EthioTrees Quarterly Activity Report Q1-2020

April 2020

1) Introduction

In this short quarterly report, EthioTrees presents its most relevant activities in Q1-2020. We continued on the activity report from December (Q4). This approach allows progressive insights on ongoing activities, without losing the overall context of the running project activities.

The aim is non-technical: for the technical summaries, we refer to the annual reports of Plan Vivo.

General and ongoing activities

Activity group and project aim	On track?	Achievement in 2020
Dissemination of project results		
EthioTrees tries to share its project insights both locally and internationally, in order to create a broad support base and awareness beyond the boundaries of the project zone.	OK!	In March 2020, EthioTrees, UGent and School-Watsani together applied for a project proposal to set up an information campaign on the Covid-19 virus in the project area, as well as several hand washing facilities. In December 2019, the “regreening Ethiopia” piece is going out at various times on BBC World News, featuring Seifu Gebresillasie (EthioTrees) – here is a link to the online version: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment-50693249/making-ethiopia-green-again Please spread the news!

*We support the creation of a network to win the recognition for Dogua Tembien as an official **UNESCO Global Geopark**. EthioTrees cooperates with the Springer (publishing house) initiative to finalize a "tourist" GeoGuide for the Tembien Highlands.*	Ongoing	In February 2020, a project proposal was submitted together with Davines to the King Baudouin Foundation, to fund the launch of the UNESCO Geopark. More news would follow in June 2020. Whatever the outcome, EthioTrees plans to set-up the organizational structure of the Geopark in 2020; the UNESCO audit would be scheduled in 2021.

Figure 1: Rock church at the project exclosure of Lafa, where plenty of grivet monkeys (upper left) and rock hyrax (lower left) can be observed. This is one of the geosites to be rehabilitated in the EthioTrees - Unesco project.

Scientific collaborations		
Further developments of the scientific VLIR-South Initiative occur between Ghent University (Belgium) and Mekelle University (Ethiopia). The aim of this 2-year SI project is to estimate the valorization potential of ecosystem services from exclosures in the Tembien Highlands.	OK	Over the course of 2019, five Ethiopian MSc. students and 2 Belgian MSc. students enrolled in the South Initiative programme, supported by EthioTrees. All 7 students performed field work in the EthioTrees sites. Over Q1-2020, we ended the Initiative. Based on the research on water quality and drinking water purification methods, EthioTrees submitted a new proposal at the KBF to set up drinking water facilities in May Genet, Adi Lihtsi and Togoga.
EthioTrees holds regular platform meetings with stakeholders such as government and non-government actors, to integrate a shared understanding on project activities and to develop common plans.	OK	In 2020, EthioTrees held platform meetings with stakeholders from the regional bureau of agriculture, regional REDD+, SLM, Caritas and WeForest, Trees For Farmers, as well as the agricultural office of the Woreda (natural resource protection).

2. Community meetings

Activity group and project aim	**On track?**	**Achievement in 2020**
Plan Vivo mapping		
The project works closely with rural households near young exclosures in different villages in Dogua Tembien. During the first phases of the project activities, awareness, acceptance and participation of these	OK	To date, all EthioTrees exclosures have Plan Vivo maps!

rural communities in the project are assessed and ensured by the local coordinator. Plan Vivo maps are constructed. At each exclosed area, the project engages a group of 10-40 landless farmers of different gender and age. A landless farmer represents a household without valid land certificate. The project aims to engage farmers under a 50-50% gender balance.		As all participating farmers are 'landless', they are often relatively young (20-40 years old). The landless farmers are often organized in exclosure associations. The associations elect a representative through a democratic election. The members of the association are 'under rotation' responsible to manage a part of the exclosure (including the patrolling process and the daily management) and are able to benefit from ecosystem services from the exclosure.



Figure 2 (a, b & c): Meeting with Endaslassie society (Debre Gunful, Adiy Meles and Chelaqo). A main purpose of the meeting was to have common understanding between EthioTrees and the participants with regards to the exclosure management, how EthioTrees could help to deliver socioenvironmental benefits, and how to base our activities on the plan vivo maps .

Figure 3: (a & b) Meeting with youngsters at the May Genet site for participation on NTFP and setting up an irrigation project; (c) meeting with the community of Walta to implement further activities at the site Katina Ruba.

Gender equality and empowerment

As an “experiment”, EthioTrees organized an awareness creation session with regards to the plan vivo planning of the project separately for men and women committees in May Genet. Thus, the village existing map and the future map were designed in separate groups, showing the impact of gender on the spatial planning priorities of the village. Results and follow-up will be discussed in April 2020.

Figure 4: Focus groups preparing plan vivo maps for women and men separately. In May Genet, EthioTrees aims to kickstart a village irrigation project in 2020.

Trainings

After 'plan vivo' maps are established, EthioTrees organizes discussions sessions and trainings to optimally manage a part of the exclosure (guarding proccess, enrichment planting of trees, soil and water conservation, honey production, frankincense cultivation, limited timber production, grasses for livestock feeding in stable). We aim for (minimum) one training per exclosure per year.	On track	In 2020, we again focus on the following training sessions: (i) <u>Exclosure management</u> A main purpose is to learn how to keep the exclosure healthy and how to evaluate the guarding system. (ii) <u>Seedling planting</u> Here we focus on pit excavation for planting seedlings in the exclosure and how we can manage young seedlings to improve the survival rate. (iii) <u>Social trainings</u>

		In this training, we learn how young landless farmers can gain income from NTFP.
EthioTrees aims for training sessions that have direct economic impact, especially related to NTFP.	Ongoing	To illustrate the impact of training on NTF production, the price evolution of frankincense (before and after project intervention) evolved from 28 ETB /kg to 50-60 ETB/kg. With an average of 4500 kg / association, this delivers an added value of + 144 000 ETB/year (association). The price of honey went from 200 to 400 ETB/kg with the installation of an extractor machine (while 1 beehive delivers app. 50 kg / year).

Figure 5 (a & b): Training session with the community of Meam Atali and Afedena

3. Tree planting, soil and water conservation and water harvesting

Activity group and project aim	On track?	Achievement in 2020
Natural regeneration		
The project assists the natural regeneration of the indigenous vegetation, partly through improved management and partly through enrichment planting activities. Enrichment planting to further support the forestation activity and to support biodiversity improvements focusses on indigenous vegetation (Olea, Juniperus, Dodonea, Cordia, Celtis, Acacia); Eucalyptus is not planted in the project areas. *We aim for an implemented high-quality guarding system in every exclosures, and aim to install SWC in every exclosure every year.*	Ongoing	The project implements soil and water conservation activities, including stone bunds, soil bunds, percolation ponds and moisture harvesting structures such as 'half moons' to trap runoff water. The project monitors biodiversity, including both plants and trees as well as (qualitatively) animals (mammals and birds). The survival rate of planted seedlings in 2019 is under assessment.



*Figure 6 (a, b & c): Moisture harvesting activities at Meam Atali. EthioTrees started to excavate 2 big (6*3*2 m) percolation ponds and 25 moisture harvesting trenches (3*1*1 m) as moisture harvesting structures in the exclosure (Seifu Gebreselassie on the right).*

Figure 7: Seedling planting at May Genet (pictures at 17/06/2019: start of the rainy season) when simultaneously a training of youngsters was organized focusing on small pit excavation for planting seedlings in the exclosure, as well as micro-irrigation.

Figure 8: Seedling planting at the Meam Atal site (Togoga).

4. Socioecological investments

Activity group and project aim	**On track?**	**Achievement in 2020**
Reservoir construction		
EthioTrees aims to support at least one socioecological investment per village per year. *Access to safe drinking water is one of the most pressing issues in the villages of the North Ethiopian Highlands. Several communities decided*	Ongoing	Before 2020, ponds were excavated in different villages. In all sites, there was participation of communities (on road maintenance and soil embankments arrangements to access the sites by machinery).

to address this issue by investing the Plan Vivo credits in drinking water reservoirs.		Excavation of two ponds took place in Adilihsti (Hizaety Gidmy and Horeyo Gidmy)in 2019. In 2020, our aim is to expand and improve the (water) quality of these ponds. Thus, after an initial phase of excavation, we aim to focus on reservoir improvement.
  *Figure 9: Excavated pond at Walta (left) and Meam Atal (right). After the initial excavation phase, EthioTrees aims to improve the quality of the ponds in 2020 by investing in bank stability, stone walls to keep cattle out of the ponds and lowtech water purification.*		
Water quality experiments and investments		
Access to safe drinking water is one of the most pressing issues in the villages of the North Ethiopian Highlands. Several communities decided to address this issue by investing the Plan Vivo credits in better quality drinking water.	Ongoing	By December 2019, several community meetings took place in Meam Atal with the two Belgium students on how to assess the problem of water quality and how to solve such issues on household and village level.

		Fencing of ponds is important to keep cattle out, as these are important sources of water contamination. A fence was constructed in Adilihtsi. A chlorine filter (water purification) is planned in Meam Atali and in Adi Lihtsi in 2020.
Homestead feeding		
As indicated in all PES agreements, both the associations, other customary NTFP users and the village councils pledge to monitor and counter potential displaced grazing. Livestock feeding in the stable (i.e. through feed boxes) is thus stimulated through trainings, installation of feeding boxes and drinking boxes. Observations of displaced grazing are reported.	Ongoing	EthioTrees selected 44 people from Adi Lihitsi and Meam Atali and provided them with 1.5 quintal - 2 quintal cement and plaster. The participants collected sand and stone masonry to construct feeding boxes at the side wall of their houses. EthioTrees encouraged grass collection from exclosure by cut and carry system.

Figure 10: Making a cattle feeding box and drinking spot inside the houses of Meam Atal with supporting cement – in order to save the animal fodder from wastage.

School construction		
As indicated in all PES agreements, investments can be made to tackle pressing social issues, as long as the environmental regeneration in the exclosures is well addressed by the village.	Ongoing	In several sites there was participation of community members on road maintenance, soil and water conservation and school construction works. In Afedena especifically, the community decided to invest part of the plan vivo credits for the construction of the school. In 2020, EthioTrees also started to construct two buildings for the Amanit school with the plan vivo credit payments.

Figure 11 (a-c): New school of Afedena constructed with Plan Vivo funds (fixed walls) and current school (built with branches)

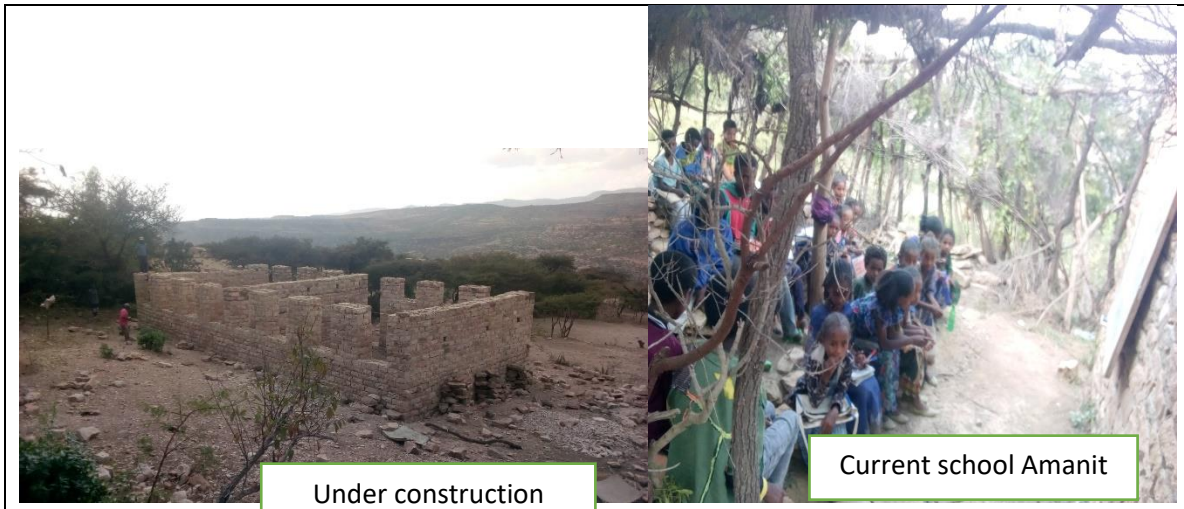

Figure 12 (a and b). Constructing masonry wall of the school and the current grade four class on teaching time (Amanit village).

Social activities		
Activity group and project aim	**On track?**	**Achievement in 2020**
EthioTrees aims to support the most vulnerable groups in the project area and made an agreement for three years with Tesfays project (http://tesfayblog.blogspot.com/) to support different groups, integrated together with the Woreda Degua Tembien (social affairs).	**Ok**	In 2020, EthioTrees directly supports 10 vulnerable women, 10 HIV victims, 4 female headed households and 30 poor students to obtain school materials for three years and with direct support by kind and cash.

Figure 13 (a-f) Support for female headed households, students, HIV victims and older women