

Ethiopia Seret

Empowering Communities and Fighting Deforestation

Annual Update 2019



In this region of northern Ethiopia, overgrazing, intensive activities and frequent drought have resulted in severe land degradation and forest loss. To reverse this situation, ‘no-go’ zones called exclosures have been created in Seret and Walta villages where human activities and livestock grazing are forbidden in order to improve soil health and regain forest cover. Our work also supports communities to generate income through forest-friendly practices to ensure the exclosures remain protected.

Achievements

Forestry

56 ha (approximately 67 football pitches!) are under restoration and based on the expected density over 109,500 trees are regenerating.

Assisted natural regeneration (ANR) is a restoration technique used to enhance the natural regeneration processes of forest restoration, encouraging the natural establishment and growth of indigenous forest trees, while preventing any factors that might harm them.

Framework planting is a technique that plants different species in a way that promotes the natural succession of vegetation.



One of the seed sowing teams

Biodiversity



A particularly tasty food for bees

16 different tree species have been planted across the intervention site, including important native trees (e.g. *Olea europaea*, *Cordia africana*, *Acacia abyssinica*, *Croton macrostacus*, *Acacia polyacantha*), valuable fuelwood and timber species (e.g., *Acacia decurrens*, *Grevillia robusta*, *Acacia etbica*, and *Cupressus lustanica*) and fodder shrub species (e.g. *Chamaecytisus palmensis*).

Community Engagement

To date, 729 households are benefiting from this project, of which 289 are women-headed households.

2019 At A Glance

June

Accelerating natural regeneration. To improve the vegetation cover in areas that suffered intense grazing, a direct seed sowing program was established. During 2019, a total of 7 kg of native *Acacia abyssinica* and *R. natalensis* seeds were collected locally and sown on an area of 20 hectares just before the rainy season.



Young seedlings taking root

Monitoring and evaluation. Despite the dry climate of the area and consecutive years with low moisture, the survival rate of seedlings planted in 2017 and in 2018 showed 56% and 60% respectively.

Skills for success. Beekeeping is not easy! We organized technical training for beginners with local experts. An additional entrepreneurship training week for both cooperatives on business planning and development also took place.

July

Expansion of Bee colonies and their food source. 20 bee colonies and modern beehives were provided to the 2 cooperatives in Seret and Walta. Bees need forage to produce honey and since initial honey harvests were lower than expected, in July we planted 1,000 seedlings of two species (*Leucas abyssinica* and *Becium grandiflorum*) to provide them with extra food so they can in turn produce more honey.



Planting for bees

October

Shared learning: A field visit by members of the two user groups to one of the best apiculture farms in the region provided a wealth of knowledge and inspiration on quality honey production and marketing.

November

Chickens are a great alternative source of income. In addition to the 2 user groups in the program, 25 poor female-headed households that are highly dependent on the collection and sale of products from enclosures (such as grass) were selected to receive support to diversify their incomes. Creating alternative income source helps to reduce the pressure in the enclosure (see story on next page).

Stories from the Field

Engaging women in poultry business to reduce the pressure on protected areas



Women receiving chickens to reduce their dependency on the enclosures

Local communities with high poverty rates are heavily reliant on the forest as a communal resource. Enclosure protection means that alternative income streams are needed and here, the provision of chickens to female headed households offers real potential for extra income.

In November, local women living far below the globally defined poverty line and dependent on activities that degrade the land participated in poultry production and management training. In December, a total of 250 chicken were distributed to 25 women along with 10kg of starter chicken feed. It is expected that each could earn an annual income of up to USD \$500 and since they can increase their flock size over time and further increase their income, we are working towards a win-win

situation – lifting communities from poverty through alleviating pressure on the land.

Beekeeping for reducing forest degradation and food insecurity

In Tigray, beekeeping is a common activity; and has been practiced for centuries by smallholder farmers. The sector is a forest-friendly business and its impact is multidimensional. It increases household income by harvesting honey or selling bee colonies, which in return help to reduce food insecurity. It may even increase crop harvests by improving pollination!

To date, WeForest has provided 40 beehives for two cooperatives (20 each) in Seret and Walta villages. The average selling price of honey is around USD\$12.5 per kg and each cooperative could expect to earn up to the equivalent of almost \$2500 in a single harvest. The harvested honey at 10kg is, at the moment, far below the regional average. We have organized trainings and exposure visits to support the cooperatives to increase their efficiency and boost household income.



The honey harvest!

Coming up in 2020

- Installation of water harvesting structures (trenches and micro basins)
- Additional seed collection for direct seed sowing in a further 36ha
- 2,500 new seedlings will be planted as bee fodder
- Continue to strengthen the sustainable grass management system in Seret and Walta villages



For more information on our project in Seret
<https://www.weforest.org/project/ethiopia-seret>

For more high-quality photos from Seret [Click here](#)