WeForest
Making Earth Cooler

Ethiopia
Amhara

Yearly report 2020

A community-based approach to restore degraded lands

Amhara, Ethiopia

2020, for Ethiopia, was more of a challenge than most. In addition to the outbreak of Covid-19, a war between government-led forces and those in our project region created significant unrest. Thankfully, our project teams and partners are safe.

Since most of the project activities took place before war broke out, there was great progress. We exceeded our restoration target by almost 30%, and with another 896 households joining the agroforestry programme, we are meeting our goal of engaging over 50% of all families in the villages.

Two nurseries raised 344,697 seedlings and ultimately 306,209 were planted. The quality of the seedlings and aftercare has shown good results since 2017. This year, the initial survey of planted seedlings in communal lands showed good initial survival rates of 93%. This will be monitored over three years against our target of 80%. Agroforestry seedlings on average perform well, and since 2017 the lowest survival rate has been an incredible 94%!

Other livelihoods activities besides agroforestry, such as dairy production and beekeeping, are co-funded by our local partner The Hunger Project (THP), and this year unfortunately we didn't meet our 2020 target of engaging at least 60% of the households (4086 reached out of 8748). THP has received good news of successful funding efforts and we aim to scale this programme back up in 2021.

Engaging women in the programme is still progressing well. 33% of employees of the nursery sites are women and to date 267 female-headed households (7% of the total) have been engaged in the agroforestry programme. Almost 60% of the clients of the local savings and credit co-operative (Lefetan Yewut) are now women.

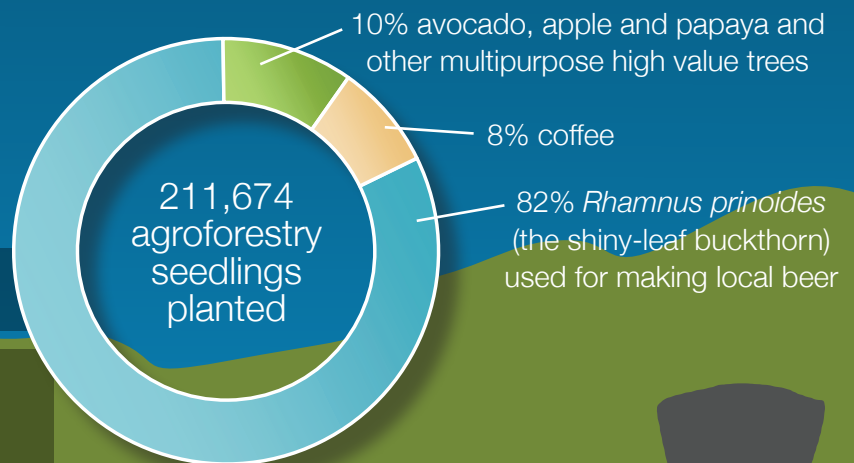**This report shares an update of our progress during 2020. Thank you for all your support!**

2020 in PICTURES

2020 in
NUMBERS

The local community is at the heart of our forest restoration project in Machakel, which is being run in collaboration with The Hunger Project. Indigenous trees are planted on community land, gullies, river banks and farmland, while fruit trees are planted on farms.

10% avocado, apple and papaya and other multipurpose high value trees

8% coffee

211,674 agroforestry seedlings planted

82% *Rhamnus prinoides* (the shiny-leaf buckthorn) used for making local beer

Forestry

306,209 seedlings were raised in two nurseries for enrichment planting and agroforestry.

161 ha was under restoration in **19** sites, exceeding our target of **120 ha**.

An additional **96.38 ha** of agroforestry was established in **10** villages, exceeding our target of **80 ha**.

5 active gullies were identified and reshaped.

Community Engagement

1146 households (**98** of them female-headed) participated in planting activities. Since 2017 a total of **4022** households (**10%** female-headed) have been involved.

896 small farmers (**8%** female) are in the agroforestry programme.

52 monitoring plots were established in 2020, bringing us to **238** in total.

New restoration sites

From January to March, 161 hectares of land was approved by the communities for ecological restoration. 19 local bylaws that protect these areas were prepared and signed by the local communities. The sites are fenced, protecting them from illegal wood cutting and livestock grazing. Since 2017, 67 local bylaws have prepared to manage communal plantation sites in 15 Kebeles.

Beekeeping

Beekeeping provides important sources of income from honey sales. 100 smallholder farmers, youth, women and agriculture extension workers were trained on producing beehives from local materials, bee colony multiplication and management and marketing.

JAN
- Community mobilisation & site selection
- Gullies identified

FEB
- Check dams
- Soil and water management practices employed

Community mobilisation preparation

Refresher training on landscape restoration and agroforestry took place in Machakel for implementing partners to enhance their engagement in community awareness-raising, mobilization and land identification. A second session focused on practices for restoring degraded land and homestead agroforestry development, as well as seedling transportation, planting and post-planting management. 143 participants represented the wide range of people engaged in this project; village facilitators, natural resource and agricultural experts, village task force members and police officers, and restoration site committees.

Raising quality seedlings

21 nursery workers from the two THP-WeForest nurseries, seven of them women, and four village facilitators were provided a 3-day training in collaboration with the district agriculture office to maintain quality tree seedling production in the nursery sites. The training covered seed treatment, day to day seedling management, hardening, transplanting, and caring during transportation. The training pays off; this year 89% of seeds sown produced good seedlings.

MAR
- Mapping of selected communal lands

APR
- Mapping of selected communal lands
- Household selection for agroforestry

MAY
- Mapping of selected communal lands
- Household selection for agroforestry

Stopping soil erosion

These gullies show just how much soil erosion takes place during heavy rains. Reshaping and planting in 5 gullies this year will bind the soil together and slow the rainwater down, reversing this erosion. Sites restored 3 years ago show what a fantastic difference this makes.

JUN
- Fruit trees distributed

Planting season begins

Two WeForest tree nurseries produced 306,209 seedlings; 80% are native and the majority are *Rhamnus prinoides*, a popular cash crop shrub for agroforestry. An additional 59,217 multipurpose tree seedlings were purchased from local youth association nursery sites to support the youth group. The nursery is a focused part of women's engagement; 33% of employees of the nurseries are women.

By the end of the season, 139,533 seedlings had been planted in 19 restoration sites on 161.89 ha. 1146 community members participated in preparation, transporting and planting the seedlings. 896 (69 female-headed) households within these restoration sites were selected to engage in the agroforestry programme, to receive training, seedlings and inputs of high-value fruit trees and cash crops like coffee and Rhamnus (below). Altogether 211,674 agroforestry seedlings were planted with these households.

JUL

Fruit trees distributed

Agroforestry farm sizes recorded

AUG

Agroforestry farm sizes recorded

Engaging households in livelihoods activities

SEP

Agroforestry farm sizes recorded

Engaging households in livelihoods activities

OCT

Seedling survival count

Agroforestry survival count

NOV

Seedling survival count

Agroforestry survival count

DEC

Engaging communities before planting

Community-based vision, commitment, and action workshop workshops were organized throughout the year to mobilize, sensitize, and deepen the villagers' knowledge, attitude, and mind-set on natural resource conservation, participatory forest management and zero grazing pasture land management. We aimed to reach 5000 people (1500 of them women) across current and future restoration sites, and managed to reach 6071 (843 women) people across 356 ha and 41 restoration sites.

Grasses for livestock

Restoration sites under protection yield valuable grasses as they regenerate, and this grass is harvested to feed to livestock. By December a total of 16,459 sacks of grass had been harvested from 28 restoration sites and shared with 1514 households (109 of them female-headed). The grass will be used as livestock feed for themselves or to sell; each family received 11 sacks on average, which can fetch the equivalent of US$33 and provide 11 days of feed for two cows.

What's next?

Forestry

- Engage landowners aiming to restore 90 ha of land in 6 restoration sites.
- Raise 255,000 seedlings in two nurseries.
- Conduct a vegetation survey to assess how successful interventions are in restoring the ecological function in our sites.

Community Engagement

- Initiate agroforestry activities with an estimated 110 households (at least 10% women-headed).
- Establish 4 school environmental clubs.
- Carry out detailed household surveys to assess the success of the agroforestry programme in improving household incomes.

How do we know our restored forests are growing and making an impact?

Every hectare under restoration is mapped with GPS points to generate polygons (areas on a map) that are assigned to sponsors. Permanent monitoring plots are established in our sites and our forestry and science teams conduct surveys to monitor progress of biomass growth, tree density, survival rate and species diversity, among other indicators. Where social impacts are also critical, we measure socio-economic indicators such as the number of beneficiaries, people trained, and income generated from forest-friendly livelihood activities.

Please visit our **Why and How** webpage for more information.

Stay up-to-date with your interactive **Amhara map**, and check out the **photo album** on Flickr.

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