

ETHIOPIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH  
NEKEMTE CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT SOCIAL AND  
DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION OFFICE OF NEKEMETE

FINAL VERSION  
EXTERNAL PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT FOR  
“INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT WITH AN  
ENVIRONMENTAL AND GENDER APPROACH IN EAST  
WELLEGA, OROMIYA REGIONAL NATIONAL STATE,  
ETHIOPIA”

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NEKEMTE,  
ETHIOPIA  
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Admassu Tesso (PhD)



## Abbreviations

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ADLI: Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization

ECC-SADCO: Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Coordinator Office of Nekemte

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

KII: Key informant interviews

MPC : Multipurpose cooperative

SACCO: Saving and credit cooperative organization

FPS: Fundación Promoción Social.



## Executive Summary

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### Introduction

Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Commission of the Coordination Office Nekemte (ECC\_SDCON) has been implementing with the support of Fundación Promoción Social (FPS) an integrated rural development with an environmental and gender approach in East Wellega, Sasiga district in four Kebeles. The project was financially supported by Generalitat Valenciana and FPS as well as a small grant from a Spanish social enterprise (AUARA) and had life time of Abril 2018 – January 2021 with the general objective to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the rural population in the district of Sasiga. The following are the three expected results of the project:

- 1) Small farmers see their agricultural production improved in a sustainable manner, increasing the availability of food in quantity and quality to cover their nutritional needs.
- 2) Access of small farmers to a diversified and improved livestock production that contributes to the enrichment of their diet and the generation of income
- 3) Strengthening of community organization allowing the active involvement of small farmers and especially women to productive resources and income generation activities

This external project evaluation has examined the project design, implementation process, impacts and aims to draw lessons for future. The report is organized in compliance with the requirements of the ToR and presents assessments on project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact and project sustainability.

### Methods

A number of data collection techniques were used. Desk review, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, questionnaire and observation were used as primary data collection tools. Information from different stakeholders were collected and triangulated for informed judgment. Accordingly, the assessment results are presented as follows:



## Reassessment Results

**Project design:** although the project and its objective are highly relevant, the baseline survey and the targeting criteria were a bit shallow and were not 100% well synchronize with the project formulation document, and some additional data should have been be collected on the baseline survey. For example, the baseline survey just took into account one qualitative indicator- Months of adequate household food – to measure the level of household food insecurity of the households. Some studies state the need to mix quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure the status and levels of household food insecurity. On the other hand the baseline survey largely failed to collect data on gender roles in the community and household levels in spite of having gender approach as a crosscutting issue in the project formulation and implementation. The scope of project according to the planning document and the practical implementation are not well synchronized, taking into account the challenges the area has faced; conflicts between Oromo and Benishangul Gumuz population, internal displacement, Socio-political turmoil and the COVID19 pandemic. The intervention logics, the expected activities, outcome and the indicators are aligned with each other for smooth project implementations, monitoring and evaluations but seems to have been lack of involvement of multiple stakeholders especially on beneficiary selection and monitoring of results. Beneficiary targeting criteria has not involved all the stakeholders. As the result the beneficiary targeting criteria were quite vague. The communication and involvement of the office of agriculture and cooperative at kebele has been high, with involvement of focal persons but the office of women and finance participations has been almost nonexistent. We have to highlight that government workers have been changed a lot during project period. Also it is important to note that the local socio-political context of the project has been very difficult since the beginning due to command post in the area, conflicts, internal displacement and later the COVID 19 pandemic, which has made difficult the participation of all stakeholders during all project period.

**Relevance:** - The project and its objectives were relevant based on the views of project staff, project implementing partners and beneficiaries across all the Kebeles. The project was vital in addressing their personal struggles such as unemployment, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as the social stability and economic growth of the people. However, opinions are diverse when it comes to specific activities of the project.



**Effectiveness:** - The project was largely effective in meeting most of its outcome targets. Nonetheless, its effectiveness had a number of gaps when it comes to addressing gender parity and specifically the construction of small-scale irrigation system and viable cattle crushes. In fact, most of these activities were performed but hardly contributed to the achievement of the project overall objectives due to wrong site selection and government gaps. The trainings were given by government sectoral employees who in some cases hardly possess the required skills and experiences. Of course, there has been contrasting views of project implementing partners and some sectoral experts clearly showing the bumpy relationship between the project management and the local partners, specifically at each Kebele level. According to the project management, the level of support from local government, specifically at the Kebele level was below what had been expected and there seemed to be poor working relationship with some of the stakeholders that should participate actively as stated in the MoU between ECC and Government. There has been a high participation of focal experts at the office of agriculture and cooperative but almost no participation from other relevant office like office of the women and children.

**Efficiency:** - On the balance of our qualitative assessment, the project is largely efficient in its resources management. However, as the concept of efficiency (input-output ratio) is the relationship between resources and results, it requires a reference point to be meaningfully measured. Objective efficiency assessment requires comprehensive actual spending data on each activity and the planned budget as per the project planning document. We also need audited financial records of the project. At the point of realization of external evaluation, the audit report was not still finalized, although the lists of expenses were provided. The budget justified to the donor and budget justified to the government of Ethiopia was reviewed. However, there seems to be a gap in the way local partner justified the expenses – by activity - and the way it is justified to the donor – by budget lines- . We have reviewed the list of expense submitted to the audit, and the project seems to have been efficient, but has been difficult to trace the real expenditure for each activity since the list of expense to the donor do not include cost per activity. In the absence of this data set, we couldn't make more informed efficiency assessment.



**Impact:** - The project has achieved important milestones in terms of impact on improving the business of cooperatives and improving household food security and restoring the environment through construction of terraces and planting of multipurpose trees. However, the impact on food security improvement is not even across the Kebeles and sex of household heads. While the project had important impact on improving food security of households in Badassa Jarso and Haro Feyissa Kebeles its effect on households in Tokuma Tsigie was blow a par. Similarly, while the project had important impact on improving food security of male households, the result was poor for female headed households.

**Sustainability:** In terms of cooperatives sustainability, a number of members have already dropped out following the phasing out of the project although members and capital of the cooperatives have been increasing significantly since the beginning of the project. The increase of members and specially the increase of capital that allow saving money and providing credits to members appears that it will guarantee the sustainability of the cooperatives. However, there is some specific activities of the project, such the construction of cattle crushes and small irrigation that are not working as expected. Wrong site selection – this is government duty as per agreement- and poor designs as well as poor project exit strategy are factors threatening the project impact sustainability of the cattle crush and small irrigation system and canal constructed. However, with regard to the sustainability of the specific activities of the project we mention above, the irrigation system and cattle crash, the Kebeles, as final recipients of the infrastructures and equipment, will have the responsibility of their proper use and maintenance.

**Collaboration with implementing partners:** - There has been weak and sometimes counterproductive involvement of some project implementing partners, specifically at the lower level of governance such as at Kebele level. Although there are focal persons of the office of agriculture and cooperative who have been participating throughout the project, sectoral heads at the Woreda level were not involved in the project. However, we have to take into account that high staff of Woredas has been changing a lot through the project life.





## Recommendations:

- Ideally for such a project, the duration of 2 years was generally short and could work better within duration of minimum of 3 years so as to guarantee the sustainability of some activities.
- There is a need to enhance and involve multiple stakeholders during project formulations, implementations, and monitoring and evaluations.
- There is a need to have memorandum of understanding not only at the top government organ but at the lower level of each sectors expected to participate as project partners. There is a heightened need to closely work with all government administrative organs and specifically at the Kebele and district level.
- There is a need to solicit for qualified and well experienced trainers with proven communication skills for each training session.
- The creation and promotion of cooperatives needs to be allocated to trustworthy staff who can persuade the community members to join
- Monitoring and evaluation system of a project need to be effective. Although a standardized periodical activity reporting template was introduced by FPS expatriate staff, the project coordinator failed to periodically report in format provided.
- There is a need to brief each newly coming incumbent of each sector so as to maintain good relationships with all partners.
- There is heightened need to involve public universities as project implementing partners



## 1. Introduction

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Since 1993, Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI) strategy has been the central pillar of Ethiopia's development. This strategy envisages a rapid and sustained development in the agriculture sector as a necessary condition for triggering and sustaining development in the other sectors of the economy. The strategy assumes that factors which affect agricultural performance are linked to economy-wide social and economic policies and hence expanding agricultural production through technological change and trade, creates important demands for the outputs of other sectors, such as fertilizer, transportation, commercial services, and construction (Timer, 1998; FDRE, 2002; FDRE, 2010).

Accordingly, a series of national policies have been issued and implemented step by step. Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP 2002-2005) was the first comprehensive development policy issued consistent with the concept of ADLI. Meanwhile, the Rural Development Policy and Strategies (RDPS, 2003) was issued, which, reaffirmed the commitment of the government to implement ADLI. Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP 2005/06-2009/10), was also well informed by the ADLI principles and guided by the RDPS directions specified above. Similarly, Growth and Transformation Plan I (GTP I 2010/11-2015/16) and Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II 2015/16-2019/20) recognized agriculture as the base for Ethiopian socio-economic development. In line with this policy, the government has also demonstrated strong commitment for the agricultural sector development through allocation of resources and agricultural extension services to the sector.

Despite these seemingly compressive and consistent policy frameworks, however, the Ethiopian agriculture is dominated by subsistence, low input-low output, rain fed farming system. In spite of disproportionately high and constant employment rate in the sector, (nearly 79 percent of the population), and high poverty reduction power of the GDP originating from the sector (World Bank, 2008), the contribution of the agriculture to GDP has been declining from 53 percent in 1997 to just 34 percent in 2010 (FDRE, 2020). Such declining role of the sector may be

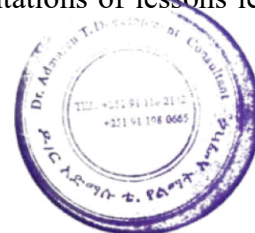


explained mainly by (1) small farm sizes<sup>1</sup> characterized by low utilization of agricultural inputs; (2) environmental degradation; (3) dependence on inconsistent, uneven and unpredictable rains; (4) poor irrigation system, low technology, little access to know-how; (5) limited capital (mainly by female headed households); (6) fragmented plots hampering economic scale production and productivity that is vulnerable to natural and man-made changes (Huluka & Wondimagegnhu, 2019).

These factors are interconnected and re-enforcing each other. Thus, the need for rural transformation necessitates integrated rural development projects. Accordingly, Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Commission of the Coordination Office Nekemte (ECC\_SDCON) has been implementing an integrated rural development with an environmental and gender approach in East Wellega, Sasiga district in four Kebeles. The project was financially supported by Generalitat Valenciana and had life time of Abril 2018 – January 2021 with three major expected results:

- 1) Small farmers see their agricultural production improved in a sustainable manner, increasing the availability of food in quantity and quality to cover their nutritional needs.
- 2) Access of small farmers to a diversified and improved livestock production that contributes to the enrichment of their diet and the generation of income
- 3) Strengthening of community organization allowing the active involvement of small farmers and especially women to productive resources and income generation activities

This external project evaluation examines the project design, implementation process, impacts and aims to draw lessons for future. The report is organized in compliance with the requirements of the ToR and has a number of sections. Section two presents the objectives and scope of the evaluation followed by section three presenting the general methodological approaches. This will be followed by results and discussions followed by the presentations of lessons learnt. The last section presents conclusions and recommendations.



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<sup>1</sup> Land holding share of 83 percent by smallholders farming setup less than 2 hectares; about a third of rural households farm less than 0.5 hectares; and nearly 55 per cent of all smallholders farmers operate on a hectare or less (EEA, 2002).

## 2. The Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

As a project end external evaluation, it is expected to provide data on the five evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project. The evaluation has also taken into account the alignment of the project with the strategic plans of those of the Generalitat Valenciana. Thus, in order to identify and document which project objectives were achieved, which were not successfully achieved and why, we have evaluated all project activities at all project phases and stages. Accordingly, the following are some of our leading questions at each project phases:

### 1. During situation analysis:

Was gender and environmental analysis issues properly made before project design?

- ☒ Proper gender analysis examines the different roles, rights, needs, concerns of, and opportunities for women and men, boys and girls, and the relations between them in a given context.
- ☒ Gender and environmental analysis helps in identifying entry points and determining the most effective strategies in a particular context that will support gender equality and the empowerment of women.

### 2. Project Planning Phase:

- ☒ To what extent was the baseline survey established the needed indicators for the project end evaluation?
- ☒ Did the project design adequately consider the gender dimensions in its interventions? If so, how?
- ☒ What indicators or assessment criteria have been created for enabling the assessment of results generated, operating models and best practices from the gender perspective?
- ☒ Have project target groups and stakeholders been trained in mainstreaming the gender perspective in project activities? Were environmental issues adequately addressed?
- ☒ What were the targeting criteria? To what extent were the targeting criteria objective and transparent?
- ☒ Are outcomes, outputs and activities designed to meet the different needs and priorities of women and men;

### 3. Implementation and Monitoring Phase:

- ☒ Does the project implementing entity have the criteria for promoting gender equality?



- ☞ How transparent the procedure was in selecting farmers for training and other supports?
- ☞ How gender-balanced was the composition of the targeted beneficiaries?
- ☞ Are the beneficiaries given chance to choose type of business they are more interested in to operate?
- ☞ Has the monitoring and evaluation of the project covered gender and environmental issues and monitor behavioral changes towards the target?
- ☞ Are the results achieved and best practices assessed from the gender and environmental perspective?
- ☞ Does project reporting and documentation include an environmental and gender equality promotion perspectives?

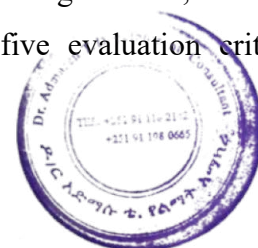
#### 4. Project Impacts:

- ☞ Are there significant differences between genders in the activity at which the project is targeted?
- ☞ Is there statistically significant difference in crop and animal productivity between those farmers who received the supports of the project and those who did not?
- ☞ What are the differences between the genders within the target groups regarding the needs, problems, life situations and expectations related to project activity?
- ☞ Which factors remain binding constraints for women, which for men?
- ☞ Are existing support and development measures targeted at women and men in the same way?
- ☞ Did women and men have equal opportunities to participate in the project?
- ☞ What kinds of issues do women find significant in promoting their wellbeing? Which do men find important?
- ☞ What kinds of new solutions and measures are necessary to succeed better in taking the gender perspective into account and enhance gender equality?

### 3. Evaluation Methods

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As the project activities at different phases and stages are interrelated one referring to and enforcing each other, the final project outputs, outcomes, impacts and its sustainability are as good as those activities performed at each project phases and stages. Thus, in order to identify and document the project performances in terms of the five evaluation criteria, we have



examined the project starting from appropriateness of need assessment made, project design, implementation and monitoring procedures and finally the project performances. For this both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used. Accordingly, the study was guided by the following conceptual frame work.

### 3.1 Sample Size

We have ensured that the sample size is a representative of the population. For this, sample size was determined within the parameter of 95% confidence interval and 5% level of precision following Jeff Watson (2001) sample size determination.

$$n = \left( \frac{\frac{p(1-p)}{\frac{A^2}{Z^2} + \frac{p(1-p)}{N}}}{R} \right) \dots\dots\dots(3.1)$$

Where,

n= Sample size required

N= Number of people on the population (in this case, as the direct project beneficiaries are 9,803 our N is 9,803).

P=Estimated variance in population as decimal (in this case, as the direct project beneficiaries in each Kebele are estimated to be 6 percent of the total, we use p=0.06).

A=Precision desired expressed as desired (which is 5 percent in this case).

Z=based on confidence level 1.96 for 95%

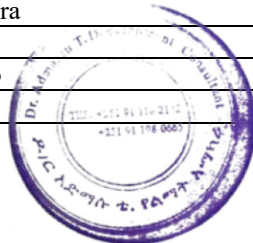
R= estimated response rate as a decimal (which is 94 percent in this case).

Substituting with appropriate values in the formula, we found sample size of 85 respondents.

Accordingly, the following table shows the allocation of the sample size across different strata.

Table 1. Allocation of sample size across different stratum

Kebeles	Have you ever participated in any of ECC-SADCON project activities?		Total Sample
	Non-participants	Participants	Total sample
Tokuma Tsige	5	16	21
Ambalta Fayera	5	15	20
Haro Fayisa	5	16	21
Badhasa Jarso	5	18	23
Total	20	65	85



### **3.2 Sampling Strategy**

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Following the project design, we have stratified our households from each Kebele into two excludable groups as: (a) Treated farmers are those who were the direct project beneficiaries, and; (b), Non-Treated farmers are those who did not have chance to directly participate in the project (non-participants) but were found at similar socio-economic status by the time the project was introduced in 2018. While we have randomly selected the direct project beneficiaries (participants) non-project participants (control group) were chosen by the respective Kebele administration following purposive sampling strategy.

### **3.3 Data sources and collection techniques**

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#### **3.4.1 Desk research**

A desk research was undertaken to examine available information about the project at Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Coordination Office of Nekemte. Such desk research has laid a foundation for the remaining work packages in terms of developing a deeper understanding of the project activities, in addition to providing evidence which has helped us to address the evaluation questions specified in ToR for the assessment.

The following documents have been provided and reviewed by the evaluation team.

- Project proposal approved by Generalitat Valenciana
- Project approved by Regional government of Oromia.
- Source of verification of each activity.
- List of expense incurred during the project period.
- Final technical and financial report to the donor.

#### **3.4.2 Evaluation scoping**

An evaluation scoping phase was undertaken to verify research tools for the assessment of the project at Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Coordination Office in Nekemte. The scoping stage also involved further discussions on the design and development of the focus group discussion, key informant interviews and case studies which has formed a core element of the methodological approach. The research tools included structured and semi-structured questionnaire that were discussed, enriched and approved by Gerard Poch and ECC Nekemte staff.



### 3.4.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

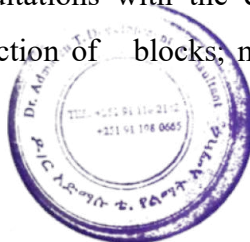
The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is one of the major instruments of primary data collection from its primary data sources. The themes of the discussion was vulnerabilities (shocks, seasonality of market and income and coping strategies) of households; sources of wealth accumulation; process of participation; livelihood strategies; migration of resources; the benefits of social asset; uses of the borrowed money; the impact of the project on their livelihood activities and their perception about the project in general. The other issues for the discussion were on the livelihoods of households and the challenges to improve the quality of their livelihoods, like technology adoptions, animal husbandry, gender relations, natural resources management, education, health services, and diversification of their livelihood strategies. Accordingly, we held two FGD in each Kebele: one with male and the other with female household heads and the results were finally combined. The information collected from such FGD was triangulated with additional information collected from key informant interviews (KII), questionnaire and observations.

### 3.4.4 Key Stakeholder Interviews

We have developed criteria of choosing respondents for KII in consultation with ECC-SADCON staffs. On the basis of agreed criteria, respondents were selected for the KII. Accordingly, We have conducted Key informant interviews (KII) with social workers of each group, committee members of each groups, chairpersons, secretaries and cashiers of each group, heads of government relevant sectoral offices involved in the project implementation as alliance with the project implementer, as well as all employees ECC-SADCON.

### 3.4.5 Participant observation

Field observation is useful to obtain timely information by observing the general environment which will help to generate insights and findings that can serve as a base of further analysis of the collected data, and to give detailed interpretation of the information and to draw recommendation. On top of that, this method is essential to complement the collected data and will be used to understand the context in which information is collected. Thus, field visits were done on some selected sites, in consultations with the client and all relevant stakeholders. Specifically, we have observed construction of blocks; material supports given to the saving





groups; cattle crushes; water fountains, troughs for animal consumptions, small irrigation systems, beehives contributed to the farmers for beekeeping, etc.

#### 3.4.6 Questionnaire

The household questionnaire survey is used to generate largely quantitative data from the selected household heads. Quantitative data was generated on economic information like income and consumption levels, assets such as; productive assets, quality and tenure of shelter, land and livestock, access to infrastructure, access to training and education, skills, health services, household labor availability, membership in community groups, financial services such as savings and access to credit, livelihood strategies includes number and type of activities, farm, non-farm, off- farm remittances received, migration patterns, income by source, access to rural assets and seasonal variation in strategies, indicators of livelihood security and demographic characteristics of households relating to the project implementation.

#### **4. Ethical consideration**

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During the data collection, ethical considerations were seriously considered to ensure the integrity, anonymity, consents and other human elements of the informants. Besides the purpose of the research, duties and responsibilities of the participants and risks of participation were thoroughly discussed with participants and reach upon consensus. Similarly, names are not mentioned in the questionnaire to keep anonymity and confidentiality and oral consent was obtained from the research participants to record their voice and present their images in the research report. All field notes and other documents of participants' responses were kept personal.



## 5. Results and Discussions

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In this section, we present the findings of the evaluation in detail. The evaluation report is structured according to the ToR adopting the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

### 5.1 Project Relevance

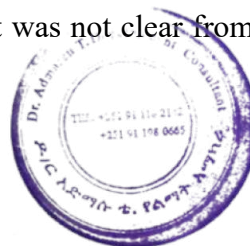
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The most unrelenting question in the review was to investigate as to whether the project interventions were still appropriate given Sasiga district's situation (social, economic, political and legal) context in particular. It also further sought the appropriateness of the local partners and their commitment to the project's objectives.

In terms of food security and unemployment rates, the project location (Sasiga district) is in dire situation in the aftermath of the 2018 political unrest in Oromia. The situation of the project area was further complicated by the Benishangul-Oromia boarder conflict of 2019 as most Sasiga district Kebele are found at the boundaries of Benishangul Gumuz region. The violence plunged most people into political, social and economic crises. It led to over 100,000 people migrate from Benishangul Gumuz to Sasiga district as refugees and left tens of thousands internally displaced. Thus, the relevance of this project with the goal to contribute to improvement and diversification of the livelihood and income of the rural farming community in the district is hardly questionable. The following are the views of the project beneficiaries on the project relevance.

#### 5.1.1 Beneficiaries' view on the project relevance

The project beneficiaries are asked to express their views on the project relevance in terms of overall project relevance, targeting criteria relevance as well as specific project activity relevance. In terms of project relevance, all focus group discussant unanimously agreed that the project falls within the scope and priorities of the government and the target communities. Unanimously all beneficiaries express a positive view of the project activities .With regard to individual beneficiary selection into the program, however, opinions are diverse. Some argued that there is no clear cut criteria to select the targeted beneficiaries while other asserts that involvement of development agents in beneficiary selection as necessary and sufficient conditions for targeting criteria relevance. Although it was not clear from FGD result as to what



criteria do development agents consider selecting households as project beneficiaries, the beneficiary selection criteria according to the project proposal were:

- ☞ Those who have initiation and full willingness to participate in the project;
- ☞ Poor members of the farming community;
- ☞ Having willingness and are ready to participate in all forms in the initiatives; and
- ☞ Having willingness to work with the saving groups/cooperative/ and respect the common rules.

It seems that these criteria are mostly subjective than objective in nature. It is hardly possible to objectively determine as to who has better initiation, willingness and readiness to participate in the project than the others. As the result, the most dominantly used beneficiary targeting criteria in all intervention kebele was “willingness to work with the saving groups/cooperative/ and respect the common rules”.

According to the beneficiaries view, anyone who was a member of primary cooperatives [saving and credit cooperatives (SAACOs) and/or multipurpose cooperatives (MPCs)] or anyone who was willing to join the cooperatives within his/her kebele was considered as target beneficiaries. This means, “the poor need to be organized in a group in the form of cooperatives” but there are no clear criteria of whom to consider as poor in this case. There are two problems with the use of cooperatives membership as criteria of targeting. The first problem widely raised by the discussants was that cooperatives in Oromia are largely established as “instrument to weaken the “human agency of the agrarian society” thereby enhancing the power of state over the smallholder farmers rather than removing some forces that have been acting against peasant domination”. Because of such widespread perception, most politically neutral poor households are less likely to join them although poor families are a criteria to be beneficiary. This means, most poor households who are not member of the cooperatives are less likely targeted. However, this long lasted negative image of cooperatives seems have diminished overtime as most smallholder farmers realized the project benefits that the members have been enjoying via cooperative membership. The following is a statement from one of our anonymous FGD participant:



*“As a farmer, I was not happy with the performances of the cooperatives and their union. Cooperatives managements were not transparent, lack accountability and responsibility for the farmers they represent. Unions and cooperative were almost never in the right place at the right time with the right product in the allocations of industrial products and seeds to the poor farmers. Given their susceptibility to predatory behaviors such as corruption, rent-seeking, abuse of public resources and a basic lack of accountability, these cooperatives have never been successful in addressing the smallholder farmers’ real interests. Now, there seems improvement as the coop managements are chosen by the members themselves and are taking a number of trainings as the result of this project.”*

Realizing the socio-economic importance of joining cooperatives and improvements in their management, there has been steady growing of interest to join them during the project period . The following table shows the number of coop members at the beginning and during the last phase of the project:

**Table 2. Change in the number of coop members**

Kebeles	Number of Coop members		Increase (number)	Increase (percent)
	During 2018	Current 2021		
Tokuma Tsige	57	124	67	117.5
Ambalta Feyera	41	82	41	100.0
Haro Feyissa	40	74	34	85.0
Badhasa Jarso	37	140	103	278.4

As can be seen from the table, there has been remarkable increase in the number of members of the cooperatives in all Kebele with minimum increase of 34 in Haro Feyissa kebele cooperatives and maximum of 103 in Badhasa Jarso kebele cooperative. The percentage of female member in each cooperative is above 39 percent with maximum member in Badhasa Jarso kebele cooperative (43 percent) and minimum member in Ambalta Feyera kebele cooperative (39 percent) of the total members. The participation of women in the cooperative also has increased comparing the initial stage of 2018.



The second problem in using cooperative membership as beneficiary targeting criteria was that not members of the cooperatives are necessarily poor. The FGD discussants in all Kebeles stated that most members in the existing cooperatives are actually better off both in terms of educational achievements and economic possessions. The discussants further expressed that some poor farmers who joined the cooperatives recently didn't receive any benefit as they are supposed to wait until six months before accessing any financial credit. This means, those farmers whose names were on the lists of the existing cooperatives have got advantage of receiving both financial and in-kind benefits of the project than those who joined the cooperatives later<sup>2</sup>. As the result, those who were actually served by the project are not necessarily the poorest of the poor in some cases.

The fact that all types of religion followers were considered is seen by the evaluation team as a positive way to engage multiple perspectives and ensure that the development intervention was relevant through being inclusive and democratic. Followers of orthodox, catholic, protestant, Wakefata and Muslim regions are joining the coops with varying numbers where 74 percent of them are protestant.

Another aspect of relevance is related to specific project activities. These activities are related to types and duration of trainings; experiences and educational backgrounds of the trainers; provision of fruits and vegetable seeds; supply of fertilizers; establishment of nursery sites and selection of tree types; provision of animals for poor and vulnerable households; construction of cattle crush; constructions of cooperatives offices and stores were the major ones.

It is clear that the objectives and business activities selected to be financed by the revolving fund have a high degree of relevance to the beneficiary objectives. We have confirmed that each member in a group is free to choose a type of business activities they need to undertake with the revolving fund. This is a remarkable departure from the business model financed by almost all microfinance institutions operating in Ethiopia in which case the members within the same group are supposed to undertake the same business activities. Such restrictions put unnecessary

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<sup>2</sup> Although the other cooperatives were using lottery methods, Tokkuma Tsigie cooperative was actually allocating in-kind benefits and revolving loans according to the orders of the name lists of the members.



limitation on the freedom of the beneficiaries to choose types of business they feel profitable to them. However, in this project case, business activities decision is actually influenced by the very limited amount of credit access (maximum of 3 times their saving balance in the case of Badhasa Jarso Kebele and 2.1 times their saving balance in the case of Tokuma Tsigie Kebele coop) that each beneficiary can get at a time<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, all project beneficiaries interviewed, including the social workers feel that the duration of the credit (one year) is too restrictive for the beneficiaries to undertake viable business activities. A lot of beneficiaries are also unhappy with timing of loan repayment. They argue that in most cases, the time they are required to pay back the loan coincide with the period when they actually need more finance to undertake the type of business they operate. They call for proper synchronization of loan disbursement and collection with each beneficiary cash outflows and inflows. Some beneficiaries prefer monthly installment repayment of their loan to the bi-annual payment.

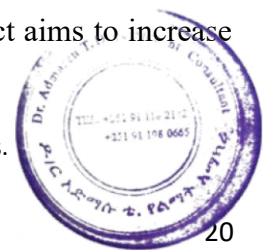
#### 5.1. 2 Partners and Project Staff view on the relevance

According to the memorandum of understanding signed, there are three project implementing partners representing three different sectors at different levels (regional, zonal and district levels). These partners were: 1) Finance and Economic Development Office, 2) Cooperative Office, and 3) Agriculture and Rural Development Office. Although the duties and responsibilities of each is clearly stipulated in the original proposal documents, one of the three sectors – Finance and Economic Development Office - hardly participate in the project implementation and monitoring and evaluation of its progress. The participation of Agriculture and Cooperative has been high through focal persons at kebele and Woreda level, but almost nonexistent at zonal level (just for mid-term and final evaluation). Regarding Finance and Economic Development Office, their participation has been almost nonexistent at the different levels. (Just for mid-term and final evaluation).

The head of Sasiga district Agriculture and Rural Development Office surprised us by stating “I used to hear about the project from others”. Asked about what the project is doing and the relevant of its activities, the head of the office explains “I heard that the project aims to increase

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<sup>3</sup> Each member should contribute mandatory saving per month was Birr 50 to the coops funds.



production and productivity of crops and animals; promote natural resources management; promote gender equality; promote cooperatives and provide community capacity buildings”. He also confirmed that most of these activities are under the very mandate of his office and are relevant for local, zonal, regional and national socio-economic policies. However, he was not sure when it comes to the relevance of the detailed operational issues such as beneficiary targeting criteria, contents of the training and trainers selection, crop seed selection, fertilizer distribution, nursery site and tree species selection, supply of animals to the beneficiaries and other activities.

Similarly, the heads of Sasiga district Finance and Economic Development Office, as well as Sasiga district natural resources and rural land management officers stated that they have never participated in the implementation of any of the project activities. They acknowledged the relevance of the project objectives as they heard informally about it but are not sure when it comes to the detailed operational activities. In contrast, the head of Sasiga district Cooperatives office admitted that he has participated in the handing over of cooperatives office built at Tokuma Tsigie and Haro Feyissa Kebeles but unaware of the detailed operational activities of the project.

Asked why those expected project implementing partners are not actively participating, the Social and Development Executive Coordinator of the project states “as the heads of most sectors are summarily changing owing to the political turbulence in the region, we have decided to strongly work with some selected focal persons from each office”. He also maintained that “the current sectoral heads are most likely new to the project as they might have been newly assigned and hence know less about the project.” The coordinator also established that his office has been strongly working in close collaboration with some focal persons representing each sector although not necessarily the sectoral heads. The project staffs also share the same view with the coordinator.







Finance and Economic Development Bureau rarely communicate about the project with its zonal office and neither the zonal office has good communication with the Sasiga district finance and economic development office about the project. As the result, the district finance and economic development office was hardly exercising its expected roles as expected in the planning document: coordinating other project implementing partners; facilitating the purchase of materials for the project and support the administration of work permits; ensuring that its staff and associates carry out monitoring and evaluation; facilitating the process of delivery of activities and equipment and materials; and mediating in case of misunderstandings and conflicts between others and the parties.

Eventually, most of project implementing partners at different levels were actually inactive participants with the exception of Sasiga district cooperative promotion office and agriculture office . To some extent, Sasiga district cooperative promotion office has participation records. Up on the completion of cooperatives offices and stores constructions at Tokuma Tsigie and Haro Feyissa Kebeles, the office head had participated in project handovers. The office was also used to receive reports from each SACCOs and MPCs about the project but had no record of using the reports for project monitoring and evaluation purposes. The reports from each cooperative were considered merely as a requirement for formality but hardly for monitoring and evaluation. The district cooperative promotion office also used to audit the financial records of each cooperative annually although no feedback has been provided to any SACCO or MPC since the project life.

Although there seems no periodical project monitoring and evaluation exercises except from internal ECC and FPS, all the project implementing partners at the regional and zonal level have actually participated in project mid- term and final evaluations. Other expected project implementing partners such as Oromia Irrigation Authority and Water Resources Offices and the Office of Women, Children and Youths Affairs offices have no record of participation although each has roles to play according to the project planning document.

Worsening the matter of different government bureaus participation, there seems to be conflict of interest among different project implementing partners at the Kebele level. Specifically, the



relationship between each Kebele administration and SACCOs' management seems relationship between predator and prey. While the Kebele administrators perceive the SACCOs' management as rent-seekers and ineffective, the SACCOs' managements are reporting that the Kebele administrators are making unnecessary claims on their properties and illegally intervening in their activities. According to the Tokuma Tsigie and Haro Feyissa Kebeles SACCOs' management, the Kebele administrators are opening contending for the ownership of the offices and stores constructed by the project fund. As we understood from our discussion with SACCOs' management of each Kebele and ECC\_SDCON project staff, the Kebele administrators were not happy with the constructions of cooperatives office and stores from the very beginning. Instead, they wanted the construction of Kebele administration office (Haro Feyissa Keble) and construction of cattle slaughter house (Tokuma Tsigie Keble).

Unnecessary interventions in the activities of the SACCOs' management were reported at all the project intervention Kebeles. However, the level and nature of the interventions vary from Kebele to Kebele. Attempts to divert the types of project activities from its original plans and project beneficiary selection for in-kind benefit entitlement and training participation were the most common nature of unnecessary intervention reported by all Kebele SACCOs' management.

Because personal and political interest of each Kebele administrators largely deviates from the project objectives, their participation was minimal throughout the project life cycle. This means, one of those expected important project partners at the grass root level was practically missed. In the final project planning document, it was stated

*“A monitoring mechanism is established by kebele and in coordination with the local central office, through which a progress report will be presented every four months to assess the achievements and eventual areas for improvement. This will evaluate the degree of efficiency of the execution, the fulfillment of the results, the impact on improving access to food in the area and the degree of involvement of all the actors”.*

Thus, given the contradictory objectives and hence the counterproductive involvement of each Kebele administration in the project implementation, it is not logical to expect periodical progress reports from the Kebele level. Of course, none of the Kebele administrators were able to show us any progress report related to the project.



### 5.2.1 Progress on objectives/ outcomes

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the project may be gauged by examining the extent to which the project has been attaining its outputs or objectives so far. Thus, our assessment below is related to those indicators which can be assessed at individual participant households only. Accordingly, the following table shows the details of target, actual achievements and changes

**Figure 1. Project effectiveness indicators and achievements**

<i>Results</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	Target	Actual	% achieved	Data sources
Result 1: Small producers see their agricultural production improved from sustainably, increasing the availability of food in quantity and quality to meet their nutritional needs.	At least 25% of beneficiary households see their average cereal production (maize, just sorghum, etc.) increase by 30% or more at the end of the second year of the project.	7	12.4	177%	Compared survey result with target
	The average monetary income of project beneficiaries increased by 20% at the end of the second year of the project (Birr).	5,718	18,867	330%	Compared survey result with target
	Beneficiary households will have a greater number of months for crop production to meet annual household cereal needs (%).	70	32	45.7%	Compared survey result with target
	Farmers improve their knowledge of small-scale irrigation use and techniques by the end of the second year of the project.	200	163	81.5%	Compared terminal report result with target
	Construction of soil terraces for soil and water conservation at the end of the second year of the project.	40km	40km	100%	Terminal report result with target
	Construction of control dams for recovery gullies and gullies formed by runoff water erosion	80 m3	98.5 m3	123%	Terminal report result with target
	Tree seedlings produced in the nurseries and planted at the selected planting sites by the end of the second year of the project.	50,000	83,357	166.7	Terminal report result with target
Result 2: Small producers' access to diversified and improved livestock production that contributes to enriching their diet and generating income.	Farmers have improved their knowledge of crop productivity before the end of the second year of the project.	2000	2016	100%	Terminal report result with target
	A structure for veterinary treatment of cattle is available in two Kebeles at the end of the second year of the draft	2	2	100%	Terminal report result with target
	There are 4 drinking troughs for cattle in each of the 4 Kebeles at the end of the 2nd year of the project.	4	4	100%	Terminal report result with target
	Upgrade of the training of 4 veterinarians	4	7	175%	Compared survey result with target
	Supply of chickens for egg production to 40 farmers	40	40	100%	Compared survey result with target
	Supply of sheep or goats to raise and fatten farmers	90	108	110%	Survey result
	Supply of improved hives for honey production at the end of the second year of the project	20	20	100%	Compared survey result with target
	Supply of 12 cattle for fattening to 12 poor farmers at the end of the second year of the project.	12	12	100%	Compared survey result with target
Outcome 3 Strengthening of community organization allowing the active	Support for primary cooperatives with some furniture (3 tables, 10 chairs and 3 benches)	2	2	100%	Compared survey result with target
	Formation of cooperative committees on basic accounting, administration, audits, business planning	4	4	100%	Compared survey result with target



involvement of small producers.	and marketing, savings and credit management.				
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In terms of percentage achievements of each target, it seems that the project is remarkably effective. Regarding the trainings, most training has reached the target goal – number of beneficiaries - designed in the project formulation and log frame as per the sources of verification. Specifically, through the project 152 beneficiaries (52 women and 100 men) have been trained in forest resource management and reforestation, and 655 TD have been taken forest seedlings with practical training. (336% of the target ; Regarding the target of 480 beneficiaries they were equipped with practical knowledge in soil fertility management, termite control, soil and water conservation, etc. At the end of the second year of the project, 82TD received support to small farmers in compost preparation , 456TD received training in soil fertility management, termite control and soil and water conservation; 162 TD (19 female y 143 male) farmers were provided training to improve their knowledge of small-scale irrigation use and techniques (81% of the target); 217 farmers (90 women and 127 men), have received training to improved their knowledge of beekeeping, livestock production, and animal feed preparation and handling, and prevention and treatment of animal health ( 98,6% of the target); 7 veterinaries had received training on animal health (175% of the target). All the four cooperatives committees had received training on basic accounting, administration, accounting, audits, business planning and marketing, savings and credit management (100% of the target) and 144 TD (58 women and 86 men) had received training in income generation and entrepreneurship activities ( 72% of the target).



## 5.2. 2 Effectiveness in terms of Promoting Coops

The intervention logic of promoting cooperatives was based on the baseline findings which showed lack of capital and basic infrastructure such as warehouses, meeting rooms and offices which have limited their participation in commercial activities and the availability of consumer goods and agricultural inputs to their members. The effectiveness of the project can be gauged by examining the extent to which the project has solved those bottlenecks.

In terms of infrastructural development, one block of building consisting of separate office for each SACCO and MPC and common store room were constructed in Tokuma Tsigie and Haro Feyissa Kebeles. Office furniture such as tables, chairs, vault and file folders were also supplied. However, the compound of each cooperative has neither fence nor guards and is simply found in open spaces (the following figure 4 and 6 show the facilities). There was no such infrastructure development and office supply assistance made to the other cooperatives in the rest two Kebeles. Cooperatives in the Ambelta Feyera Kebele have very recently constructed a small office from wood materials but don't have office facilities such as vault, tables, chairs and any file cabinet while cooperatives in the Badhassa Jarso Kebele are using very old and physically deteriorated office made up of woods. Figure 5 and 7 show the office conditions of Badssa Jarso and Ambelta Feyera Kebele cooperatives respectively. In terms of capacity building, different trainings had been conducted for the committees and members of the cooperatives to improve their knowledge in management, accountability, business plan and credit and saving which seems to be effective. Also the capital of the cooperative and its member have increased considerably since the project started and confidence of better management by cooperative committees has been raised in FGD.





Figure 2. Cooperatives Office and store at Tokuma Tsigie Kebele

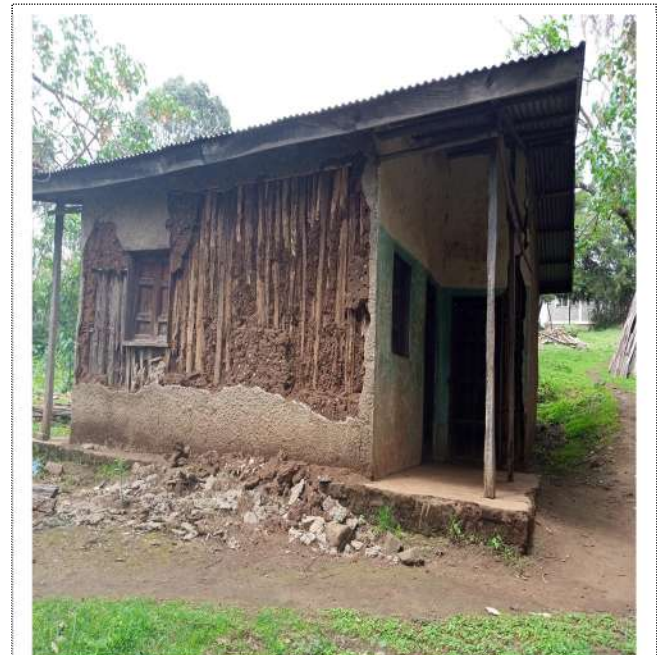


Figure 3. Cooperatives Office at Badassa Jarso



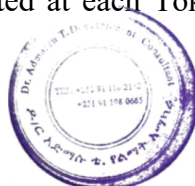
Figure 4. . Cooperatives Office and store at Haro Feyissa Kebele



Figure 5. Cooperatives Office at Ambelta Feyera

### 5.2.3 Effectiveness in terms of Promoting animal health

According to the project planning document, the need for greater support for the care of animals has also been detected, reinforcing the veterinary component and the supplies and infrastructures necessary for the existing small herds to have a good state of health. And along with this, the need for cattle crushes, access to safe water, both for livestock and human consumption were the major targets. Accordingly, a number of activities were performed with a varying degree of success. One cattle crush was constructed at each Tokuma Tsigie and Badassa Jarso Kebeles.



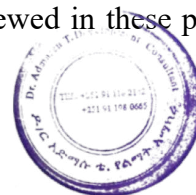
However, those cattle crushes are apparently not as much in use as it would expect to be. The one constructed at Badassa Jarso Kebele was built at the site very far from a village at which the farmers used to access vaccination for their livestock. As information obtained from the community and confirmed by the veterinary personnel, the location is not convenient for cattle vaccination as it is very far from villages with large livestock population. However, the site location was selected by the Office of animal husbandry at Woreda level although ECC staff and community raised the issue. The other cattle crush constructed at Tokuma Tsigie Kebele, Similar to Badassa Jarso Kebele case, the veterinary personnel and the community are arguing that it was built based on wrong design. Future sustainability depends on the involvement of the animal husbandry bureau since ECC hand over the two cattle crash to the respective Kebeles bureaus.

The project also aims to work on animal health and consumption by focusing on aspects related to the low nutritional quality of the communal pastures in which the existing cattle graze and the water points as a trough. Different fodder seeds and seedlings have been introduced and distributed but it is difficult the impact on animal nutritional quality. Along with these, the project also aims to reinforce the care of livestock and the resources to combat or cure diseases, for which it aimed to support and strengthen the work of the veterinary clinics in the area. In viewed in these aspects, although there were a number of activities and trainings, the effectiveness and the sustainability of the achievements are difficult to measure.

On the other hand, four fountains for human consumptions and four cattle troughs were constructed at a four Kebeles and are giving service. They are springing up water but the wash comite established and trained seems to face some challenge to keep the area clean, at least for the water source visited. Regarding the four cattle trough constructed, it seems that the one in Haro Fayisa kebele is not providing water due to water shortage during the dry season. However, source of verification and FGD assure that they are providing service during the year

#### 5.2.4 Effectiveness in terms of Women empowerment

According to the project document, gender approach is a crosscutting issue, strengthening not only their inclusion at the productive level, but also reinforcing their empowerment for decision-making, through the mechanisms established in cooperatives. Viewed in these perspectives, the



effectiveness of the project is far below par. Only very few women actually participated in the management of cooperatives and all SACCO are led by male although women membership has increased since the project intervention. The WASH committee established had a minimum of women presence but some of them left after project due to different challenges. Also a minimum of women (30%) were targeted for the different activities but no gender raising awareness was implemented during project. This means the women are hardly participating in decision making over issues affecting their lives. At the community level, asked whether there is any form of gender discrimination, about 35 percent of the survey households confirmed prevalence of gender discriminations. At the household level, 25 percent of the surveyed households believe that the husband only makes household decisions while about 75 percent confirmed joint decision making by wife and husband. Women are also identified with less capital and income possession as compared to their male counterparts. While the average annual income of the male is Birr 20,974 the women earn about Birr 15,196 with a difference of Birr 5,778 per year

#### 5.2.5 Effectiveness in terms sustainable agriculture development

According to the project document, it aims to contribute to sustainable agricultural development based on the diversification of crops and support for the diversification of income sources, via the implementation of small-scale irrigation systems, diversification of crops and incorporation of more trees for forestry home garden, and construction of terraces. Seeds vegetables and different multipurpose trees have been distributed to thousand of farmers and 40 km of terraces constructed, so we expected a more sustainable agricultural development and a benefit for the environment reducing soil and water erosion. It also aims to construct small-scale irrigation systems, sink and river diversion; and to provide training in small-scale irrigation use and techniques to 200 farmers. Accordingly, a small-scale irrigation system was constructed on a river named lag Lakku with the aim to benefit a number of households. A number of farmers were also received training in small-scale irrigation use and techniques. However, the canal of small-scale irrigation system was affected by a flood and needs maintenance to give the expected results.





## 5.2.6 Management effectiveness

To assess the management effectiveness we gauged how it addressed changes in Oromia's context, conflict, establishment of monitoring and evaluation system, implementing financial management, building local actors and leveraging on new opportunities. In terms of addressing the changing environment and conflict, the management was neutral despite the changing circumstances and conflicts of interest among the project implementing partners bringing project activities to a halt. The ECC\_SDCON project management hardly briefs about the project to newly assigned sectoral heads owing to the recent changing political circumstances in Oromia. Instead of keeping the new incumbents, the management preferred working with some focal persons representing each sector. As the result, most of the top officials of each sectoral heads are unaware of the project activities.

## 5.3 Efficiency

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The fundamental question is whether the intervention methods, institutional structure and financial, technical and operational resources and procedures available helped or hindered the achievement of the project outcomes and objectives. However, as the concept of efficiency (input-output ratio) is the relationship between resources and results, it is a relative; not an absolute concept, and requires a reference point to be meaningfully measured. Efficiency is almost impossible to evaluate for each activity, in the absence of comprehensive data on spending (based on actual disbursements), and aggregate performance indicators for the period. We have seen level of achievement of each activity due to technical source verification and final report, but it has been difficult to trace each cost of the activity since the financial justification has been by budget lines. Without cost data related to specific activities, it becomes hardly possible to apply standard quantitative scientific approach of efficiency measurement. Nevertheless, the qualitative evaluation allows observations on both the resourcing of interventions and their management. Accordingly, the evaluation team efficiency assessment is described as follows.

In respect of the efficiency of the project, it appears that the majority of activities were broadly efficient when judged from the perspective of what they achieved relative to the resources



committed to them. Key assessment underpinning this judgment relate to the fact that in a number of cases the project has produced outputs that would have cost significantly more had they been produced by government parastatals of the same locations. However, this observation doesn't necessarily mean that the project implementing entity and its activities were actually seamless. However, we could not make any judgment because it is difficult to trace each activity cost the way finance report has been prepared.

## 5.4 Project Impacts

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As explained above, effectiveness and efficiency are judged within the specific parameters of the ToR evaluated against the agreed objectives and outcomes, and within the available resource constraints. These evaluation criteria are immediate outputs of the project activities. In contrast, impact is not the immediate outputs, and is likely to be influenced by other variables. Thus, a project can be effective and efficient, but still have less impact for impact is more likely influenced by other factors external to the project.

### 5.4.1 Impacts of training

In terms of community mobilization and training (investment in capacity-building), it is cumbersome practice to precisely measure such impacts as the expected impacts were defined in general terms. However, given the fact that all trainers were government sectoral employees who are less experienced and have little to share from their own experiences, it is highly unlikely for such trainings to result in tangible impacts. The evaluation team has attempted to capture an improvement in know-how and awareness raising that is attributable to the project and found very little evidence. In some cases, the farmers barely remember the topic of training they have attended. In other cases they said that the trainings help them to improve their agriculture performance, income generating activities, and saving and credit. Moreover, the trainees were mostly interested in the per diem they used to collect rather than the expected skill improvement and attitudinal changes. For the smallholder farmers, attending the training sessions were simply considered as pre-conditions for the per diem allowance. On the top of this, because similar trainers were giving a number of training sessions on different occasions, some farmers were less enthusiastic to attend the trainings for they were already familiar with the trainers. However in terms of different training topics, most of the trainings have been conducted as expected, and





#### 5.4. 4 Impacts of investing on Cooperatives promotions

All the partners and project staff involved in the project from project coordinators, social workers and trainers decisively endorsed the relevance and importance of the cooperative promotion activities performed by the project. Promotion of cooperatives and construction of infrastructure were deemed good solutions towards the achievement of the objectives of the project as the result of which there has been steady increase in memberships. Promotion of cooperatives was seen as a major move to establish order and ease in access of funds, one of the major obstacles for rural households' productivity. The beneficiaries felt that organizing them to form cooperatives was not only helping in terms of social cohesion, but also ensured that members of the cooperative could get access to agricultural inputs and sell their products in harmony. Those who have been trained on marketing and forming cooperatives were of the opinion that, the project has helped them form a cooperative where they save finances and maintain order by sharing resources and market spaces. Initially they were not well organized and instead of working together to grow their businesses, they were busy with jealousy of each other and sometimes endangering their lives as the following verbatim from a woman in Ambelta Feyera Kebele cooperative member shows:

*Before this project came, we were not organized! We would just meet sometimes at "Edir" and "debo" but never ever appreciated each other. Instead, we were each jealousy of each other and rarely see each other's strengths. We also used to think as if saving is only for those who have excess. As the result, we used to consume everything we produce. Before the project, we couldn't afford to even purchase agricultural inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizers as the result of which we were in a vicious circle of poverty. Thanks to this project, now we are able to get access to the revolving fund and easily buy agricultural inputs as the result of which we could produce more than before from the same plots of land.*

Overall, the project has solved some of the major bottlenecks of the cooperatives related to lack of capital and basic infrastructure such as warehouses, meeting rooms and offices. As the result, the project has unleashed the capacity of the cooperatives and hence increased



their participation in commercial activities and the availability of consumer goods and agricultural inputs to their members.

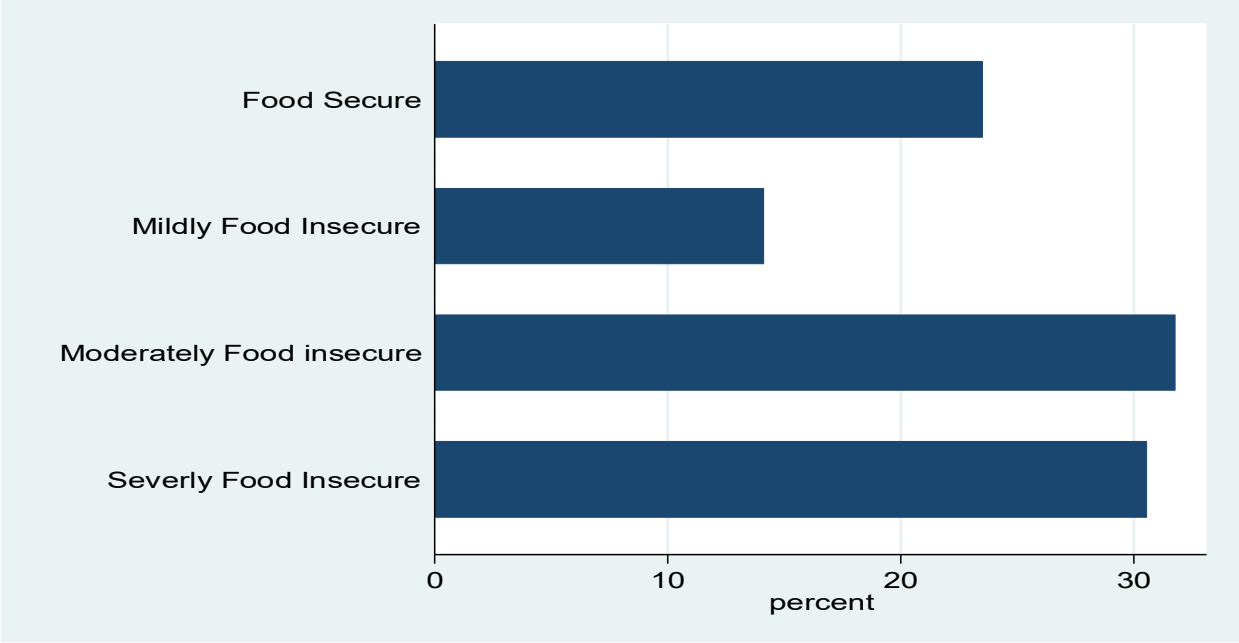
#### 5.4. 5 Impacts on Food security

The ultimate goal of the project was to improving food security in rural areas by improving agricultural production which is the base for enhancing availability and access to food. Thus, as the main objective of this impact assessment was to assess household food insecurity as measure of availability and access to food, we have examined household food insecurity status using Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS). Following (Coates, Swindale, & Bilinsky, 2007, PP. 18-19), we have first detemined household food insecurity access scale (HFIAS). The HFIAS score is a continuous measure of the degree of food insecurity (access) in the household in the past four weeks. First, a HFIAS score variable was calculated for each household by summing the codes for each frequency-of-occurrence question. Before summing the frequency-of-occurrence codes, we have coded frequency-of-occurrence as 0 for all cases where the answer to the corresponding occurrence question was “no”. The maximum score for a household is 27 (the household response to all nine frequency-of-occurrence questions was “often”, coded with response code of 3); the minimum score is 0 (the household responded “no” to all occurrence questions, frequency-of-occurrence questions were skipped by the interviewer, and subsequently coded as 0). The higher the score, the more food insecurity (access) the household experienced. The lower the score, the less food insecurity (access) a household experienced.

At second stage, we have grouped the households into four food insecurity prevalence (HFISP). A food secure household experiences none of the food insecurity (access) conditions, or just experiences worry, but rarely. In contrast, a mildly food insecure (access) household worries about not having enough food sometimes or often, and/or is unable to eat preferred foods, and/or eats a more monotonous diet than desired and/or some foods considered undesirable, but only rarely. However, it does not cut back on quantity nor experience any of three most severe conditions (running out of food, going to bed hungry, or going a whole day and night without eating). A moderately food insecure household sacrifices quality more frequently, by eating a monotonous diet or undesirable foods sometimes or often, and/or has started to cut back on quantity by reducing the size of meals or number of meals, rarely or sometimes. However, note that it does not experience any of the three most severe conditions. A severely food insecure



household has graduated to cutting back on meal size or number of meals often, and/or experiences any of the three most severe conditions (running out of food, going to bed hungry, or going a whole day and night without eating), even as infrequently as rarely. In other words, any household that experiences one of these three conditions even once in the last four weeks is considered severely food insecure. The following graph shows household food insecurity prevalence.



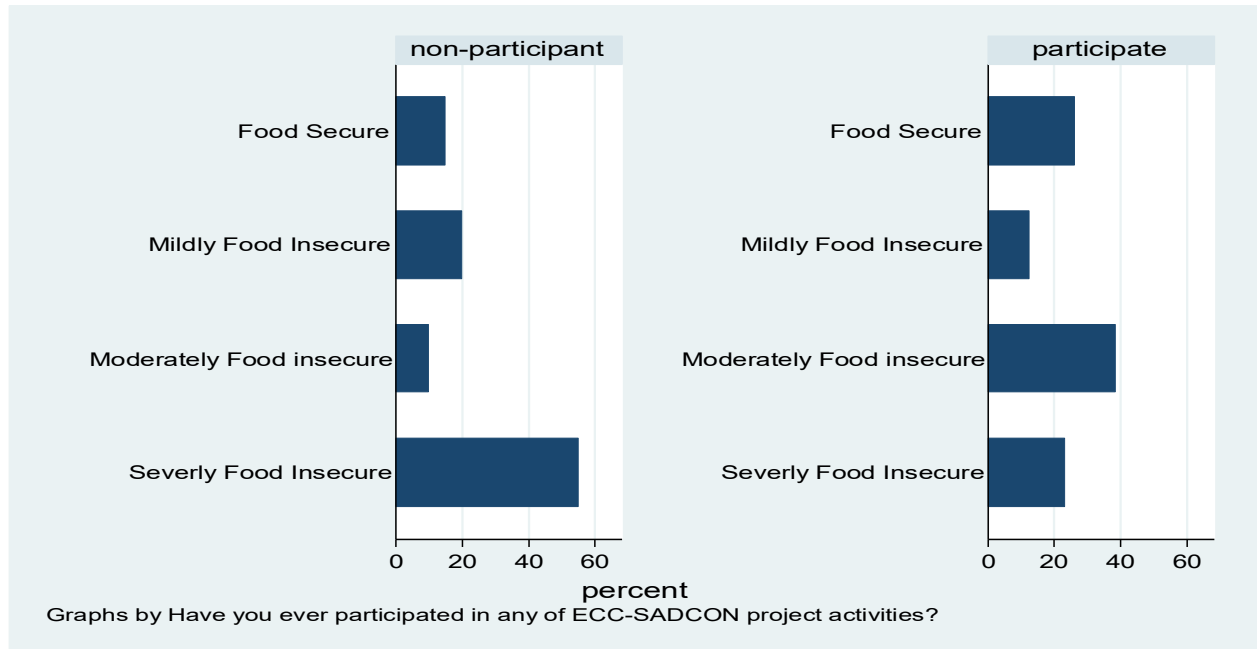
**Figure 6. Household food insecurity prevalence of the study areas**

As shown by the above figure, only about 24 percent of the surveyed households were food secured while 14 percent of them are mild food insecure. In contrast, about 32 percent of the surveyed households were moderately food insecure while 30 percent of them were actually severely food insecure households. This means the majority of the surveyed households were actually food insecure by the time this data was collected.

Now, the important question is whether there has been any improvement in the household food insecurity prevalence as the result of the project. To adequately address this question, we need to have baseline (before the project) data and outcome (after the project) data both on the project participants and non-participant households. However, as there was no baseline data on the household food insecurity prevalence, we couldn't make change in the household food insecurity access scale that can be scientifically ascribed to the project. Instead, we have collected



household food insecurity prevalence data both on the project participants and non-participants so that we can compare the two groups of households. The following figure shows this comparison.



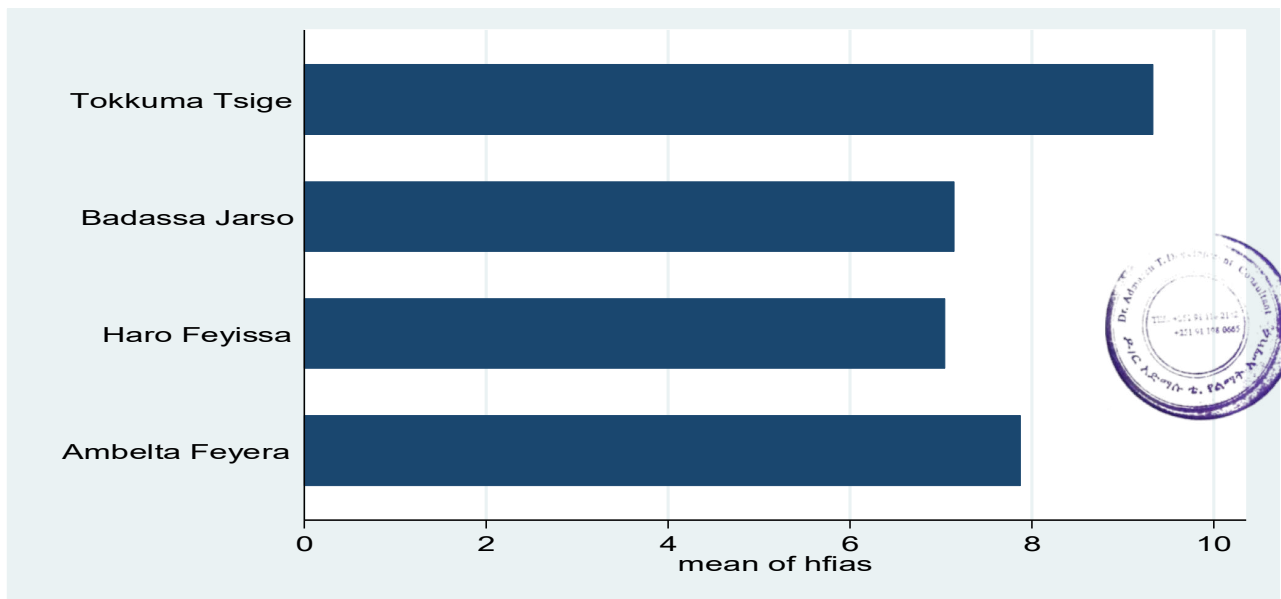
**Figure 7. Household food insecurity prevalence by farmers groups**

As vividly seen from the graph, while 26 percent of project participants were classified as food secured households, only 15 percent of the non-project participants were actually in this group. On the contrary, while about 55 percent of the non-project participants were classified as severely food insecure households, only 23 percent of the project participants were classified in this group. This clearly shows that those households who have directly participated in the project are more likely food secured than the non-participants. Another comparison is on the basis of moderately food insecure households. As one can see from the graph, while 36 percent of the project participants were classified as moderately food insecure households only 10 percent of the non-project participants were actually classified in this group. This could be because most households who were in severe food insecure category might have moved to the lower level of food insecurity group which is moderate food insecurity. 32% of the families interviewed state a better food security status than before and assure they have greater number of months for crop production to meet annual household cereal needs. This again confirms the impact of the project in increasing their food security status. However, these conclusions need to be made with very



caution as we don't have any information related to both farmers groups food security status before the project. In case those project participants had priory better food security as compared to the non-project participants, this conclusion could be misleading. However, if the project participation were purely random, it could be fairly concluded that the project has achieved marvelous impact in terms of improving household food security.

Another striking finding is that the effect of the project on household food security varies by location. While the project has made great food security improvement impact in the case of Haro Feyisa and Badassa Jarso Kebeles, there seems no impact on the case of Tokuma Tsigie Kebele (note that the higher the mean of HFIAS, the more household food insecurity prevalence and vice versa). This finding is consistent with FGD results. While cooperatives in the other Kebeles were relatively transparent in allocating revolving funds and in-kind contributions of the project, cooperatives in Tokuma Tsigie Kebele were criticized for lack of transparency in allocating those benefits. The following figure shows this result.

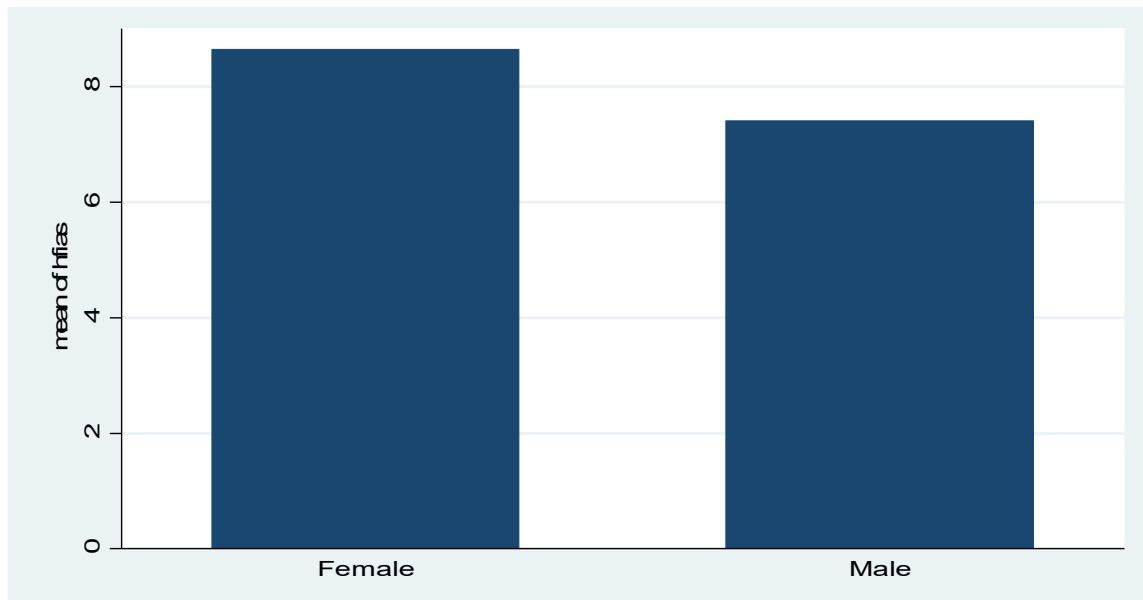


**Figure 8. Household food security status by Kebele**

Another interesting finding is related to household food insecurity scale difference by gender. As explained above, the role of the project in addressing gender parity was poor. Most of activities target 30% of women but gender awareness campaigns to change attitudinal behavior in gender parity has not taken place. As the result, the impact of the project improving female headed



households' food security status is not as remarkable as for the male headed households. The following figure shows this reality.



**Figure 9. Food security status by the sex of the household heads**

As one can read from the above figure, male headed households are identified with lower mean household food insecurity (HFIAS) scale while female headed households are relatively with higher on the scale. This clearly shows that the impact of the project in improving household food security situation varies by the sex of the households in which female headed are at disadvantageous position. This finding is also consistent with our qualitative information as described under project effectiveness section.

## 5.5 Sustainability



We have assessed project impact sustainability at two levels: firstly, in relation to the sustaining of the cooperatives and their infrastructure; secondly, in terms of the sustainability of effects and outcomes generated through the project activity after the project is phased out.

### Sustainability of the cooperatives

As explained under the project effectiveness assessment section above, there has been steady increase in the membership of the cooperatives induced by the project interventions. However, member drop outs were being recorded during the last two months before project has phased out

in Tokuma Tsigie Kebele and increased member drop outs since the time of project phase out. This member drop outs can be ascribed to two different reasons. The first reason, mainly in the case of Tokuma Tsigie Kebele, was because of the fact that the farmers were told to get revolving fund of three (3) times of their saving balance during training provision while actually they were given merely two (2) times their saving balance. The second reason, which is of course, similar across all Kebele, is that because the project has already phased out the members felt that they don't have any more incentive to remain in the cooperatives. This misconception of the cooperatives member may be ascribed to their shallow understanding of the nature of a project and the need to be in a cooperative even without external assistance, which can be again ascribed to lack of effective training. Coupled with poor relationships between the cooperative management and their respective Kebele administrators, the sustainability of the cooperatives after the project phase out could be challenged although they have good capital balance and more members at the moment.

There are other pressing factors threatening the sustaining of the unity of the cooperatives members. These factors include but not limited to: lack of committed and transparent management; lack of working premise or gathering places (in the case of Ambelta Feyera and Badassa Jarso Kebeles); lack of adequately trained manpower although training has been taken place and they state better knowledge (accountant to manage the assets of cooperative); lack of office furniture and infrastructures such as computer, vault, tables and chairs (again in the case of Ambelta Feyera and Badassa Jarso Kebeles). Given the fact that most the committee members were simply nominated with no or very little literacy level, it would be unfounded to expect them to lead and sustain the unity of their respective cooperatives in the absence of assistance from external.

### **Sustainability of the project activities**

With regard to the sustainability of the specific activities of the project we mention above that the irrigation system and cattle crash already face some challenges due to wrong site selection and bad construction in the case of the irrigation system. Regarding the other constructions like cooperatives and water sources, they have been hand over the community and they are being used and providing service. With regard to the sustainability of the specific activities of the



project we mention above that the irrigation system and cattle crash, the kebeles, as final recipients of the infrastructures and equipments, will have the responsibility of their proper use and maintenance.

## 6. Lessons learned

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As a result of the evaluation conducted, it was possible to glean the following lessons learned:

**Lessons learnt 1:** One of the main lessons learnt is lack of involvement of multiple stakeholders especially the beneficiaries in the project design. This lead to difficulties in getting profiled beneficiaries because of vague beneficiary targeting criteria.

**Lessons learnt 2:** The other limitation of the project was related to weak and sometimes counterproductive involvement of the expected project implementing sectors, specifically at the lower level of governance such as at Kebele level.

**Lessons learnt 3:** There is heightened need to involve public universities as project implementing partners.

**Lessons learnt 4:** The monitoring and evaluation system was not effective as the expected project implementing partners were not actively participating. Monitoring and evaluation was not actually in place for this project because the Kebele administration miserably failed to shoulder its responsibility for timely project activity report as per this project document. Furthermore, the field staffs were not using constantly the standard template for periodical reporting of project activities introduced by the FPS expatriate.

**Lessons learnt 5:** there is a need to solicit qualified and well experienced trainers with proven communication skills for each training session. Arbitrarily picking of trainers from sectoral office would not serve in some cases any purpose. It is also wise to critically train a limited number of farmers on a given issue, who will be used as a catalyst to change the attitudes of their respective Kebeles instead of “mass induction”. There is also a need to follow up on the behavioral and attitudinal changes of the trainers as the result of each training module. There is a need to conduct pre-training and post training tests to gauge any behavioral and attitudinal changes that could be ascribed to the training.



**Lessons learnt 6:** The relationship between the project staff and its expected lower level partners was bumpy due to lack of clear, specified and agreed upon roles at lower level. As the ever changing political situation in Oromia is necessitating rotation of sectoral heads very frequently, there is a need to brief each newly coming incumbent of each sector so as to maintain good relationships with all partners. There as a heightened need to closely work with all government administrative organs and specifically at the Kebele and district level.

**Lessons learnt 7:** The duration allocated to the project was short given that there were many project set-up activities that took longer than expected. Ideally for such a project, the duration of 2 years was generally short and could work better within duration of minimum of 3 years so as to achieve the expected project objectives.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations



### 7.1 Conclusions

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Although the project meets different policy priority areas of the government and Generalitat Valenciana, the initial baseline survey and the targeting criteria were a bit shallow and were not well synchronize with the project formulation. The baseline survey largely failed to collect data on gender roles in the community and household levels. Although the intervention logics, the expected activities, outcome and the indicators are aligned with each other for smooth project implementations, monitoring and evaluations there seems also lack of involvement of multiple stakeholders in the project design and implementation. As the result, the beneficiary targeting criteria were quite vague.

The project and its objectives were relevant based on the views of project staff, project implementing partners and beneficiaries across all the Kebeles. The project was vital in addressing their personal struggles such as unemployment, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as the social stability and economic growth of the people. However, there are divergent views on the relevance of each specific activities of the project. Some stakeholders such as the local sectoral heads and some veterinary personnel views contradicted with the view of the other stakeholders such as project staffs backing the relevance of the project activities. The other limitation of the project was related to weak and sometimes counterproductive involvement of

some expected project implementing sectors, specifically at the lower level of governance such as at Kebele level. As the memorandum of understanding was signed at the regional level with each expected project implementing sectors, their respective offices at zonal and district levels seem to have few idea of the project.

Although on a balance, the project has achieved most of its targeted outcomes and had positive impact in household food security and household income reaching most of expected goals and indicators; its effectiveness had a number of gaps. The gaps were wide when it comes to addressing gender parity, construction of small-scale irrigation systems and construction of viable cattle crushes. In fact, these activities were performed but hardly led to the achievement of the project overall objectives. The trainings were given by employees merely recruited from government sectoral offices who in some cases hardly possesses the required skills and experiences although the results differs on the type of training and beneficiary perception.

The effectiveness of the project as local partners was of contrasting opinions, clearly showing the bumpy relationship between the project management and the local partners, specifically at each Kebele level. According to the project management, the level of support from local government, specifically at the Kebele level was below what had been expected


The project has achieved important millstones in terms of impact on improving the business of cooperatives and improving household food security. Promotion of cooperatives and construction of infrastructure were deemed good solutions towards the achievement of the objectives of the project as the result of which there has been steady increase in memberships. Promotion of cooperatives was seen as a major move to establish order and ease in access of funds, one of the major obstacles for rural households' productivity. In terms of improving household food security, however, the achievement varies by location and gender. While the project has had remarkably improved household food security at Haro Feyissa and Badassa Jarso Kebeles, the result was poor in the case of Tokuma Tsigie Kebele.





the 50 Birr monthly savings of members lost without being registered on the members saving books, especially in the case of Ambelta Feyera Kebele SACCO.

- 6) The monitoring and evaluation system of the project was not regular and quite defective. There is a need to assign a specific staff to this task. This will ensure an effective and regular reporting from the field to the headquarters and other stakeholders. Although FPS expatriate introduce a monthly technical report, it has not monthly and regularly fulfilled by the project coordinator.
- 7) The relationship between the project staff and its expected lower level partners was bumpy due to lack of clear, specified and agreed upon roles at lower level. As the ever changing political situation in Oromia is necessitating rotation of sectoral heads very frequently, there is a need to brief each newly coming incumbent of each sector so as to maintain good relationships with all partners. There as a heightened need to closely work with all government administrative organs and specifically at the Kebele and district level.
- 8) There is heightened need to involve public universities as project implementing partners. As all public universities have earmarked budget and designated office named “Research and Community service vice president”, any development project could be more successful if implemented in collaboration with such office as implementing partners. The involvement of universities could make a difference in project implementation because of two reasons. Firstly, such public universities can involve more educated and experienced staffs during needs assessment, baseline survey, and the project design, training provisions as well as monitoring and evaluations. Secondly, because public universities have earmarked budget for research and community services, they can happily welcome such developmental projects and contribute ‘matching funds’ for their effective implementations.

  
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