WeForest

2024 Project Update

Gewocha Forest Landscape Restoration Project

A flourishing future for Gewocha Forest through community-led development & forest landscape restoration in and around Gewocha Forest in Jabi Tehnan Woreda, Amhara Region, Ethiopia

Jabi Tehnan Woreda, Amhara, Ethiopia
Great Green Wall

Timeline:
2021 - 2030

Targeted ecosystem: **Dry Afromontane Forest**
Biodiversity hotspot: **Eastern Afromontane and Horn of Africa**

Project management and M&E team

Main implementing partner:
The Hunger Project

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See the full team at:
www.weforest.org/about-us/#our-team

Project story

Located in northern Ethiopia, Gewocha Forest was once a thriving habitat for many large mammals, including leopard, cheetah, lion, fox, warthog, and antelopes. However, low crop yields and a shortage of animal feed have forced farmers in the surrounding areas to encroach into the forest to sustain their livelihoods. Faced with economic hardship and under-nutrition, communities rely on tree cutting for fuelwood, construction and charcoal production as a source of income. As a result, human activities have led to forest degradation, posing a serious threat to these precious ecosystems and their biodiversity. This challenge is further exacerbated by weak legal enforcement from local authorities, hindering effective protection and sustainable management efforts.

Key challenges

Unsustainable use of forest products and agricultural practices by the local community.

Low levels of access to **clean water and sanitation** in the area - only 67% have access to water and 50% to sanitation.

Vulnerability to **climate change** due to livelihoods in local communities being dependent on agriculture and the forest.

Our integrated approach

To address these challenges, the Gewocha Forest Landscape Restoration Project integrates forest restoration, sustainable livelihoods, and community-led governance to create long-term environmental and social resilience in Gewocha forest and its surrounding villages. It aims to:

Improve forest governance and stewardship through:

- Mobilizing all 14 rural community clusters around Gewocha Forest through the introduction of a holistic, gender-focused, community-led development approach, supporting them to reach sustainable self-reliance.
- The establishment of self-reliant community-based organizations which will sustainably manage Gewocha Forest as well as future community ambitions.

Conserve and restore the forest through:

- Restoring 10,000 hectares of currently degraded land and open forest by increasing the vegetation cover and ecosystem services of 7,932 ha of community forest and 1,143 marginalized degraded open communal land.
- Tree planting, social and physical fencing of restoration sites and construction of physical soil and water conservation measures.

Strengthening forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors through:

- Introducing agroforestry practices on 925 hectares of smallholder farmland.
- Sustainably improving the self-reliance, livelihoods and dignity of the 41,682 inhabitants in the Gewocha Forest area.

A long-term vision

Climate

The restoration of Gewocha Forest will contribute to both climate mitigation and adaptation: increasing tree cover to sequester carbon while improving water retention and soil stability to help communities adapt to droughts and erratic weather.

Nature

Restoring Gewocha Forest will protect biodiversity and secure critical ecosystem services like water and soil health. Improved land management will enhance habitat resilience, ensuring the forest continues to sustain both people and wildlife.

People

Strengthened governance and forest-friendly livelihoods will ensure communities see the forest as an asset—one that provides resources while being sustainably managed. By introducing agroforestry practices, the project reduces deforestation-driven income reliance while securing long-term economic stability.

Outcomes

By integrating these interventions, the project will:

- **Reduce hunger** and poverty
- Improve **women's empowerment**, agricultural production, climate resilience, income and income diversity, food diversity.
- Improve **access to water** and sanitation, healthcare and inclusive finance services.
- The **long-term** impact of our work will benefit people, nature and climate.

Theory of Change

Existing problems in the forest and landscape

- Weak governance structures
- Deforestation
- Land degradation
- Yield reductions

Risks

- Land use change
- Desertification
- Climate change
- Soil erosion

WeForest Interventions

Improved forest governance and stewardship

- Mobilizing communities and establishing forest user associations
- Formulation of bylaws
- Cooperative groups
- Community-led development

Restoring and conserving at-risk forests

- Tree planting
- Conservation fencing
- Soil and water conservation measures
- Tree nurseries

Introducing forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviours

- Agroforestry
- Improving livestock practices
- Farm irrigation
- Cookstoves
- Sanitation improvement

Project outcomes

- Enhanced stewardship, governance and awareness of natural resources and forest management
- Increased vegetation cover and ecosystem services throughout the Gewocha landscape
- Improved household income and food security through forest-friendly livelihood schemes in the communities surrounding Gewocha Forest

Long term impact

Climate

Stored and sequested carbon

Nature

Thriving biodiversity and intact ecosystems

People

Sustainable and resilient communities

2024 Major Achievements

Despite a troubled security situation, with occasional armed conflict in the area, work by The Hunger Project, WeForest and the communities around Gewocha Forest has managed to continue through **adaptive management strategies**.

Over a thousand people from communities around the forest gained access to **clean water**.

“Milk production has doubled from 2 to 4 liters per day”

Case study

Tamir Agerie, a 51-year-old father of eight, resides in the Jabi Tehnan woreda of Woyenma Kebele, in the Enqurqur sub-village. He is one of the participants in the project and sustains his family through his 1.5-hectare land. One of the primary challenges facing livestock production in his area is the lack of adequate feed. As Mr.Tamir explained, he relied on low-quality fodders, such as crop residues from his own farm, as well as purchased grass. To address this issue, the project introduced an alternative solution: fast-growing grass species, particularly Rhodes grass, which can be harvested year-round in areas with sufficient water.

Mr.Tamir received 7.5 kg of Rhodes grass seeds in 2023 as a beneficiary of the project. Since then, he has harvested a total of 2,100 sacks (31,500 kg) of Rhodes grass over seven rounds. Additionally, he harvested and sold 45 kg of Rhodes seeds, earning 31,500 ETB (approximately 262.5 USD). In 2023, Mr. Tamir was producing 2 liters of milk daily from his local breed of cows. However, thanks to the availability of improved fodder, his milk production has since increased to 4 liters per day.

Looking ahead, Mr.Tamir plans to purchase two crossbred cows by mid-2025. He also noted that, although the project initially provided inputs to a limited number of beneficiaries, the positive results have inspired others in his community. Neighboring farmers have purchased grass seeds from the project participants and have cultivated Rhodes grass on their own, further expanding the number of individuals growing this beneficial crop.

2024 activity update

Forest Governance and Stewardship

- **Local institutions**, such as churches, schools, businesses and service providers, were engaged and involved in tree plantation.
- **53 members of the community** participated in training on seedling care and forest boundary management.
- **19 hectares of land** protected under new governing bylaws.

Forest Conservation and Restoration

- **114 new hectares of tree planting** and conservation on degraded communal land and through agroforestry.
- **11,004 seedlings** of 11 native tree species were planted in restoration area.
- The nursery produced **521,670 seedlings** of 16 different species.
- Other restoration activities included **fencing** of degraded land for restoration.

Forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors

- **295,488 seedlings** of 14 tree species were planted for agroforestry purposes.
- **261** households received **artificial insemination** services for their cows for better milk production.
- **594** households provided with **multipurpose trees**, shrubs and fruit trees for agroforestry purposes.
- **239** households received access to **clean water** through the construction of 3 new water schemes.
- **1,963** supported households started **harvesting** different products:
  - 1,554 households harvested over 75,000 kg of products from multipurpose tree **Rhamnus prinoides**, with an estimated market value of nearly 50,000 USD.
  - 55 households harvested 7,700 kgs of **banana**, worth over 5,000 USD.
  - 424 households harvested 190,000 kgs of **grass** as fodder for their animals. One sheep can consume 2kg of grass per day, meaning each family can feed a sheep for 224 days.

Progress tracker

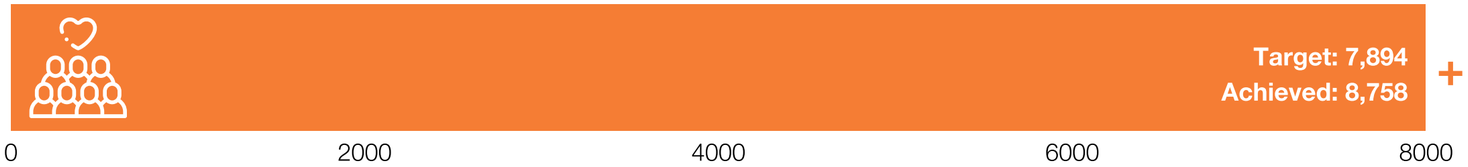
See end of report for our progress tracking methodology

Anticipated CO2 sequestered from project activities

Hectares planted, conserved and restored

Number of trees conserved and restored

Number of households positively impacted



Trees planted to date

Woody species in project to date

For forest conservation and restoration

For forest-friendly livelihoods

2024 Challenges

The Amhara region has faced challenges due to ongoing political instability since 2023. In 2024, many planned activities had to be halted or adapted in response to the security situation in the landscape. Although the situation has improved compared to preceding two years, in 2024 occasional armed conflict in the area continued, and this in turn has an impact on project activities like restoration and efficient collaboration with government institutions.

For example, planned school participation in tree planting as planned was not possible, as formal education ceased. However, Kuni kebele Kayti primary school community members requested the project to plant seedlings around the school yards through their own initiative and the project provided 1,980 seedlings. As well as this, other institutions than schools were engaged to plant seedlings. 16 churches under 9 kebeles planted over 85,000 seedings in 68 hectares.

Looking ahead to 2025

The activities of the Gewocha Forest Landscape Restoration Project will continue into 2025, with priorities including:

- Restoring **240 hectares** of communal forest and degraded lands to promote environmental recovery.
- Engaging **411 households** in improved animal husbandry practices, including the use of artificial insemination for enhanced cattle breeds.
- Supporting **600 households** in agroforestry initiatives to diversify farm outputs and increase family income.
- Developing two springs to supply clean drinking water to **1,000 individuals**.
- Distributing efficient cook stoves to **300 families** to reduce reliance on natural forests and alleviate environmental pressure.

Supporters & Partners

2024 project partners

The Hunger Project
Led the project implementation with project staff at the Jabi Woreda/District. WeForest supported with budget, technical support and follow-up.

Jabi Woreda Office of Agriculture
Supported the beneficiary selection for agroforestry seedlings, vegetable seeds, and water pumps.

Jabi Woreda Office of Water and Energy
Assisted with site selection, cost-effective labor, and technical support for water schemes.

Jabi Woreda Livestock Agency
Helped select beneficiaries for small ruminants, provided vaccinations, and artificial insemination.

Jabi Woreda Office of Cooperative
Identified gaps in SACCOs for SHG inclusion.

Restoration Committees
Aided in beneficiary identification, water scheme construction, and community mobilization.

The Community
Provided labor and materials for fencing, gully treatment, and water schemes.

Injibara University
Supported the project in data collection and sharing specific research findings from the area.

With thanks to our supporters in 2024, including:

Ecologi

Contact us

Visit: **www.weforest.org** or for more information or email: **contact@weforest.org**

How we measure and forecast our impact

Baseline

For the sake of simplicity, the progress bars in this report show a baseline of zero. This represents the concept that the area covered by WeForest forest and landscape restoration (FLR) activities was zero; thus the associated trees conserved and restored, carbon stored and households impacted through WeForest intervention was also zero.

In reality, when a WeForest project begins, our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team undertakes a detailed survey on forest structure and regeneration through establishing Permanent Monitoring Plots, and conducts an extensive questionnaire on livelihoods, to establish meaningful baseline values. You can read more about our full MEL activities here.

Hectares planted, conserved and restored

Progress up to 2024

Verifiable cumulative total since the project began of all mapped intervention sites, also known as polygons, of:

1) Conservation forest areas, such as forest reserves

2) Restoration forest areas, such as Assisted Natural Regeneration and planting areas

3) Agroforestry areas on community/farm land

End of Project Target

Target number based on the potential area of land able to be conserved, restored and planted in the project area under the known and expected conditions at project start. However, it is subject to change based on unforeseen opportunities or challenges that may arise.

Anticipated tons of CO2 to be sequestered through project activities

Progress up to 2024

Extrapolated tons of CO2 calculated from the measured areas of different types of land use (for example forest or agroforestry) under “Hectares of forest planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average amount of projected long-term CO2 per hectare provided from literature review for each land use type in their locations. Although totalled, please note the methodology for calculating these CO2 projections are specific to land-use type, and span a period corresponding to the expected time taken for the trees to reach maturity, which varies between locations.

End of Project Target

As above, but using the target (and not current) number of hectares planted, restored and conserved and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated CO2 target may also change over time.

Number of trees conserved and restored*

Progress up to 2024
Extrapolated number of trees calculated from the measured areas of different land use types (for example conservation areas, restoration areas or agroforestry) under “Hectares planted, conserved and restored” to date, and the average tree densities observed for each land-use type when mature, known through our MEL activities or scientific literature.

End of Project Target
As above, but using the target (and not current) number of “Hectares of forest planted, restored and conserved” and their respective area totals as a parameter for calculations. As this parameter is subject to change, the associated trees conserved and restored target may also change over time.

*Estimations based on average numbers per hectare

Trees planted to date (2024)

Total
Actual counted number of planted seedlings and saplings of woody (tree and shrub) species in the project to date.

Trees planted for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors
Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder & timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Trees planted for forest conservation and restoration
Only woody species that were directly planted for ecological reasons, aiding restoration of the natural forest ecosystem.

Woody species in project to date (2024)

Total
Actual observed number of woody (tree and shrub) species:

- Regenerating in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the Permanent Monitoring Plots) and
- Planted, either for restoration or livelihood improvement
- Growing as mature trees in the conservation/restoration zones (i.e. in the permanent monitoring plots).
- Please note, these numbers are not exhaustive and the true species richness is likely to be higher.

Tree species for forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors
Only woody species directly planted for livelihood improvement. This also includes woody fruit, fodder and timber trees, and woody cash crops, exclusively planted on community or farm land.

Tree species for forest conservation and restoration
The woody species observed in the project area that are not used for livelihood improvement purposes. Where species are used for both livelihood improvement and restoration (which is sometimes the case, as we use native species as much as possible), they have been counted under ‘forest-friendly livelihoods and behaviors’.

Mammal and bird species sighted to date

Numbers are included where we have a good level of biological monitoring, for example using camera traps or audio devices - please note that numbers are unlikely to capture the full species richness of the project area and that the absence of reporting does not imply the absence of species.

Other notes

WeForest works in close cooperation with local partner organisations, institutions, community-based organizations and local people. Therefore, our impact can never be fully separated from the work of our partners. WeForest acknowledges that the presented impact numbers cannot be solely attributed to our work, but is also supported through the hard work contributed by all our local partners.

Terminology

Conservation
Where native forest canopy cover is still intact, we focus on protecting the forest from any threats and disturbances, such as overgrazing, unsustainable wood extraction and fire.

Restoration
Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR): Where there is reduced forest cover but high potential for natural regeneration, we aim to accelerate natural recovery, typically through preventing soil degradation, reducing competition with weeds, and protecting young trees.

Tree planting
Where there is reduced forest cover and little regeneration potential, we actively plant native trees at a density that corresponds with the regeneration potential.

Agroforestry and tree crops
Where agricultural landscapes exist, WeForest promotes the planting of trees for livelihood improvement. These trees can be used either for direct consumption or sale (fruits, timber, fuelwood) or to support other crops or livestock (agroforestry). Native tree species are prioritized but, where necessary, non-native species may be used.