



WeForest Desa'a Forest and Landscape Restoration Project

Consultancy – Evaluation of livelihoods strategy and untapped opportunities

1. The Forest

The Desa'a forest reserve was once the largest and oldest rift-valley remnant dry Afromontane forest (154,071 ha) in the area and directly provides essential ecosystem services to more than half a million people. It hosts two very different ecosystems: The Eastern Tigray highlands and the arid Afar lowlands with very distinct vegetation and climate. The reserve is part of the East Africa biodiversity hotspot, home to many threatened and endangered tree species including the Dragon Tree (*Dracena ombet*), *Erica arborea*, and *Dobera glabra*.

Desa'a Forest crosses two regions in Ethiopia: Tigray (highlands - 80% of Desa'a) and Afar (lowlands - 20% of Desa'a). In Tigray region, where the population is mostly sedentary, subsistence farming and livestock are predominant. Afar region is characterised by pastoralist and agro-pastoralist populations who depend on subsistence livestock and husbandry (goat, sheep and camel) as well as paid labour in salt mines.

2. The Problem

74% of the forest has already disappeared and the remaining 26% are already severely degraded. With a history marked by successive wars, occupations, land redistribution and changes in land use from animal husbandry to agriculture, the main drivers of forest degradation and deforestation are directly linked to local population growth, land scarcity, ineffective long-term land use planning and weak governance. This has led to unplanned agricultural expansion, unsustainable grazing practices and the extraction of biomass for firewood and charcoal for traditional stoves, beyond the forest's capacity for renewal. In order of importance, the main cereal crops on the Tigray side are wheat, maize, barley, faba bean, field pea and lentil; the main vegetable crops are tomato, green pepper, salad and potato.

Over half a million people live within and around Desa'a, 86% of which depend on forest products for subsistence. As resources are depleting, poverty rates and food insecurity are growing. The immediate consequence of this degradation for local communities is erosion of topsoil and the significant reduction of agricultural yields for these smallholder farmers. An alarming long-term impact on local cloud formation and rainfall will be an increase in the frequency of droughts and food insecurity. Droughts have already become more frequent, and local youth, many of which are landless, are forced to migrate.

3. Our project

Working at landscape level, we engage with the poorest, most vulnerable community members that are most likely to resort to forest resources in times of need, in areas presenting high potential for restoration. We are planning to work in 11 kebeles in Tigray region and 4 kebeles in Afar region.

Our intervention started in Tigray region in 2018 after comprehensive resource inventories and socio-economic assessments. For Afar region, assessments and plans have not yet been developed. Aiming to improve the sustainable use of forest resources, our intervention, beyond forest restoration, also focuses on:

- **Livelihoods diversification and food security** through the promotion of alternative, forest-friendly activities such as beekeeping, poultry and small ruminants (sheep) and agroforestry. With a focus on the sustainability and impact, all activities are implemented alongside **entrepreneurship and skills trainings**;
- **Cleaner cooking** through energy-efficient cookstoves;
- **Improved governance** through the development of a Forest Management Plan and strengthened law enforcement through support to forest guards and local by-laws;
- **Improved large and small water infrastructure**.

4. Strategy for livelihoods to-date

a) Livelihoods diversification and food security in Tigray

Our livelihoods diversification intervention in Tigray focuses on improving production, introducing inputs and practices that are more productive, stimulating local demand for these while facilitating access in the long term:

- For **beekeeping**, we are promoting two kinds of beehives. The first one – referred to locally as “modern beehives” – produces higher quantities of honey. The second one – “transitional” hives – is made of bamboo (which is available in Desa’a) and mostly produces beeswax (however, for beeswax production, “traditional” hives remain preferred to “transitional” hives). Honey is a high-value, high demand product in Tigray.
- For **poultry** – an activity that requires little input or land and is highly desired amongst female-headed households as it has the potential to quickly generate regular and frequent income – we are promoting a highly productive species.
- For **small ruminants** – an activity that is also highly desired although it may take a few months to generate income.
- For **cleaner cooking**, we promote energy-efficient cookstoves in partnership with the local government and development agencies. Our intervention aims at reducing the amount of fuelwood used for cooking by 30%. Considering the direct link between biomass extraction and forest degradation, this is a key component of our strategy. Despite significant investments by the large development agencies, the procurement and adoption of energy efficient cookstoves remains a challenge in the region.

Livelihood packages: Focusing on diversification and resilience, our current 10-year plan promotes packages, some of which combine more than one activity. Currently, recipients provide in-kind contributions (labour days) and are required to deposit 25% of the value to local cooperatives. Engaging with local cooperatives where membership is disintegrated, dedication is unequal, member selection and benefit-sharing is unclear and focus is on short term opportunities, has been a challenge. Other modalities such as cooperatives, pass-on schemes, revolving funds, etc have already been explored but are considered to be unrealistic and difficult to implement by local stakeholders.

Anticipated costs and income generation: The above packages have the potential to increase incomes between 41% and 170%, depending on the package.

Partnerships: The first two years of implementation were carried out by a local partner; however, from 2020, WeForest decided to implement livelihood activities directly, in close collaboration with the Tigray Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (T-BOARD).

Timeframe: Active implementation started in late 2018 and will be completed in 2026. The last three years of implementation (2027-2030) will be focused on continuous monitoring, support and capacity building.

b) Challenges, opportunities and questions to-date

While the project has already yielded encouraging results in the first years of implementation, we have encountered challenges and questions, which have contributed to defining the scope of this consultancy.

Key challenges:

- 1) **Procurement:** the project has experienced difficulties in identifying local suppliers who are able to deliver the volumes and quality required by WeForest;
- 2) **HH-level ownership, participation and capacity/willingness to invest** in livelihood activities is limited, with high expectations from the WF project.

Opportunities to be considered (this is not an exhaustive list):

- 1) Develop an intervention to support the local supply of beekeeping, poultry and agroforestry inputs, making these inputs available locally, at affordable prices and high quality;

- 2) Develop forest friendly interventions to support new, additional sectors for which there are currently untapped economic and market opportunities for local community;
- 3) Change the modalities for providing livelihood inputs – taking into account government policies.;
- 4) Market systems development based approaches that would target specific functions within a selected sector.

Key questions:

- 1) Is the project's Livelihoods strategy and approach consistent with the objectives of the wider forest and landscape restoration project to alleviate poverty and to reduce the pressure on forest resources? Have systemic root causes to forest degradation, poverty and vulnerability been appropriately identified and addressed?
- 2) Is the project targeting the right beneficiaries, sectors, markets and value chain functions to effectively achieve sustainability, scale and impact?
- 3) Are there alternative strategies (sectors, functions, partnerships, modalities, methodology, market systems development, etc) that the project should adopt, in order to increase the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of our interventions?

5. Scope of the consultancy

Geographical scope: Desa'a project intervention area in Tigray region. However, recommendations will be useful for future activities in Afar region.

General objectives:

- Conduct an external evaluation of the overall project strategy with a focus on the livelihoods intervention's sustainability and impact and make recommendations to increase its' sustainability and long-term impact.
- Analyse untapped economic opportunities and additional markets for commodities that have not been explored yet and that could contribute to generate sustainable incomes in the target areas (in Tigray) and thereby reduce pressure on forest resources (including business analysis, planning and development and engaging with local entrepreneurs.

Specific objectives:

- 1) Undertake a desk review of all project documents and other relevant literature
- 2) Conduct interviews with key project staff and relevant stakeholders
- 3) Facilitate a participatory learning, strategy review and development process with the project team, including a field visit to current and future project sites and multistakeholder workshop (approximately 5 stakeholders) and an analysis of the most recent M&E data available
- 4) Produce a detailed report and presentation with annexes including summary of key findings, recommendations, priorities and outline of plans

6. Support from WeForest HQ and Ethiopia

The consultant is expected to work independently, with a high degree of autonomy. However, WeForest HQ and Ethiopia will provide the following support:

- Make all project documentation available;
- Make the most recent, relevant M&E data and analysis available (up to 2020) prior to the field visit;
- Facilitate contacts with key stakeholders when possible, both for the field visits and the multistakeholder workshop
- Actively participate and support review meetings to discuss findings and recommendations

7. Deliverables and timeframe

Specific objective	Deliverables	Timeframe
1) Undertake a desk review of all project documents and other relevant literature	List of all documents reviewed	ASAP
2) Conduct interviews with key project staff and relevant stakeholders	Interview guides and questions Preliminary report with initial findings and recommendations	January 2021

3) Facilitate a participatory learning, strategy review and development process with the project team, including a field visit and multiskateholder workshop (approximately 5 stakeholders) and an analysis of the most recent M&E data available	Terms of Reference and reports for field visit and workshop Supporting materials: interview guides and questions, powerpoints	Mid-February 2021
4) Produce a detailed report and presentation with annexes including summary of key findings, recommendations, priorities and outline of plans	Detailed report Annexes: summary of key findings and recommendations, priorities, draft plans, comparative cost-benefit analysis/business plans, list of potential partners, etc	31 March 2021 at the latest for the final report, reviewed and validated by WeForest

8. Profile of the consultant(s)

We are looking for business-minded individual(s) with strong analytical skills and the ability to formulate realistic, sustainable interventions with clear benefits to poor people and to forests:

- Consultants may apply individually or as a team.
- Proposals in English from both international and national consultants will be considered.
- An excellent knowledge of Ethiopia and particularly Tigray region is essential.
- Proven experience in community-based natural resource management and forest-friendly livelihoods in Ethiopia.
- Proven experience in supporting similar interventions with a strong focus on sustainability, scale and impact.
- Proven experience of developing business plans for value chains that benefit poor people and forests.
- Proven experience of developing and negotiating partnerships.
- Excellent knowledge of markets, market systems development, commodities and livelihoods that benefit both people and forests.
- Excellent analytical skills with an ability to think strategically and creatively with high attention to detail and ability to develop realistic plans and recommendations.
- Excellent understanding of issues related to poverty, vulnerability and natural resources
- Excellent participatory facilitation skills.
- Fluent in English (written and spoken). Knowledge of Tigrinian or Amharic is highly desirable.

9. Terms and conditions

Report to: WeForest Livelihoods Programme Manager

Timeframe: Final deliverable by 31st March 2021. However, we are willing to renegotiate the timeframe to suit the availability of the right candidate. Furthermore, depending on the recommendations provided by the consultant, further part-time involvement in the project may be considered.

10. Application process

Interested candidates (teams or individuals) are requested to prepare:

- A technical proposal presenting a clear understanding of the scope, challenges, questions and opportunities of the consultancy, and proposing a methodology and workplan including the number of working days, timeframe and deliverables (maximum 4 pages)
- At least one example of previous work that is relevant to this consultancy (report, business plan, cost-benefit analysis, tools...)
- A curriculum vitae (maximum 4 pages)
- A detailed financial proposal with all costs including daily rate, travel and logistics



- At least 2 and up to 3 references of previous clients

Proposals must be submitted by email to recruitment.ethiopia@weforest.org by 15th November 2020. Only shortlisted proposals will be contacted for an interview. **Update: the deadline to submit proposals has been extended to 30th November 2020.**

Due to the anticipated high number of applicants, only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. We thank you in advance for your interest. WeForest is an equal opportunity employer, we celebrate diversity and do not discriminate.