AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK'S CLIMATE PROOF WATER 4 FOOD (W4F) PROJECT IN GAMBELLA REGION, ETHIOPIA

Projects SAP code: P-Z1-EAZ-068

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN (SEP)

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September/2025

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ABBREVIATION

ADF	African Development Fund
AfDB	African Development Banks
BoA	Bureau of Agriculture
BoWE	Bureau of Water and Energy
BoWSA	Bureau of Women and Social Affair
CAW	Climate Action Window
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GRC	Grievance Redressing Committee
GRM	Grievance Redressing Mechanism
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoWE	Ministry of Water and Energy
MoWSA	Ministry of Women and Social Affair
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
W4F	Water4Food
WAO	Woreda Agriculture Office
WWEO	Woreda Water and Energy Office
WWSA	Woreda Women and Social Affair

Executive Summary

The Climate-Proof Water for Food (W4F) Project in Gambella seeks to improve food security, enhance climate resilience, and support sustainable livelihoods through climate-smart agriculture and water resource management. The Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) highlights Gambella's unique baseline: a tropical climate with pronounced wet and dry seasons; fertile but flood-prone soils (mainly Vertisols); extensive wetlands and biodiversity, including endangered species such as the Sheha tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa*); and a predominantly agrarian economy dependent on maize, sorghum, legumes, and livestock. At the same time, the ESIA identified challenges including seasonal flooding and droughts, soil erosion, invasive species (e.g., water hyacinth), limited adoption of climate-smart practices, and risks to both community and occupational health and safety.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) provides the framework for ensuring that project design and implementation are participatory, inclusive, and responsive to these conditions. Its objectives are to:

- Foster transparent communication and local ownership.
- Strengthen trust between communities, authorities, and project implementers.
- Ensure that environmental and social risks identified in the ESIA are addressed collaboratively.
- Support adaptive management for climate-smart and socially inclusive outcomes.

Key stakeholder groups include:

- Local communities: farming and pastoralist households, women's associations, youth groups, and vulnerable groups.
- Traditional leaders and religious representatives, who play a central role in mediation and trust-building.
- Local government authorities at kebele and woreda levels, particularly in agriculture, water, and social affairs.
- Regional institutions: the Water Bureau, Agriculture Bureau, Environmental Protection Authority, and Women and Social Affairs Bureau.
- Federal ministries: Ministry of Water and Energy, Ministry of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Authority, and Ministry of Women and Social Affairs.
- Civil society and development partners, who provide complementary expertise and support.

The engagement strategy emphasizes:

- Participatory platforms: Key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and women/youth consultations, and community assemblies.

- Inclusive communication: use of local languages, culturally sensitive methods, and diverse media channels.
- Continuous dialogue: regular meetings during project phases (planning, construction, operation) to share updates and gather feedback.
- Integration with ESIA monitoring: ensuring stakeholders participate in monitoring air, water, soil, biodiversity, and health outcomes.
- Conflict-sensitive grievance resolution: operationalizing the multi-tier Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) from kebele to federal levels, ensuring accessibility and accountability.

By aligning evidence from the ESIA with a clear engagement approach, the SEP ensures that the W4F Project is not only technically sound but also socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and widely supported by those it intends to benefit.

1. Project Context

Africa faces a significant climate finance gap, limiting its ability to respond to escalating climate challenges. To address this, the African Development Fund (ADF) has established a Climate Action Window (CAW) under its 16th replenishment cycle (ADF-16). This initiative mobilizes public and private sector partners to scale up climate-resilient investments across the continent. The CAW comprises two key funding streams: the Mitigation Investment Sub-Window, which supports low-carbon development, and the Adaptation Investment Sub-Window, which finances projects enhancing resilience to climate impacts. These sub-windows target six priority sectors: agriculture and food security, water security, climate information and early warning systems, green transport and infrastructure, green energy and energy efficiency, and green finance.

Under the Adaptation Sub-Window, the Climate Proof Water 4 Food (W4F) program has been selected for funding and will be implemented by Plan International in five woredas of Gambella Region, Ethiopia. The program aims to strengthen climate adaptation in agriculture and water systems, with the goal of doubling food production, improving food security, and expanding access to water and sanitation.

The W4F program is structured into two core components:
- Climate-Smart Agriculture and Value Chain Development – This component promotes drought- and flood-resistant farming techniques, enhances agricultural productivity, and strengthens market linkages to improve livelihoods.
- Inclusive, Gender-Transformative Water Resource Management – Focusing on resilience to floods and droughts, this component ensures equitable access to water and sanitation while integrating gender-responsive approaches into water governance.

1.1. Background to the Project Stakeholder Engagement

The AfDB Operational Safeguard 1 (OS1-Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts) and OS 10 (Stakeholder Engagement) states that the borrower or client shall be responsible for carrying out and providing evidence of meaningful consultation (i.e. consultation that is free, prior and informed) with communities likely to be affected by environmental and social impacts, and with other local stakeholders. The key focus of meaningful consultation is inclusivity; namely, the approach taken needs to ensure that all groups (including those that are disadvantaged or vulnerable) are embraced within the consultation process on equal terms and that all groups are given the capacity to express their views with the knowledge that these views will be properly considered. The Bank requires that stakeholder engagement starts at an early stage during project preparation and that it should continue throughout. The results of such

engagement should be adequately reflected in project design, as well as in the preparation of project documentation. In all cases, consultation should be carried out after, or in conjunction with, the release of environmental and social information for the potential risks (Section 3).

2. Objective of SEP

The overall objective of this SEP is to define a program for stakeholder engagement, including public information disclosure and consultation throughout the entire project cycle. The SEP outlines how the project team in the implementing agencies will communicate with stakeholders and includes a mechanism by which people can raise concerns, provide feedback, or make complaints about project activities or any activities related to the project.

The Specific Objectives are to:

- To Identify and prioritize key stakeholder groups that will help to build and maintain a constructive relationship with them focusing on project affected parties.
- Provide a transparent and inclusive strategy, action plan and timetable for disclosure of information.
- Ensuring that engagement with each group is undertaken without any form of discrimination.
- To assess the level of stakeholder interest and support for the project and to enable stakeholders' views to be taken into account during project design and environmental and social performance.
- To ensure that appropriate project information on environmental and social risks and impacts is disclosed to stakeholders in a timely, understandable, accessible, and appropriate manner and format.
- Establish an effective grievance redress mechanism, ensuring that stakeholders are properly informed of their rights and know how to communicate their concern.
- The opportunity to consider interlinked issues such as engagement of vulnerable persons/groups using methods that will ease and promote involvement.

3. Key Risks for stakeholder Engagement

The implementation of the Water for Food (W4F) Project in Gambella is associated with several potential risks that require proactive management to ensure both environmental and social safeguards. Construction activities may result in accidents due to unsafe equipment use or lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), alongside air and noise pollution from dust emissions and heavy machinery. Environmental risks include soil erosion and sedimentation impacting rivers and farmland, as well as water pollution from accidental spills of oil, chemicals, or construction waste. On the social side, key risks include gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation or abuse (SEA) linked to worker-community interactions, child

labor or exploitation of minors through improper recruitment, and resettlement or livelihood disruption caused by land acquisition, crop loss, or reduced access to natural resources. Addressing these risks is central to safeguarding communities, protecting ecosystems, and ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes, making their integration into the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) indispensable.

Stakeholder engagement in the W4F Project goes beyond consultation and extends to active participation in implementing risk mitigation measures. Local communities, contractors, and oversight bodies will collaborate to enforce health and safety rules through daily briefings and PPE provision, minimizing accident risks. Community representatives and environmental authorities will help reduce pollution by supporting water spraying, noise barriers, and regular equipment maintenance, while farmers and kebele committees will participate in erosion control practices such as silt fencing, terracing, and vegetation cover. Local institutions will oversee the secure storage of hazardous materials and availability of spill kits to prevent water contamination. On the social dimension, women's groups, youth associations, and other local stakeholders will play key roles in upholding the GBV Code of Conduct, promoting awareness, and facilitating confidential reporting. Kebele-level leaders will monitor age verification and recruitment practices to prevent child labor. Finally, affected households, together with woreda administrations, will be actively engaged in implementing the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP), ensuring timely compensation, relocation assistance, and livelihood restoration. This inclusive approach strengthens accountability, enhances resilience, and ensures that project benefits are equitably shared while risks are responsibly managed.

4. Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

In addition to the enumerated stakeholders in section 3, more stakeholder identification is an initial phase in project management. There can be many stakeholders depending on the type, scope, and complexity of the project. For successful project management, key project stakeholders should be identified and managed to satisfy their requirements. Understanding the importance of stakeholder identification will increase the efficiency of the stakeholder management system.

Water 4 Food (W4F) project stakeholders are the different parties, both project affected, and others interested in the project, who are directly or indirectly affected by the project. Individuals or groups that are affected or likely to be affected by the project will be identified as 'project affected parties' and other individuals or groups that may have an interest in the project will be identified as 'other interested parties'. Within these categories, vulnerable groups are those parties (individuals or groups) who, because of their unique circumstances, may be disadvantaged by the project, who may be less able to access project benefits

or less able to participate in engagement activities. Based on this definition/categorization, the project will further identify individuals or groups who may have different concerns and priorities about project impacts, mitigation mechanisms and benefits, and who may require different, or separate, forms of engagement. Stakeholder identification and analysis is an important tool to determine the appropriate level of communication between the project and different stakeholders. The process of stakeholder engagement will involve the following, as set out in further detail in AfDB's Operational Safeguard 10 (OS 10)**:** (i) stakeholder identification and analysis; (ii) planning how the engagement with stakeholders will take place; (iii) disclosure of information; (iv) consultation with stakeholders; (v) addressing and responding to grievances; and (vi) reporting to stakeholders.

4.1. Water 4 Food (W4F) Project Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

W4F enhances stakeholder engagement from the early stages of the project preparation process and throughout the project lifecycle, enabling meaningful stakeholder participation. Table 1 below shows the key stakeholders identified for Water 4 Food project. Additional stakeholders interested in the project may be identified, so the stakeholder list may change during the lifecycle of the project.

4.1.1. Project-affected parties

W4F project intervention areas identified as being directly (actually or potentially) impacted by the project and/or most vulnerable to project-related change. The project will encourage and closely work with those involved in the project activities such as individuals, groups, and other entities. This not only helps determine impacts and their significance but also helps decision making regarding mitigation and control measures. Examples of affected parties for W4F project include individuals and beneficiary communities whose access to land or other assets or land use is affected by project supporting investments or project implementation sectors. Project affected parties include:

- Federal level line Ministries (Ministry of Water and Energy (MoWE), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Federal Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA).
- Regional level sector bureaus Gambela Regional State Bureau of Water and Energy (BoWE), Bureau of Agriculture (BoA), Regional Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Bureau of Women and Social Affairs (BoWSA).
- Woreda level administration/council.
- Woreda level sector offices (Woreda Woter and Energy Office (WWEO), Woreda Agriculture Office (WAO), Woreda Women and Socia Affairs (WWSA).
- Community (including Pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, village heads, religious leaders, clan leaders).

- Woreda/City and Kebele Administration and Kebele level structures (Kebele development committee (KDC), grievance redressing committee (GRC), Water User Committee.
- Project institutional arrangement (steering committee, technique committee).
- Contractors.

4.1.2. Other Interested Parties

Individuals/groups/entities that may not experience direct impacts from the project but who consider or perceive their interests as being affected by the project and/or who could affect the project and the process of its implementation.

The Projects' stakeholders also include parties other than the directly affected communities, including international development NGOs (Plan International), local farmer cooperatives and unions, water user associations, community-based organizations (CBOs), advocacy groups, research and academic institutions, United Nations Agencies (e.g., FAO, WFP, UNDP), International Financial Institutions (AfDBs and WB)

4.1.3. Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Groups

Persons who may be disproportionately impacted or further disadvantaged by the project intervention as compared with other groups due to their vulnerability, and that may require special engagement efforts to ensure their equal representation in the consultation and decision-making process associated with the project. These can be elders, women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), women headed households, pastoral and semi-pastoral communities, unemployed youth, who need special attention during project design, planning, implementation, and monitoring.

5. Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

Effective stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of ensuring the environmental and social sustainability of projects, enhancing project acceptance, or obtaining broader community support, and making a significant contribution to successful project design and implementation. Stakeholder engagement involves building and maintaining relationships. It also involves preserving the active support and commitment of the people to the implementation of change, through program or project delivery.

5.1. Principles for stakeholder engagement

W4F project applies the following principles for stakeholder engagement:

- ✓ Openness and life-cycle approach: Public consultations for the project will be undertaken on a continuous basis throughout the whole project lifecycle from preparation through implementation. Stakeholder engagement will be free of manipulation, interface, coercion, and intimidation.
- ✓ Informed participation and feedback: Information will be provided and widely distributed among all stakeholders in an appropriate format; conducted on a timely basis;
  - Understandable and accessible information related to the project, including in relevant local and major languages and in formats that can be understood by people who are illiterate.
  - Assure those stakeholders' concerns and feedback is taken into consideration during decision-making.
- ✓ Inclusiveness and sensitivity: Stakeholder engagement is undertaken to support better communications and build effective relationships. The participation process for the project is inclusive and the stakeholders are always encouraged to be involved in the consultation process.
- ✓ Gender approach for consultation: Consultation times will have to align with the needs of women. Women may have limitations about time of day or location for public consultation; they may need childcare for meetings or other additional support and resources to enable them to participate in consultations.

Improved access to information and sensitivity to stakeholder needs are key principles underlying the choice of engagement methods. Particular attention will be paid to female heads of households, young people, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the cultural sensitivities of different ethnic groups in the project area.

5.2. Purpose and timing of stakeholder engagement plan

Project preparation has relied significantly on national level stakeholder engagement in order to gain understanding of the needs of the project beneficiaries, as well as existing capacities and coordination mechanisms at national, regional and woreda levels.

The overall objective of this SEP is to define a program for stakeholder engagement, including public information disclosure and consultation, throughout the entire project cycle. It will be refined and adapted periodically as necessary as the project implementation progresses.

This SEP will have the following purposes in the life of the project cycle:

- Describe the ways in which the project team will communicate with stakeholders and includes a mechanism by which people can raise concerns, provide feedback, or make complaints about any activity related to the project.

- Support project activities related to a communication, mobilization, and community engagement campaign to raise public awareness and knowledge on water and climate smart agriculture among the general population.

- Adapt project interventions to evolving needs of the project affected and other interested groups.

- Ensure the coordination between implementers: government, non-government and community structures.

- Provide transparent and accountable mechanisms on all aspects of project implementation and monitoring.

- Ensure the meaningful participation of members of vulnerable groups from project affected communities in the consultation process and enjoy project benefits.

5.3. Stakeholder engagement/consultation strategies

To ensure proper engagement of stakeholders at national, regional and woreda levels the Federal MoWE, MoA, and its regional and woreda level bureaus will play a leading role and coordinate the efforts of other stakeholders in their respective administrative levels. They will organize project appraisal and launch meetings on a national level as well as organize meetings in each project implementing woredas with leaders, Project Affected Parties (PAPs), and other interested parties.

A range of consultations with different stakeholders such as men and women, elders, including vulnerable households and representatives of underserved communities will be conducted and documented using various methods such as FGDs, one-on-one discussions, and consultations to better understand needs, expectations, and concerns of these groups in relation to the project. Meetings in each of the regions/woreda and kebele will also be organized on timely basis based on the agreement reached on the initial meetings. Table 1 provides detail engagement techniques, target audience and timeframe. The project will ensure that consultation activities will be conducted to enable meaningful communication, consultation, and discussion among stakeholders.

Table 1: Methods for Stakeholder Engagement

Level / Responsible Party	Roles and Responsibilities in Stakeholder Engagement	Level of Influence / Interest	Engagement Techniques & Description	Target Audience	Timeframe
Federal Level (MoWE, MoA, RPCU/WPCU)	-Provide oversight, support, and quality control for PIUs and RPCUs on E&S risk management and stakeholder engagement. -Review, assure quality, and approve screening reports and ESMPs. -Facilitate disclosure of ESIA/ESMP/SEP to the public. -Ensure contracts and bidding documents contain E&S and stakeholder engagement provisions.	High influence/ High interest	-Steering committee meetings -Technical committee meetings -Joint review meetings -Digital media/websites for disclosure	Federal ministries, development partners, regional/woreda sector offices	Steering committee (quarterly) Technical committee (monthly) Joint review (quarterly) Digital media (continuous)
Federal EPA	-Review and approve ESMPs and engagement plans. -Provide training on E&S safeguards and stakeholder engagement.	Medium influence/High interest	-Capacity building workshops	Federal and regional E&S staff	Quarterly
Regional Bureaus (Water, Energy, Agriculture)	-Coordinate stakeholder engagement activities and support consultation processes. -Integrate E&S and engagement clauses in regional contracts. -Provide regular reports on engagement and mitigation measures.	High influence / High interest	-Workshops and trainings for contractors and staff -Correspondence (letters, emails, calls)	Regional offices, contractors, CSOs	Monthly/Quarterly
Regional EPA (REPA)	-Review and clear screening reports and ESMPs. -Support and participate in public consultation activities. -Deliver capacity building to regional/woreda E&S safeguard focal persons.	Medium influence/High interest	-Public/community meetings and FGDs -One-on-one interviews with vulnerable groups	Local communities, NGOs, CSOs, vulnerable groups	Community/public meetings (quarterly) One-on-one interviews (biannual)
Woreda Offices (Water, Energy, Agriculture)	-Lead day-to-day engagement with affected communities. -Share regular updates on project risks and progress. -Report community concerns to RPCU.	Medium influence / High interest	-Community/public meetings -Printed materials: leaflets, brochures	Affected communities, local leaders	Community/public meetings (quarterly) Printed materials (biannual)

Stakeholder	Role	Influence/Interest	Engagement Methods	Target Groups	Frequency
Woreda level Water Committee	Facilitate consultations on water-related project activities. Maintain, monitor and report local water use and community feedback. Assist in implementing mitigation measures for water quality and availability.	Medium influence/medium interest	Meetings with committee members, Participation in water management workshops, Household consultations for water users	Water users, local households, community leaders	Monthly/Quarterly
Kebele Administrators	• Act as local liaison between project staff, Woreda offices, and communities. • Mobilize community participation in consultations and mitigation measures. • Collect and report community concerns and feedback to Woreda Offices.	Low influence / High interest	-Local community meetings -Household-level consultations -Distribution of printed materials (leaflets, brochures)	Local community members, vulnerable groups	Community meetings (quarterly) Printed materials (biannual)
Local Contractors	-Maintain direct communication with workers and surrounding communities. -Enforce Codes of Conduct (GBV, child labor, OHS). -Ensure timely disclosure of site-specific risks.	Medium influence / Medium interest	-Daily safety briefings -On-site consultations -Disclosure boards at worksites	Workers, local communities	Daily /Continuous
Local Community	Actively participate in consultations, provide feedback on project activities, report grievances through GRM, and collaborate in implementing mitigation measures (e.g., erosion control, water management).	Low influence / High interest	Community meetings facilitated by Woreda or Kebele administrators, Household-level consultations, Participation in workshops, FGDs, and handover events	Community members, vulnerable groups, water users	Continuous / Quarterly meetings; closure activities at project end

5.4. Proposed Strategy for Consultation

Where it is proposed to involve the community, the Project shall describe how that involvement will occur, and when it will occur. Some techniques of involvement may include:

- Public meetings (these are open with no restriction on who may attend);
- Advisory panels (a group of individuals, chosen to represent stakeholder groups, which meet periodically to assess work done / results obtained and to advise on future work);
- Interviews (a structured series of open-ended interviews with selected community representatives to obtain information/concerns/views);
- Questionnaires (written, structured series of questions issued to a sample of local people to identify concerns/views/opinions); and
- Participatory appraisal techniques (a systematic approach to appraisal, based on group inquiry and analysis and, therefore, multiple and varied inputs.

Stakeholder engagement is a continuous process and depends on the needs of the project. The table below outlines key stakeholder engagement activities at key stages in the project cycle preparation, launch, implementation and closing. Responsible agents for consultation at each stage also take the task of integrating the feedbacks from these consultations to inform project at each key stages. A combination of the methods above will be used to engage different stakeholders.

Table 2: Stakeholders Engagement Activities and Timing

Project Stage	Engagement Activity	Objective	Target Stakeholders	Priority E&S Issues	Timeframe	Expected Outputs / KPIs	GRM Integration	Estimated Cost (USD)
Project Design	National stakeholder consultations	Collect views on project design, target beneficiaries, E&S risks, mitigation measures, GRM, SEP	MoWE, MoA, Plan International, Federal EPA, AfDBs	Identification of key E&S risks and safeguard gaps	During preparation	Numbers of institutions consulted; Minutes with agreed actions; Draft list of risks & mitigation measures	GRM process introduced, roles of national institutions in handling grievances clarified	10,000
Project Design	Regional-level stakeholder consultations	Gather inputs on beneficiaries, local E&S risks, mitigation, GRM, SEP	Regional Administration, sector bureaus (BoA, BoWE, BoH, Regional EPA), Gambela Region Plan International Office	Region-specific risks (e.g., water use conflicts, livelihood impacts)	During preparation	Numbers participants (≥30% women); Agreed list of regional risks & mitigation; Documented feedback on SEP	Regional grievance channels discussed, GRM focal points nominated	9,000
Project Design	Community-level consultations	Collect views on targeting beneficiaries, risks, mitigation, GRM	Ordinary community members, vulnerable groups (women, youth, elderly, PWDs)	Social risks (exclusion, site selection disputes, land-use conflicts)	During preparation	≥100 participants; Numbers of vulnerable groups represented; Agreed mitigation measures documented	GRM explained in local languages, community-level complaint uptake channels established	10, 000
Project Launch	National project launch workshop	Raise awareness of project features, safeguards, roles/responsibilities	MoWE, MoA, Plan International, Federal EPA, AfDBs	Institutional safeguard responsibilities	Launching stage	Workshop report; Number of institutions committed; Agreed roadmap on safeguards	GRM officially launched and shared	9,000
Project Launch	Regional/Woreda project launch workshops	Explain project features, safeguards, roles, communication to beneficiaries	Regional & woreda offices (Water & Energy, Agriculture, Health, EPA),	Communication of safeguard measures & inclusion of vulnerable groups	Launching stage	Number of participants; Summary of roles/responsibilities; Beneficiary communication plan agreed	GRM focal persons at woreda level introduced	12,000

			Gambela Plan Office					
Implementation	Community/public mobilization & consultation	Mobilize and prepare communities, clarify expectations, agree on outreach methods	Regional & woreda offices, community associations, elders, religious leaders, residents	Site selection for infrastructure, land-use conflicts, exclusion risks	Quarterly	Number of community mobilization events; ≥40% female participants; Documented site selection decisions	GRM reintroduced, flyers/posters distributed in local languages, hotline shared	14,000
Implementation	Monitoring & supervision missions	Provide and obtain ongoing info on performance	National, regional, woreda, community stakeholders	Monitoring compliance with safeguard measures	Quarterly/monthly	Number of missions conducted; Compliance reports submitted; % corrective actions implemented	Grievance cases tracked, resolution reports shared	15,000
Implementation	Project review meetings	Collect feedback on progress, address new/emerging issues	Regional & woreda sector offices	Adaptive management of E&S risks	Quarterly	Numbers of review meetings; Numbers of new issues identified and addressed	Standing GRM agenda reviewed; grievances tracked	9,000
Closing	Project closeout meetings	Discuss project exit strategy	Regional & woreda administrations, local stakeholders, beneficiaries	Sustainability of safeguard measures, exit strategy	End of project	Final report shared; Numbers of stakeholders attending; Exit strategy agreed	Final GRM report presented, including total grievances received & resolved	11,000

5.5 Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

The project establishes a multi-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) to provide accessible, transparent, fair, and timely resolution of complaints. The GRM is designed to enhance accountability, build trust, and ensure that all stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalized groups that have a safe channel to raise concerns without fear of retaliation. The GRM operates across four levels: Kebele, Woreda, Regional, and Federal, each with defined committee members, roles, and responsibilities. The process emphasizes accessibility, inclusivity, confidentiality, and non-retaliation.

5.5.1 Accessibility

The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) will be designed to ensure that community members and stakeholders have multiple accessible entry points at the Kebele, Woreda, Regional, and Federal levels. Complaints may be submitted orally or in writing, through letters, phone calls, suggestion boxes, or during community meetings. To ensure broad awareness, information on the GRM will be disseminated widely through posters, brochures, community assemblies, and local radio programs. Grievances will be accepted in local languages and through both formal and informal channels to guarantee inclusivity and ease of use.

5.5.2 Inclusivity

The GRM will actively promote inclusivity by ensuring that vulnerable groups, including women, youth, elderly persons, and people with disabilities, are able to access the mechanism without barriers. Community facilitators and women's representatives will participate in each Grievance Redress Committee (GRC) to strengthen representation and trust. Furthermore, safe and confidential reporting options will be provided, particularly for sensitive cases such as gender-based violence (GBV), where survivors require discreet and secure channels to lodge complaints.

5.5.3 Action Plan / Procedures

The GRM will follow a clear and time-bound procedure to ensure complaints are addressed effectively. First, grievances may be submitted at the Kebele level through a GRC member, hotline, suggestion box, or during community meetings. Upon receipt, the complaint will be formally registered, categorized, and acknowledged within seven days. Each grievance will then undergo an assessment and investigation by the responsible GRC, to be completed within two weeks. A resolution will be proposed, communicated, recorded, and implemented within 30 days. If a grievance cannot be resolved, it will be escalated progressively from the Kebele to the Woreda, then to the Regional, and ultimately to the Federal level. Once a resolution is reached, the complainant's feedback will be sought to confirm satisfaction; unresolved grievances may ultimately be referred to formal judicial processes.

5.5.4 Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities within the GRM are distributed across all four levels of governance. At the Kebele level, the GRC will be responsible for registering, investigating, and proposing resolutions, while reporting outcomes to the Woreda. The Woreda GRC will verify grievances, resolve disputes, monitor redress actions, and escalate unresolved cases. At the Regional level, the GRC will handle more complex grievances, ensure compliance with safeguard requirements, and escalate matters beyond its jurisdiction to the Federal level. Finally, the Federal GRC will serve as the ultimate arbiter, ensuring consistency, oversight, and national-level resolution of disputes.

5.5.5 Linkages to Existing Mechanisms

The GRM will be closely aligned with existing local and national systems. Traditional and community-based conflict resolution practices; such as the involvement of elders, religious leaders, and women's associations will be leveraged to enhance trust and acceptance. At the same time, the mechanism will be integrated into national legal frameworks and institutional mandates to ensure compliance, accountability, and enforceability of decisions.

5.5.6 Confidentiality and Non-Retaliation

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of the GRM. All grievances will be treated with discretion, and the identity of complainants will be safeguarded at all times. The system will also ensure that no individual is subject to retaliation for raising grievances in good faith. To further encourage participation, anonymous complaints will be accepted and addressed

5.5.7 Monitoring and Reporting

Each GRC will maintain detailed grievance registers, both in paper and digital formats, capturing information on all complaints received, their status, and the outcomes. Regular reports will be generated to include the number of grievances received, resolved, pending, and escalated to higher levels. Key performance indicators (KPIs) for the GRM will be integrated into the project's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. These will include accessibility and inclusivity metrics, timeliness of resolution, complainant satisfaction, and documentation completeness. Through this structured monitoring and reporting, the GRM will remain transparent, accountable, and responsive throughout the project lifecycle.

5.6. Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

Information disclosure to stakeholders will be tailored to the stage of the project and the specific information needs of each stakeholder group. Key information to be disclosed includes the project design and objectives, target beneficiaries, anticipated environmental and social risks and impacts, proposed mitigation measures, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), and the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). A combination of disclosure methods will be used to ensure that all stakeholders are adequately informed.

At the federal and regional levels, information will be shared through workshops and meetings with representatives of relevant ministries, agencies, development partners, and other interested parties. At the woreda and community levels, disclosure will account for literacy levels, language differences, and local context. Methods will include:

- Community radio broadcasts: Communications will be delivered in the dominant local languages of the Gambella Region (e.g., Nuer, Anuak) to ensure broad understanding.
- Community meetings: Organized in coordination with local authorities, including regional and woreda offices and traditional leadership structures. Visual aids and interpreters will be used to ensure accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).
- Phone communication (SMS alerts)
- Notices at public locations (marketplaces, religious centers, social gathering places)

Local authorities, such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, and woreda administrators, will play a central role in informing communities through meetings and public postings at project sites.

Information disclosure will also include key project documents, reports from previous stakeholder consultations (including agendas, participants, main issues raised, conclusions, and proposed dates for subsequent meetings). The methods of disclosure will be adapted depending on the target audience to ensure accessibility, inclusion, and effectiveness.

Table 3: Summary of key methods for information disclosure at different stages of the project

Project stage	List of information to be disclosed	Methods proposed	Tentative schedule	Target stakeholders	Responsibility
Project Design	Project design summary, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Environmental and Social Management Plan, Grievance Redress Mechanism setup	Community Meetings, Focus group Events, and Special Gatherings	Project preparation period at selected community venues	Members of target communities in target woreda/ Kebele	Project Preparation team in collaboration with concerned offices
		Regional FM radio	After the AfDBs and Plan	Community members in	Project preparation team and

			International Approval	target woreda/Kebele	implementing agencies and offices
		Make available printed and electronic copies at National, Regional/City and Woreda/kebele level focal offices as well as online portals	After the AfDBs and Plan International Approval	Federal, Regional and woreda level stake holders	Project implementing agencies and offices
Project implementation	Project Progress Reports	Review Meetings A short summary/ of annual report in simple and accessible language to local communities and media Focus group feedback sessions with most vulnerable Interviews and one on one meetings	Annually throughout the project life span	Stakeholder representative at Federal, Regional, Woreda and community level	Project coordination unit with joint review committee

	Any project-related information (on activities, beneficiary selection, GRM, etc.)	Community meetings, radio, mobile phone, email, website	Annually throughout the project life span	Stakeholder representative at Federal, Regional, Woreda and community level	Project coordination unit

5.7. Strategies for engagement of vulnerable groups

Plan International and other implementing organizations at the Federal, Regional and Woreda/community level will ensure that women, elders, persons with disabilities, street children, and other members of vulnerable groups are participating effectively and meaningfully in consultative processes and that their voices are not ignored. This will require specific measures and assistance to create opportunities for meetings with vulnerable groups in addition to general community consultations. For example, women are usually more outspoken in women-only meetings than in general community meetings. Similarly, separate meetings need to be held with young people, elders, persons with disabilities and street children.

Engagement of vulnerable groups needs appropriate and clear methods of communication to inform participants about the consultation meetings. This will include invitation letters and direct contact by social workers with specific information about the objective of the meeting and types and number of community stakeholder groups expected to come. Adequate consideration should be given to organize meetings within manageable distances for people with walking or physical challenges due to old age or physical disability. Consideration also required for individuals who might need assistant or interpreter due to visual and hearing challenges. In cases where necessary, one-on-one interviews and surveys will be used to ensure the inclusion of views and concerns of vulnerable beneficiaries. Moreover, the project will ensure that all consultations are culturally appropriate. During the consultations, verbal consent shall be sought from meeting participants before starting recording of the proceedings. Comment/suggestion boxes shall also be prepared and placed in designated places within close reach of the communities to enable them to submit their views and reactions after information disclosure meetings. After completion of consultations, all views expressed by stakeholders will be carefully noted, documented in the consultation summary and considered, including those of disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

5.8. Review and Integration of Stakeholder Consultations

Plan International and other project components and sub-components implementing organizations at the Federal, Regional, Woreda and Community level will gather all comments and inputs originating from community meetings, SMS, GRM outcomes, surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The

information gathered will be submitted to the project coordination unit (PCU), specifically to the Social and Environmental Specialists, to ensure that the project has general information on the perception of communities, and that it remains on target. It will be the responsibility of the implementing organization (MoWE, MoA) to respond to comments and inputs, and to keep open a feedback line to the communities, as well as the local authorities.

5.9. Timelines and Project Closure

The stakeholder consultations shall be conducted throughout the project lifecycle. It will conduct during the preparation of the project and throughout project implementation. Information disclosure and consultations during project implementation will include monthly visits and meetings with community leaders and regular meetings with Regional, Woreda and Communities and other concerned stakeholders.

- **Final Evaluation Meetings**

During the project closure phase, final evaluation meetings will be conducted to present and discuss the project's achievements, lessons learned, and sustainability measures with all relevant stakeholders. These meetings will include federal and regional ministries and bureaus, woreda offices, community representatives, local contractors, development partners, and civil society organizations. Workshops, presentations, and meetings will use accessible language, visual aids, and interpreters for PWDs to ensure inclusivity. The focus will be on validating the project's outcomes, assessing the effectiveness of environmental and social mitigation measures, and discussing recommendations for sustaining benefits beyond the project lifecycle.

- **Handover Ceremonies**

Handover ceremonies will officially transfer project assets, infrastructure, and tools to beneficiary communities and local government authorities to ensure continuity and proper management. Community leaders, woreda administrators, sector offices, local contractors, and project staff will participate in these events. Public handover events will be documented clearly, including lists of transferred assets, assigned responsibilities, and guidance for maintenance, to ensure transparency and accountability.

- **Final GRM Report**

A final GRM report will be prepared to review all grievances received during the project lifecycle and confirm that each has been addressed or resolved. Project staff, community representatives, and affected individuals will participate in this process. The report will summarize grievance types, actions taken, resolutions, and any outstanding issues. Findings will be shared with stakeholders to maintain transparency and reinforce trust in the grievance management system.

- **Community Feedback and Sustainability Planning**

Community feedback will be collected to understand beneficiaries' perspectives on project impacts and their priorities for sustaining benefits. Women and youth groups, local authorities, and NGOs/CSOs will be engaged through focus group discussions, surveys, and community meetings conducted in local languages. Visual aids and interpreters will be provided for PWDs to ensure accessibility. This process will help inform recommendations for sustaining the project's positive outcomes and guide future interventions in the Gambella region.

Project closure activities will take place during the final month(s) of project implementation, immediately preceding official project completion. Handover ceremonies and final evaluation meetings will be scheduled in coordination with woreda offices and community representatives to maximize participation. The final GRM report will be prepared and shared prior to project closure to ensure all outstanding grievances are addressed.

6. Resources and Responsibilities for Implementing Stakeholder Engagement Activities

6.1. Human Resources

Stakeholder engagement is a core project strategy and the daily responsibility of community-level staff as they facilitate group organization and other activities. Therefore, all project human resources—including staff from Plan International, line ministries, and respective Gambela Regional and Woreda offices (Water and Energy, Agriculture)—will be continuously engaged in this process. Assigned full-time experts at the Plan International Gambela Branch and Environment & Social (E&S) focal persons at the national, regional, and woreda levels will be responsible for implementing the project and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

6.2. Budget

Plan International has allocated USD 84,000 for the implementation of the SEP. This budget will support SEP facilitation and implementation throughout the project. While this allocation is managed by the Plan International project coordination unit for implementing and monitoring the SEP, other line ministries—including the MoWE and the MoA—may also dedicate budgetary resources to strengthen stakeholder engagement as part of the overall project costs.

A tentative budget for the SEP is presented in Table 8. This table will be updated to include all stakeholder activities, such as workshops, training sessions, program reviews, and monitoring activities.

Table 4: Estimated Budget for SEP Implementation

No	SEP Activities	Estimated Cost in USD
1	Technical Support for the implementation of the SEP	30,000
2	Consultations/ Participatory Planning, Decision-Making Meetings	20,000
3	Community awareness on Water 4 Food and GRM at regional and woredas level	10,000
4	Trainings	24,000
	Total	**84,000**

*Note: this estimated budget is subject to change based on the needs at the ground

6.3. Management Functions and Responsibilities

Table 5: Stakeholder Engagement Implementation Responsibility Matrix

Institution / Body	Role and Responsibility in SEP Implementation
Plan International	Overall Lead & Coordinator. Responsible for the day-to-day execution, budget, and reporting of SEP activities. Key tasks include: • Managing the central Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) database and ensuring all complaints are logged, tracked, and resolved. • Compiling and analyzing all stakeholder feedback from meetings, interviews, and the GRM for reporting and adaptive management. • Providing funding, materials, and training to government partners for all SEP activities. • Drafting and submitting periodic progress reports on SEP implementation to the African Development Bank. • Leading the organization of regional-level workshops and community meetings.
Ministry of Water & Energy (MoWE) / Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	Strategic Oversight & Authority. Provide policy direction, official endorsement, and high-level conflict resolution. Key tasks include: • Chairing the project steering and technical committee meetings to provide strategic direction. • Co-chairing and officially convening major joint review meetings and national-level workshops. • Endorsing key project information and SEP materials before public dissemination. • Arbitrating conflicts that cannot be resolved at lower levels. • Providing official directives to facilitate coordination between woreda offices and Plan International.
Woreda Water, Energy & Agriculture Offices	Community-Level Implementation & Liaison. The primary point of contact for day-to-day engagement with affected communities. Key tasks include: • Organizing and convening quarterly community meetings and facilitating focus group discussions.

	• Acting as the local GRM entry point—receiving grievances, providing initial acknowledgment, and forwarding them to Plan International for logging. • Directly disseminating information (e.g., leaflets, brochures) and reporting back to communities on decisions and actions taken. • Mobilizing community members and key figures (e.g., Kebele leaders) for project activities. • Collecting raw feedback and community sentiments and reporting them to Plan International.
Federal & Regional EPA and Bureaus	Environmental & Social (E&S) Safeguards Assurance. Ensure all engagement activities address and mitigate E&S risks. Key tasks include: • Reviewing and validating that all public communication (e.g., brochures, meeting agendas) adequately explains E&S risks and mitigation measures. • Participating in community meetings and workshops to directly address environmental and social concerns. • Monitoring the GRM to ensure E&S-related grievances are handled appropriately and effectively. • Providing input and oversight to ensure SEP implementation is compliant with national E&S policies and AfDB safeguards.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

7.1. Monitoring

Plan International and sector institutions will monitor the project activities in accordance with the requirements of the legal agreement. The extent and mode of Stakeholder monitoring with respect to environmental and social performance will be proportionate to the potential environmental and social risks and impacts of the project supported activities their effect on the various stakeholder interests.

The following Monitoring actions will be undertaken regarding stakeholder interests in line with the environmental and social performance of the project, which will include:

• Conducting stakeholder engagement in a consultative manner, in accordance with the SEP, and build upon the channels of communication and engagement as established with stakeholders.

• Collection of feedback from stakeholders on environment and social performance of the project, and on the implementation of the mitigation measures on defined timeframe.

• Periodic reviews of compliance with requirements of the legal agreements.

• Where appropriate, and as set out in this SEP, engaging stakeholders and third parties such as independent experts, local communities or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), to complement or verify projects stakeholder monitoring information.

• Where other agencies or third parties would be responsible for managing specific risks and impacts and implementing mitigation measures, Plan International would collaborate with such agencies and third parties to establish and monitor such mitigation measures.

7.2. Reporting Back to Stakeholder Groups

Results of stakeholder engagements will be reported back to the affected communities, as well as the relevant local authorities and other stakeholders through quarterly project reports produced by Plan International and Gambela Region Water and Energy Bureau, and Agriculture Bureau. It will be the responsibility of these sector institutions to ensure that all relevant reporting is shared through the above defined public means. At a sub-component and activity level, IPs will be responsible for disclosing their stakeholder engagement results and relevant reporting on a quarterly basis. All stakeholders will be reminded of the availability of the GRM in case of any issues arising from the reporting.

The PIU/PCU is unequivocally committed to the principles of transparency, accountability, and shared learning. As a cornerstone of this commitment, the sector institutions hereby formally pledge to share the findings of the project's final evaluation with all key stakeholders.

Upon its completion, a comprehensive and accessible summary of the Final Evaluation Report will be proactively disclosed. This summary will be disseminated through established channels, including:

- Official project and government websites.
- Direct distribution to relevant federal, regional, and woreda-level government offices.
- Presentation and discussion in final stakeholder review meetings.
- Public communication channels such as community notice boards and local information centers.

The purpose of this disclosure is to provide a clear account of the project's achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, thereby fulfilling our accountability to the communities and partners involved and contributing to future programming and policy development.

ANNEX

Stakeholder Engagement

Key informant interviews were conducted at regional and woreda offices from September 15-16, 2025. Subsequently, focus group discussions were held at the project site from September 17-20, 2025, engaging local communities from different kebeles. FGD participants included elders, women, youth, girls, persons with disabilities. The objective of these engagements was to disclose project-related information and gather feedback and comments from the stakeholders. The details of the stakeholder input are provided below.

1. Interview Results Woreda representatives

1.1. Agricultural Office

In the region, climate resilience is closely linked to improving livelihoods and enhancing income generation. Communities promote fruit-based plantations such as mango, banana, and zeytoun, which support both household consumption and local market sales. Most households practice labor-based mixed farming, combining crop cultivation with livestock rearing. Organic fertilizers, including livestock manure and crop residues, are commonly used to reduce reliance on chemical inputs. Rivers are also utilized for irrigation, and in some cases for fish production, providing additional nutrition and income. Key crops include maize, sorghum, pulses, groundnuts, and vegetables such as beans and cabbage, often intercropped to improve soil fertility and productivity.

Despite these practices, several challenges limit agricultural productivity. Unpredictable rainfall and recurrent flooding frequently damage crops, sometimes washing away seeds shortly after sowing. Pest outbreaks, including soil crickets and other insect infestations, threaten yields, yet communities face shortages of pesticide sprayers and improved seed varieties, reducing their capacity to manage these risks. Limited access to agricultural machinery—sometimes as few as three tractors per district—further constrains farm efficiency, while resistance to new approaches and low awareness among farmers slow the adoption of improved techniques. These challenges are compounded by broader ecological concerns, including deforestation and the disappearance of indigenous species such as the Sheha tree, which reduces biodiversity and local environmental resilience.

Capacity-building and awareness creation are essential solutions. Training for both farmers and agricultural experts can improve knowledge and uptake of climate-smart practices, such as in-line cropping, composting, and the use of biogas technology for energy, waste management, and soil fertility enhancement. Early and coordinated communication across federal, regional, and local levels is also critical to ensure effective planning and project implementation. Large-scale investments are needed to restore biodiversity, conserve critical tree species, and provide access to pest-tolerant, improved seed varieties.

Inclusive engagement of men, women, and youth in agricultural planning and training can strengthen adoption of climate-smart practices, improve productivity, and enhance long-term resilience against climatic shocks and environmental degradation.

1.2. Interview with Water and Energy Bureau: water supply and sanitation

Access to safe and reliable water remains a critical challenge across the Gambella region. Communities frequently experience extreme annual floods that damage vital infrastructure, including hand pumps and pipelines, leading to repeated service interruptions. Existing water systems are largely reliant on hand pumps connected to shallow wells, which have limited yield and are particularly vulnerable during dry seasons when groundwater levels drop. Mechanical failures are common, and the lack of a robust supply chain for spare parts, combined with insufficient local repair capacity, exacerbates system downtime. Only a small proportion of kebeles currently benefit from climate-resilient infrastructure such as Rural Pipe Systems (RPS), although regional plans aim to expand RPS coverage to replace approximately 80% of hand pump systems.

The functionality of water systems is further constrained by a shortage of trained technical staff, including hydrologists, water engineers, and civil engineers, which limits the ability to design, maintain, and manage water infrastructure effectively. Water committees exist in some areas, but a lack of incentives and awareness often results in low participation, frequent turnover, and ineffective community-level management.

Water quality is also a major concern. Flooding and poor sanitation practices contribute to contamination of both surface and groundwater. Open defecation due to a lack of household or community toilets allows human waste to enter rivers, ponds, and shallow wells, resulting in recurrent outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, and dysentery. Communities rely heavily on these compromised water sources, highlighting the urgent need for both infrastructure improvements and public health interventions.

Institutional and logistical constraints further compound these challenges. Even where water sources exist, breakdowns often remain unaddressed for extended periods due to limited transportation, spare parts shortages, and insufficient trained personnel. The growing population in many kebeles places additional pressure on already limited water resources, underscoring the need for integrated planning that combines climate-resilient infrastructure, skilled workforce development, community engagement, and sanitation awareness programs.

2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

2.1.Drong Kebele Communities
2.1.1. Socio-economic

- **Livelihoods and Income Sources**

Community members reported that their main sources of livelihood are animal rearing (cows, goats, and chickens) and crop farming. However, household income stability is affected by several constraints. Large family sizes place pressure on limited resources, and there is a lack of basic farming tools such as shovels, spades, rakes, hoes, axes, and sickles, which reduces agricultural efficiency. In addition, households lack seed capital to initiate small-scale businesses, which restricts opportunities for income diversification.

- **Gender and Social Inclusion**

Discussions revealed that men, women, and youth all participate in household and community-level decision-making, often through collective dialogue and consensus. However, their roles remain differentiated. Women and girls, for example, are responsible for collecting firewood for household use and for sale, and they contribute to household income by selling milk at local markets. These activities demonstrate women's critical contribution to both household and community economies, despite being undervalued compared to men's farming activities.

- **Community Organization and Participation**

Participants explained that engagement with government institutions and NGOs typically occurs through participatory methods, including surveys; focus group discussions, and public meetings. These mechanisms allow the community to provide input and feedback on development projects. However, members noted that engagement is often irregular and does not always translate into tangible improvements at the local level.

2.2. Wnky Kebele Communities
- **Livelihoods and Income Sources**

The primary livelihoods in Wnky Kebele are crop and livestock farming, carried out with insufficient and largely traditional tools. Honey production also provides supplementary income for some households. However, the stability of household income is undermined by resource constraints, the use of outdated farming tools, and limited opportunities for livelihood diversification.

- **Gender and Social Inclusion**

Participants indicated that men, women, and youth are all actively involved in household and community-level decision-making. Nevertheless, women and girls carry differentiated responsibilities within the household and the local economy. Their contributions include preparing traditional drinks and alcoholic beverages for sale, collecting firewood, cultivating diverse crops, and engaging in fishing activities. These roles provide both subsistence support and cash income, though they are often undervalued compared to men's roles in farming and livestock management.

- **Community Organization and Participation**

Community members reported that their engagement with government and NGOs in development projects occurs primarily through consultative mechanisms. These include meetings, surveys, and participatory assessments. However, participants noted that such engagements are often limited in frequency and follow-up, reducing the effectiveness of community involvement in shaping interventions.

2.3. Socio-Economic in Nibnib Kebele

- **Livelihoods and Income Sources**

The primary sources of livelihood in Nibnib Kebele are livestock rearing—particularly cows and goats—and crop farming, with maize as the main staple crop. Community members reported that household income stability is highly vulnerable to recurrent flooding, drought, and climate-related cattle diseases, which directly threaten both crop and livestock production.

- **Gender and Social Inclusion**

Women, men, and youth actively participate in household and community decision-making processes. Women and girls, in particular, contribute significantly to household income generation. Beyond their household responsibilities, they are engaged in small businesses that supplement family income, highlighting their central role in sustaining household economies.

2.4. FGD Results: Okuna Kebele – Socio-Economic Conditions

The focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed that the livelihoods of households in Okuna Kebele are primarily dependent on crop farming, livestock rearing, and casual labor. Farming activities remain the backbone of household income and food security, with both men and women actively participating.

Gender and Youth Roles: Men, women, and youth are all involved in household and livelihood decision-making. Women and girls were noted to play a particularly **critical role during the farming season**, not only engaging in crop production but also contributing to household sustenance and

community-level support systems. Their contribution is recognized as essential for both agricultural productivity and social cohesion.

Institutional Collaboration: The community maintains strong working relationships with **government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)**. Development projects and external support initiatives have strengthened local capacity and provided additional opportunities for livelihood improvement, resource access, and resilience-building.

2.5. Socio-Economic – Pinkuwe Kebele

- **Farming and Income**

The community practices **two main harvest cycles per year**. Maize is cultivated and harvested twice annually, while tomatoes are produced once per year. However, agricultural productivity is severely constrained by **floods and droughts during the rainy season**, which regularly damage crops and reduce yields. Another significant challenge is the **lack of market access**, particularly for tomatoes, which makes it difficult for farmers to sell their produce at fair value. Additionally, **transport limitations** mean that farmers must arrange their own means of getting products to market, adding financial and logistical burdens.

- **Gender Roles**

In Pinkuwe kebele, **men are typically the primary decision-makers**, while women often play the role of implementers of these decisions. Women and girls are largely responsible for **domestic tasks**, including fetching water, cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes. Beyond household responsibilities, women also contribute to the **economic wellbeing of their families** through activities such as selling farm produce and participating in market transactions.

- **Projects and Support**

The kebele benefits from the involvement of **development partners**, particularly the **ZOA organization**, which implements projects focused on agriculture and nutrition. These initiatives include the provision of seeds for **okra, tomatoes, maize, and other crops**, contributing to improved **food security** and **income generation** for local households.

2.6. Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) in Drong Kebele

- **Main Crops and Flood Impacts**

Community members identified maize and sorghum as the primary crops grown in the kebele. However, frequent flooding poses a major threat to planting, harvesting, and overall crop yields. Heavy rainfall often destroys young plants, interrupts crop growth, and leaves fields too wet and muddy to access. As a result,

farmers are unable to plant on time or are forced to delay planting, which shortens the growing season and reduces productivity. Drong Kebele was described as one of the most flood-affected areas.

- **Coping Strategies**

In the past, farmers have attempted to reduce crop losses during floods mainly by improving drainage systems and adjusting planting times. While these measures provided some relief, they remain inadequate in addressing the scale of the problem.

- **Access to CSA Practices and Training**

The discussion revealed that no Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices are currently implemented in the community. Participants stated that they had not received training or technical support on CSA methods. Furthermore, CSA-related training opportunities have not been made available to women, youth, or persons with disabilities, leaving them excluded from potential benefits.

- **Preparedness for Future Floods**

When asked about preparedness, participants indicated that their primary coping mechanism is to inform local government authorities for assistance. However, there is limited proactive support in terms of capacity-building or provision of adaptive technologies.

- **Gender and Youth Involvement in Decision-Making**

Despite the lack of formal CSA structures, women and youth were reported to participate in household and community-level decision-making. They do so by sharing the challenges faced by their families and the community with agricultural experts. Nevertheless, their involvement remains informal and often lacks follow-up support from government or NGOs.

2.7. Climate-Smart Agriculture in Wnky Kebele

- **Main Crops and Flood/Drought Impacts**

Community members reported cultivating a variety of crops, including maize, sorghum, sunflower, banana, sweet potato, pumpkin, okra, beans, and cabbage. Both floods and drought were identified as major threats to production. These hazards disrupt planting schedules, shorten or delay harvesting periods, and ultimately reduce crop yields. The Balaltine area, particularly around Balaltine Lake, was mentioned as the most flood-affected zone within the kebele.

- **Coping Strategies**

To reduce crop losses during floods, farmers reported constructing drainage structures by digging holes or water channels to redirect excess water. While such measures provide some short-term protection, they are insufficient to address large-scale flood impacts.

- **Access to CSA Practices and Training**

Participants indicated that soil preparation and cultivation are used as strategies to prevent pest infestations; however, no comprehensive Climate-Smart Agriculture CSA practices have been adopted in the kebele. Similar to Drong, no CSA-related training has been provided to women, youth, or persons with disabilities, leading to low awareness and limited adaptation capacity.

- **Preparedness for Future Floods**

When asked about preparation for future flood events, participants emphasized the need for heavy cultivation as a means of strengthening resilience. However, they acknowledged that this approach is limited and does not provide long-term protection.

- **Gender and Youth Involvement in Decision-Making**

The discussion revealed that women and youth currently have little involvement in CSA-related decision-making. No awareness creation sessions or trainings have been organized to strengthen their participation. As a result, their potential contributions remain largely untapped.

2.8. Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) FGD: Nib Nib Kebele

- **Main Crops Grown**

The community primarily grows maize and sorghum as staple crops.

- **Effects of Floods on Planting, Harvesting, and Yield**

Heavy rainfall and flooding were reported to cause significant crop destruction. Floodwaters often damage planted fields, leading to reduced yields and unstable harvests.

- **Areas Most Affected by Flood**

The Kuerliey area of Nibnib Kebele is identified as the most flood-prone and severely affected location.

- **Measures Taken in the Past to Reduce Crop Losses**

Community members indicated that there are very limited strategies available to mitigate flood-related crop losses. The only coping measure mentioned was planting crops earlier in the season to avoid peak flood periods.

- **CSA Practices Already in Use**

Participants acknowledged practicing some form of climate-smart agriculture, specifically through adjusted crop planting methods. These practices were seen as modest but helpful in improving resilience.

- **Accessibility of CSA-Related Trainings**

Unlike in other kebeles, Nibnib community members reported that CSA training had been delivered and was accessible to different groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

- **Suggestions to Better Prepare for Future Floods**

The community emphasized the importance of constructing canals or drainage systems to channel floodwater, which would help protect farmlands from inundation and improve long-term resilience.

- **Involvement of Women and Youth in CSA Decision-Making**

Women are already involved in CSA decision-making processes in Nibnib. They also participate in CSA-related training, ensuring that their perspectives are integrated into household and community-level adaptation strategies.

2.9. Climate-Smart Agriculture in Okuna Kebele

The community in Okuna Kebele benefits from annual agricultural extension support, which strengthens their capacity to adopt improved farming practices. Unlike nearby kebeles such as Okuna Kir and Ocunna Dooy, this village does not experience significant flooding. However, the community remains cautious and has adopted a flood warning system, drawing on the experiences and practices of neighboring villages.

Farming Practices: The dominant farming approach in Okuna Kebele is mono-cropping, which provides stability but limits diversification and resilience against climatic shocks. Despite this, villagers reported achieving sufficient crop harvests in the previous year, which helped to buffer household food security.

Community Participation in CSA: Both women and youth are actively and equally involved in decisions related to climate-smart agriculture. Their inclusion in planning and training activities has contributed to broader community engagement and uptake of CSA practices.

2.10. Climate-Smart Agriculture – Pinkuwe Kebele

Main Crops

The principal crops cultivated in Pinkuwe kebele include maize, sorghum, vegetables (notably tomatoes and peppers), and fruit trees such as mangoes and papayas. These crops form the backbone of both household consumption and local income generation.

Floods and Their Effects

Flooding is a recurrent challenge, occurring every summer and causing substantial damage to farmland. Vegetable crops are the most affected, as they are difficult to harvest during the flood season. While maize and sorghum are somewhat more resilient, they also require careful management to withstand flood impacts. The riverbank areas are particularly vulnerable due to annual overflows, often forcing farmers to relocate their cultivation to higher and drier ground to reduce losses.

Preparing for Challenges

To cope with seasonal challenges, farmers commonly save seeds for winter cultivation, when farming conditions are more favorable. Some climate-smart agricultural practices have been introduced, including the use of nurseries for tomato production. In addition, government programs support youth by providing agricultural inputs such as water pumps, enabling them to engage in more resilient farming practices.

Training

Development partners, particularly ZOA, have trained some women in multi-cropping techniques to diversify production and improve resilience. However, men and youth often continue to rely on traditional farming methods, limiting the adoption of new approaches. Community members stressed the urgent need for functional irrigation systems, especially to protect farms near riverbanks. They also highlighted the importance of inclusive training opportunities that equally involve men, women, and youth to strengthen the uptake of climate-smart agriculture.

2.11. Biodiversity in Drong Kebele

Plant and Animal Populations

Participants explained that some plant species have been common in Drong Kebele since settlement, but their abundance and distribution have shifted over time. Wild animals, which had disappeared for many years, were reported to have briefly reappeared but have since declined again. Livestock such as cows, goats, and chickens are common, and their populations are increasing, whereas wild animal populations are steadily decreasing. The main reasons identified for these changes were recurrent floods, food and water shortages due to seasonal fluctuations, human activities such as deforestation, and broader environmental changes.

Habitats and Ecosystems

Forests and grasslands were highlighted as critical habitats that provide resources essential for the survival of plants and animals. However, these ecosystems are increasingly threatened by human activities such as deforestation, land clearing, and farming. Seasonal variation was also noted to strongly affect habitats, forcing species to adapt their life cycles, physiology, and behavior in response to changing temperatures, food, and water availability.

Observed Plant Species

Community members identified several plant species in the area, including Rigk (Piya), Kuel (Bot), Buay (Lango), Nor (Guorap), and Nipini (Kith).

Observed Animal Species

Animal species that were mentioned include elephant (Bay), buffalo (Bash), crocodile (Thagar), gazelle (Karbe), monkey (Fuga), lion (Tofo), hyena (Ciw), and ostrich (Blut).

Reasons for Distribution Changes

The community **a**ssociated the decline in wild species and shifts in plant distribution with agricultural expansion, large-scale farm investment activities, deforestation, overgrazing, rapid human population growth, and the expansion of settlements into animal habitats.

Critical Habitats and Ecosystems

Wetlands, forests, and bush lands were identified as vital ecosystems for sustaining biodiversity. However, these areas are under severe threat from degradation, deforestation, and clearance for agriculture and settlement.

2.12. FGD Results: Biodiversity in Nibnib kebele

Plant and Animal Populations

Community members reported the presence of traditionally recognized plant species such as *Wguer*. However, the abundance and distribution of plants in the area have declined over time, mainly due to excessive flooding and human interference.

With regard to wildlife, participants observed hyenas and monkeys as still relatively common. In contrast, species such as elephants, giraffes, and gazelles were said to have disappeared from the area. Livestock remain abundant and stable, but wild animal populations are declining. The main reasons cited for these changes were human activities, particularly hunting, deforestation, and land-use expansion, as well as the impacts of high annual flood levels that negatively affect plant survival.

- **Habitats and Critical Ecosystems**

Forests and grasslands were identified as the most important habitats for sustaining local plants and animals. These ecosystems provide shelter, grazing areas, and breeding grounds. However, the community emphasized that human settlement expansion, migration into new areas, and associated land clearing are degrading these habitats. Climate variability, particularly seasonal flooding, has further accelerated the disappearance of both wild animals and plants, leaving ecosystems increasingly vulnerable.

2.13. Biodiversity / Biological Environment – Okuna Kebele

- Plant and Animal Populations

Plant Population: Community members reported that the village does not contain any rare, endemic, or threatened plant species. The local flora is relatively common, and no particularly vulnerable or unique plant species were identified within the area.

Animal Population: The village has recently seen an increase in wildlife, particularly large predators such as tigers and lions. While these species indicate a recovering wildlife presence, they also pose significant safety risks to both humans and livestock. Consequently, the number of domestic animals has been declining due to predation. Residents link the growth of predator populations to the availability of forested areas that provide suitable habitats.

- Habitats and Critical Ecosystems

Community members reported that there are no critical ecosystems or habitats within the village itself. However, the presence of dangerous wildlife reduces residents' ability to safely access and utilizes surrounding natural areas, such as nearby forested zones, for grazing or other livelihood activities.

2.14. Biodiversity and Biological Environment – Pinkuwe Kebele

- **Plant and Animal Life**

The local environment in Pinkuwe kebele supports a variety of plant and animal species. Tree species such as Acacia commiphora and Acacia bananites are common in the area, forming part of the natural vegetation. The wildlife population includes hyenas, leopards, foxes, and deer, alongside other smaller animals. However, community members noted that large-scale farm investments and associated human activities have disrupted natural habitats, causing stress and displacement of wildlife. This disturbance also affects domestic livestock, as wildlife interactions increase when natural habitats are reduced.

- **Habitats and Critical Ecosystems**

The most important ecosystems in the kebele are forests and wetlands along the riverbanks, which provide essential habitats for wildlife, including leopards, baboons, and monkeys. These habitats are not only vital for the survival of wildlife but also play a key role in maintaining the overall biodiversity and ecological balance of the area. However, both agricultural expansion and settlement pressures continue to threaten the integrity of these critical ecosystems.

Sample Photos during FGDs at different Kebeles

Sample Photos during KIIs at Regional and Woreda Offices