

Resilient and Empowered Women and Girls in Coffee-Growing Communities - phase II

This project works with over 18,000 people from coffee-growing communities in Ethiopia. They are gaining the skills and opportunities to overcome barriers and build secure futures, with women and girls at the heart of the project.



Adanech, participant from phase I,
with her coffee tree

**RIPPLE
EFFECT**

It starts on an African farm

Location: Bensa district, Sidama zone, Ethiopia

Duration: October 2024 - September 2027

Funding partner: The Starbucks Foundation

Other partners: Ripple Effect US

THE CHALLENGE

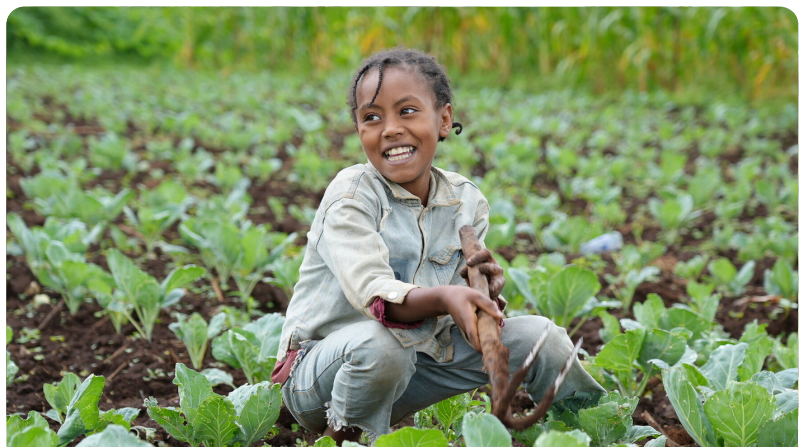
In Ethiopia's coffee-growing communities of Bensa, smallholder farming families face hunger and poverty, while unpredictable weather makes it harder to grow enough food and earn a reliable income. Women and girls are particularly affected, often carrying much of the work on farms and in the home while having less say in household decisions or community leadership. Local gender norms and practices such as early marriage can further limit their opportunities to build more secure and resilient futures.

OUR APPROACH

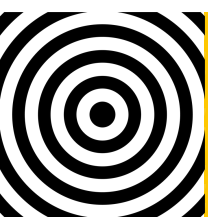
The project uses sustainable farming and gender-transformative approaches to strengthen families' resilience. In self-help groups, families build practical skills, turning their land into a reliable source of food and income, while challenging the barriers faced by women and girls.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Women empowerment
- Climate-smart farming
- Income & coffee production
- Nutrition & hygiene
- Community engagement



Project participant daughter, in their healthy field full of crops





WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women and girls often carry much of the work on farms and at home, while having less say over household decisions or community leadership. The project creates opportunities for women to build confidence, have a voice, influence decisions and take on leadership roles.

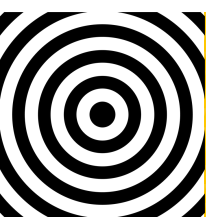
Through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), neighbours meet regularly to save together and decide on community improvements. Women develop practical leadership and assertiveness skills, including communicating confidently, managing their time and taking on responsibilities within their groups.



Project participant pointing at her family's THM results, showing the women of the family had more workload.

Families also use Ripple Effect's Transformative Household Methodology (THM) to look at how workload and decisions are shared at home, then identify changes that create greater equality.

Community events such as "We are Women, We Can Lead" bring local authorities and community members together to challenge attitudes around women's leadership.





CLIMATE-SMART FARMING

For families farming small plots and relying on rain-fed agriculture, climate pressures and soil degradation make it difficult to grow enough food. Farmers are learning practical ways to make better use of their land while protecting the resources their farms depend on.

Training covers kitchen gardens, sack mounds, organic composting, soil and water conservation and integrated pest management amongst others, with farmers putting these approaches into practice on their own fields.

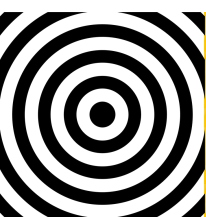
Techniques such as bench terraces, soil bunds and micro-basins slow water runoff and reduce erosion, while composting improves soil fertility without relying solely on purchased inputs.

Farmers also learn how to prepare nurseries, manage vegetable crops and strengthen coffee production through planting, pruning, mulching and pest and disease management. Improved forage such as alfalfa, desho grass, vetch, oat and lablab gives farmers additional options for feeding livestock while adding organic matter to their farms.

These elements of the whole farm system work together to strengthen resilience, helping families withstand climate shocks and keep their farms productive.



Adola, project participant, in her kitchen garden with thriving crops





INCOME & COFFEE PRODUCTION

Smallholder farmers in Bensa often rely on coffee as their main cash crop, but changing weather, pests and diseases, low productivity and limited access to markets can make income unpredictable.

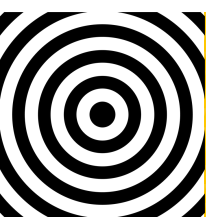
The project strengthens families' ability to save, invest and develop opportunities that make better use of what they already produce. Within their Self-Help Groups, members learn how to manage savings and loans, giving them a way to invest in small businesses and other income-generating activities.

Farmers also develop skills in enterprise development and value addition, while Cluster Level Associations (CLAs) (local organisations bringing several Self-Help Groups together), build relationships with markets, financial institutions and agricultural suppliers.

Coffee farmers access specialist production knowledge through collaboration with the Starbucks Farmer Support Center, covering areas such as coffee agronomy, soil management and post-harvest practices. Improved coffee seedlings also give farmers opportunities to strengthen their coffee farms, while value-addition activities create ways to increase the value of products before they reach the market.



Ayelech, participant from phase I, selling enset and other goods at market





NUTRITION & HYGIENE

The project supports families to grow a wider range of nutritious foods, making better use of the land and resources around their homes. Farmers grow vegetables such as carrots, beetroot, onions, cabbage and Swiss chard, alongside fruit trees like avocado.

They learn how to establish and manage kitchen gardens, from preparing planting areas and nurseries through to watering, pest management and harvesting. Training in food preparation and nutrition gives women and families practical knowledge to turn what they grow into more varied and nutritious meals.

The project also addresses the lack of safe water and sanitation that can place a particular burden on women and girls, with communities working on water access and households adopting practical measures such as tip taps, dish driers and improved latrines.



Demonstration of a dish dryer, one of the project's hygiene practices.

"Having enough food to eat is only the first step towards a healthy family. We also need to think about whether that food is nutritious and whether families have the knowledge and conditions to stay healthy. This is why nutrition and hygiene are such an important part of our work. When families can grow a wider variety of food and understand how to prepare it safely, the benefits of farming go much further."

- Meshark Sikuku,
Sustainable
Agriculture
Coordinator





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

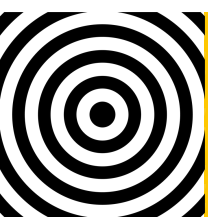
The project is designed to make progress last long after it ends, with communities themselves leading change and local organisations continuing to bring people together around shared priorities.

Cluster Level Associations (CLAs) bring Self-Help Groups together within each kebele (a local administrative area similar to a ward or village-level community). This gives people a platform to identify challenges affecting their communities, decide what action is needed and work together to find solutions. Existing CLAs are already developing enterprises suited to their communities, such as beekeeping.

Young people are also taking action through school clubs, exploring issues such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, social inclusion and sustainable farming.



Ayelech, project participant from phase I, is a 'Model Farmer', showing her kitchen garden and sharing seeds and vegetables with her neighbours so they too can learn and benefit.





Amarech, a project participant reflects:

"Through applying the THM, my family exercises shared household responsibilities and cooperation, which strengthened my family's bonds. My family now experiences improved food security, diversified diets, and greater economic independence."

ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR



YEAR 1 PROGRESS

54%

of the communities' farmers report increased access to markets (up from 7%)

98%

of women are actively participating in decision-making within their households (up from 13%)

98%

of participants are regularly saving in their SHGs (up from 0% at project start)

Thank you to all supporters, partners, and staff who make this and other projects possible. Change starts with your support.

Discover more at:
rippleeffect.org



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