



SWFLG Briefing Note 8



Wild Coffee by Participatory Forest Management (WCC-PFM) Project in South West Ethiopia

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PROJECT
TEAM

WCC-PFM 2015 DEC

Summary

The Wild Coffee Conservation by PFM Project seeks to address the challenge of maintaining the genetic diversity of wild coffee *in situ* in parts of southwest Ethiopia. Given the problems faced in earlier top-down forest conservation initiatives, this project is exploring an alternative approach which is based on participatory forest management (PFM). This aims to empower communities through giving them clear rights to the forest and its resources, while in return engaging communities to take responsibility for managing the forest. The government becomes the monitor of the forest, rather than the protector. PFM takes an economic view of forests and recognises that they are a renewable resource whose products can be harvested sustainably while addressing specific biodiversity goals. Forest based enterprise development enables communities and government to jointly manage and benefit from forest products, in turn improving the maintenance of the forest and wild coffee genetic resources, as livelihoods are enhanced. Experience to date suggests that this is a viable method for sustainable forest management which will have wider relevance beyond Ethiopia and beyond *in situ* conservation of coffee biodiversity.

The Project

The Wild Coffee Conservation by PFM (WCC-PFM) project works in four districts in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS) with a focus on Kontir-Berhan and Amora Gedel forests in Sheko District of Bench-Maji Zone. The total forest area covered by the project is approximately 76,000ha with direct beneficiaries numbering some 30,000 people.

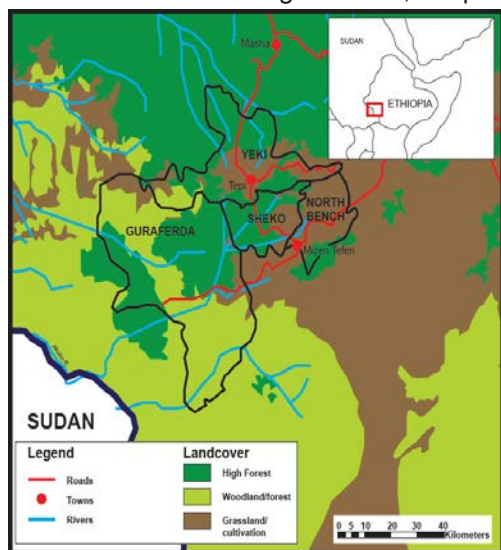


Figure 1: Woredas of WCC-PFM Project 2015

New Approach to *In Situ* Conservation

The WCC-PFM project is a response to the limited success with forest conservation projects in this part of the country, both in the past and today. Due to a scarcity of state resources and poor relations with communities, externally driven and top-down forest conservation initiatives have faced many problems and have generally been unsuccessful in halting the process of forest loss. Hence it was felt that alternative approaches needed to be explored.

The WCC-PFM project starts from analysis at the community level and seeks to empower communities to undertake sustainable forest management. The project sees people as key players in maintaining the forest: people are seen as part of the solution rather than as the cause of the problem. The PFM approach views forests as renewable and harvestable resources which will only survive if they are able to compete against other land uses. The basis of this view is that community motivation and interest in maintaining the forests has to be developed, and for this to be achieved communities have

appropriate and secure rights over the forests and can obtain specific benefits and income from that forest.

The project draws on the evolving international experience with PFM in recent years which has shown that when local communities gain rights over forest areas and benefits from the sustainable use of these resources, they will be prepared to organise and develop institutions to take on the responsibility of maintaining the forest and meeting specific requirements. Hence rights over the forest and revenues from the forest are needed in order that responsibilities are accepted by the communities to maintain the forest and specific aspects of biodiversity, such as wild coffee stands. These three Rs, **rights**, **revenues** and **responsibilities**, are the basis of PFM thinking, and are central to this project.

PFM for Bio-diversity Conservation in Practice

The PFM approach, as applied in the WCC-PFM project, involves communities at the lowest level, the got (village), organising themselves into forest management groups for mapping, demarcating and assessing their forest resources. When this is done the communities, develop a forest management plan. This includes aspects of protection, development and utilisation, especially linked to generating increased livelihood benefits. Plans are subsequently discussed with government prior to an agreement being signed for the forest to be handed over to the community. The community is subject to an annual review by the government to ensure that the forest is being managed in line with the plan.

Key elements related to this process include the development of legally registered district level PFM Associations, to which the got-level groups become affiliated. This provides these groups with legal status and offers the communities an opportunity to be represented in discussions with the government at the district and higher levels. This may include discussing forest policy and enforcement of legislation, as well as strategic policies affecting forest management and biodiversity conservation. Besides forest management institutions, the project is supporting the communities in the development of enterprise cooperatives which are developing the domestic and international value chain for marketing forest products, which include coffee, honey and spices.

Project Goals

The overall aim of the project is to contribute to the conservation of coffee biodiversity through the application of PFM which will create sustainable arrangements for conserving this biodiversity *in situ*. Critically the burden of forest maintenance and management is now with the communities and the government becomes the monitor of the situation.

In a wider sense the project is helping explore new forms of joint (community and government) management and benefit sharing with respect to forest and coffee genetic resources, with enhanced livelihoods through forest enterprise development and other incentives, such as carbon payments.



Co-op member picking wild coffee

Project Activities

The WCC-PFM Project works closely with, and through, all local stakeholders, government and communities, as well as local market actors. Project activities are developed through joint discussion and analysis of the situation, with an adaptive and flexible approach to ensure responsiveness to the field conditions.

The forest is not seen in isolation, but as part of the wider functional landscape which provides a range of ecosystem services. This means that the management of all land use types has to be analysed and ways to improve sustainability and enhance the overall functioning of the landscape and the services it provides are sought so as to generate enhanced benefits for the local and wider community.



Harvesting forest honey

Achievements to late 2015

To date the project has succeeded in introducing PFM into the four districts and in Sheko, the core one with the major area of forest with wild coffee, the PFM development process is complete and implementation is established. Over 76,000 ha of forest have been handed over to the communities to manage in line with the agreements signed with the local government, and their approved forest management plans which guide implementation and monitoring. This work is guided by the application of the new regional forest policy, whose development was supported by this project and an earlier one implemented by the SWFLG grouping.

The Forest Management Association is now established in Sheko and is coordinating forest management activities

by the got-level groups and liaising with the government. Three cooperatives are registered and operating with forest coffee and honey being marketed through them. Diversification of forest-based enterprises has been explored, especially with respect to a number of non-timber forest products, while carbon payments related to silviculture and forest enhancement are also being investigated. Similar activities are progressing in the other districts, being Guraferda, North Bench and Yeki.

Overall these developments will improve the livelihoods of communities and increase the value of the forests in their eyes. Project lessons are being shared with other conservation projects in the region and with the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.



Coffee drying at Kontir Berhan Co-op



Committee Member Elections, Forest Management Group

South West Forests and Landscapes Grouping

SWFLG is an informal grouping of organisations which are interested in the development of an ecologically sound and socio-economically sensitive approach to the management of the south west landscapes of Ethiopia. The members of the grouping to date are: University of Huddersfield (UK), Ethio-Wetlands & Natural Resources Association and Sustainable Livelihood Action/Wetland Action EEIG (the Netherlands). They have been partners in projects funded by the EU and several other international donors since 1996 and have built up specific expertise in the areas outlined above.

The grouping currently has two projects in this area besides the recently completed NTFP-PFM Project. These are:

Wild Coffee Conservation by Participatory Forest Management Project (WCC-PFM) led by the University of Huddersfield with contributions from EWNRA and SLA and funding from the European Union, the Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network and the UK Government Darwin Initiative.

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WCC-PFM Project Summary

The “Wild Coffee Conservation by Participatory Forest Management” (WCC-PFM) Project seeks to test and fine-tune PFM so that it can contribute to *in situ* conservation of wild coffee in the forests in southwest Ethiopia. At present the project is working in parts of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Regional State (SNNPRS).

The focus of this approach to *in situ* conservation is the engagement of the communities so that they own and lead the process of PFM and forest management plan development and implementation. The plans include different forest management practices - development, protection and utilisation, including activities to ensure *in situ* conservation. The PFM process is driven by the way in which rights can be devolved to communities and forest-based enterprises developed which help forests become an attractive land use for communities, competing against other land uses and so “pay their way”.

Further details can be found at:

<http://wetlandsandforests.hud.ac.uk/forests.html>

All SWFLG Briefing Notes can be found at:

http://wetlandsandforests.hud.ac.uk/wcc_publications.html

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Project Funding Agencies



European Union,
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Horn of Africa
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Project Partners



The University of
Huddersfield



Ethio-Wetlands and Natural
Resources Association.



Sustainable Livelihood Action



Ethiopian Institute of
Biodiversity



Southern Nations, Nationalities
& Peoples Regional State,
Bureau of Agriculture

SNNPRS