

farmers' confidence in lentil cultivation.

The results have been promising. Demonstration plots in Ada'a woreda over the past three years showcased significant improvements in productivity, encouraging the expansion of these innovations to two kebeles in Gumbichu Woreda in this year.



## Field visits to showcase the lentil innovation sparks hope and interest

To show the field level performances of the bundle and roll out the technology, a field day was organized at Habru Seftu kebele in Gumbichu woreda. The event, held in collaboration with the woreda Agriculture and Land Office and kebele administration, aimed to raise awareness, create demand, and facilitate knowledge sharing among farmers and stakeholders.

Farmers who hosted demon plots shared their success stories during the field visit. They emphasized that adhering to recommended practices and utilizing the full innovation bundle significantly boosted their lentil yields. Women participants highlighted the economic impact of lentil production, witnessing what they benefited.

## Challenges and strategies to ensure sustainability

Farmers raised concerns about accessing improved seed varieties. In response, BARC and RAISE-FS have partnered with private seed producers and cooperatives in Ada'a and Gumbichu woredas to address these challenges. Efforts include providing basic seeds, building

capacity among seed producers, and initiating Early Generation Seed (EGS) production to meet growing demand. A revolving seed scheme and farmer-to-farmer seed exchange mechanisms have also been introduced as sustainable solutions for ensuring access to quality seeds.

In his closing remarks during the field day, a representative from the woreda Agriculture Office underscored the importance of diversifying farming systems currently dominated by wheat and teff. He highlighted that adopting lentil technologies would not only boost household incomes but also enhance soil health through improved crop rotation practices, thereby supporting more sustainable crop production.

*The lentil innovation bundle guideline can be accessed here: [Link](#)*

# Transforming vulnerability into resilience: The role of poultry production in Atsbi and Enderta woredas

*In the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia, where crises like armed conflict, recurrent drought, and locust invasions have devastated food systems and livelihoods, poultry production has emerged as an opportunity to empower rural livelihoods.*

## The initiative: A life-changing opportunity

The SWR Ethiopia RAISE-FS project, together with Tigary Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) as implementing partner, piloted a poultry-based asset-building program targeting 40 female-headed households in Atsbi and Enderta woredas. The selected households received:

- 30 Sasso dual-purpose chickens.
- Feeders, drinkers, and 70 kg of feed.
- Training on poultry husbandry, feeding, housing, and health practices.

Farmers were also supported with technical guidance and vaccines for their chickens. This holistic approach aimed to restore livelihoods while empowering women to lead the way in transforming their households.

## Egg-cellent achievements

The initiative yielded remarkable outcomes in Nutrition, Income, and Empowerment:

### Improved egg production:

Farmers in Atsbi achieved a higher egg production rate of 72.7% compared to Enderta's 57.1%.

### Enhanced meat production:

At 45 days old, Sasso chicks averaged 450g in Atsbi and 500g in Enderta. By 11 months, hens reached approximately 2,166g in Atsbi and 2,125g in Enderta.

### Reduced mortality rates:

Chick mortality was lower in Enderta (1.44) than in Atsbi (5.79) due to improved housing, feeding, and healthcare practices.

**Asset building:** Poultry farming enabled families to purchase sheep, household equipment, school supplies, seeds, and fertilizers. It also strengthened savings habits through microfinance institutions.



### Women's empowerment:

Women played a leading role in poultry-related activities, including production, marketing, income control, and consumption decisions. Their involvement reached 89% in income control and 84% in marketing activities.

## Lessons Learned

The initiative highlighted critical factors for success:

**Housing quality:** Proper housing significantly influenced chicken

**Feed supply:** Ensuring access to sustainable feed is vital for long-term success.

**Vaccination:** Timely vaccination reduced mortality rates and improved productivity.

**Training:** Continuous capacity-building efforts enhanced farmers' skills in poultry

**Dependency challenges:** Some farmers developed reliance on external support, implying the need for sustainable practices.

## Potential for scaling up

Based on experiences and lessons from this initiative, stakeholders are making efforts to establish local, cost-effective feed supply systems using readily available resources and to promote climate-resilient, low-cost poultry housing. Women's economic empowerment is being prioritized through the reinforcement of poultry cooperatives and leadership opportunities.

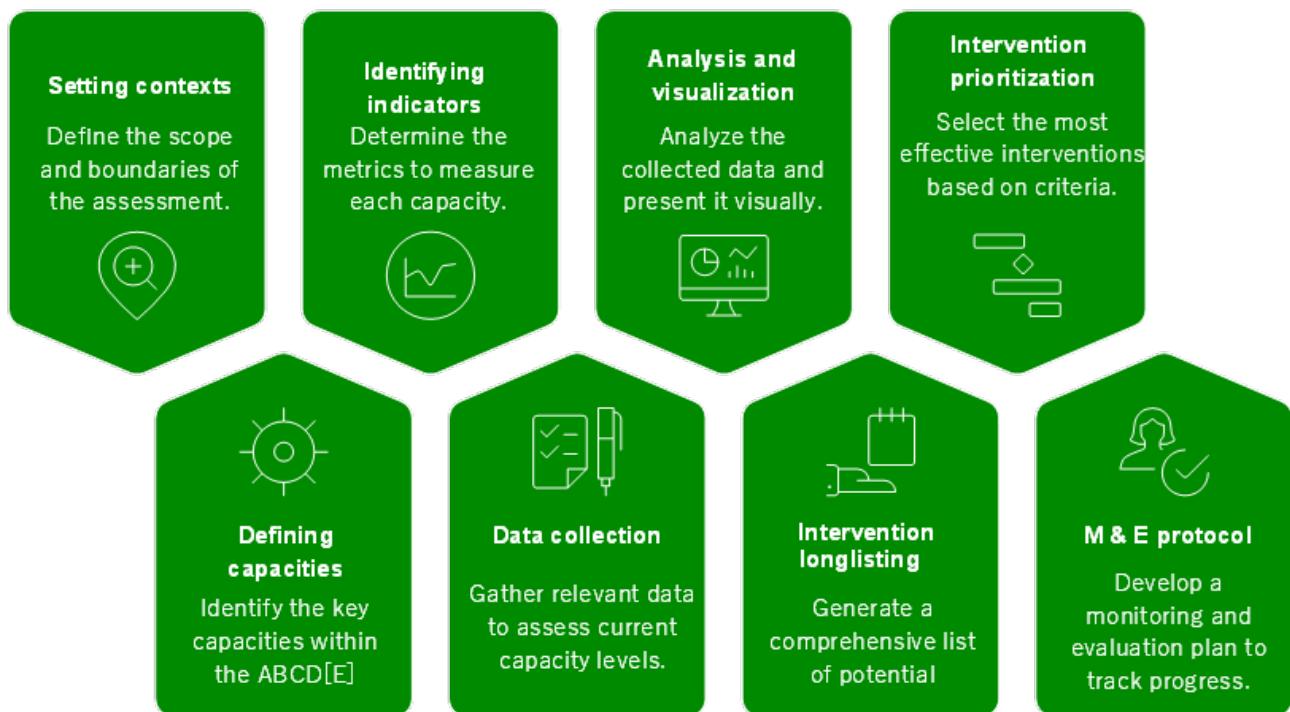
Additionally, the lessons learned are being documented and shared with key stakeholders. This documentation serves to provide evidence, advocate for institutional backing, foster collaboration among stakeholders, and ensure the sustainability and scale-up of poultry farming as a critical avenue for local food system transformation.

# Breaking new ground: Testing the ABCD[E] framework for food systems resilience in Ethiopia

In a landmark effort to bolster food systems resilience, researchers under the SWR Ethiopia RAISE-FS project, in collaboration with Wageningen Social & Economic Research, have successfully applied the ABCD[E] framework in Ethiopia's potato sector. This marks the first real-world implementation of the ABCD[E] framework, which stands for Agency, Buffering, Connectivity, Diversity, and Enablers. The study, conducted in Welmera woreda in the Oromia Region, offers valuable insights into strengthening local food systems and highlights both the potential and challenges of this innovative tool.

## What is the ABCD[E] framework?

The ABCD[E] framework is designed to assess and enhance food systems resilience by integrating core capacities with a structured eight-step process



## A new approach to assess food systems resilience in Ethiopia

As part of its objective, the SWR Ethiopia RAISE-FS project targets transforming the Ethiopia's food systems by testing and validating different approaches that address vulnerabilities and improve production and productivity. In this regard, the ABCD[E] framework, was tested in collaboration with farmers, community leaders, and other stakeholders targeting the evaluation of the key assumptions about the framework's about the framework's ease of use,

applicability and effectiveness. By engaging directly with local stakeholders in the potato sector—a vital component of Ethiopia's food system—the study explored how resilience capacities manifest in practice and what scalable lessons can be learnt.

Using a participatory action research (PAR) approach, researchers conducted focus group discussions and interviews to understand local resilience strategies. This hands-on engagement provided a wealth of data about how communities navigate risks and adapt to challenges.

## Key findings: Resilience in action

The study revealed that stakeholders found the ABCD[E] framework both useful and understandable, underscoring its potential as a practical tool. However, several challenges emerged during its application. Conceptually, the framework requires further refinement to address the complexity of resilience dynamics over time and space. Practically, it demands significant data and familiarity with food systems resilience concepts, which may limit its accessibility for some users.

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## Transforming waste into wealth: The innovative journey ...

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the pulp, moulding it into sheets, and finally pressing and calendaring it. With the help of machines like pressing machines, fibre decorticators, beaters, screening sieves, calendaring machines, creasing machines, and silk screen printers, Bereketab has successfully completed the testing phase and is now ready to scale up production.

### A sustainable business model

The potential for this business is immense, thanks to several key factors:

#### Resource availability:

Banana farming is widespread in southern Ethiopia, particularly in regions like Arbaminch and Wolaita. After harvesting the fruit, farmers are left with banana trunks that would otherwise go to waste. By utilizing these trunks as raw materials, Bereketab's project not only reduces waste but also provides an additional income stream for farmers.

**Market demand:** Bereketab strategically targeted cosmetics vendors and supermarkets as his initial market. By promoting sample products and advertising in these shops, he successfully generated demand

for his eco-friendly paper bags. This demand has paved the way for full-scale production.

**Government support:** In June 2025, Ethiopia enacted the "Solid Waste Management and Disposal Proclamation (No. 1383/2025)," which bans the production, importation, distribution, trade, storage, and use of single-use plastic bags nationwide. This legislation aligns perfectly with Bereketab's business model and creates a favourable environment for his product.

**Future prospects:** Bereketab has ambitious plans to expand his product line to include notebooks and sanitary napkins made from banana trunk fibres. He is actively seeking partners to support him in scaling up his business and exploring new market channels.

While Bereketab's journey has been inspiring, it hasn't been without challenges. For instance, he initially rented a work shed for one year but is now in talks with government offices to secure a more permanent space. Despite these hurdles, Bereketab's technical expertise and determination have been instrumental in driving his project forward.



### The potential for scaling and sustainability

Bereketab Kataro's innovative approach is a testament to the power of young minds in addressing food systems challenges. By transforming agricultural waste into a valuable resource, his project not only contributes to environmental health but also creates employment opportunities and supports local economies. This initiative underscores the importance of supporting young innovators with technical capacity and aspiration. Governments and stakeholders must continue to invest in such projects to ensure long-term benefits for employment, economic growth, environmental sustainability, and import substitution.

Bereketab's story is a shining example of how a young professional with innovative ideas can drive positive change. As his business takes off, it serves as a reminder that with the right support and determination, young entrepreneurs can create solutions that benefit both people and the environment.



## Breaking new ground: Testing the ABCD[E] framework ...

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Despite these challenges, the study uncovered the following critical aspects of resilience in action:

**Agency:** Farmers demonstrated their ability to mitigate risks through strategies like crop rotation and composting. These actions reflect their capacity to make informed decisions under stress.

**Buffering:** Communities employed diverse coping mechanisms, such as saving livestock and forming social savings associations, to prepare for uncertainties.

**Connectivity:** Infrastructure and social networks proved vital. Good road conditions and strong community institutions were essential for enhancing connectivity and improving resilience.

**Diversity:** Crop and livestock diversity emerged as key factors in withstanding shocks and ensuring food security.

These aspects clearly indicate an entry point, along with what other resilience mechanisms need to be promoted for enhancing the food system resilience

### A promising path forward

The Welmera experience shows that ABCD[E] framework is a powerful way to ground resilience work in local realities, but it requires thoughtful localization, clear boundaries, and a commitment to iterative learning. Start small, build local capacity, and use participatory methods to continuously refine

indicators and interventions. This approach can help communities diagnose resilience gaps, design targeted actions, and monitor progress in shaping a more resilient local food system

As global food systems face mounting pressures from climate change and other stressors, tools like the ABCD[E] framework could offer a compelling blueprint for turning resilience thinking into action at the local level. By prioritizing participatory indicators, clarifying data needs, and embracing iterative learning, communities can better understand and strengthen their food systems against shocks and stresses.

## New publications

- [The ABCD\[E\] of Food Systems Resilience: Framework Testing and Co-creation](#)
- [Harmonizing nutrition behavioural change communication materials using the Ethiopian Food-Based Dietary Guidelines: A scoping review](#)
- [Enhancing food systems through home gardens](#)
- [Business opportunities for Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato processing in Ethiopia](#)

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