

# UN Ethiopia

## NEWSLETTER

February 2024

The UN in Ethiopia has identified four interconnected outcomes that will guide its development cooperation over the next five years:

- All people in Ethiopia enjoy the rights and capabilities to realize their potential in equality and with dignity.
- All people in Ethiopia live in a cohesive, just, inclusive and democratic society.
- All people in Ethiopia benefit from an inclusive, resilient and sustainable economy.
- All people in Ethiopia live in a society resilient to environmental risks and adapted to climate change.



## Ethiopia: The pond that keeps giving

*“Our lives depend on another life. If our livestock die, our future becomes uncertain.”*

For Anab, the benefits of the pond go beyond just water; they are fourfold.



Anab Abduakkahi, 50, lives in the drylands of Ethiopia's Somali region. Anab has spent the last 50 years navigating these lands, frequently moving with her family in search of water and pasture for their animals.

She relies on the regions two rainy seasons, which occur between

March to April and from October to December, to sustain her livestock and generate income to support her family.

But climate shocks – such as drought – are making it increasingly difficult for people like Anab to find the resources they need.

After five years of back-to-back poor rainy seasons, many animals have died, leading to income losses of up to 35 percent for pastoralists and 25 percent for farmers dependent on crop production.

“During the dry seasons, we sometimes we have to travel 20km to find water, without having anything to drink or eat. We worry about sending our children on these journeys, knowing they faced the risk of violence along the way.”

“Each dry season, I lose up to ten animals due to starvation, exhaustion and wild animal attacks on the journey,” she adds.

But this dry season, everything changed for the better.

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## UN Women, partners enhanced capacities of 364 women leaders in Ethiopia

Rukiya Endris is the Deputy Administrator of Kedida Kebele in Kombolcha City Administration of the Amhara region. She is one of the women who participated in Transformative Leadership for Gender Equality (TLGE) training and mentorship initiative by Amhara Bureau of Women, Children and Social Affairs (BoWCSA) in partnership with UN Women. She recalls the challenges she used to face including difficulty to accept harsh criticisms from her colleagues due to lack of confidence. This was also reflected in her personal relationships.

“While I was in this critical situation, I participated in a five-day day training on personal development, transformative leadership, gender equality, time management, crisis leadership and women's role in peace and security skills in May 2024. I also got a mentorship and networking opportunity in August 2024. Through the training skills and mentorship support I gained I have brought many changes in my life and career. I have boosted my self-confidence. I also



*UN Women Ethiopia has been working closely with local partners to increase women's effective participation and equal representation in leadership and decision making by employing tailored strategies.*



learned resilience, persistence and servanthood from the training and mentorship support,” she said.

Despite some improvements in the last decade, in Ethiopia, women's representation in public leadership and decision making is still minimal.

With this background, UN Women Ethiopia has been working closely with local partners to increase women's effective participation and equal representation in leadership and decision making by employing tailored strategies. Building the capacity of women leaders on transformative leadership for gender equality is among key strategies utilized.

In the year 2024, UN Women capacitated 364 women leaders from different regions. Women leaders who benefited from the training programs have now gained new skills and knowledge on being transformative and influential leaders which will contribute to their effort to tackle various gender inequalities persisting in their respective regions.

“While I was in this critical situation, I participated in a five-day day training on personal development, transformative leadership, gender equality, time management, crisis leadership and women's role in peace and security skills in May 2024,” she said.

[Full story](#)

## ILO's ProAgro Ethiopia project transforming lives

Urban agriculture is increasingly becoming a primary source of livelihood and temporary employment for youth migrating from rural to urban centers in Ethiopia. In the absence of other job opportunities, they engage in small-scale dairy farming, the production of vegetables, fruits, and spices, as well as the retail of garden inputs and materials to earn income.

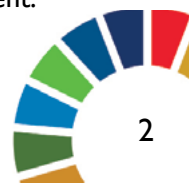
However, the growing number of livestock, dairy farms, and poultry businesses is contributing to pollution and negatively impacting air quality for city residents. To address this, as part of the ProAgro Ethiopia project's goal of decent job creation,



these businesses are being relocated outside the city to designated areas with clusters of permanent structures. These new locations will

offer additional training in quality, hygiene, and waste management.

[Full story](#)



## Strength in struggle: Muluken Gebrewold's resilient journey to economic independence

Muluken Gebrewold is a 43-year-old Ethiopian woman, born and raised in Bedele city in the Illubabor Zone. She is divorced and has a 26-year-old son. Muluken's life took a dramatic turn after the loss of her mother, the end of her marriage, and the termination of her job as a typist in a courthouse, all happening at the same time. This series of challenges pushed her to seek new opportunities in Addis Ababa. However, life in Addis Ababa remained difficult for Muluken as she worked as a cashier in a restaurant, with her salary barely covering her basic needs.



The turning point came when Muluken's younger sister came across an agency advertising opportunities to travel to Lebanon, requiring an initial payment of \$100.

Encouraged by her sister, Muluken saw this as an opportunity, realizing she had nothing to lose given her struggles. She sold her gold necklace to cover the cost of making arrangements for travel and migrated irregularly to Lebanon. Upon arrival,

*'Muluken viewed the training as a catalyst for positive change, enabling her to shift her mindset and take meaningful steps towards a better future.'*

however, she found herself in a remote desert area bordering Israel, far from the urban setting she had imagined.

"Initially, the agency told me I would be working in the capital city, something I was looking forward to. However, when I arrived at the family's home, located in a remote and desolate area, I was shocked by the huge disparity between what the agency promised and the reality of my employment. I even wondered if the employers had taken me by mistake," she recalled.

[Full story](#)

## In Ethiopia, WFP is helping families to resettle, rebuild and reconquer their livelihoods, post-conflict



Two years on from the Pretoria Agreement "Peace deal," families are returning to their homes in parts of Northern Ethiopia and rebuilding their livelihoods with support from WFP.

Hiwot Negasi – her first name

meaning "life" in the Ethiopian language of Amharic – describes how her life literally changed overnight when war broke out and her family's home was invaded at the end of 2020.

"Before I came here, my life was very good – I was educated well, and I worked as a secretary in a school," she says.

Negasi, aged 27, has been living in the Sabacare camp for internally displaced people on the outskirts of Mekelle, the capital of Ethiopia's Tigray region, for the past three years. With little shelter or food

available in the camp, it's the rainy season (June-September) she dreads the most.

"You can understand from my face and my cough, that we're barely surviving here, with little food. We face disease and illness, especially when it's cold and rainy," she says.

Hiwot Negasi is one of the 400,000 people who remain displaced two years after the end of hostilities in Tigray. Here, she receives her ration of cereals at a WFP distribution point in Sabacare camp.

[Full story](#)

## Breaking the flow of stigma for displaced women and girls



Ethiopia – Dr. Tsebaot Meles, a young Ethiopian doctor, turned a distressing personal experience into a mission to transform lives. During a visit to Sekota, a small town in Ethiopia's Amhara region, Tsebaot faced an unsettling challenge when she tried to purchase sanitary pads.

"I got my period and went to a local shop with my sister," she recalls. "To our shock, the male shopkeeper refused to help, reprimanding us for daring to request such an item. He insisted they don't sell such things there."

Desperate, Tsebaot resorted to cutting up a bathroom towel for use as a sanitary pad. The incident ignited a passion within her to address this critical issue. Driven by the glaring gap in access to feminine hygiene products, she began researching how to start a company that could make a difference. She later founded Ngat Reusable Sanitary Solution, a social enterprise committed to empowering women and girls in underserved areas.

Through her research, Tsebaot discovered that many women and girls in rural Ethiopia lacked access to essential hygiene products. Determined to create an affordable and sustainable solution, she focused on producing reusable sanitary pads for women in remote areas. As she delved deeper,

she identified an even broader need for hygiene products, including baby diapers and supplies for individuals with incontinence.

Ngat Reusable Sanitary Solution now offers a range of affordable and reusable products, including sanitary pads, baby diapers, incontinence products, and underwear. Beyond manufacturing, the company provides free products in rural areas, enabling individuals to maintain their health and hygiene with dignity.

### Partnerships for sustainable solutions

Recognizing the transformative impact of Tsebaot's initiative, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and other partners, launched the Sanitation for All project. The initiative aims to improve access to reusable hygiene products for vulnerable populations, including those in refugee camps and internally displaced persons (IDP) sites.

Implemented in Jewi Refugee Camp in Gambella and IDP sites in Ethiopia's East Hararghe zone, the project addresses hygiene needs in humanitarian settings.

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## UNOPS signs \$1.8 million agreement with Ethiopia's Ministry of Health to enhance blood storage capacity

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - UNOPS has signed an agreement worth \$1.8 million with Ethiopia's Ministry of Health to enhance the country's blood storage capacity. This initiative aims to modernize and upgrade cold storage and freezer facilities to meet international quality and safety standards, ensuring the reliable and efficient delivery of blood products across Ethiopia.

The project seeks to improve healthcare infrastructure by strengthening blood storage efficiency, enhancing accessibility in both urban and remote areas, and ensuring a stable supply of safe blood products. By establishing state-of-the-art storage facilities, this initiative will significantly contribute to Ethiopia's healthcare system and its capacity to respond to medical emergencies and patient needs effectively.

Key components of the project include assessment, design, procurement, installation, modification, testing, commissioning, and the final handover of advanced cold room facilities. These enhancements will be strategically implemented in key locations to address regional demands and improve healthcare service delivery nationwide.

Additionally, the project prioritizes local capacity-building through specialized training programs for staff, equipping them with the necessary skills to operate and maintain the new storage systems.

[Full story](#)

## Aisha: an inclusive financial product brings hope for host and refugee entrepreneurs



ILO and Shabelle Bank's innovative "Aisha" program provides Sharia-compliant financial solutions and education to refugees and host communities in Ethiopia, empowering entrepreneurs and fostering sustainable livelihoods.

In the bustling town of Kebribeyah, home to over 18,000 refugees from Somalia, two women stand as shining examples of resilience and entrepreneurship. Aisha Abdi, a 49-year-old Ethiopian mother of nine, and Kadra Yonis, a 57-year-old mother, are among the first beneficiaries of a new financial product that is transforming lives in the Somali region of Ethiopia.

Launched by the Shabelle Bank in partnership with the International

Labour Organization (ILO) in February 2024, "Aisha" is an innovative financial product providing working capital loan tailored specifically for refugees and host communities.

Aisha used the loan to expand her small shop, now stocked with a variety of consumable goods. Similarly, another woman, Kadra, scaled her business, expanding her consumer base as well as profits allowing her to reinvest in more products. Both women have not only expanded their livelihoods but have also consistently made timely loan repayments, showcasing their commitment to responsible financial management.

**Localized solution eases access to finance**

***ILO and Shabelle Bank's innovative "Aisha" program provides Sharia-compliant financial solutions and education to refugees and host communities in Ethiopia, empowering entrepreneurs and fostering sustainable livelihoods.***

In Ethiopia's Somali region, the culture of taking loans or paying interest was not easy for financial institutions to operate. This, coupled with a lack of capital, has stifled business growth and job creation in both refugee and local communities.

"To overcome this barrier, Shabelle Bank introduced the "Aisha" program, offering an innovative, Sharia-compliant solution for small and medium enterprises. Instead of providing traditional loans, the bank acts as a supplier, selling essential products, machinery, or equipment to entrepreneurs at a marked-up price. Business owners then repay the bank in manageable instalments, allowing them to grow without violating religious principles," explained Ahmed Abas, Microfinance Operations Director at Shabelle Bank.

[Full story](#)

## WFP's multipurpose cash assistance helps communities rebuild



Ethiopia is currently experiencing a severe food crisis due to conflict, drought, high living costs, and natural disasters. The FAO-WFP June 2024

Hunger Hot Spot report classifies Ethiopia as a hunger hot spot. The 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan indicates that 15.8 million people are acutely food insecure, with 4 million being internally displaced. Despite the reduction in large scale conflict, the severity of food insecurity remains extensive.

In a village near Berhale town in Ethiopia's Berhale town, Halima Ebrahim and her family of 8 are struggling with food insecurity, after returning home from an IDP camp.

**"What is left in the bank account will be my seed money- I want to start a small business and become self-sufficient," says Halima.**

Halima and her family fled conflict in 2021, when fighting in North Ethiopia forced millions out of their homes.

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## Building resilience: Transforming lives in Ethiopia through skill development



In the arid landscapes of Ethiopia, two individuals, Ifrah Beshir Ahmed and Abdulkader Areb Ibrahim, known as 'Dekere,' have embarked on transformative journeys, rebuilding their lives and communities through resilience and newfound skills.

Ifrah Beshir Ahmed: A Journey of Empowerment and Community Building

At just 20 years old, Ifrah Beshir Ahmed has already faced significant challenges. A relocated woman,



she had to leave school after the eighth grade due to marriage. Now divorced and a devoted mother to her three-year-old daughter, Ifrah lives with her mother in a house in desperate need of repair. Before her relocation, she supported herself by selling coffee, tea, and sometimes food. However, in her new environment, business has been slow, making it difficult for her to sustain an income. With no prior knowledge or experience in construction, she felt uncertain about her future—until she heard about a skills training

program in her community.

Determined to change her circumstances, Ifrah joined the program, hoping to learn something new that could help her rebuild her home and support her family. Initially unsure about what to expect, she soon discovered a world of opportunity. Through the training, she learned essential construction skills, including setting out and building masonry foundations using mud blocks. Although she missed the initial lessons on making mud blocks, she eagerly absorbed knowledge from others who had learned before her. "I can't wait to build the foundation," she said, her eyes shining with excitement. "It's empowering to know that I can create something with my own hands."

[Full story](#)

## UN Women's integrated economic empowerment initiative enhances women's economic growth and well-being



Abeba Bunti, 39, lives in Legetafo town in the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Raised by a single mother who struggled to meet ends, she used to help her in labor-intensive domestic work after school. When she reached 9th grade, she dropped out of school and got married since the household's meager income wasn't enough for her and two siblings. "I

was a homemaker, as a driver, my husband's income wasn't sufficient.

Having a child added a burden to our economic condition. Despite trying to do some work outside home as house help and a waitress, life was difficult for me for over twenty years," she spoke.

As one of the 800 women reached by a UN Women supported project, "Integrated and Sustainable Economic Empowerment Initiative (ISEEI)", Abeba considered the support provided by the project instrumental for opening a time and labour-saving services business mainly catering to women in her community who cannot afford to buy food processors.

"After I registered under the project two years ago, I took a ten-day training on basic business and life skill," Abeba said. "For cash award, I submitted a business plan on provision of labor and time saving food processing service in my village where over 300 households do not have the access. Through the business plan, I was awarded 25,000birr (500USD).

[Full story](#)

## Ethiopian coffee farmers take digital leap with new planning system



Ethiopian coffee farmers embraced digital transformation as Bench Maji Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union adopted enterprise resource planning software. With ITC's support, over 21,350 farmers gained tools to improve efficiency, traceability, and compliance with

global standards.

Ethiopian coffee farmers, long-time stewards of the country's coffee heritage, are increasingly embracing digitalization to transform their practices, enhance market access, and secure sustainable livelihoods.

Despite Ethiopia's status as a leading coffee producer, smallholder farmers face challenges like limited market access, volatile prices, financial exclusion, and inefficient supply chains. The lack of digital tools deepens these struggles, leaving a gap between their potential and day-to-day realities.

While agritech innovations are emerging, adoption remains low across farming communities.

To tackle challenges faced by small agribusinesses, ITC's Alliances for Action, through the Netherlands Trust Fund V (NTFV) programme, has partnered with tech advisory firm Bopinc to bridge the gap between small processors and the tech sector.

[Full story](#)

PROSPERITY

## Empowering women in the leather industry: A gender-inclusive approach



In response to the diverse and unique challenges that women employees face in the leather industries, LISEC (Leather Initiative for Sustainable Employment Creation), funded by the European Union and being implemented by UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) has integrated gender in the project activities to ensure women's and girls' participation and equality in the beneficiary abattoirs, tanneries and

micro, small and medium enterprises. The project was started with gender analysis which identified the gaps and opportunities in the leather industries to maximize equal opportunities and benefits for female employees. The findings came up with key areas of support such as gender-based job segregation, lack of daycare facility and safe workplace, and low participation in leadership and decision-making positions.

In support of addressing these challenges, UNIDO-LISEC targeted the beneficiaries along the leather value chain with capacity building training for management staff and women employees of the beneficiary abattoirs and tanneries on ensuring gender equality, participation, leadership as well as prevention of gender-based violence.

Among the beneficiaries of the project is Addis Ababa Abattoirs Enterprise (AAAE) that implemented gender-focused capacity-building training activities targeting 105 female employees. Following this, the company established a Gender Working Group (GWG), composed of five staff members (3 males and 2 females)— including the gender focal person, legal officer, health officer, performance supervisor and human resources officer.

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## Forests and Ethiopia's coffee



*The impact is far-reaching—these initiatives have directly benefited 49,762 individuals, 86.4% of whom are women, fostering sustainable land use and agricultural resilience across the country. By equipping communities with knowledge and tools, the project is laying the foundation for long-term environmental and economic sustainability.*

### **Preventing forest loss, promoting restoration, and integrating sustainability into coffee value chains and the food system**

Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee, is taking bold steps to protect its forests and sustain its coffee industry with a \$20 million initiative aimed at restoring degraded lands.

As deforestation threatens both biodiversity and the livelihoods of millions who depend on coffee farming, this ambitious project—part of the global FOLUR Impact Programme—seeks to integrate sustainable land management with agricultural practices. FOLUR, financed through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) focuses on preventing forest loss, promoting restoration, and integrating sustainability into coffee value chains and the food system.

Spanning multiple regions, including Oromia, Sidama, and Central Ethiopia, the effort underscores the delicate balance between economic growth and environmental conservation in one of the world's most renowned coffee-producing nations.

This initiative is implemented by the Ministry of Planning & development (MoPD) of the Government of Ethiopia in partnership with the Ethiopian Forest Development and the Ethiopian Coffee & Tea Authority. It helps farmers in adopting sustainable practices that meet the EU market standards, which account for 30% of the Country's Coffee export.

FOLUR efforts are in line with the recent European Union announcement of a deforestation regulation aimed at reducing deforestation linked to key

commodities, including coffee. This regulation requires companies and countries to prove their products are not sourced from deforested land.

The EU accounts for 30% of Ethiopia's coffee export. Though this regulation promotes environmental sustainability, it may create challenges for small-scale farmers who may struggle to meet strict requirements due to limited resources, insufficient systems and a lack of knowledge.

The FOLUR project set up a technical team to assess the existing land use planning systems in Ethiopia, which were identified as a key gap in the sector. In response, knowledge products were developed to address various aspects of Integrated Land Use Planning (ILUP), including conceptual frameworks, best practices, and experiences related to Land Use/Land Cover (LULC).

These resources are helping to enhance understanding and guide the implementation of effective land use strategies, ultimately supporting sustainable agricultural practices and forest conservation in Ethiopia.

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**Bimonthly Newsletter by the UN Communications Group**

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