



## Young women in sheep fattening youth groups: What do they want?



*"I previously believed that living a successful life was all about fate – that success is given not taken, but now I know that success is in my hands"*

*"Girls of my age always thought marriage was our only choice. For me that belief is now history and I am going to change attitudes of girls in my village..."*

**Yeshareg Tesfa**

**Yeshareg** is an 18 years female sheep fattener, who joined *Negasi-amba* sheep fattening youth group in Menz Gera district at the inception of the ICARDA-TAAT project in 2018. Previously she was jobless and economically dependent on her family. She engaged in traditional fattening that involved fattening sheep twice annually, with no attention to feed or husbandry management. She was very pessimistic towards change or adoption of new technologies.

**So what do young women need?** "Women need trainings, they need access to information so that they are not weighed down by cultural stereotypes. Yeshareg was a beneficiary of a start-up package comprising one ram, a feeding and water trough and a block of salt lick. She was trained in improved sheep fattening feeding practices, using locally available feed resources and sheep husbandry as well as technical service in deworming, vaccination and castration. She also received training in entrepreneurial skills development. Se is now courageous enough to be a youth group leader.

*"Since I became the youth group leader – my motivation to work hard and bring change is increasing".*



**Why is information important?** "Information makes one realize that opportunity is in your reach. Feeds for fattening are in our village, I now understand how to utilize them well; disease prevention

and control results in healthier rams. Its about having a positive attitude, looking for opportunities, persistence and determination and a mindset of success as ESD training has taught us.”

**How can leaders and the government help young women?** “Rural young women have no assets, no skills and very little education and knowledge. They need to be supported with start-up packages accompanied with trainings. They need to be facilitated to form groups so that they can encourage each other. The project gave me one ram in 2018, now I am fattening 4 rams each cycle and I fatten 4 cycles in a year. I plan to double the number of fattening rams with every subsequent fattening cycle, to the maximum capacity that space in my parents’ homestead can accommodate.”



*“Joining the group gave my friends and I the chance to meet, discuss and share experiences of sheep fattening with each other.”*

**Amsalech Hailemariam**

Amsalech Hailemariam, is a 29 years old mother from *Shuta* kebele of Adiyio district, Bonga, who didn’t get the chance to go to school. She has been fattening rams for the last 6 years using her traditional knowledge. She now leads the *Shaya women* Sheep Fattening Youth Group. She reports that her income from each fattened ram has more than doubled since she joined the ICARDA-TAAT project and attributes it to trainings in improved fattening technologies and importance of having an entrepreneurial mindset. She is able to participate in open field days to share her experiences with the local community and the opportunity to meet regional, zonal and district leaders.

*“Let us embrace inclusivity and we will bring change to our community”.*

**Amsalech Hailemariam**



*Report by Jane Wamatu and Nahom Ephrem*