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## ***'From Lucha to Medale'* the story of Shemsiya Roba who benefited from WASH NFIs and Latrines Construction**

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Descending from the majestic mountains of Bale heading further East, the Bale lowlands offer an opportunity to witness the life of the pastoralists who almost entirely depend on livestock for sustenance and as sole source of their livelihoods. The pastoralist community lives in an environment very much susceptible to frequent droughts and their impact leading to the deterioration of key assets and resources such as cattle and water sources. A significant portion of the pastoralists are settled along the border areas with the Somali Regional State.

The conflict between the Oromo and Somali ethnic groups that escalated in October 2017 is a very recent experience having displaced over 65,000 ethnic Oromo from their original places in the border areas and from Somali region into Bale zone. Currently, the Oromia Regional State is host to the largest number of IDPs in Ethiopia with over a million people displaced and requiring humanitarian assistance.

LWF, in partnership with IRC and its back donor ECHO with the ERM VI project, has been providing humanitarian assistance to the conflict-displaced people in Dawe, Kachen, Seweyna Meda Welabu and Delo Mena woredas reaching a total of 39,591 IDPs (18,890 F and 20,701 M) through distribution of WASH NFIs, construction of communal latrines and hygiene promotion.

Shemsiya Roba is one of the beneficiaries of this partnership. She is a mother of 10 (6 girls and 4 boys) who lives in the Medale IDP site of Meda Welabu Woreda. Shemsiya was born and raised in Oromia region in a village called Lucha located along the border with the neighboring Somali Regional State. As many other fellow community members, Shemsiya lost 6 camels, 10 cows and a significant number of goats as consequence of the conflict. She and her families were forced to leave their home village and all of their assets in the wake of the Oromo-Somali inter-communal conflict towards the end of 2017. The once productive family, Shemsiya, her husband and their 10 kids fled their home and settled in Medale IDP site. At the time of their arrival, they had no access to sanitation and hygiene facilities. *"We didn't even have such thing like jerry can for fetching and storing water"* she reported.



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Shemsiya went on to say that she used to practice open defecation walking a long distance to the forest in order to make sure other people especially men would not see her. Shemsiya was keenly aware of the danger especially gender-based violence she was exposing herself to but the only solution to minimize the risk was to go once a day only to the forest at a time when fewer men were likely to be around. Her family members have also been practicing open defecation as there was no other option available. *“We were not as such concerned about our hygiene mainly because of the low awareness level and we didn’t have the facilities to wash our hands during critical times including washing of our cloths and caring for our children’s hygiene”* she added. *“However,”* she explained *“after LWF’s intervention in the area and after the first meeting we had with the LWF staff who explained to us about the purpose of their presence in the area, it was a relief for all of us in the IDP site and particularly for me thinking that at least I will no more have go to the forest.”*



Shemsiya washing her hand after using the communal latrine built by the Project in Medale IDP site - © LWF/2019

Shemsiya reported that LWF provided her household with one 20-lit capacity jerry can, 4 laundry and 4 bathing soaps and that she benefited from the awareness raising campaigns on improved hygiene and sanitation and access to latrine sex-disaggregated latrine near her dwelling.

Shemsiya also reported that she also witnessed health benefits since they started practicing proper hygiene and sanitation. She noted that the incidence of diarrhoea, especially among children, has significantly decreased since the start of the WASH project.

While Shemsiya is pleased with the project, she mentioned that access to water was a major challenge especially to practice the knowledge from the hygiene and sanitation sessions by LWF. *‘We know what to do exactly but most of it required water which is more often than not is prioritized for drinking’* and concludes by thanking LWF and IRC for: *“easing my day to day routine and educating me how to care for my family’s health”*. Unsure of the foreseeable future, Shemsiya asked LWF not to abandon them as there is no one else to rely on.