



PROLINNOVA
Ethiopia
PROMoting Local INNOVATION
in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management

Results of Focus Group Discussions

on impact of Proli-FaNS project in Enebse Sar

Mider (ESM)action-learning site

8–11 July 2019



Group picture of participants in the FGD, Mertulemariam, ESM

By BezaKifle, Prolinnova–Ethiopia coordinator

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Introduction

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted at the Enebse Sar Mider (ESM) action-learning site on 8–11 July 2019 (2 days for travelling and 2 days for the FGDs). Two representatives from each Farmer Field School (FFS) at *kebele* (ward) level were invited to join the discussions in the town of Mertulemariam. The FGD is the research method that was used for gathering qualitative information about the impact of the project over the past three years. To conduct the FGDs, a guideline developed by the subregional coordinator for Eastern & Southern Africa was used.

The meeting was opened with a speech by the Prolinnova–Ethiopia (PE) coordinator Ms Beza Kifle generally about the FGD method, followed by introductions by the participants and the formation of three groups according to their *kebele*, each made up of two farmers and one facilitator. The participants were six male farmers; Beza Kifle, PE coordinator; Aschalew Abye, ESM Rural Development and Health Extension Officer; and Ms Lidet Solomon, Project Officer with Best Practice Association (BPA). (Lidet works with a project in Koneba, Afar Region but joined this trip to ESM to help the PE coordinator because Taffese Mesfin, who had originally planned to join, was unable to do so for health-related reasons). Each group referred to the FGD guide to discuss on each point. After the FGDs, during the final afternoon, a general discussion was held about the points raised during the FGDs and the way forward expressed by the farmers.



Discussion points	Kebele 018	Kebele 010	Kebele 022
<p>Do you have examples of local innovators in your community who have continued to work on developing still more innovations since the start of the project?</p>	<p>Yes, the farmers are practising different innovations in their FFS; other farmers are adopting the innovations from the FFS. The farmers did not give examples.</p>	<p>Yes, there are farmers (outside of the project) in their community in which they develop different local innovations, e.g. making local treatments, different natural resource management (NRM) systems such as composting, gully management etc. Some male farmers also mentioned the use of traditional birth attendants as an innovation.</p>	<p>From the start of the project, there are different farmers who are locally known for local medicine preparation, e.g. <i>astma</i>.</p>
<p>Have any of you started doing something new or different since being involved in the project? What are examples? Do you know of other people in the area who have picked up some of the ideas gained through the project and started doing or experimenting with something they have not done before? Do you know of people (women especially) trying out something for the first time? (Note: ask for examples)</p>	<p>The FFS is practising different innovations since it was involved in the project, e.g. for crop protection, additional innovations were practised. Some farmers in the area are using organic fertilisers such as animal dung to increase and improve the productivity of their crops.</p> <p>The women members of the FFS are practising the local innovations in their home.</p> <p>Being involved in this project, the farmers are getting different kinds of support from experts and they are improving their innovations.</p>	<p>In <i>Kebele 010</i>, there is no new or different local innovation, but the farmers are developing their previous innovations. They share their local innovations for others at different times (Informal visits, meetings and farmers day celebrations). Yes, some farmers were adopting the local innovation to control rats, which is being implemented by other farmers in the community.</p> <p>Some farmers in the community, including women, are applying NRM practices such as planting different trees as a fence, using Inter- and mixed-cropping systems and planting different vegetables in their gardens. These practices are being applied by the local farmers (outside of the project) after the start of this project, after different members of the <i>kebele</i> shared the ideas.</p>	<p>The farmers are experimenting on preparing local soap from botanicals. Some of the farmers in the community are doing different experiments by sharing the idea from the FFS, e.g. controlling rats, gullies and chicken disease.</p>
<p>Before the Prolinova project, what organisations related to agriculture did you have relationships with? Can you describe these relationships</p>	<p>Before the Prolinova project, the farmers were supported by Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE), which provided materials, technical support, experience-</p>	<p>The FFS started to experiment in 1994 Ethiopian Calendar (2002) with the help and support of ASE, which provided training, workshops,</p>	<p>The farmers had a relationship with ASE before the start of the project. ASE provided different services for the farmers, i.e. experience sharing, learning</p>



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<p>(what was the purpose of the relationship and how good/strong was it)?</p>	<p>sharing visits, trainings and workshops. During this time, the farmers were obtaining good-quality crop production.</p> <p>The Agriculture Office has linkages with the farmers, which existed before the project started. The office provides different types of technical support to the farmers about how to sow, use fertiliser etc. The relationship with the organisation is very strong and they practise every activity by involving farmers and the farmers can show improvement in their production.</p>	<p>experience-sharing visits and material support. While supported by ASE, the FFS had a great linkage with ASE and, in each activity, most of the members attended the programme.</p>	<p>events and follow-up.</p>
<p>How have these relationships changed in the last 3 years? What new organisations have you linked up with during this period? And for what purpose?</p>	<p>In the last three years, the farmers have had linkage with Best Practice Association (BPA), the legal holder of the Proli-FaNS project that works with Alem Birhan Association to provide different trainings, workshops, experience-sharing/learning events and material support. Also the universities and the Agriculture Office invited the farmers to different trainings, workshops and meetings and gave technical support.</p> <p>In the implementation of PID cases, the farmers were interacting with different relevant organisations, i.e. Agriculture Office, universities. These organisations give technical support to the farmers to Improve their innovation and also their lives by participating in different workshops, trainings and meetings.</p>	<p>In the last three years, the relationships have changed. ASE was replaced by BPA with the main actor Alem Birhan; then BPA implemented the Proli-FaNS project, which was directly related with what the farmers were implementing, and BPA provided capacity-building trainings, experience sharing and material supply through the implementer Alem Birhan.</p> <p>In the implementation of PID cases, the farmers were interacting with different relevant organisations, i.e. Agriculture Office, universities. These organisations give technical support to the farmers to Improve their innovation and also their lives by participating in different workshops, trainings and meetings.</p>	<p>In the last three years, the relationships have changed. ASE was replaced by BPA with the main actor Alem Birhan; then BPA implemented the Proli-FaNS project, which is directly related with what the farmers were implementing, and BPA provided capacity-building trainings, experience sharing and material supply through the implementer Alem Birhan.</p> <p>In the implementation of PID cases, the farmers were interacting with different relevant organisations, i.e. Agriculture Office, universities. These organisations give technical support to the farmers to Improve their innovation and also their lives by participating in different workshops, trainings and meetings.</p>
<p>Do you think that the activities of the project (LI and PID) help people</p>	<p>Yes!!! The LI and PID activities helped the farmers become food and nutrition</p>	<p>Yes, the farmers are implementing different local innovations in their</p>	<p>Yes! The farmers are securing the food and nutrition of their family after having</p>



<p>become more food and nutrition secure?</p>	<p>secure. The farmers are growing more different vegetables in their gardens and also cereal crops and, after the project, the farmers are developing different vegetable varieties such as carrot, onion, beetroot and cabbage, and fruits such as orange and banana.</p> <p>And the farmers were also trained in what do we mean by food and nutrition security and how to secure it. This helps the farmers to work more on their innovation and to practise different activities to secure the food and nutrition security of their families.</p>	<p>homes to solve some problems, e.g. to control rats, control the animal killer <i>alket</i> and also other local innovations to protect the crops from different worms in the field and also in storage.</p> <p>All of the activities implemented by this project help the farmers to be food and nutrition secure. Most of the activities, especially LI and PID cases, help the farmers to be food secure. The farmers' innovations are related to crop protection in the field and also in storage.</p>	<p>become involved in the project by practising different activities such as controlling crop disease and pests, controlling animal disease and increasing soil fertility.</p>
<p>What are the periods in the year that the community's access to food is generally low? Has engaging in local innovation and/or PID increased your or others' ability to access food throughout the year, especially in the periods of food scarcity? What evidence can you give?</p>	<p>The food access of the community is low in summertime. The farmers access the food they collect in wintertime for the whole winter.</p>	<p>In the community starting from June to October, food access is very low. By being engaged in this project on local innovation and PID cases, the farmers have gained ability to have some solutions to get past this critical time.</p> <p>In <i>Kebele</i> 010, to get past this food storage time, the farmers have developed a solution: they will have a meeting once a month and collect 5 Birr from each member per month; then this money will be kept for this time so that they can give loans to the farmers to buy seed of food items for their family.</p>	<p>From July to October, there is a shortage of food in the area. Because the farmers have been involved in this project, they can cope by using their innovations, e.g. by using the silt soil and planting different vegetables, protecting the animals from different diseases, preparing local soap and saving the expense to use for food or other items for the home.</p>
<p>For most households involved in the project, how many main meals were they eating per day before the project started? How many meals per day are they eating now? Has the project's activities helped to</p>	<p>For most households in the area, before the project started, they were eating <i>injera</i> with one main dish (<i>shiro</i> by its local name), sometimes two dishes and additional food items from cereals and vegetables. But now, after having been</p>	<p>Before the project started, most of the households in the community were eating two meals per day, mostly <i>shiro</i> (by its local name) plus vegetable, mostly <i>gomen</i> (by its local name) with <i>injera</i>. But after the project, they are</p>	<p>Before the project was started, the farmers were eating <i>shiro</i> as a common staple food and potato, but after being involved in the project, the farmers are eating different vegetables (cabbage, potato, tomato..) that they grow in their</p>



<p>improve (increase) the food intake (meals) per day? What improvements have been made over the last 3 years?</p>	<p>involved in this project, the farmers grow different vegetable varieties and fruits. And especially in summertime, the farmers have access to vegetables. Most of the farmers are planting vegetables in their gardens and in the summertime some farmers grow vegetables by irrigation. The farmers not using irrigation will buy from the market; then they will have more than one meal per day.</p> <p>Yes, the project activities are very helpful for the farmers to improve their food intake per day because the women were involved in different trainings where they got a better idea how to secure their families' food and nutrition.</p>	<p>adding different types of meals. The farmers growing vegetables in their gardens consume especially in summer different vegetables, i.e. tomato, cabbage, onion. These vegetables are available in summertime but some farmers are growing the vegetables using an irrigation system.</p>	<p>gardens and also grains (wheat, barley ...). After being involved in this project, the farmers are eating more than one meal. This will help the farmers to protect their families and themselves from disease.</p>
<p>What is the general situation regarding women's access to enough food in the area? What is the current situation of access to food for women in households involved in LI/PID? How has the project contributed to improving the capacity of women to access enough food?</p>	<p>The women in the area have easier access to food after they were involved in the project, which helped the women to grow more vegetables and to cook different vegetables and to serve them to their families.</p> <p>The project helps the farmers involved in LI and PID cases: the women are involved in different trainings and workshops about food and nutrition security. This helps them to prepare nutritious food for themselves and for their families.</p>	<p>Women have higher chances to access food in the area. As the farmers indicated, in earlier times as a culture women were allowed to eat only after all other family members had eaten and most of the time the women ate less than the others. But now, they can eat equally with their family.</p> <p>The women involved in LI/PID are growing different vegetables in their gardens; they can feed their family and themselves. Effectively, the project contributes more in improving meal preparation for the family. The women are getting different capacity-building trainings and this makes them prepare and diversify the family diet.</p>	<p>The women in the area are practising different innovations. They are experimenting by making <i>areke</i> (highly alcoholic drink).</p> <p>The women involved in the LI and PID cases are preparing nutritious food for their families and they have equal access to food like the men.</p> <p>This project helps the women farmers to feed their families nutritious food in their diets.</p>



<p>How would you describe local farming systems in general? What are the crops that are generally grown? Have any new crops been introduced as a result of the project? Are these cash/food crops? Have women started to grow any new crops in their homesteads?</p>	<p>The farming system in the area is by using traditional ploughing method. The crops generally grown in the area are <i>teff</i> (local cereal) different cereals (maize, barley...), <i>gesho</i> (hops).</p> <p>The women are planting different spices in their gardens.</p> <p>New crops were not introduced but the farmers are improving their farming system by using compost and protecting their crop fields from pests and diseases by using their innovations.</p>	<p>The farming system in the area is by using traditional ploughing method. Before sowing the land, the land preparation takes place. The most common crops grown in the area are millet, <i>boloke</i> and <i>teff</i>. After the project came, most of the farmers started to practise intercropping and mixed cropping of <i>teff</i>, tomato, oil crops with millet, for both cash and food.</p>	<p>Land preparation is the first activity of the farming system. The most common crops are barley, <i>teff</i> and other cereals, both as cash crops and as food crops.</p>
<p>How would you describe local diets in general? What new products/ingredients from the farms/ household gardens have been added into family diets as a result of the project? What new/different ways of processing food has been tried out? What new recipes are being used for preparing food?</p>	<p>The local diet is most commonly <i>shiro</i> and different cereals, i.e. barley; also chickpea and peas are served as common foods. Because of this project, the farm families are cooking more than one meal per day to feed their families.</p>	<p>The local diets in the area are <i>shiro</i> together with different cereals, i.e. barley. Because of this project, the farmers are growing more vegetables in their gardens and they have access to nutritious food items.</p> <p>In the processing of the food, the women are using different techniques. Before the project, they were adding oil after the food is cooked, But now they process the oil with the onion and it has a great taste and now they also add more onion and garlic than before.</p>	<p>The local diet is <i>shiro</i>. The women now cook different vegetables from their gardens. They are growing vegetables in their gardens so they can add enough vegetables to cook the food and make it more tasty and nutritious.</p> <p>The women prepare <i>kollo</i> (by its local name) from different cereals, also chickpea and pea, and make bread from wheat.</p>



Conclusion

Implementation of the Proli-FaNS project has had an impact in ESM. According to the information collected from the FGDs, the farmers are improving their diet and their food and nutrition security. After the start of this project, especially women are highly motivated to grow vegetables in their gardens and to feed their families by cooking several different dishes for one meal, especially in the summertime. The women also practise different postharvest handling technologies to increase the shelf life of the vegetables.

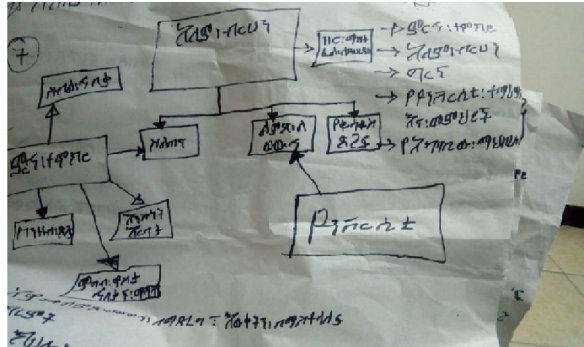
Before the Proli-FaNS project, the farmers were getting support from Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE), which provided different trainings, workshops, experience-sharing and learning visits and material support. After the withdrawal of ASE, Best Practice Association (BPA) – the legal holder of the Proli-FaNS project for Prolinnova–Ethiopia – has been working with the farmers through the local partner organisation Alem Birhan. The new thing after the start of this project is that PID processes were started. In this case, the farmers get support from different relevant organisations, i.e. Agriculture Office, Bahirdar and Debremarkos Universities and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) colleges. This will help the farmers to improve their innovations and to use them on a large scale and also to create market linkages and to secure their food and nutrition in a sustainable manner.

The PID and LI practice of the project helps the farmers to improve their lives by practising their innovation. During the PID activities, the farmers are communicating with different relevant organisations and getting technical support. This makes the farmers improve their innovations and to do more innovation. The project helps the women to feed their families nutritious food by planting different vegetables in their gardens. Being involved in this project helps the farmers to cope better in the time when food access is low in the area.

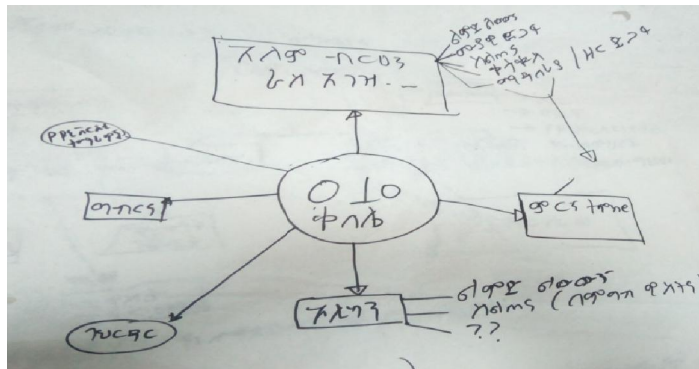


Venn diagrams showing relationships of farmers with different relevant organisations

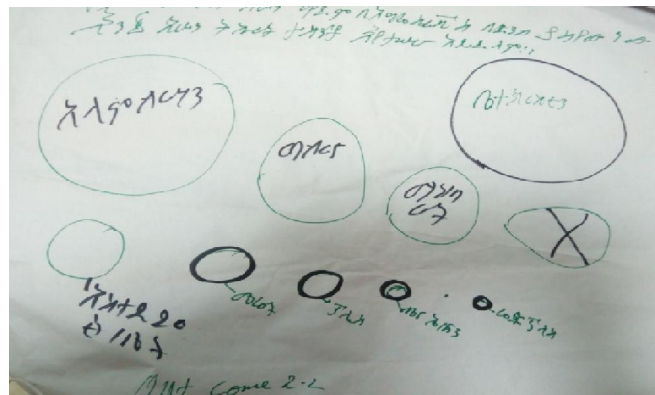
Kebele 018



Kebele 010



Kebele 022





Summary table showing the relationships of different organisations with the farmers

Organisation	Relationship	Purpose
Best Practice Association (BPA)	High	By funding all the project activities and implementing different project activities (trainings, workshops, experience sharing, learning events...)
Alem Birhan Association	Very high	Implementing the project activities (trainings, workshops, establishing FFS, material supply and technical support and follow-up)
Agriculture Office	Medium	Providing technical support and tree seedlings
Bahirdar and Debremarkos Universities	Medium	Inviting the farmers to join different trainings, and some students were involved during the documentation of local innovations.
Churches	Low	To show the farmers' innovations
Community	High	The local community gives some ideas, questions and discussion points for improvement of the innovations. Some of the community members also adopt some of the innovations.