

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
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Project Title	Community-based forest development for wood product supply and natural forest conservation in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia
Application ID	41372-B
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1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
To examine to what extent local communities' participation in the selection of sites, conservation measures applied, and tree species planted.				The level of community engaged to participate in the selection of tree species, including traditional knowledge of indigenous species and preferences for species that provide economic or cultural benefits were identified. The types of conservation measures adopted (e.g., erosion control, agroforestry practices) and the role of community knowledge in selecting and implementing these measures were identified.
Understand how the implementation of community-based forest development changed the ways in which rural people access to the land and natural resources.				Community based forest development has led to an increased sense of local ownership over forestland, with communities now managing, and protecting forest were identified. With increased community control over forests, rural people have gained more equitable access to NTFPs, such as fruits, medicinal plants, mushrooms, and honey. Local communities now have the rights to harvest and sell these resources, leading to increased incomes and more sustainable use practices.
Describe and determine the species composition and population in the				The communal land was found to harbor a variety of plant species, including a mix of native and non-

communal land in the area.				<p>native species. Common indigenous tree species such as (<i>Cordia africana</i>, <i>Juniperus procera</i>, <i>Afrocarpus falcatus</i>, <i>Millettia ferruginea</i>).</p> <p>The population of dominant tree species was identified. Shrub and herb species were more abundant in grazing and agricultural areas.</p>
To propose adaptive community forest management strategies that promote effective conservation and reduce social conflicts.				<p>The communities need to have established successful community forest management practices where collective decision-making and resource-sharing are prominent. Forest use for the livelihood of the community need to be balanced with conservation efforts. Social conflicts often arise from unequal distribution of benefits, and competition over forest resources use.</p>

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- i) Analysis of how local participation in decision-making processes has affected community empowerment, environmental knowledge, and the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts.

Challenges and barriers that prevent full community participation, such as lack of technical knowledge, limited resources, land tenure conflicts are identified. The positive outcomes of local involvement in conservation practices such as increased awareness of environmental issues, and improved management of forest resources is identified. Accordingly, community-based forest development has empowered rural people by providing them with both the responsibility and the benefits of managing their natural resources. This empowerment has led to stronger community cohesion, as collective decision-making processes foster collaboration and solidarity. Despite improvements in land access and resource management, challenges remain, such as conflicts over land boundaries, difficulties in enforcing community-based rules, and external pressures from commercial interests or government policies that undermine local management systems. Improved access to forest resources has led to enhanced livelihoods for rural communities. The commercialization of NTFPs and other forest products has created new income streams. However, there are concerns about over-exploitation if management strategies are not adequately enforced. The community based forest development has impacted women providing them with better access to forest resources for livelihoods (e.g., women gathering firewood, medicinal plants, or working in agroforestry). However, ensuring gender equity in decision-making processes and benefits-sharing remains an ongoing challenge.

- ii) The species composition in the communal land is diverse, but human activities such as agriculture, grazing, and resource extraction have led to changes in the ecosystem.

There is a clear impact on the plant population structure, particularly in areas with high human activity. Some species, particularly indigenous trees, are showing signs of population decline due to overuse, while others, such as smaller animals and non-native plants, have flourished in disturbed habitats. The study indicates that while the communal land supports a variety of species, human-induced pressures are leading to changes in the composition and population sizes of tree species. There is a need for better management practices to conserve biodiversity, including the establishment of protected areas, the use of sustainable agricultural practices, and better livestock management to prevent overgrazing. Local communities have expressed interest in conservation efforts, and their traditional knowledge of species and ecosystems could be vital in implementing more sustainable practices. Community-based management strategies that balance land use with biodiversity conservation should be prioritized.

- iii) To propose adaptive community forest management strategies that promote effective conservation and reduce social conflicts.

Communities involved in forest management must develop and sustain effective community forest management practices, where collective decision-making and resource-sharing are integral components of the process. These practices allow for the cooperative management of forest resources, ensuring that all members have a voice in the decisions that impact the ecosystem and their livelihoods. The key to success in such systems lies in balancing the need for forest use, which is crucial for the community's economic well-being, with the imperative to protect and conserve the forest for future generations. However, maintaining this balance can be challenging. Social conflicts often arise, particularly when the benefits of forest resources are unevenly distributed. These conflicts may be further exacerbated by competition over access to and control of forest resources, such as timber, non-timber forest products, and land. In many cases, inequalities in benefit-sharing can create divisions within the community, leading to tensions between different groups. Effective management requires addressing these disparities and ensuring that all members of the community have equal access to the benefits derived from the forest. Moreover, involving the entire community in the decision-making process and fostering transparency and accountability can help mitigate such conflicts and strengthen cooperation toward long-term sustainability. Only through such inclusive and equitable approaches can forest management truly thrive and serve both the needs of the people and the health of the ecosystem.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

At the initial stage limited community buy-in at intervention sites was a challenge. Then it was mitigated through ongoing engagement and discussion with higher official and beneficiary communities, ensuring a participatory that considers their needs and draws from their knowledge and experience of the local context.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

The involvement of local communities in community-based forest development (CBFD) programs has initiated at the initial stage of the project. As community-based forest development is based on communal land of the community. They were involved in local participation while identifying there decision-making processes of community empowerment, environmental knowledge, and the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts. In addition to propose adaptive community forest management strategies that promote effective conservation and reduce social conflicts is mainly based on identified community need and priority. The community benefit from the project is that participation in community-based forest enhances community power and control over their natural resources, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. Involvement in decision-making encourages the sustainable use of forest resources, preventing overexploitation and depletion. Furthermore, the consideration of communities needs training and support to effectively manage their forests. Furthermore, the community benefit from the project: Strengthen land tenure security through formal recognition of community land rights; Promote inclusive governance that ensures the participation of all community members; Implement sustainable forest management practices that involve community participation; Promoted conservation education programs to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity for the community; and Encourage reforestation efforts in degraded areas and establish buffer zones between agricultural areas and sensitive ecosystems

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

The involvement of local communities in CBFD offers a pathway to improve livelihoods, enhance environmental and empower communities. However, achieving these benefits requires careful planning, implementation, and ongoing support. As the community still have challenges on equitable benefit sharing mechanisms it need in place to ensure fair and equitable distribution of benefits among all community members. So need to support to work and put in place benefit sharing mechanisms with the community and officials. Communities need to get capacity building training and support to effectively manage their

forests, mechanisms for resolving conflicts over resource use within the community are essential. I am planning an action research on expanding tree preferred plantation for enterprises to use for production and creating skill and linking to market.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

I started sharing the research results in participating conferences. For the community, the project held village meetings to give feedback to communities, and summary reports were left at the village offices and woreda level. Besides I am working to produce scientific articles for the global research and development community.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

In Ethiopia the rise in population and economic growth increase demand for wood products for construction and wood fuel consumption. The wood comes from different forest resources, ranging from trees grown on farm and plantations to natural high forests and woodlands. However, the commercially important species are over exploited to the extent of being endangered. The wood product industries activities of wood production are not supported with innovations to improve the limited resource utilization efficiency. The actors of the forest development and conservation through innovation activities have been organized under different ministries. In this case, the actors need to integrate and coordinated which result to reduce the pressure on the over-exploitation of the forest resources.

CBFM has also grown in practice because centralized management of natural resources has often neglected the rights of local communities that once inhabited rural areas. Unless a strong measure is taken to develop the already dwindled forest resources, no question, the country will turn out to be a barren land in the near future, unable to support life. Therefore, efforts have to be made to create conducive environment, such as clear policy framework and other supportive rules and regulations, efficient bureaucratic procedures to encourage the involvement of the community in the forestry conservation and development activities. CBFM therefore aims to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of forests for the benefit of present and future generations. Thus, decentralization is expected to result in more effective forest management, conserving biodiversity while also contributing to poverty reduction and economic development.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

I have acknowledged the Rufford foundation while I participated in the conferences. I will acknowledge in the publications. I inform the colleagues and the researchers in the research study site that I had a grant from Rufford foundation.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Name	Role
Tatek Dejene (PhD)	Scientific guidance on conservation
Dr Daniel Jalata	Scientific guidance on community forest devolvement
Damena Obsa	Zonal expert facilitating the project work
Abdulselam Umar	Familiarizing with community in Gomma woreda
Mohammed Abdu	Familiarizing with community in Seqa Chokorsa woreda
8 parsons	Data collectors

10. Any other comments?