

LEARNING BRIEF

RESILIENCE IN PASTORAL AREAS (RIPA-South)

Through the Resilience in Pastoral Areas project, iDE is working with women and youth to design diversified livelihood opportunities that will generate income and increase agro-pastoralists resilience in the face of climate change, natural disasters, and food insecurity. Through partnering with private sector actors and financial institutions, young pastoralists and agro-pastoralists will engage in new jobs and value chains as both small business owners and wage employees.



Designing an entrepreneurship hub with Borana youth

This brief explores the project's experience designing services with Borana youth who aspire to engage in alternative income-generating activities. While the project is working with young pastoralists across three major regions of the southern Ethiopian lowlands, we intentionally embarked upon a focused co-design process with Borana youth due to their diverse interests and entrepreneurial enthusiasm. This brief outlines the phases of co-design undertaken with both Borana youth and stakeholders to develop, test, and refine ideas that might strengthen their capacity to run new enterprises.

Background

At the beginning of the RIPA project, the RIPA-South component two team used the HCD methodology to conduct primary research to understand the challenges and opportunities for youth to engage in diverse income-generating activities. The team conducted in-depth interviews with male and female youth, elders, government offices (including cooperative offices and TVETs), and financial institutions to gain a comprehensive understanding about what youth are currently engaging in, the opportunities they want to pursue, and the current institutions and resources available to them. **We found that while many youth are motivated to pursue jobs and businesses, they face a few major challenges: many youth are not accessing technical training or business management training due to lack of awareness as well as minimal government capacity in providing it; they are not accessing savings and loans due to lack of such services and fear of failure to repay; and they are struggling to succeed alone in business due to lack of capital and the reality that training and resources are mainly only provided to cooperatives.**



"I sell tea and coffee but I want to do another business - I want to open a big shop to sell goods to people in Arero."

Rama Hasen, Borana region, Ethiopia

Photo by Rebecca Merrifield

Co-Design Process

With an understanding of both the challenges and opportunities facing Borana youth as they embark on starting new enterprises or jobs, iDE's design team brainstormed initial ideas for strengthening youth in their business journey. Due to the enthusiasm and motivation we witnessed among Borana youth, we developed an idea for a youth entrepreneurship hub offering multiple services, run by experienced youth entrepreneurs. After sketching the model as a low-resolution prototype, we decided to test whether youth would be interested in the service. We did this by creating a poster that advertised the youth hub and posted it around woreda towns so that youth could learn about the service, and call iDE if they were interested. In the Borana region, our team received numerous phone calls and office visits from youth who wanted to learn more about the youth hub and how they could utilize its services. This early confirmation of

interest demonstrated that the youth hub might be addressing significant needs of young entrepreneurs.

We then facilitated a co-creation workshop with interested youth and government stakeholders to further test the youth hub's feasibility and viability, and to refine the model towards a realistic and operational platform. We used tools such as a voting exercise to prioritize the services the hub would provide, and further discussed modalities such as information sharing, physical space, and service payment schemes. We learned that youth are most interested in learning about financial services, but that they may be unable or unwilling to pay until they are confident of the value of the service. Youth and government representatives also suggested that the services may be offered through both phone and in person, as calls would reduce transport time and cost, while in person meetings might promote more experience and information sharing.

However, government offices also shared that they are already trying to provide similar services, and suggested that iDE strengthen their efforts rather than develop a new initiative. As a result, we have continued to discuss the way forward with the local enterprise development office and job creation units to identify aspects of the youth hub which may add the most value to youth entrepreneurship and employment opportunities. Next steps include further engagement with these relevant government actors to determine the nature of a partnership and how to begin offering critical services to youth.

Lessons Learned

- Interest in the early prototype suggested the need for improved services for young entrepreneurs exists, even if the hub with youth-youth service is not the most effective solution
- Using posters to test a service center is an effective, low-cost way to reach youth in pastoral lowlands
- Youth are keen to learn from one another through experience and information sharing, and there are successful youth entrepreneurs willing to share their knowledge
- Financial viability is the key barrier to developing and offering services among vulnerable youth

Conclusion

Testing and iterating is always an important part of the design process. In this case, the youth entrepreneurship hub in Borana has undergone various tests and refinement, and we will continue to prototype and test the model with all relevant stakeholders.

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