

THIS IS OUR LAND

Restoration of degraded land in Ethiopia inspires local community to participate in conservation

Lem, the Environment & Development Society of Ethiopia (Lem Ethiopia) is a citizen's movement inspired by the concepts of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. With support from the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#), and on request of local stakeholders such as the Ankober District Administration and the Debre Birhan University, Lem Ethiopia has recently been focusing its efforts on protecting the [Aliyu Amba-Dulecha KBA](#) in the Amhara Escarpment of Ethiopia.

The Aliyu Amba-Dulecha KBA covers an estimated area of about 7,000 ha and is known for its population of the Endangered [Yellow-throated Seedeater *Crithagra flavigula*](#) – endemic to the highlands of Ethiopia. Lem Ethiopia targeted a highly degraded part of the KBA in Aliyu Amba, known as the Teter Amba sub catchment, which covers an area of 460 ha. The target site was degraded mainly as a

result of deforestation, caused by farmland expansion and increasing fuelwood demands, which was in turn caused by high population pressure (about 25,000 people live in the KBA). 80% of the Teter Amba sub catchment had turned into a dust bowl in the dry seasons, and into a floodplain in the wet seasons. Small farms struggled to survive, but nobody really cared about this land.



From no man's land to our land

Lem Ethiopia engaged 1,220 local people to rehabilitate the sub catchment. Their commitment was very high, as shown by the fact that 65% of both male and female locals between the ages of 20 to 45 years, actively participated for 56 days to work on the project. By now, 300 hectares of the KBA have benefited from various soil and water conservation activities. Water basins

were constructed, 275,000 tree seedlings and 45,000 vetiver grass slips were raised and planted over the sub catchment, and 27 hectares were set aside for biodiversity conservation. Local bye-laws were developed by the people themselves, and free cattle grazing and tree cutting within the sub catchment are now banned without permission of the local Watershed Management Committee and the District Administration.

As Mr. Matthias, the head of the District Development Coordination office said during the mid-term evaluation of the project: “Lem Ethiopia not only restored the land, but also widened the scope of our mind on conservation. Teter Amba sub catchment is no longer ‘no man’s land’: community members have started to say ‘it is our land and we care for it’.”

Conservation impacts

Already, these physical and biological conservation activities have helped reduce soil erosion and flooding during the 2015/16 and 2016/17 rainy seasons over 50 ha of land downstream. Also, long lost species like *Carissa edulis*, *Acacia tortilis*, *Acacia bussie*, and *Rosa abyssinica* have started to regenerate. Groups of Ankober Serin have been observed early in the morning, as well as mammals like civets, wild cats, and small antelopes. The rehabilitated land has become habitable again.

People benefits

To ensure conservation and local development go hand in hand, Lem Ethiopia also supported various income-generating activities. 110 of the poorest people in the area (76 male and 34 female) expressed a wish to be engaged in goats/sheep rearing, applying controlled grazing methods to sustain the rehabilitation efforts. 21 (18 male and 3 female) people preferred to be engaged in energy efficient stoves production. Most of the young people among these 121 beneficiaries used to be involved in tree cutting, but have now been turned around. They were very active in the project’s conservation activities and whenever the project asked for their support, they were responsive.

The people engaged in goats/sheep rearing have been very successful, and each beneficiary now has 12 to 16 goats or sheep. 80 beneficiaries already sold three to six male



sheep/goats, after fattening, for USD\$90 each. They are legally licensed as an association and contribute monthly close to USD\$0.50 each. Currently, the association already has about USD\$1,000 in its account. They have also developed saving practices and there is no one who doesn't have an individual savings account.

Those engaged in energy efficient stoves production were not as successful as the others, but have still done well too. They produced 100 stoves and sold them to the community. They are also legally licensed as a business association, and saved close to USD\$425 so far. Through their efforts, 100 households have reduced their fuelwood consumption with 30%.

Spread the word

More than 5,000 people have been informed about the benefits of biodiversity and its link with poverty reduction through different media. At two times, the Amhara Regional TV has showcased the project and its results, and the local FM radios have aired programmes about the project five times between November 2016 and May 2017.



Lem Ethiopia would like to express its gratitude to CEPF who helped them to achieve all this, and more!

But enough is not enough; more work remains to be done to scale up these achievements and create even more impacts within the KBA. If you are interested to work with Lem Ethiopia to protect Aliyu Amba-Dulecha KBA, please contact Mogues Worku at lemethiopia92@gmail.com and visit their website www.lemethiopia.com.

Produced by: Mogues Worku (Lem Ethiopia) and Maaike Manten (BirdLife/RIT)

Implementer: Lem Ethiopia

Project period: March 2015 to June 2017

Previously published on the BirdLife International website on 5 September 2017

Note: Some hyperlinks may no longer be active

Notes

In May 2017, the Tropical Biology Association, together with the CEPF Eastern Afromontane Regional Implementation Team (EWNHS and BirdLife International), organised a training in communication skills for Ethiopian CEPF grantees. This article is one of the products that came out of that training. For other articles, click [here](#).

See the interactive map of all projects implemented under the CEPF Eastern Afromontane Hotspot programme [here](#).

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. More information on CEPF can be found at www.cepf.net.

[BirdLife International](#), together with the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) and the [Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society](#) (BirdLife in Ethiopia) form the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot (2012-2017). The investment will support civil society in applying innovative approaches to conservation in under-capacitated and underfunded protected areas, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and priority corridors in the region.

Read more [NEWS](#) from the Eastern Afromontane Hotspot!