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Report on: Institutional Strengthening for the Forest Sector Development in Ethiopia



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Acronyms

CRGE	Climate Resilient Green economy
REDD+	Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest degradation
NFSDP	National Forest Sector Development Program
FSDP	Forest Sector Development Program
MEFCC	Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change
MoFEC	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
GTPII	Growth and Transformation Plan
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
A/R	Afforestation Reforestation
EEFRI	Ethiopian Environment and Forest Research Institute
NPC	National Program Coordination
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
TOT	Training of Trainers
PCO	Program Coordination office
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
SLMP	Sustainable Land Management Program
PSNP	Productive Safety-Net Program

Executive Summary

In Ethiopia, deforestation and unsustainable land management practices are causing significant environmental and socio-economic problems. Conversely, the forest sector has got important focus in the national development strategy (CRGE and GTP). In achieving this, mandated institution is established by the government of Ethiopia to spearhead the implementation of the targets in the strategic documents. However, the new institution requires capacity building activities at all levels. The Institutional Strengthening for the Forest Sector Development Program of Ethiopia is designed to support such capacity building efforts and has been co-funded by Norway, Sweden, UNDP, and Government of Ethiopia. The overall objective of this program is to strengthen government capacity in the forest sector at all levels and spearhead the implementation of the forestry component contained in the GTPII and CRGE Strategy.

The program has the following five expected outputs;

- i. Strengthening the institutional capacity of the forest sector at all levels,
- ii. Piloting forest conservation and development for their multiple benefits in selected areas,
- iii. Promotion of broad-based stakeholder engagement in forest conservation and development,
- iv. Strengthening private sector involvement in forest development and
- v. Strengthening science and innovation in the forest sector.

Overall, the performance of the program has been substantial in achieving its targets with the participation of multiple stakeholders while using a flexible approach to implementation. The achievements both at strategic level and piloting model approaches have gained trust to be a showcase for other similar government efforts on afforestation and reforestation activities.

Moreover, piloting model afforestation and rehabilitation approaches has been critically important for learning and future scaling up to other areas in the country including through the private sector. The level of commitment by field experts, participation of stakeholders at various levels and the leadership provided for the pilot implementation is encouraging. As this program is designed to be result-based, defining baselines, setting evaluation criteria and creating positive competition among pilot Districts is well considered starting from the very inception of the program. Rewards and recognitions are provided from the Ministry for best achieving Districts of the previous years.

This report covers achievements from July 2016 to July 2017. Considering the existing progress of implementation during the reporting period, the program can deliver the outcomes envisaged in the program design. However, the program is facing some implementation regress due to delay in budget release. Moreover, large number of activities were targeted to be achieved over a brief two-years period posing stretch beyond capacities on the ground. Sustaining the existing momentum of financial and technical support throughout the project period will be vital to achieve the envisaged outcome.

Program title	Institutional Strengthening for the Forest Sector Development in Ethiopia
Program Agreement Code	ETH-13/0021 and Addendum No.1
Executing entity	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Reporting period	July 2016 – July 2017
Program Period	2015-2020
Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total Program Budget required: USD22,464,942 ○ Budget secured <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Norwegian Government through the CRGE Facility \$10,600,000 ● UNDP: \$1,400,000 ● Swedish Government \$6,500,000 ○ Unfunded budget: \$2,714,942 ○ In-Kind contributions from the Government: \$ 1,250,000

1. Introduction

Deforestation and unsustainable land management practices in Ethiopia are causing significant environmental problems, including soil erosion, loss of soil fertility and associated loss of crop productivity, flooding, sedimentation of water courses and dams, loss of carbon and biodiversity assets. Even then, Ethiopia continues to show strong commitment and leadership to grow greener by creating resilient landscapes. This is confirmed by designing and implementing Climate Resilient Green Economy strategy embedded under its growth and transformation plan (GTPII). The forest sector has got important focus in the national strategy and has a mandated institution for it. However, the new institution requires capacity building activities at all levels.

The Institutional Strengthening for the Forest Sector Development Program of Ethiopia designed for a period of 5 years has been co-funded by Norway, Sweden, UNDP, and Government of Ethiopia. This program is designed to contribute towards reversing such negative effects through institutional capacity building and piloting activities. The program is targeted to achieve its goals through strong commitment of the Government of Ethiopia and the involvement of key stakeholders, in particular the local communities.

Component I and V of the program aims at strengthening the institutional capacity; including the capacity of the research and education system of the sector. Component II aims at creating afforestation and reforestation models at nine pilot projects Districts for demonstrating sustainable forest landscape restoration practices in the degraded areas of the three regional States of Ethiopia. Component III aims at promotion of broad-based stakeholder engagement in forest conservation and development while component IV aims at promoting the role of the private sector in forest development.

Program Components and Planned budget

Components	Planned Budget (USD)	Funding source
Component 1: Strengthening Institutional capacity of the forest sector	5,568,374	Norway, Sweden, UNDP
Component II. Piloting forest conservation and development for their multiple benefits in selected areas,	8,644,125	Norway, Sweden, Government of Ethiopia in-kind
Component III. Strengthening private sector involvement in forest development	608,500	Norway, Sweden
Component IV. Promotion of broad-based stakeholder engagement in forest conservation and development,	872,000	Norway, Sweden
Component V. Strengthening science and innovation in the forest sector	1,627,000	Norway, Sweden
Project management and Admin	2,430,001	Norway, Sweden, UNDP, Government of Ethiopia in-kind
Total	19,750,000	

This progress report is prepared based on field assessments and report compilation from pilot areas, regional coordination offices and the National Program Coordination Office (NPCO). Evaluation has been made against the physical targets indicated in the project documents.

1.1 Objective of the Program

The overall objective of this program is to strengthen government capacity in the forest sector at all levels and spearhead the implementation of the forestry component contained in the GTPII and CRGE.

1.2 Duration of the Program

The overall program duration is from 2015-2020. However, Norwegian funding support is secured for the first 2-3 years. The Swedish Government has provided additional fund to support the implementation of the program up-until 2020. Mobilization of additional finance is still required for the remaining targets as per the original plan. There are positive feedbacks from both Norway and Sweden to further support the implementation of the program.

1.3 Program Target Areas

Capacity building is planned for the forest sector at all levels in all regions while piloting forest conservation and management will be made in selected degraded areas of Tigray, Amhara and SNNPR National Regional States (Figure 1). Further, sustainable forest management model and roadmap will be designed for Benshangul Gumuz regional state.

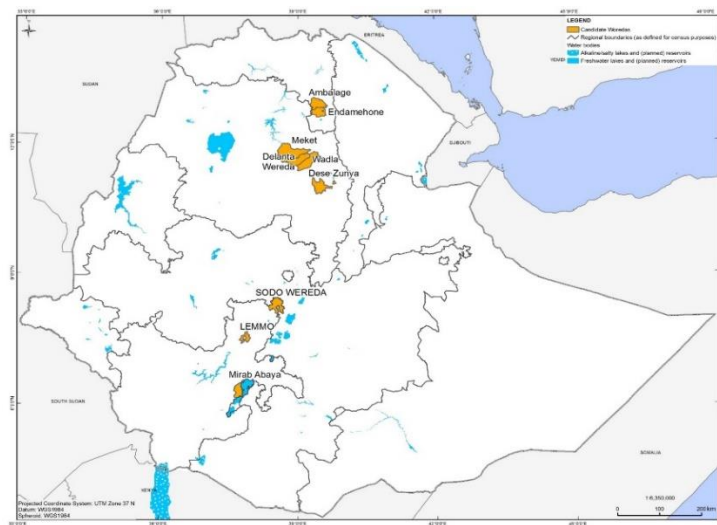


Figure 1. The location of the piloting sites (yellow) for A/R and Rehabilitation targets¹

¹ The sites indicated on the map are the areas supported both by Norway and Sweden support. Additional four woredas (*Hintalowujirat, Ofla, Dessie and Shashego*) are selected to be supported by the Swedish government

2. Implementation Arrangement

The lead organization for the implementation of this program is MEFCC technically supported by the UNDP. MoFEC, UNDP, the Norwegian Embassy, the Swedish Embassy and MEFCC are expected to conduct joint monitoring and evaluation of the program. Technical and administrative bodies at regional and local level are also responsible for the implementation, monitoring and follow up of the program execution on regular basis. The project should be monitored based on the Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines of the CRGE Facility, UNDP and MEFCC. Nine project offices are opened in the selected project Districts to serve coordinate project activities in the thirteen Districts and these offices are linked with the National Program coordination office through the regional REDD+ coordination offices. The overall guidance of the project implementation is provided by a Steering Committee while at District level there is additional technical committee, which provides technical guidance including quality assurance for each project activity on the ground.

3. Progress of the Program

3.1 Output I: strengthening the institutional capacity of the forest sector

As a baseline, the Ministry has limited capacity at all levels with outdated action program and poor database infrastructure. Therefore, activities under this output focused to strengthen national and regional implementation capacity at strategic and functional level in order to realize the forestry target contained in the GTPII and CRGE. In this regard, National Forest Sector Development Program has been developed to help guide implementation of targets set for the sector under the GTP for the coming ten years. Building and establishing national and regional forestry data base infrastructure so as to fill the gap in data management and archiving was supported by the program. Accordingly, key database facilities were procured and distributed to all regional states. Further, project experts were hired in pilot sites to spearhead and showcase possible on-the-ground activities, should the new ministry cascade its structure down to the grass root level. During the reporting period, the following key results were achieved under this output. Comparison of achievements of the reporting period against the planned activity results for this output is highlighted in table 1.

- One National program coordination and nine woreda coordination offices active and running;
- 51 project staff hired at various levels;
- Two field cars, one dump-truck and three tractors on procurement process (Swedish support)
- National Forest Development Program document prepared and ready for launching;
- Consulting firms being hired to prepare Regional Forest sector development program for all regions and city administrations
- A consulting firm hired to prepare the ESMF and baselines.
- Key database infrastructure facilities are procured and distributed while the remaining are on process of delivery.

Detailed descriptions of achievements of each activity result are presented as follows;

3.1.1 Designing National Forest Sector Development Program, ESMF and Baseline

An international Consulting Firm was recruited to design the National Forest Sector Development Program while the consultant for ESMF is local firm. While the ESMF and baseline study is on the recruitment process, the Consulting Firm for the National Forest Sector Development Program has submitted three volume documents. This program documents have taken substantial time to accommodate concerns and feedbacks from various stakeholders. The NFSDP is now being published ready to be public. This national document is planned to be used as a framework document to guide future forest sector plans. Subsequently, region-specific action program design has been initiated and five consulting firms are being recruited to work on clusters for all regional states and city administrations. The regional action programs will use the NFSDP as a framework document and will be designed to complement with the existing regional REDD+ strategies where ever possible.

3.1.2 Strengthen the Human and Material resources

The recruitment of 51 new project personnel is completed in the spirit of bringing new experiences and skilled human resources to spearhead the implementation of the ground activities. The Human Resource Directorate of MEFCC has announced the positions and recruitment of the required staff was finished following the official procedures of the government.

Procurement of additional two vehicles, three tractors and one dump-truck is on process and this is largely supported by the Swedish support. Previously delivered 14 vehicles and six tractors are functional and supporting the project activity on the ground.

3.1.3 Forestry Data-base

The procurement of additional IT equipment, which will help to make the database facility up and running, is being made through UNDP. Previously purchased equipment have been delivered to the Ministry and its regional replica. The Ministry has started setting-up the database units at various levels, which will further help to make the forestry institutions at various levels to be information centers and training hubs.

3.2 Output 2: Forest conservation and development enhanced

This program emphasizes supporting land use plan based rehabilitation efforts in targeted micro-watersheds. Moreover, short rotation forestry activities will be initiated as community forestry scheme, which include primarily; plantation establishment of the fast-growing species to fill the pressing need on wood products while reducing pressure on the remaining natural forests and

woodlands. This all requires careful selection of species, raising seedlings and plantation establishment and management. During the reporting period, the following main results were achieved. Further comparison of achievements of the reporting period against the planned activity results is highlighted under table 1.

- 22 targeted micro-watersheds demarcated with management and use plan;
- Rehabilitation of 53,534ha degraded land through assisted natural regeneration and regeneration of indigenous species from soil seed bank
- 1500km of terraces, 32,272m³ trenches, 130,015 (number) basins, 9310.9m³ check-dams, 1114km bunds constructed;
- 1.1million seedlings planted in rehabilitation sites to assist natural regeneration
- 15 water harvesting ponds and mini-dams constructed
- 1047.7kg of tree seeds used to raise 18,063,370 seedlings in 33 nurseries
- 3,387ha of land covered with new short rotation plantation (average survival rate 81.2%)
- 2328ha of plantation covered by weeding, mulching, composting and watering
- Required tree seeds, polythene tubes and other nursery material purchased
- 22,820 apple, avocado, mango and coffee seedlings distributed to 1128 beneficiaries (85female)
- 157 beneficiaries (60female) on beekeeping, 153 solar lantern, 1893 improved stoves distributed and 6 biogas plant locally built
- 46,688 people benefited (21,272female) gained temporal job opportunities through the program
- In the rehabilitation effort alone, about 176,656 (59,677 female participants) have been participating in the free community participation and the monetary value of this amounted to 8,723,075 birr so far

Detailed descriptions of achievements of each activity result are presented as follow.

3.2.1 Integrated land use plans piloted in the selected Districts of the regions

During the reporting period, draft local level land use plan was prepared for 22 targeted micro watersheds (e.g. fig 2) but further capacity building effort is required to do these land use planning activities to get the required standard. Training is provided for 6 experts on geo-informatics and land cover change analysis to bring the planning up-to the standard. Getting legal authentication on the local land use plans will be the requirement from the local government authority.

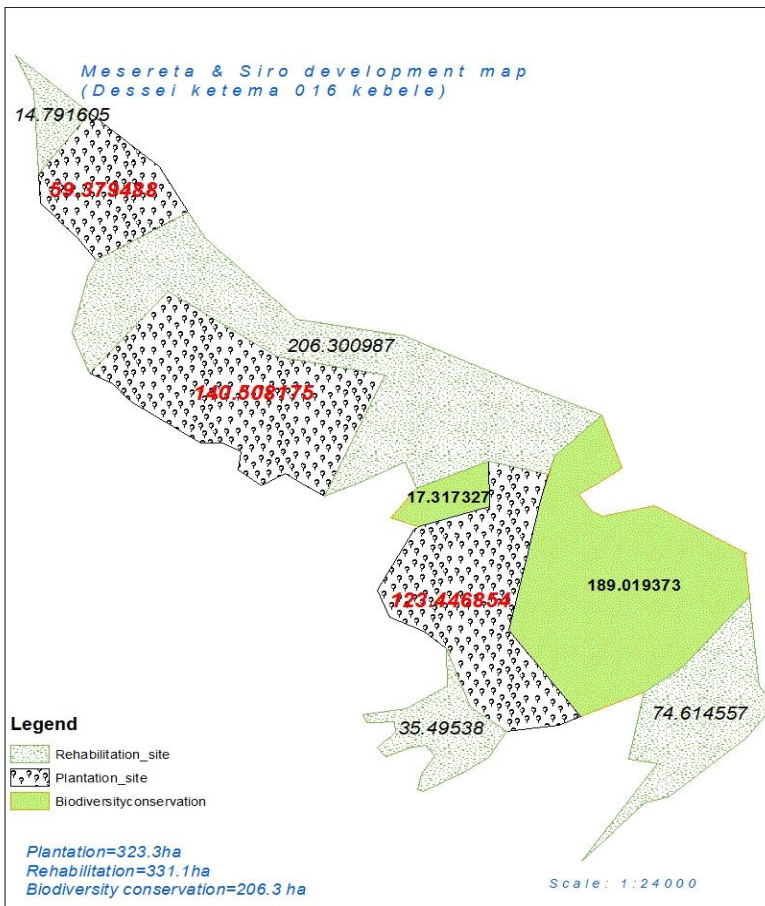


Figure 2. Development map at one of the project site (Dessie Z.)

3.2.2 Degraded areas in selected regions rehabilitated

The program envisages rehabilitation of 150,000ha degraded lands in Tigray, Amhara and SNNPR during the two years. The target up to this year was 74,250ha. To achieve this target, each project office prepared action plan and conducted demarcation and delineation of plantation and rehabilitation sites with active community participation. Accordingly, 53,534ha of degraded lands have been demarcated for rehabilitation in addition to the 35,000ha rehabilitated last year. Various rehabilitation activities including soil and water conservation and enrichment planting have been done in the rehabilitation zone. The already existing mass mobilization effort by the government, which should be considered as part of the in-kind contribution from the Ethiopian people, supported the rehabilitation effort especially by engaging in various physical and biological rehabilitation measures. Mass mobilization has been based on free will and there have been prior consultations with communities to make this happen. The monetary value of the free community contribution through participating in various activities amounted 8,723,075 birr so far.

3.2.3 Short-rotation forestry expanded for fuel and construction wood supply

The program has planned for afforestation and reforestation of 10,000ha of forests in the three Regional States during the project period. In this regard, each project pilot site prepared action plan and conducted demarcation and delineation of plantation sites together with local stakeholders and communities. All project sites have managed to undertake plantation in the previous short planting seasons. Accordingly, 18mln seedling of various species were raised in 33 nurseries but only 187ha of land is covered with new plantation during the short rainy season. While preparing this report, there is significant land preparation and plantation underway during the longer rainy season and it will be included in the next season report. The average survival rate of the 3200ha plantation established last year is about 70% and there is an ongoing post-planting management including weeding, mulching, composting and watering. The short rotation plantations are established mainly on communal lands and hence will be managed in the form of ‘community forestry’ model to be managed and used by certified community members. This model is being revitalized as one ownership in the forestry sector of Ethiopia and is believed to be more sustainable.

There was again input from public participation especially to prepare plantation sites for tree planting. The free labor contribution in this activity is estimated at 6,250,000 birr. Detailed

activities achieved during this period are indicated in table 1; Annex 1 and 2 for some of the nursery and site preparation techniques.

3.3 Output 3: Private sector involvement in forest development facilitated

In Ethiopian context, the definition of the private sector might extend to the level of engaging farmers as tree growers. Accordingly, a series of private sector targeted awareness raising activities was planned at national and regional levels. The scope of the private sector engagement in this program ranges from supporting the development of short rotation plantations to marketing of forestry products preferably in non-timber forest products. During the reporting period, the following results were achieved. Comparison of achievements of the reporting period against the planned activity results for this output is highlighted under table 1.

- 242 field experts and extension agents participated on TOT on sustainable forest management and establishment and management of forest business enterprises; This training is provided to candidates interested in future forest business or those who are currently practicing it at minimal level.
- Trained trainers provided similar training at woreda level for a total of 13,174 participants. Most of these participated in the communal afforestation programs but the number of individuals who continued on private forest business by their own remains to be monitored.

Detailed description of activities conducted under each activity result is presented as follows:

3.3.1 Training on Forest management and Forest Business Enterprises

At national and regional levels, one-week training of trainers is provided for project and district government experts focusing on forest establishment and management including establishing forest based business enterprises. The national and regional trainings for 242 experts were given as TOT to project and government staff while community trainings were provided for rural communities. Provision of seed money and technical support with modest investment from the individuals might be required in the next seasons to convert the actual trainings in to investments on the ground.

3.4 Output 4: Forest Science and Innovation promoted

There is a critical need to strengthen focused research that can directly feed into the current forest based development efforts. In this regard, the program is designed to build and support existing national training and research capacities by providing facilities and technical support. During the

reporting period, the following key results were achieved. Comparison of achievements of the reporting period against the planned activity results for this output is highlighted under table 1.

- Procurement of key laboratory facilities is on-going by the project support
- Key knowledge gaps in the research system identified and postgraduate training initiated to fill the gap
- Academic exchange and joint research and education program initiated with Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)
- MoU signed with Wondo Genet and Mertolemaria Colleges to initiate demand-driven skill training

Detailed description of activities conducted under each activity result is presented as follows:

3.4.1 Capacity of the Forest Research Institute and Higher Education

The Ethiopian Environment and Forestry Research Institute (EEFRI) has conducted in-house gap assessment and identified critical needs in laboratory facilities and skilled human resources in specific fields. Accordingly, procurement of key laboratory facilities is supported and postgraduate training is provided for one female expert in the area of tree biotechnology to fill the knowledge gap identified.

Moreover, an academic exchange and education program is initiated with Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). This program will be anchored within local training institutions and MoU is signed with Wondo Genet and Mertolemaria Colleges to support demand-driven skill training in the sector for the coming years. This initiative is part of the target set in the NFSDP of Ethiopia.

3.5 Output 5: Stakeholders engagement in forest development enhanced

Broad based stakeholder engagement in forest conservation, management and marketing is highly required. Therefore, meaningful participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Research Organizations, Higher learning Institutions, Community Based Organizations, relevant Professional Associations such as Ethiopian Foresters Association was planned to be supported by the program. However, the implementation of this component was not yet started during the reporting period. This primarily due to overlapping priorities that compete for the last limited fund disbursed during the season. Additional fund disbursement was delayed in the season primarily due to financial reporting requirements.

3.5.1 M&E and Communication

Noted progress was made by the national PCO in improving the overall M&E system with attention given to the improvement of the quality of the data reported and data management and reporting. The physical monitoring and reporting by the project has improved, but there is more work to do to ensure consistency and satisfactory reporting of the project's financial system. The national PCO is planning to undertake detailed review of the project's financial management including M&E system.

That said, the national PCO has started documentation of best practices through documentaries and brochures to reach out the public and wider stakeholders. In this line, a documentary production will soon be initiated while the NPCO has already produced two brochures showing the summary of activities during the implementation period so far. Quarterly discussions with regional and woreda level stakeholders on the progress of the project is well under way as per the plan. This is believed to benefit future scaling-up and out.

Table 1. Program outputs, activities and achievements as of June 2017

Program Outputs	Activity Description	Activity				Remarks
		Planned targets during the project period	Planned targets during the reporting year	Achieved during the reporting year (July 2016-July 2017)	Achieved since the beginning of the program (December 2014-July 2017)	
1. Institutional capacity of the sector strengthened	Established Forest management offices established at Regional and National levels	Establish NPC and nine District offices	Continue supporting the NPC and nine district project offices		National Program Coordination (NPC) office established Nine project coordination offices established	
	Preparing National and regional forest sector development program	Design One National and 11 regional forest development programs	Finalize one NSFD and initiate 11 regional program design	National Forest Sector Development program design finalized on June 2017 Preparation of similar regional programs initiated	National Forest Sector Development program design finalized Preparation of similar regional programs initiated	Regional programs will be prepared soon following the NFSDP as framework document. Five consulting firms are being recruited to prepare regional programs for 9 regional states and 2 city administrations
	Skilled human resources developed/recruited	Recruitment of project staff	Recruit 60 project staff	51 project staff recruited	86 project staffs recruited and deployed to support the implementation of the program at various levels	
	Preparing ESMF for the rehabilitation and afforestation sites	Prepare ESMF and baseline for all the nine sites	Prepare ESMF and Baseline for project sites	This task is re-advertised and a local consulting firm is recruited to undertake this task	This task is re-advertised and a local consulting firm is recruited to undertake this task	
	Establish national and Regional Forestry data base infrastructure	Support the establishment of national and regional database	Procure additional facilities for database	Additional database facilities procured through UNDP	Database facilities procured and some provided to the regions and federal Ministry	

				The National IT and database facility is under establishment		
2. Forest development enhanced	Define integrated Rural Land Use plans	Design pilot local LUP for all the nine sites	Prepare land use plan for all project sites	Land use planning is done for 22 targeted micro watersheds	Land use planning is done for 22 targeted micro watersheds covering about 13thousand ha	
	Rehabilitate Degraded areas	Rehabilitate 150,000ha (74,250ha this year) degraded land	Rehabilitate 80,000ha degraded land	53,534ha of degraded land demarcated for rehabilitation	88,534ha of degraded land demarcated for rehabilitation	Through assisted natural regeneration Various physical and biological measures are done mainly through community participation
	Establishing plantations	Create 10,000ha new short rotation plantation	Cover additional 4000ha of land with short rotation plantation	187ha of land covered with new short rotation plantation Post planting management activities under way in all the plantation sites	3,387ha of land covered with new forest plantation Post planting management activities under way in all the plantation sites	Site preparation underway for the planting season
	Nursery establishment and management for seedling production Site preparation to establish plantations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terraces, trenches and basins Pitting	35million seedlings 10,000ha 10,000ha	22million seedlings 4000ha new plantations	18mln seedlings raised during this year Intensive site preparation underway for the coming planting season	25.5mln seedling raised in 33 nurseries Intensive site preparations for plantation establishment	Physical structures to supplement the A/R depending on site demands
3. Promote private sector	Awareness of Private sector	Trainings	Provide training for 300experts	TOT provided for 242 experts	TOT provided for 283 experts	More activity was planned during the season but constrained by

engagement	Support the private sector for technology piloting			13,174 individuals trained on forest management and forest business (this includes farmers)	17,686 trained on forest management and forest business	budget for implementation
4.Promote Forest based Science and Innovation	Building capacity of the forestry research and education institutions	Capacity building Academic exchange Joint research	Initiate demand driven capacity building through post-graduate programs	Further Postgraduate training initiated Procurement of lab. facility started Academic exchange initiated MoU signed with local training institutions	Support provided for review and publication of the 40 years research outputs Gaps in lab facility and personnel identified Further Postgraduate training initiated Procurement of land facility started Academic exchange initiated MoU signed with local training institutions	More activity was planned during the season but constrained by budget for implementation
5. Enhance Stakeholder involvement	Mapping stakeholders involved in forestry			This task is not done so far. It will be a focus area in the next season provided that the fund is transferred on time.	This task is not done so far	This activity was planned during the season but constrained by budget for implementation. It will be a focus area in the next season provided that the fund is transferred on time.
	Establish Stakeholder platform and network		Establish one stakeholder platform in forestry			
	Prepare Future Engagement road map for forestry sector actors					
6.Project management	Project management and administration					
	Vehicle purchase	Purchasing vehicles and tractors	Purchase three more tractors	Two additional field vehicles, three tractors and one dump-track under procurement,	14 field vehicles and 6 tractors purchased and deployed for the project activity Two additional field vehicles, three tractors and one dump-track under procurement,	UNDP

	Monitoring and evaluation, including communication	Field M&E	Deploy M7E team every quarter	National mission deployed to evaluate project activities on the ground. Mission report synthesized and one annual report presented to donors	National mission deployed to evaluate project activities on the ground. Mission report synthesized and one annual report presented to donors	
	Communication		Prepare one brochure	Two Brochures produced Documentary film under preparation	Two Brochures produced Documentary film under production	These materials can be provided

4. Reasons for Major Deviations from Plans

This program was planned to start field activities in the early 2015. However, due to administrative delays and approval procedures, the program was officially launched in October 2015 and actual implementation on the ground started on February 2016. The initial fund transfer (for the first quarter) from the CRGE Facility was made to MEFCC on July 2015 as per the annual work plan (AWP) submitted to the Facility. Evidently, the implementation of the first year suffered from time constraint to capture the opportunity of the planting season in 2016. The time delay has created additional pressure on diversification of planting stock, preparation of site for planting and the actual planting itself. However, the preparation for the second year has progressed as planned and achievement made so far is good and showed the commitment of the people and government institutions at various levels. The second year has substantial achievement in response to capture the first-year delay. However, the implementation of the second-year plantation activity equally suffered from delayed budget release from the donor for various reasons.

5. Project Management and Administration

At Federal level, the program implementation is guided by the Ministry of Environment; Forest and Climate Change through the National Program Coordination Office. UNDP is supporting international procurement of items and consulting entities.

At Regional level, REDD+ Coordination Units are supporting the implementation of the program. The program activities in each Districts is monitored, supported and evaluated by the respective regional authorities. Regions have conducted separate and joint field missions with the national experts to evaluate the project activity on the ground.

At District level, all the nine Districts have established Technical and Steering Committees (TSC). These committees also oversight the implementation of other mega projects like SLMP and PSNP wherever available, and this has created good opportunity for synergy and collaboration. The overall guidance of the project implementation is provided by the Steering Committee while the District technical committee provided technical guidance including quality assurance for each project activity on the ground. Noted progress was made by the national program coordination office (NPC) in improving the overall M&E system with attention given to the improvement of the quality of data handling and reporting. The physical monitoring and reporting by the project

has improved. However, more work is required to ensure consistent and satisfactory financial management of the program. The MEFCC, MoFEC and UNDP will engage in continuous spot-checking to ensure future financial management is to the required standard and as per the agreement with the donor.

6. Financial Utilization

The fund utilized during the reporting period was 59,040,961.32 birr. It is important to note that the project financial performance has improved in 2009 E.C. calendar. The program financial utilization against plan for the reporting period is presented as below. Out of the planned 63.21 million ETB for the fiscal year, 59.04 million was utilized. This represents 93.4% utilization during the reporting period.

Table 2. Program budget and utilization for 2009

	Output	Planned budget for 2009 E.C	Expenditure in 2009 E. C	Difference
1	Institutional capacity for the Forest sector Strengthened	4,600,000.00	4,600,000.00	-
2	Forest conservation and development for their multiple benefits enhanced	43,077,408.82	43,077,408.82	-
3	Private sector Involvement in forest development Facilitated	3,420,000.00	2,529,183.31	890,816.69
4	Science and Innovation for enhancing SFM promoted	10,960,000.00	7,682,959.39	3,277,040.61
5	Project Management	1,151,409.80	1,151,409.80	-
		63,208,818.62	59,040,961.32	4,167,857.30

7. Assessment of Achievement with Purpose

As indicated in the program document, the main purpose of the program is to strengthen government capacity in the forest sector and spearhead the implementation of the forestry component contained in the GTPII and CRGE. The work carried out during the reporting period represents a significant contribution towards the achievement of this purpose. Activities conducted and the results achieved in a relatively short implementation period are encouraging. The program is assisting Ethiopia to achieve its targets for A/R and reach targets for reduced emission and increased sequestrations of greenhouse gases. Moreover, piloting and field testing of afforestation models including the trainings and discussions of the progress at various workshops were excellent avenues for learning and scaling-up and out to other areas in the country including private individuals. The level of stakeholders' engagement and support provided by the people and government institutions at various levels signifies a promising sustainability of the program. Higher government officials at various levels and donors have made direct field visits to project sites and routinely guided the delivery of the program. Without undermining the effects of delayed commencement of implementation and recent budget delay on delivery, it is safe to conclude that the program is on a right track to achieve its purpose.

8. Assessment of Efficiency of the Program

This program is designed in the result based scheme and resources are especially targeted towards supporting delivery of outputs. Most of the resource was planned for field level A/R and rehabilitation works including livelihood activities and hence significant focus and resource support is provided accordingly. This program has ample evidence already to show that efforts from different stakeholders were quickly mobilized for the actual implementation of the program. This indicated that afforestation in Ethiopian landscapes (even on degraded ones) can be achieved shortly if conditions are fulfilled, i.e. good site rehabilitation conditions, guaranteed quality of plant material, proper management, reasonable investment and access to markets for products. In practice, the entire exercise was translated into important outcomes of increased employment, income generation while arresting land degradation; the main targets in the GTPII. The program is also likely to contribute to biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts of the country. Regional leaders in the three regions have directly dedicated personnel and institutions to monitor this program and provided guidance on the selection of sites for its

implementation and its implementation approaches. Previous experiences in other similar projects like (e.g. SLM, PSNP etc) have helped to quickly start the implementation of this one. However, the implementation was challenged by delayed reporting, especially on the financial disbursement. Going forward, the Ministry and the national coordination team should sustain support to limit these challenges.

9. Key problems and risks

- The expected level of support by UNDP was initially constrained by lack of timely budget release from the donor. This has created further challenge in expenditure as staff salary and procurement of vehicles and goods was done by shifting fund from other sources.
- Some of the sites selected for afforestation have environmental constraints and demanded extra investments in site amelioration efforts. These calls for extensive consultations and costs on the ground in order to reduce the risk of compromised results. However, there is equal concern by woreda level stakeholders and hence improvement in site selection is expected in the future. Moreover, such costs are increasingly being covered by the public.
- There is insufficient forestry data at local level to establish baseline and monitor progress. The program is trying its level best to acquire this information through local consultants.
- The implementation was challenged by poor financial management qualifications. Additional staff is now hired to reduce this problem.

10. Conclusion

This program is a key mechanism to pilot new approaches on rehabilitation and afforestation by triggering more stakeholders' engagement in the forest sector. It supports governments' national green growth strategy, CRGE. Although inception of the program was delayed and budget release was unparalleled with the plan, the implementation is on good progress.

In 2009 E.C. the project was under full implementation in all project Districts. Noted progress was made by the NPCO in improving the overall M&E and communication system with particular attention given to the improvement of the quality of the data reported and data management. The

physical monitoring and reporting by the project has improved, but there is more work to do to ensure consistent and satisfactory financial management system. Yet, sustaining the existing momentum including the financial and technical support throughout the implementation period will be vital to prove the existing implementation model is working for Ethiopian landscapes and livelihood systems.