

Project Update: May 2023

The security challenges at my project site (Tigray, Ethiopia) were updated on January 12, 2022. There is presently very little security to carry out some tasks in the project area as a result of the Pretoria peace agreement between the fighters. So, I'm here to give you an update on the first phase. First and foremost, the objective of the project entitled 'Rehabilitation of rare and threatened species through capacitating and involvement of the local community in and around Hirimi Forest' (project ID: 33352-B) was:

- 1) Capacity building for 220 local communities and experts.
- 2) The rehabilitation of threatened rare and poorly regenerating species.

In this phase the first objective (capacity building) was done from May 16 to 19, 2023. The training was held in Shire-Mai Tsebri Agricultural research center (as usual) on the scope of:

- ☞ The concept of ecological rehabilitation and conservation (by the trained expert from the district and project manager).
- ☞ The overview and findings of the two projects in Hirimi forest ecosystem (By the project manager).
- ☞ The role and responsibilities of the communities in the forest management and conservation (by the trained local administrative, project manager, researchers Shire-Mai Tsebri Agricultural research center).



Capacity Building for local community © Mehari Girmay.

The project manager, local expert and researchers working in Shire-Mai Tsebri Agricultural Research Center have delivered the training. Each of the three districts received 1 day of training. The local leaders and selected leading experiences were shared at another one session. One beehive was given to each of the 20 householders who have demonstrated expertise in conservation and an interest in beekeeping farming.



A glance for beehive provision for the selected local community © Mehari Girmay.

Raised and revealed challenges in this phase

Before the war in the density cover of plant species in the project area was 528.4 stems/ha. More than 171 plant species were identified in the forest habitat according to studies conducted in 2020. During the war the forest ecosystem was served mainly as military camp, plants and plant products were used as a firewood source, trenching, and shading. Particularly, the woody plants were highly targeted for their timber products by the local community. As a result, there are now very few forest patches in steep, inaccessible places. Currently, about 60% of its original vegetation remains. Fire, charcoal production, cutting and grazing were among the prominent threats in the forest ecosystem.



Fire © Mehari Girmay



Tree cutting/firewood collection & Charcoal production © Mehari Girmay.

Recommendations

Despite the fact that this project will play a significant part in the rehabilitation of a 1,000 ha that had previously been damaged, it is not as intense as the existing devastations. According to the researcher's observations and the communities' recommendations, the 30,000 ha Hirmi forest ecosystem should be thoroughly studied and surveyed to determine the detailed extent of deforestation and degradation so that appropriate conservation measures can be taken. As a result, a post-war impact analysis and land use/land cover dynamics should come next, followed by rehabilitation and restoration efforts.





Terracing was done inside the forest to preserve degradations and prepared the ground for planting selected species. © Mehari Girmay.