IFAD
Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty

Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management in Lake Tana Watershed – GEF

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Restoring ecosystem integrity in the Ethiopian highlands

Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries, with an annual per capita income of only US$174. Nearly half of the population lives under the poverty line, and more than 12 million people are chronically or periodically food insecure.

Agriculture generates approximately 50 per cent of the GDP and 90 per cent of export earnings. Despite its importance, agricultural performance has improved little over the past 50 years and food security has deteriorated. Low agricultural productivity and chronic food insecurity are direct results of the ongoing degradation of natural resources in the Ethiopian highlands.

Rich heritage threatened by land degradation

The highlands occupy nearly half of Ethiopia's total land area and are the centre of the country's economic activity. More than 85 per cent of the population and 75 per cent of the country's livestock are found there.

The Lake Tana watershed in Amhara National Regional State is important in ecological and economic terms, and it has both local and global significance. The watershed encompasses Lake Tana – the largest freshwater body in Ethiopia and source of the Blue Nile. Its unique and isolated landscape includes forested islands, immense and varied wetlands and high mountain areas. The region is renowned for its biodiversity, and it is also the home of churches and monasteries dating from the 14th to the 16th century.

Ninety per cent of the area's rapidly growing population of 2.5 million people depends on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. The productivity and sustainability of mixed farming practices depend on ecosystem goods and services, which rely on the functional integrity of the watershed's ecosystems – rivers, wetlands, lake, forests, pastures and soils. The integrity of the overall ecosystem has been undermined and continues to be under serious threat.

Land degradation has become a crucial impediment to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the region, increasing the rural population's vulnerability to recurrent drought and famine. This deteriorating situation is a result of overgrazing, deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices and overexploitation of wetlands. Siltation of water bodies is a major threat to irrigation development. The region also suffers from poor governance and inadequate policies in support of sustainable land management.

Rehabilitating land, raising incomes

The IFAD-led seven-year project in the Lake Tana watershed will be implemented in 21 districts over a total area of about 15,000 km^2. It will combat land degradation in the watershed to protect and restore ecosystems and their essential services – key elements to

GEF PROJECT INFORMATION

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Executing partners: Amhara National Regional State (ANRS); Environment Protection, Land Administration and Use Agency (EPLAUA); Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD); Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoARD)

GEF financing: US$ 4,400,000
Cofinancing: US$21,024,500
IFAD: US$13,016,000
Govt (ANRS): US$ 2,775,500
Beneficiaries: US$ 5,233,000
Total financing: US$25,424,500

GEF PROJECT COMPONENTS

Community-based integrated watershed management through

- supporting land administration and certification in the entire Lake Tana watershed
- helping communities prepare and implement 650 watershed management plans
- establishing a database of existing land-use patterns and natural resources
- improving fodder management
- rehabilitating severely degraded lands
- promoting participatory forest management
- supporting off-farm soil and water conservation measures
- improving biodiversity conservation

Institutional, legal and policy analysis and reform through

- fostering an enabling environment for integrating sustainable land management best practices into regional policies, strategies and development programmes

The Lake Tana watershed project will develop about 650 watershed management plans covering 227,500 hectares. It will restore the productivity of more than 32,000 hectares of degraded land, increase agricultural productivity, and improve food security and incomes for about 450,000 rural households living in the watershed. It will also increase carbon sequestration by some 700,000 tonnes, thus contributing to mitigating climate change.

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reducing poverty. The project will increase per capita income by 25 per cent for about 450,000 rural households. Project participants include mainly farmers with landholdings of 1 hectare or less, as well as those with no land.

Local communities, already actively involved in planning the project, will take the lead role in a wide variety of activities designed to reduce land degradation, protect the area's rich biodiversity and counter the negative impacts of climate change.

Emphasizing links between land conservation and production – and therefore, incomes – the activities will focus on improving agriculture, grazing, forestry, and water management practices.

The project will provide training at individual, community and government levels to help people gain the skills and knowledge they need to practice improved sustainable land management. The project will offer other incentives for community participation, such as access to secure land rights and the right to manage and use common assets. At least 32,500 households are expected to obtain access to reclaimed land. Another objective is to mainstream sustainable land management principles into local and regional policies, strategies and action plans related to agriculture, forestry and water development.

Global benefits

The project will restore ecological balance in this fragile, globally significant ecosystem, conserving endemic plant and bird species and cattle breeds, and maintaining ancient cultural and archaeological heritage sites. Conserving, protecting and rehabilitating the natural resource base will lead to sustained increases in the production of agriculture, forests and fisheries, which in turn will increase carbon sequestration.

Enhanced tenure security will encourage farmers to invest in land improvements, and the reduced siltation of water bodies will create opportunities for hydropower development. The conservation of biodiversity and improved ecosystem integrity will result in invaluable long-term benefits of global significance.

Innovative features

- The project will document and promote traditional and recent local innovations both within and outside the watershed for replication throughout the region and in other parts of the country.
- The project will develop carbon payment mechanisms to provide a direct income source for rural communities.
- For centuries, the church and monastery lands of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church have provided refuge for important forest biodiversity. To help ensure that biodiversity is maintained, the project will provide these churches and monasteries with compensation for protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Associated IFAD-funded project:
Community-based Integrated Natural Resources Management Project

TerrAfrica
REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT

GEF

IFAD

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