

# Finalist's case study

## University of Huddersfield Research & Development

### 'Saving the forest: community enterprise development in South West Ethiopia'

#### Section 1 About the project

##### Summary

This University of Huddersfield (UoH) project seeks to identify effective arrangements for sustainable resource management in the forests of SW Ethiopia, an environmentally vulnerable area. Critical to this is small-scale enterprise development with increased production of honey, spices and coffee, together with the enhancement of national/ international market links, development of new institutions and the revision of national legislation. These all contribute to making the forest pay so that community users are motivated to sustainably manage the forest. This has transformed 105,000 hectares of degrading forest, created 18 new enterprises and directly benefited 100,000 forest users.

##### Project partners

The University of Huddersfield established a partnership in 2003 with the Ethiopian Southern Regional Government, Sustainable Livelihood Action (SLA), a Dutch-based not-for-profit and Ethio-Wetlands and Natural Resources Association (EWNRA), a local NGO to work with local communities. Together they established the Non-Timber Forest Products and Participatory Forest Management project (NTFP-PFM).

#### Section 2 The results

##### The problem

The Highland forests of SW Ethiopia impact on millions of people's lives, including ours in the West. They play a global role in mitigating climate change, storing 300m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum as well as supporting the gene pool of Arabica coffee. And they are important for the hydrology of the region, moderating water flow in the Nile Basin, which impacts on food production in lowland Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. But these forests are being degraded and destroyed, threatened by population growth, clearance by local communities to grow crops and agri-investment. This is exacerbated by a lack of enforceable tenure arrangements.

##### The approach

The project was established to explore and test an alternative approach to the failed top-down regulatory approach to forest protection. The project has developed and applied a participatory forest management (PFM) framework with the aim of devolving control of the forest to local communities who develop their own management plans for sustainable forest use, thereby ensuring the forest is used sustainably.

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##### Profile

- HEI
- 22,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 1800 staff
- Urban



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## Our goals

To reduce the rate of forest loss and degradation.

To establish a system of forest management that is sustainable.

To ensure that this is not done at the expense of local people but in a way in which their livelihoods are improved.

## Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
Legislation not recognising community forest rights	New regional forest proclamation 2012
Communities unable to defend their interests, with no legally accepted representation on forest issues	Establishment of community-based Forest Management Associations with legal basis
Limited volume and low quality forest products for sale	Trials of improved NTFP production and post-harvest handling of honey, coffee and spices
Poor marketing links for forest products	Value chain development with links to Addis Ababa-based companies and through them to international markets in the Middle East and Europe.

## Performance and results

- 105,000 hectares of forest under community management.
- 100 Forest Management Associations set up; these take forward the PFM process, develop bye-laws around forest access and create forest management and monitoring plans.
- 5 district-level Associations set up to co-ordinate FMA work and represent FMA's to government.
- Forest loss down from 0.7% per annum between 1973-2001 to 0.2% per annum between 2009-13. This represents a reduction in forest loss from 2177 hectares per annum to 400 hectares per annum.
- 3000 people directly or indirectly employed in forest based enterprises.
- 7 entrepreneur-led forest product co-operatives established.
- 6 community based honey marketing companies operating.
- National and international supplier relationships including The Body Shop and German Fairtrade GEPA.
- 24% increase in family income linked to non-timber forest products.
- 200,000 people in the locality have benefitted from a better supply of forest products.
- 15 million people in the region benefit from revised forest policy and legislation.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

1. Long-term commitment and involvement with partners (be they community members, local organisations or relevant government officials) to build trust and understanding. Their engagement from the outset is crucial not only for getting buy-in but also to ensure that the best practices are developed through joint learning and so are relevant and sustainable. Understand that you don't/won't have all the answers – the ideas of others will mean you get a better product/outcome.
2. Action research, testing agreed innovations, and monitoring their results, is the way to create an interactive and iterative testing, learning and adoption process for solutions to challenges. This helps build local ownership of innovations and ultimately makes them sustainable. As such, the approach to research and project implementation is critical.

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3. Changing behaviour and attitudes to forest management requires building confidence amongst the communities in the new legislation and PFM situation and amongst the government officials that farmers will adhere to the PFM agreements. This all takes time and requires patience; be prepared to be in there for the long haul. You can only start with where people are at.

## Sharing our project

In Ethiopia briefing notes, posters and technical material have been produced in English and Amharic, the lingua franca of the field area and federal government. Annual workshops are held with key stakeholders in the field and regional government and national dissemination workshops are held periodically. Two DVD's for dissemination in-country and abroad have also been produced and a website regularly updated. Between 2008-2012 UoH supported the regional government to develop a new forest policy which was promulgated in 2012. Ideas generated by the project are now being used by the newly-established federal Ministry of Environment and Forest (MEF) in the design of new national forest legislation affecting 97 million Ethiopians.

The PFM approach is already being used in several African and Asian countries and the lessons from the work have the potential to have an impact across the Global South. A lesson of global significance is the use of PFM to support biodiversity conservation, in this case of the wild Arabica coffee.

In Huddersfield the project has been used to engage and inspire students at The Business School. It is used as a case study in the Masters in Risk, Disaster and Environmental Management and in undergraduate modules on Social Entrepreneurship and Environmental Management. It has also fed into PhD work on forests in Libya, honey value-chain analysis in Zambia and Ethiopia and inspired a research project using similar methodologies looking at charcoal production in Zambia.

## What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

The University of Huddersfield is delighted to be a Green Gown finalist. We see this as recognition of our long-term commitment and hard-fought efforts to develop sustainable ways of managing the tensions between improving the livelihoods of people in the Global South whilst sustaining precious environmental resources which impact on our collective global future. It has helped to promote this work and that of the Centre more widely and to engage students and colleagues alike in this debate.

## Further information

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