



**Executive Summary of the Internal Review of  
the Heifer International funded project with Rural  
Organisation for the Betterment of Agro-pastoralists  
(ROBA)**

**“Walii Dabarsa Women’s Livelihood Improvement  
Initiative” –  
“WADA-WOLII”**



September 2010

Review team led by Richie Alford

## Executive Summary

The review team were really impressed by the progress made in the Wada Wolii project in its first two years. This was in spite of a poor first year caused by the delays brought about by the regular comings and goings of project staff. ROBA has learned a lot during the two years which will ensure continued good progress in the future.

The greatest impact seen by the review team was in the area of women empowerment. The attitude change of men has been extraordinary, and the greater empowerment and public confidence of the women was wonderful to behold.

Within individual households, the project objectives are already being met. There is already an increase in the consumption of animal products, mainly as milk and processed milk products. The sheep are milked as well as the heifers. Though to focus narrowly on animal protein would miss some of the improved nutritional and health impacts of the project on the households of the group members who eat a predominantly vegetarian diet.

The Sustainable Organic Agriculture training has enabled group members to become aware of and then to take advantage of the enormous potential of the land that they own, with tremendous production of many types of vegetables seen by the project. When the training of Sustainable Organic Agriculture was delivered in a very practical way the results were encouraging. ROBA has recruited community facilitators to support the delivery of the project and fill the gaps caused by the high level of staff turnover within ROBA. The review team were not convinced that they are adding value to the project, and recommend adoption of a peer farmer system.

There has been very little work done in the area of Improved Animal Management, and so it was good for the wellbeing of the animals that very few improved livestock have been placed. There has been an increase in animal productivity of local livestock when components of IAM have been practiced by local farmers.

The empowerment and freedom of choice given to those group members who have received sheep is striking. Many have already completed the pass on requirement, and are now planning their own future by trading additional offspring born for livestock of their own choice. The group members were less excited about the heifers placed, with only a limited level of impact so far, partly because non-pregnant heifers were placed but also the length of time a pass on takes.

There is already strong evidence of the sustainability of the project. One group, Guri, shared with us that if ROBA withdrew support, they would be able to survive without ROBA. They impressed us when asked for how much longer the group would exist by answering that development is an on-going process. Most of the groups were formed out of like-minded community members. They were forged together by the rejection of richer members of the community, instilling a strong sense of "In this together" within each group.

There are some weaknesses in the development of the groups thus far, which need to be remedied with further training on envisioning, the setting up of byelaws and on their implementation.

One group shared with us that they have valued the training much more than the inputs placed. Poverty was seen more as a lack of awareness than an absence of resources. It was very easy to see the impact of the Cornerstones Values training and of Gender and

Social Development training, releasing the tremendous potential of the group members, and instilling in them a high degree of self-confidence.

The concept of 'Pass On' has been adopted very readily as it mirrors a local cultural practice of "Wali Dabarsa". As well as willingly passing on livestock, the groups are also very keen to pass on knowledge to other groups in their community, these groups forming in response to the success of the Wada Wolii project. Despite being initially rejected, the groups are willingly sharing with the self-help groups other community members have now established, both knowledge of group establishment and development as well as the more practical training.

ROBA works hard to cooperate fully with all the relevant local government departments and partners. There was a clear sense of an on-going working relationship with the government officials who joined the review team for the field work. The partnership with SACE is working well, with a strong sense of mutual accountability.

There remains a lot of work to be done with these partners to support the development of an enterprise mentality and market orientation in the minds of the group members and the community at large. This will be easier to develop through the marketing of vegetables than through dairy.