



# SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS THROUGH ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION

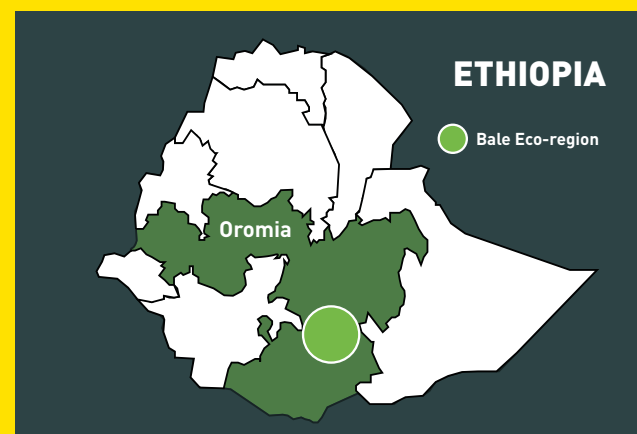
Update on the Bale Eco-region Phase II project  
Ethiopia, May 2022





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# SUMMARY

The Bale Eco-region in Oromia Zone, Ethiopia is home to 1.6 million people and a biodiversity hotspot where there are many threatened animal and plant species. But increasing demand for the area's natural resources is endangering the region's unique flora and fauna and the water supply for 12 million people living downstream.

With support from the European Union, Farm Africa is leading a consortium of partners (SoS Sahel Ethiopia, Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and Population, Health, Environment Ethiopia Consortium (PHEEC)) to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable people in the highland and lowland communities that depend on the Bale Eco-region, while ensuring the area's critical ecosystem is protected.

The first phase of the Bale Eco-region (BER) project, which lasted four years from 2014 to 2018, created an eco-region development framework to help the government to sustainably manage forests, rangelands and water sources, while helping to develop forest-friendly businesses and enhance production of existing agricultural land to prevent communities cutting down forests further.

Phase II of the BER project is expanding the project, reaching 16 woredas and 1.6 million people in the Bale Eco-region over the period of 2019-2024, while also improving the drought resilience, food and nutrition security of an estimated 12 million people living downstream, who depend on the region for their water supply.

## LIVELIHOODS DEVELOPMENT

The Bale Eco-Region Phase II partners are working with NGO partners, authorities and communities to increase forest-friendly businesses. The project partners are:

➤ Working with the Frankfurt Zoological Society in the Bale Mountains National Park to strengthen eco-tourism by training tourism service providers.

➤ Supporting communities to sustainably manage livestock and rangelands, and increasing access to improved breeds, animal health services, water and markets.

➤ Strengthening value chains of non-timber forest products, including forest coffee, honey, gum and resin.

➤ Working with women and young people to increase their incomes by developing businesses in rearing goats and producing milk, energy-efficient cook stoves and eco-charcoal.

## PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The project partners are working with law enforcement, ranger patrols and Bale Mountains National Park management to develop policies and management strategies to protect the ecosystem. This includes:

➤ Strengthening Participatory Forest Management and Participatory Rangeland Management committees to manage forests and rangelands.

➤ Supporting community controlled hunting areas.

➤ Increasing awareness in the community on the relationships between population, health and the environment, providing greater access to family planning services to address population pressures on natural resources.

This report outlines the project approach and results of the project to date, and features stories of people taking part in the project.



# CONTEXT

The Bale Eco-region (BER) of Ethiopia, within the Oromia Regional State, is of critical economic, social, biodiversity and ecological importance. The Bale Eco-region is located within two river basins: the Wabi-Shebele and Genale-Dawa, and represents the largest area of Afro-alpine habitat on the African continent. The Bale Eco-region hosts a globally important area of biodiversity, harbouring 26% of Ethiopia's endemic species and more than 40 water springs that feed into five major rivers that flow into the Indian Ocean. The Bale Eco-region Phase II project benefits 1.6 million people, and the drainage system supplies water for over 12 million people in the entire south-eastern part of Ethiopia and to northeast Kenya and Somalia.

Anthropogenic pressures in the form of deforestation and forest degradation, encroachment of protected areas, overgrazing, unsustainable agricultural practices, and extensive soil erosion are

threatening the sustainability of the eco-region and its ecological functions and supply of ecosystem services.

Poverty, rapid population growth, weak market access and poor capacity in multi-sectoral planning and implementation are among the underlying factors driving degradation of the eco-region. Protection of the forests and water towers is critical to sustainable development and biodiversity conservation in the region.

The Bale Eco-region is made up of three agro-ecological zones: highland, mid-altitude, and lowland. Communities living in the highland areas mainly earn a living from forest products and mixed crop and livestock farming, while communities living in mid-altitude areas and the lowlands are predominantly pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. The rivers flow from the highlands to the lowlands interconnecting the highland and lowland ecosystem.

# THE BALE ECO-REGION (BER) PHASE II PROJECT

The BER Phase II project, funded by the European Union, is implemented by a consortium of five partners namely Farm Africa (lead organisation), SoS Sahel Ethiopia, Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and Population, Health, Environment Ethiopia Consortium (PHE-EC). With a total budget of 10 million Euros for a five-year period (1 May 2019 to 30 April 2024), the project is designed to build the capacity of multiple stakeholders (national, regional, and local government and communities) to sustainably manage ecosystems and watersheds in the Bale Eco-region.

The BER phase II project aims to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable people in south-eastern Ethiopia and to protect the environment through an integrated eco-regional development approach. The BER Phase II project is a follow-up to a pilot

project funded by the European Union's Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience (SHARE) initiative, implemented by the same consortium from 2014 to 2018 in the Bale Eco-region. The first phase piloted the eco-regional development approach in selected seven woredas and supported the development of the Bale Eco-region Development Framework including the preparation of the 10-year general management plan for the Bale Mountains National Park (BMNP).

This second phase intends to scale up the multi-sectoral integrated development approach in 16 woredas of the eco-region while strengthening government and communities' capacity to plan and monitor integrated actions that support both livelihoods and environmental sustainability in the region.

## THE DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES

The approach builds upon the experience of SHARE BER and supports the implementation of the Bale Eco-Region Development Framework (BERDF) and the Bale Mountains National Park General Management Plan (BMNP). The project partners have supported stakeholders to scale out best practices of the pilot project into 16 woredas using an integrated multi-sectoral development approach, with the full participation of all concerned stakeholders. The community and the government have been involved in joint situational analysis, planning, joint implementation, and participatory monitoring. Generally, participation is at the heart of the formation and operation of all community-level engagements such as participatory forest management (PFM), participatory rangeland management (PRM), and other natural resources managing groups. The consortium organisations' diverse expertise has been impactful in developing synergies between government sectors and community structures to respond to the multifaceted needs and demands in the eco-region.





# RESULTS

Since its start-up in 2019, the project has made great progress towards the expected results. The main results achieved by the project are presented below based on the progress monitoring conducted in December 2021.



## ENVIRONMENT-RELATED PROGRESS

➤ A total of **115,875 hectares of forest land** have been actively monitored by the Bale Park rangers (68% of the project lifetime target). This has been achieved through an increased number of outposts and rangers.

➤ In the first two years of the project, 93,650 hectares of land have been demarcated as the **Nyala-controlled hunting area**.

➤ A total of **373,935 hectares of woodlands** have come under sustainable management by participatory rangeland management (PRM) cooperatives. This achievement accounts for 89% of the lifetime target.

➤ A total of **468,370 hectares of forest lands** have come under sustainable management of participatory forest management cooperatives (PFMCs) (94% of the project lifetime target).

➤ **Community-based monitoring activities** continue to be promoted, resulting in better resource protection and management of the natural forest including park management.

➤ **Ecological management action plans** are being implemented to improve park management. This included: ecological threat monitoring activities conducted by a para-ecologist trained by the project; forest fire management by local government and communities; regular monitoring and law enforcement by taskforce committees, and elimination of invasive species like uprooting of exotic tree species such as Eucalyptus.

➤ The project has constructed **three communal water ponds**. The construction progress has reached 92%, and each pond has the capacity to store 10000m<sup>3</sup>. The ponds will benefit 1,050 households and 15,000 cattle. This initiative reduces the movement of the local community with their livestock to natural forests in search of water and forage during the dry season.



## PROGRESS ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

➤ Participatory Forest Management Cooperatives (PFMCs) have sold a total of 27,835kg of **coffee** (95% of the project lifetime target), 406kg of **gum and resin** (51% of the lifetime target), and 1,705 kg of **honey** (73% of the lifetime target). PFMCs and Participatory Rangeland Management Cooperatives (PRMCs) have generated a total of 2,896,165 Birr from these different business interventions. This revenue from non-timber forest products exceeds the lifetime target, which was 2,160,000 Birr.

➤ The project has organised 16 new **women-owned goat husbandry groups** and four milk processing groups. Members of the goat husbandry groups that were established during the pilot phase sold 224 goats in 2021, which was 97% of the annual target. An assessment conducted in 2021 showed that these women generated 313,180 Birr, while the annual baseline value was 117,000 Birr.

➤ By end of 2021, a total of 1,926 **energy-efficient stoves**, which reduce the amount of wood burnt, were produced and sold (92% of the project lifetime target). This has enabled youth groups to generate a total revenue of 602,000 Birr in 2021.

➤ A total of 3,731 farmers and 371 government staff were trained in **climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices**. At the start of the project, the percentages of women and men using three CSA practices were 10% and 43% respectively. These proportions have now reached 21% for women, and 56% for men.

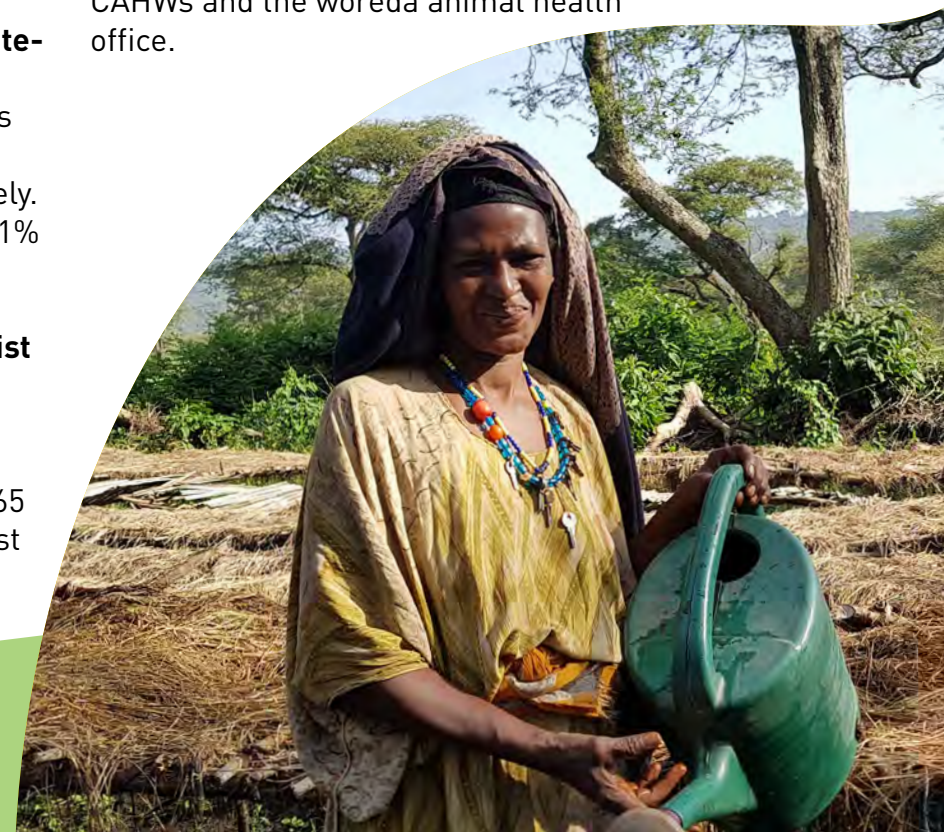
➤ The project has established **six tourist service provider associations**, which comprise 256 members (228 males, 28 females). Due to the prevalence of COVID-19 and security issues, only 2,065 tourists visited the national park against a target of 7,721, representing 26.75% achievement.

➤ The construction of a **livestock market centre** in Berbere Woreda is 55% complete. This market centre will serve 15,000 household in Berbere Woreda and adjacent Woredas.

➤ In all intervention woredas, more than 3,600 women are engaged in **village savings and loan associations (VSLAs)**; and about half of them have already benefitted from loan access. They use the loans to engage in small businesses such as goat husbandry, fattening, poultry production and petty trades like honey and coffee.

➤ **Artificial insemination (AI) services** were provided for more than 1,501 cows; 989 cows conceived, while 559 have had calves.

➤ **Fifty Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs)** have received training and were certified. In continuation with the training, the project provided kits and veterinary medicines for the CAHWs to provide effective animal health services in their respective woredas and kebeles. As a result, CAHWs are providing support to the communities. A regular reporting mechanism is put in place between CAHWs and the woreda animal health office.





## SOCIAL RELATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS

➤ **Integration in population, health and the environment** was realised through awareness-raising training, mentoring and coaching, which resulted in improvements in natural resource management, children's rights and women's health, effective use of family planning and change of attitude among youth groups in relation to use of contraceptives.

➤ **Communities are engaged** in joint planning, activity implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Community participation is significant in PRM, PFM, watershed development, woodlot development and climate-smart agriculture activities.

➤ The project collected **community feedback** to understand the level of satisfaction and any complaints needing remedial actions.

➤ In 2021, the average **household dietary diversity** score was 6.95 (99% of the lifetime target).

➤ The project gives due attention to **gender mainstreaming**; female-headed households and women in male-headed households have been supported to engage in and take up leadership positions in PFM, PRM, watershed development, VSLAs, and various women-led enterprise groups.

## RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

➤ A **research publication** entitled "Farmers' willingness to pay for alternative resource management practices in the Bale Eco-region, Ethiopia" has been published by *Heliyon Publisher*.

➤ Another **scientific article** entitled "Framework to operationalise PES in sub-Saharan Africa: the case of Bale Eco-region, Ethiopia" was submitted to the *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*.

➤ Continuous **data collection on water flow** during the dry season and average sedimentation load has been continued at three hydro-sedimentology monitoring stations that were installed during the piloting phase.

➤ PhD and MSc students from different universities are being sponsored to **conduct research** on identified different thematic areas.

## ADVOCACY AND POLICY INFLUENCING

➤ At the national level, officials (representatives of State Ministers and Oromia Regional Government) provide **strategic guidance** on how the project can deliver expected impacts, supporting the project mainly through their active engagement in the higher-level learning platform.

➤ A Multisectoral Task Force (MSTF) at kebele, woreda, and zonal levels is supportive of the project; the MSTF is laying a strong foundation for the **sustainability of delivered impacts** beyond the project lifetime.

➤ Lessons generated in relation to the **payment for ecosystem services (PES)** in the Bale Eco-region were presented by IWMI at a workshop convened by the Ethiopian government and to the Nile Basin Development Forum.

➤ **Project good practices, lessons and strategies** were promoted on OBN Radio and Walta TV; and the eco-region annual newsletter was published to disseminate lessons and best practices of the project.

## CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

### CAPACITY BUILDING

➤ The project provided on-the-job training, mentoring and coaching, and facilitated experience sharing visits to enhance institutional and human capacities.

➤ An assessment conducted in December 2021 showed that the KAP scores of supported government staff increased from 45% to 64% against the baseline value.

➤ The average organisational capacity of community-controlled hunting managing groups increased from 35.67% to 60.9% in 2021.

➤ The average organisational capacity of 14 PRMCs increased from 40% to 57% in 2021.

➤ The average organisational capacity of 115 PFMCs increased from 45% to 51% in 2021.

### SUSTAINABILITY

➤ The project is working closely with government and community institutions to ensure the sustainability of project outcomes beyond the intervention period. Activities such as PFM, PRM, park management, watershed development, and PHE activities are designed to be community-led interventions. These activities have been jointly planned and implemented with the active participation of local community and government sectors and are being embedded into government planning at all levels through the taskforces and the integration of the BERDF in government plans and budgets.

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

➤ The project provided sanitation and infection prevention materials to beneficiaries in 16 woredas and 32 demonstration kebeles using contingency funds approved by the European Commission.

## CHALLENGES AND LEARNING



➤ The COVID-19 pandemic reduced the travel of foreign tourists to the Bale Mountains National Park. To compensate for this, we have promoted domestic tourism to the park.

➤ A shortage of rainfall at the crop maturity stage resulted in a decline of productivity in the lowland intervention areas. Encouragingly, we have learnt that project beneficiaries who have implemented a combination of climate-smart agriculture practices have not severely been affected by the shortage of rainfall. The Bale Zone Administration has expressed interest in

organising farmers' experience learning visits to Berbere woreda to learn how to scale up the successful application of climate-smart agriculture there.

➤ Getting hold of improved crop varieties (including coffee) was challenging during the first year of project implementation. To help overcome this challenge, we have provided support for farmers and FTCs to start the multiplication of improved seeds.

# THE PROJECT IN NUMBERS

115,875

hectares of forest  
land actively  
monitored by the  
Bale Park rangers.

373,935

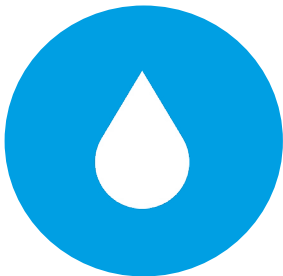
hectares of woodland  
under sustainable  
management by PRM  
cooperatives.

468,370

hectares of forestland  
under sustainable  
management by PFM  
cooperatives.



**54,427 improved  
fruit tree seedlings**  
distributed to  
1958 households.



Three communal  
water ponds have been  
established, benefitting  
**1,050 households and  
15,000 cattle.**



**468 hectares of land**  
covered with climate-  
smart agriculture  
practice.

50

Community Animal  
Health Workers  
trained and certified.

4,231

farmers trained in  
climate-smart agriculture  
practices.

2,279,095

tree seedlings  
planted on 269  
hectares of land as  
woodlot plantation.



1,926 energy-  
efficient stoves  
were produced and  
sold, generating  
a total revenue of  
**602,000 Birr.**



**147 Village  
Saving and Loans  
Associations (VSLAs)**  
established, with  
a total of 3,528  
members.



**25 women-owned  
goat husbandry**  
groups organised,  
with 750 women  
receiving a goat.



**2,896,165 Birr**  
generated from  
PFMCs and PRMCs.



Maize yield  
increased from 10.5  
quintals/hectare  
(1,050kg) to **18.14  
quintals/hectare  
(1814kg).**



Barley yield  
increased from 12.5  
quintals/hectare  
(1,250kg) to **22  
quintals/hectare  
(2200kg).**



Wheat yield  
increased from 23.9  
quintals/hectare  
(2,390kg) to **35  
quintals/hectare  
(3500kg).**





# TREE NURSERIES

## THE MAGARIISAA COMMUNITY NURSERY GROUP



"I have been working with many groups and individuals for years, in my professional service as a forestry expert, I have never seen such a successful community nursery site. The Magariisaa Community Nursery Group is unique in achieving results within a short period of time."

These words are by Abdulkerim Hussien, a Community Development Facilitator at the BER II project. The Magariisaa Seedling Producing Group has ten members and has been active for two years. With support from the Bale BER II project, it aims to regrow trees in the surrounding deforested areas.

The group is a sub-group of the Odaa Wedessa participatory forest management cooperative (PFMC) in Odda kebele, Medewelabu woreda of Bale zone in Ethiopia. The PFMC gained its legal recognition in 2013 with 33 founding members and now has 750 members.

It's from this PFMC that the Magariisaa community nursery group emerged and has been able to demonstrate successes: rehabilitating the environment and enhancing livelihoods. Its contributions

to the reforestation effort in its kebele and the surrounding areas have become valuable. The group, managing 0.25 hectares of land, produces seedlings of coffee and woodlots including eucalyptus trees, grevillea, juniper trees, fruit trees, moringa and others. In two rounds within the last two years, the group has produced and sold 56,720 seedlings of coffee and 16,600 woodlot seedlings. These were traded to group and individual farmers in Odda and other kebeles, particularly Meda, Hara-Haji and Danisa Kerkero.

Demand for products has increased the group's profit. Members are looking to diversify their businesses to include cattle farming, beekeeping and grain trading.

Abdulkerim Hussien commented: "They are determined! Regardless of any supervision, they are there day and night taking care of the nurseries. Their sense of responsibility is high."

Farm Africa, with financial support from the EU, backs the group providing seeds, nursery tools, training and market value chains.

"I have been working with many groups and individuals for years, in my professional service as a forestry expert, I have never seen such a successful community nursery site."

-Abdulkerim Hussien



# CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

## ABDULKADIR'S STORY



Like with so many farmers, water depletion and lack of irrigable land stopped Abdulkadir Somo from achieving his full potential. The 33-year-old has been farming crops and vegetables in Bale zone, Ethiopia for many years, practising rain-fed farming as well as irrigation. Several factors have limited his productivity, particularly a lack of agricultural inputs and land access issues. With his one-hectare plot of land, Abdulkadir struggled to provide for his wife and two children. Whenever his income from the crop production was too low, he took on work as a daily labourer.

Farm Africa supported Abdulkadir to gain access to a plot of irrigable land by a river where he could achieve greater yields. Using a water pump generator provided by the project, Abdulkadir can now grow maize, onions, cabbages and other crops and vegetables. He has become one of the most successful farmers in the village, earning a profit from irrigation farming. "I was able to earn 12,000 Birr growing onions, cabbages and maize," Abdulkadir said. "This was only from the first round."

"The project helped me get farming inputs and above all, together with the local administration, it supported me to get farming land. This is a great help to enhance my productivity."

Abdulkadir used to produce just teff and sesame, earning no more than 10,000 Birr a year. "But now, since I am growing maize and vegetables through irrigation, I am able to earn near to 24,000 Birr. On the first production season, I grew two quintals (200kg) of onion intercropping with maize. I produced tomatoes as well." However, big challenges remain: the

drought affecting eastern Africa and high inflation both pose significant risks to Abdulkadir's livelihood. "The biggest problem is we are not having rain here due to the ongoing drought. It seems similar to the one I have witnessed ten years ago."

Though water depletion is a major issue, Abdulkadir wants to be part of the solution. He is playing an active role in water conversation, planting fruit trees, including mango and avocado. He has a dream to see his surrounding area covered in forest and to never endure a drought season again.





# ACCESS TO WATER



## IN BERAK KEBELE

Water scarcity is a challenge in the Bale Eco-region of Ethiopia. Deforestation in the highlands and erratic rainfall are putting pressure on the area's already inaccessible water resources. In Berak kebele in Delo Mena woreda, families of six to seven people have to get by on just ten litres of water every two days.

The women of the neighbourhood face the brunt of this burden, having to make the long and arduous eight-hour round trip on foot to the main source of water. Aside from the distance, the journey also exposes them to harmful incidents. Rabila Hussien from Berak kebele, explains:

"There were many incidents where pregnant mothers from our village gave

birth on their trip to fetch water. Others were attacked by crocodiles, snakes and other wild animals. We have been fetching water from Welmel river. The water is not clean. For this reason, our children have been suffering from diarrhoea and abdominal cramps. On the other hand, the spring water source has diminished."

Other women from Rabila's kebele and the surrounding neighbourhoods have encountered similar experiences:

"Going on foot while carrying water jerry cans on your back under a scorching sun or on a rainy day makes you desperate. It leaves us with no energy for household chores that are waiting for us at home," said Deko Adem, also from Berak kebele.

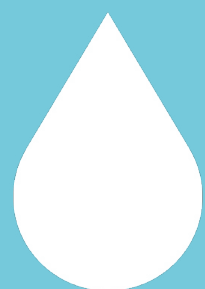


To address the community's challenging access to water, Farm Africa has been constructing a community pond in the kebele. According to Rabila, when the pond fully opens it will supply water to more than 300 households in her kebele, as well as to other people in nearby neighbourhoods.

"Thanks to the project, now our women won't waste their time and energy in search of water," said Rabila.

Agreeing with her neighbour Deko says, "I am glad it will only take us five to 15 minutes to get water when the pond starts service."

Aside from providing local residents with water, the project aims to improve the health of the community's livestock, and as a result agricultural productivity, by also supplying water to 15,000 cattle, goats and camels in Berak kebele, an area home to 140,000 hectares of grazing land.



"Thanks to the project, now our women won't waste their time and energy in search of water."

-Rabila Hussien





# FUEL-EFFICIENT STOVES



## THREE YOUTH-LED ENTERPRISES

Firewood collection is a major driver of deforestation in rural Ethiopia, but fuel-efficient cooking stoves offer a cost-effective and practical solution for mitigating climate change, protecting trees and vegetation and improving families' health. The stoves allow for smoke-free cooking, and not only provide an income stream for rural communities, but also safeguard health and keep homes cleaner.

The BER II project set up three youth-led enterprises producing and selling energy-efficient cook stoves and sustainable charcoal. The cook stove initiative gives young people the opportunity to reduce carbon emissions and boost their income. The project provides training in fuel-efficient stove technology, business development and market linkage and analysis.

Between March 2020 and July 2021, one eco-friendly group in Dinsho woreda, made up of five women and three men, sold more than 1,800 cook stoves. Frankfurt Zoological Society has supported the group with theoretical and practical training, as well as production materials so they could produce stoves for the surrounding woredas. As they continued producing stoves, demand grew and so did the members' income.

Abdurahman Aman, a husband and father, had previously found it difficult to provide for his family. However, since joining the group he is now able to feed his wife and child, can afford a kitchen and furniture for their home and is now rearing four breeds of poultry.

Another member, Nigatowa Getachew, was previously a labourer who had to stop her education due to her low income. Since joining, she has secured a permanent job and is delighted to have started up her education again at night school. Meanwhile, Zara Hasan is now able to provide for her children and is building up her savings with the dividend she receives from the group. What's more, she can afford to rent a bicycle, buy livestock and furniture for her family's home.

The group would now like to transition into producing eco-friendly charcoal, in order to maximise their profit, while still playing a key role in natural resource conservation.



**More than 1,800  
stoves sold  
between March  
2020 and July 2021**



# GOAT REARING

## RAHIMA'S STORY

Rahima Kumbi is a resident of Melka Amana Village located in Delo Mena District in the Oromia region. Married with five children, Rahima attended traditional Quran schooling and now runs her household, rearing goats and farming crops.

As part of the first phase of the project, Rahima became a member of Huluka Sof-Omer participatory rangeland management (PRM) cooperative and a women's goat husbandry group, during which she reared three goats. Since 2019, Rahima has continued with the second phase of the project and received advice and training in capacity building and technical support in improving goat productivity.

The project promotes practices that boost the productivity of farmers' existing herds to ensure they do not have to increase the size of their herds. This results in fewer

animals grazing on the rangelands, which puts less pressure on the environment.

In addition, Rahima has been trained in planting additional animal fodder plants, which also helps to improve soil health, and financial resource management.

Rahima now has an effective production system in place with 23 goats and as a result, has been able to sell some of her herd to pay for her children's education. She can now pay for her children's school books, clothes, food and rent, all thanks to the income generated from selling her goats.

Additionally, the family now has access to milk and meat, which have improved their diet. They are delighted with these results; Rahima believes her family's socio-economic activities have improved and she now feels a sense of ownership in her farming and self-confidence in herself.



# VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS



## BUNE'S STORY

For many years, Bune Sida struggled to earn a decent living. With the support of Farm Africa, she is now a member of the Biftu Jirenga Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA), a collective that helps women invest in the local economy and gain financial independence.

Bune is married to Ibrahim Gobena and together the couple have seven children. They make a living from farming, cultivating maize and teff, as well as rearing cattle. However, they have faced major challenges. Erratic rainfall and incidences of crop disease prevent Bune from producing sustainable yields. As a result, the couple has at times been unable to feed their family.

Bune has worked with Farm Africa since 2016, when she became a member of a participatory forest management (PFM) community-based organisation, joining in forest management activities such as tree planting, deforestation reduction and the production and marketing of sustainable forest products. In addition to wanting to work with the forests, Bune wanted to engage in income-generating activities in order to improve her family's livelihood.

That's why she joined the Biftu Jirenga VSLA in December 2019. Supported by Farm Africa, Bune was able to join the association in the Oda kebele and improve her livelihood. Working with the VSLA not only allows Bune to enjoy a greater income, it also encourages her to engage with her local community in a positive way.

After joining the VSLA, Bune started saving 20 Birr a week, with 15 Birr for the revolving loan fund and 5 Birr for the social fund. She also borrowed 2,000 Birr from the group, purchasing two goats for 1,500 Birr and using the rest to sell onions and potatoes in the local market. After three months, she had two goats and four kids. By selling one of the goats for 3,000 Birr, she was able to return the 2,000 Birr she had borrowed from the VSLA. With the additional money she made from trading onions and potatoes, Bune was able to buy school materials for her children.

Now, Bune owns seven goats and three kids, and has earned over 16,000 Birr. By working with the VSLA, she has improved her business skills and gained financial freedom. She has big hopes for the future; she aims to own better livestock and chicken breeds to help her and her family become self-sufficient and move into a better home.











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