



Ethiopia Sidama Highlands

Highland restoration

Stopping erosion while fighting poverty



Aromo Village

Summary

We all know that education is core to the development of the poorest nations: how can one break the vicious circle when no cash economy is available to send kids to school? Providing long term jobs to women in these remote regions makes this possible. Our local planting partner Eden Reforestation Projects empowers these single mothers and widows who work year after year in our projects to be self sufficient and to be able to pay for school and medical care. New micro-enterprises are also being created. All this while delivering WeForest's objective of restoring a deforested and severely eroded area threatened by desertification.



Highland nursery

Why this project?

Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries. Out of a population of around 80 million people (2008), 35 million people (44%) are living in abject poverty and more than 12 million people are chronically or at least periodically food insecure. Most of them live in rural areas with agriculture as their main occupation.



Escarpment nursery

What is our objective?

With 80% of Ethiopians dependent on agriculture as their main livelihood, poverty has been made worse by severe arid conditions due to persistent lack of rainfall coupled with civil disputes. All efforts have been made to improve conditions in Ethiopia but progress remains elusive. Sadly, the extremely poor people are often the small and marginal farmers.



Women planting

Some of the prime causes of poverty in Ethiopia include:

- Loss of forest cover during 20 last years and arid conditions leading to irregular production in the agriculture sector
- The two year long war in Eritrea that caused massive population displacements in the south, increasing substantial pressure on the soil



Children of Aromo

How do we work?

Africa's forest systems desperately need to be restored. However, the people also require fuel, construction, fodder and fruit trees to be planted to meet their daily and long-term needs. With this in mind, our local partner is planting a significant portion of the trees for future human use (called 'agroforestry'). How do we ensure that the trees are protected? Through engaging the local people. We find that when the local community is involved and makes a sustainable living with us, they are motivated to protect rather than harvest the restored trees.



Working with the advisor



Achieving awards



75% of the trees are *Millettia ferruginea*, *Olea Africana*, *Juniperus procera*, *Hagenia abyssinica*, *Podocarpus falcatus*, *Arundinaria alpine*, *Acacia abyssinica*, *Casurina equisetifolia*, *Acacia decurrens*, *Acacia melanoxylon*, *Pinus patula*, *Phonex reclinata*, *Grevillea robusta*, *Cuppressus lusitanica* and *Schinus molle*.

How does the local community benefit?

- Training: both permanent and seasonal workers are trained to be able to restore their environment
- Food and income: up to 10% of the seedlings planted around the forest are intended to directly and quickly benefit the local population. The 90% majority is true reforestation seedlings that are designed to restore the eroded hill slopes
- Jobs: the planting and caring of 500,000 trees provides a job to 16 permanent and 31+ seasonal workers. We hire local workers who desperately need a source of cash that frees them from the subsistence pattern
- Women: the hiring of single mothers and HIV AIDS widows ensures the greatest local impact

Where do we plant?

The WeForest trees are grown in the Gallo Argesi nursery and then transplanted to The Udo escarpment (also called Oudo Wetate), 2 km West of Awasa lake in the Aromo country, (270 kms south of Addis Abiba) in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People Region of Ethiopia.

This region belongs to the rift valley and has a dense village population

When can we plant?

The tree planting calendar follows the seasons:

- October to December: nursery work takes place, bringing truckloads of topsoil, making mulch, collecting seeds and filling planting tubes
- January to March: seedling cultivation and digging of millions of holes along the reforestation hillsides. This digging of the holes means the planting will go that much faster during the rainy season
- July and August: most of the planting takes place during these months. Depending on the rains we can eventually begin planting in late March. We therefore consider this 2 planting seasons when the weather patterns allow for it, but most years the short rains are too short. Seedlings need a minimum of 10 days of consistent rainfall to successfully survive the transplant process from nursery to reforestation site
- Late August through September: Herewith begins the final phase. Each seedling benefits from having other competitive growth removed from around the base of the baby tree.

Steve Fitch,
Founder of Eden Reforestation Projects:



Mama Sisy and her children

"Mama Sisy is the mother of 5 children from 4 different fathers. All of the husbands are now gone. When we first met this family they were considered the poorest in the village. In recent years they have found steady work as planters and now the two oldest girls of the family, Sisy (16) and Vana (14) no longer live year around with their mother – and for a good societal transformation reason. The typical cycle for a young woman in such a remote area would include being married by the age of 12 or 13. Today, these two sisters are living in a nearby city with close family friends, and both girls are attending school. Sisy wants to be a doctor and Vana wants to be a teacher. These two sisters have had their lives transformed. Imagine this pattern repeatedly taking place in family after family, village after village, and nation after nation. Poverty reduction through environmental stewardship is the way of the future".



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