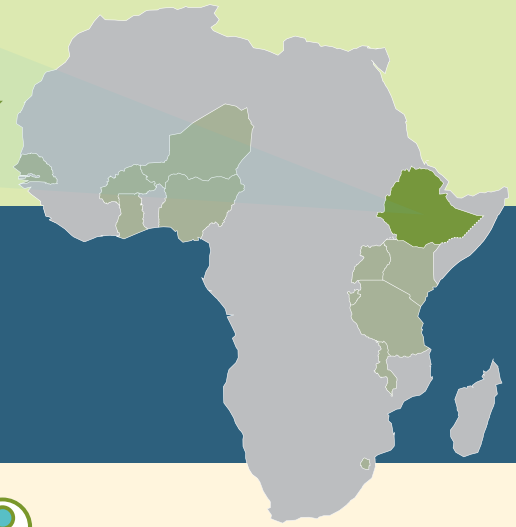


Learning note

Ethiopia country project



Leveraging Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Integrated Watershed Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience



Establishing multi-stakeholder platforms

As part of the project component focused on **institutional frameworks for enhanced biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services** within food production systems, functioning multi-stakeholder platforms were put in place in the project sites and related levels of local government.

The project team has applied an **integrated approach** which encompasses the engagement of several stakeholders who come up with diversified ideas and technologies as well as approaches. The RFS Ethiopia project has applied multi-stakeholder engagement approach to improve the income and enhance the livelihoods of the project target households and communities. Multiple stakeholders come up with their institutional plan to apply in the same landscape, community and households. The multi-stakeholder platform helped to ensure context specific approaches could be scaled and were appropriate to the land portions.

Background

The Resilient Food Systems (RFS) project in Ethiopia, Integrated Watershed Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience, is being implemented since 2017 in **12 woredas/districts of 6 regions** of the country.





Multi-layered Stakeholder Platform Engagement Process

NATIONAL LEVEL

- **Executing Agency**-Ministry of Forests, Environment and Climate Change
- **Project Steering Committee** consisting of representatives of national agencies such as Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, National Meteorology Agency and Wildlife Conservation Authority. The objective of this partnership is to enhance integration of actors and resources during the implementation of integrated land management activities at landscape level and serve as the high-level decision-making platform. These agencies also provide technical guidance to the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
- **National level steering committee** guiding management decisions and approval of project plans and reports, as well as supporting the project technically. In addition to the political

appointees (the deputy commissioner and regional heads and woreda administrators) all national steering committee members are experts from partner ministries and organizations (Ministry of Water, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, Ethiopian Wildlife Protection Authority and Ethiopia Meteorology Agency). The management committee is both managerial and technical. Its meetings are held twice in a year. The first one is to prove annual work plan and reports. The second one is to support the project technically by visiting project sites. The national steering committee visited the SNNP region Duguna fango woreda projects in 2019 and Oromia region Doba project sites in 2021 and provided constructive feedback and recommended best practices to be upscale by other regions and woredas.

DISTRICT LEVEL

- **The district level partnership or steering committees are led by district administrators and consist of district sector office heads representing Agriculture, Environment, Finance, Education, Gender and Youth, Cooperative and Small and Micro enterprise development offices.** The district administrators are also members of the national level steering committee to allow for clear transmission of information. At this level the offices serve as a district level decision making platform which plans collaboratively and shares resources during the implementation of project activities at a landscape level.
- In addition, for the **12 project sites/ districts, 12 landscape management technical committees are in place.**
- **The woreda steering committee is responsible for the implementation of each and every project activity at community levels.** Woreda/district Steering Committee (WSC) is comprised of the Woreda Administrator (Chair);

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission (EFCCC) representative (Secretary to WSC); woreda project officer (WPO); woreda cooperative promotion office; community-based organization representatives (including women and youth groups); NGO representative; a representative for Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI); and representatives from district/woreda sectoral offices. In addition to the steering committee, there are technical committees, and gender teams in 12 Woredas and a greater number at Kebele level.



- **The district level steering committee provides the strategic leadership and oversees the project implementation.** All district-level work plans and budgets are approved by the district steering committee after the district technical committee provides the technical details of the activity implantation. Then the implementation at landscape level will be technically supported by the district technical committee. **At grassroots level, there are landscapes or watershed committee who are working with technical support from the district technical committees to implement landscape activities at community level.** They mobilize communities and monitor the bylaws in protecting rehabilitated watersheds.
- **Both sets of stakeholders are engaged at the national level or specific technical purposes** and tasks to be conducted at the national and site level.
- In terms of **civil society, the project through the PSC and Executing Agency is working with six universities and one agriculture research center to conduct specific activities** under each component such as soil fertility study to inform the integrated soil and water management interventions; feasibility study on potential options for rehabilitating degraded sites; invasive species control.



- In relation to the **private sector, the RFS Ethiopia project is facilitating and advocating for improved implementation of Environmental Mitigation Plans (EMP),** promotion of value chain support schemes and support to Private Sector Social Responsibility (PSSR) at landscape levels.

Operational Modality of the institutional framework:

- At the **district level, the committee meetings are held every quarter. At the National level, meetings are held twice in a year** and project site visits are also conducted.



What impact did the effort have and on/for whom?



Farmers: Significant number of project beneficiary farmers improved their income and enhanced their livelihoods. For instance, **Ferdahusa Muallim's** annual income from Gursum district of **Somali** region has increased from **20,000-25,000 ETB (approx. 370 - 463 USD) to 3 to 4 million ETB (55,525 - 74,033 USD) through production of vegetable production.** **Reshid** from the same district has also increased his income from **50,000ETB (925 USD) to 6 million (111,049 USD) through engagement of fruit and vegetable production.** Furthermore, Aliyi Mohammed's livelihood has also improved from labor selling to stable agricultural production and improved his livelihood.



Community members: Take lesson from the project models and are copying the same practices. A number of **community members are engaged in the same diversified agricultural practices.**



Local authorities: Local Authorities learn from the **project approach and merge the government plan to the project plan.** District authorities are voicing other projects to adopt the project approach to achieve similar results.



Government agencies and other institutions: Several experience sharing visits have been carried out in the project sites and model farmers' homesteads. Universities are also supporting the project sites through conducting action research and are introducing new technologies as well as resources to the project sites and beneficiaries.



Women: more than **44% of the project beneficiaries are women** and in most sites the project models are women, especially those engaged in off-farm income generation activities, poultry production, vegetable production, dairy production through organized user groups, and fuel-saving cooking stove production.



Youth: engaged in **off-farm income generation activities** including barbery through solar power energy in smaller rural villages, poultry farming and petty trade.



The main ingredients that led to these results

- One of the main reasons for project success was its relevance regarding priorities in Ethiopia **linking environmental management of all factors that affect food security** (land management, water management, forestation, market access, gender differential impacts, value chains);
- **Identification, Analysis and Establishment of Multi-stakeholder platform;**
- Preparation of **project activity description manual** and awareness made on the activity menu;
- **Context-based capacity development interventions** that empowered decision making power of the district level steering committees and technical teams;
- **Gender teams and watershed committees** organized at district and community levels and regularly capacitated with M&E and follow-ups;
- **Involvement of universities** in some areas which improved the technical capacity of some districts – e.g., Haromaya University has done significant efforts in capacitating Doba woreda experts and establishment of modern fruit nursery;
- **Close monitoring and evaluation system;**
- **Regular update on the project achievements;**
- **Utilization of local media in promoting the project achievements;**
- Involvement of **Environment Diplomacy Coordination Directorate of the Environment Forest and Climate Change Commission (EFCCC)** quarterly newsletter. In the past three years, the project best practices have been published at least twice in four publications in a year.



Scaling these efforts

Capacity building at all levels needs to be a strong explicit component for these sorts of projects, incorporating through demonstration the value added of whatever practices, methods and knowledge are being transferred to stakeholders. This not only generates and enhances capacity; it also creates ownership.

Projects with intricate components and multiple partners and stakeholders need to have internal coordination mechanisms with clear coordination among and between all types of stakeholders.

Project design should be clear and consistent, and contain proper indicators to capture effects and impacts, as well as have a clear strategy for overall implementation.

The association of **traditional knowledge and innovation needs** to be embedded in a project in order to strengthen both approaches and have them be mutually supportive.

Gender mainstreaming must be clearly embedded at all stages of a project and be based on a complete gender analysis, mainstreaming strategy and proper indicators to monitor.

Project design should encourage decentralized approach which improves capacity, empowerment and develop ownership.





What are the main lessons learned?

- **Multi-layered frameworks** for project guidance are key to integrate different stakeholders and to enhance a bottom-up approach;
- When working in different regions, ecosystems, and socio-economic contexts in different productive sectors, a “one size fits all” recipe is not proper. **Project processes need to be tailored to each particular locale’s specificities;**
- **Identification of community priorities** in relation to Integrated Landscape Management addresses several issues such as food security and resilience building, especially if they are based in context based/area specific problems identified and lead to specific solutions/ practices/technologies;
- **Ownership development improved**, project beneficiaries oversee and influence the adequate management of project funds;
- **Engagement of universities** improved the inclusion of new technologies and enabled the districts to improve the technical capacities;
- **Additional resources** were also mobilized;
- **Working groups** came as a new entity;
- **Creativeness** improved to come up with new ideas, development agendas;
- **Capacity developed** in project management;
- **Decision making power** improved at local level; and
- **Gender mainstreaming** is becoming culture.



ABOUT THIS KNOWLEDGE BRIEF

This brief is part of a series of knowledge products prepared by the Regional Hub project of the Resilient Food Systems programme. This brief falls under the Engage theme, with other knowledge products categorized under the other programme pillars (Act and Track), or within a Cross-cutting tag.



Our programme website allows easy access to these resources.