

# Strategic Goal 2: Gender Equitable and Sustained Livelihoods

## *From Invisible to Influential: Genet Tsegaye's Journey of Empowerment*

Genet Tsegaye, a young woman from Zoregotera Kebele, North Wollo, Amhara Region, recalls:

*“...before, I was invisible. My voice was lost. Now, I stand strong, not just for myself, but for other women too.”*



For years, Genet and her husband relied solely on daily labor to support three families. With no land or fixed assets, and traditional norms limiting women's participation in leadership and economic activities, Genet had little exposure to empowerment opportunities. She says *“...being women and poor I had no chance for self-expression or decision-making and was afraid to speak in public,”* she remembers.

Her life began to change in 2021 when she joined a Self-Help Group (SHG) facilitated by WE-Action. At first, she was skeptical about the anticipated changes. She says:

*“...saving 5–10 birr weekly seemed insignificant, and I was not sure that being a member of SHG would change my life.”* But the SHG became a platform for learning, mutual support, and empowerment. Through gender equality and women's right trainings, crop production training, and leadership development, Genet gained both skills and confidence. She stated the change:

*“...after the training I received loan from my SHG and two packs of carrot seeds from the project.*

*I cultivated them on 0.25 hectares of land I got by rent. The carrot harvest brought a net income of 65,000 ETB, which we used to purchase a camel for transporting goods. Continued cultivation of other vegetables earned an additional 30,000 ETB. Today, we cultivate 0.5 hectares of carrots with a projected income of 80,000 ETB, depending on market conditions...”*

Genet's transformation goes beyond economic success. She recalls her social empowerment: *“...I served as vice-leader of the SHG for two years and became the main leader in 2023, representing women and children at the kebele level,”* she explains. *I now have the confidence to speak publicly and advocate for women's rights within my kebele. I am a voice for women who lacked opportunities to express themselves or make decisions.”*

Genet's story illustrates the power of gender transformative livelihood programs that integrate women's empowerment into economic development, enabling women to break cycles of poverty, challenge social norms, and achieve both economic and social empowerment.