



**Gender, Climate Change, and Nutrition Integration Initiative  
(GCAN)**

**Reports on the First Multi-Stakeholder Platform Dialogue  
Workshop**

**20 February 2025**

**Elilly International Hotel**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Organized by Forum for Social Studies (FSS)**



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Forum for Social Studies**

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## Executive Summary

The first multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) workshop of the Gender, Climate Change and Nutrition Integration Initiative (GCAN) was held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at Elilly International Hotel, Addis Ababa Ethiopia. The workshop was organized by Forum for Social Studies and included representatives from ministry offices, delegates from non-governmental organizations as well as media representatives. The program was attended by a total of 36 participants and 4 presenters who presented on issues focused on gender, climate change, and nutrition conditions in Ethiopia. Discussions following the presentation were moderated by Dr. Ezana Amdework representing the FSS and GCAN project and shared information on the gender, climate change, and nutrition policy landscape in Ethiopia.

The event was a great success with participants providing feedback on project objectives and active engagement in the capacity needs assessment activity undertaken as part of the workshop.

## Opening Remarks and Introduction

The workshop was launched with a welcoming address by Dr. Yeraswork Admassie, Executive Director of the Forum for Social Studies (FSS). Following the welcoming address, Dr. Ezana Amdework introduced participants to the work of FSS, and its engagement in research and publication and then outlined the program schedule for the day. Dr. Ezana then gave a brief introduction about the first presenter, Mr. Tadesse Zerfu, a research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

### Presentation session

#### Overview of the GCAN Project by Tadesse Zerfu

Tadesse introduced the GCAN project to invited stakeholders highlighting the need for integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition in policy and programs. He provided information on the funding, current project status, initiative operation areas, and future research directions.

#### Small Farmers and Challenge of Climate Change by Dessalegn Rahamato

Dessalegn Rahamato, senior researcher at the FSS and member of the GCAN team presented on the challenges and impact of climate change on small farmers in Ethiopia. In his presentation Dessalegn raised key issues on climate change, the challenges to the land sector, and the adaptation measures peasants have put in place to meet these challenges in the country. The material for this presentation is based on research undertaken in Tehuledere *woreda* in South Wollo Zone in 2022 as part of a study of climate change and migration.

In his presentation, Dessalegn emphasized the link between climate change, tenure security, and food security. He highlighted the northeast region of Ethiopia, including South Wollo, is highly vulnerable to climate change, with extreme weather events exacerbating poverty. While most of the population depends on farming, only half of the land is cultivable due to rugged terrain. Climate change further disrupts agricultural productivity, leading to food shortages and famines in the area. Farmers are aware of these changes as they experience the impact on their lives and livelihoods on a daily basis. In response, they have adopted strategies like planting drought-resistant crops, shifting to vegetables and fruit trees, using irrigation, intensifying labor, migrating, and prioritizing khat cultivation to mitigate climate impacts.

## **The Ethiopian Policy Landscape by Dr. Ezana Amdework**

Dr. Ezana presented key findings from a report on the policy landscape in Ethiopia, highlighting existing opportunities and challenges in integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition in policy and implementation. He outlined the evolution of policy frameworks and measures taken by the government of Ethiopia, particularly in the agriculture sector which is intrinsically linked with nutrition, climate change, and gender issues over successive regimes.

The policy review highlighted gaps in translating objectives into effective programs. For example, agricultural extension agents, predominantly male, provide technical support to farmers but often lack sufficient expertise and face high turnover. The state-farmer relationship tends to be hierarchical, with initiatives typically following a top-down approach. Furthermore, new policies tend to be donor-driven, raising concerns about the effectiveness and inclusivity of government services, particularly in terms of gender balance and social diversity in rural communities.

Moreover, government policy increasingly recognizes that nutrition deficiencies, especially in rural areas, contribute to poor health, high mortality, low productivity, and poverty. As a result, addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach. Additionally, Dr. Ezana highlighted that the impact of climate change in Ethiopia's agricultural sector has increasingly become evident as seen in the decrease in productivity, loss of crops, water scarcity, and greater vulnerability to extreme weather events. This has led to heightened food insecurity, economic instability, and challenges for rural livelihoods. As such several mitigation and adaptation programs adopted by the government have placed strong emphasis on promoting climate resilience through increasing investment in road and transport infrastructure, investment in hydropower and renewable energy, including wind, solar, and thermal energy, and expanding extension services, both in agricultural and health extension programs.

## **The Impact of Climate Change on Food and Agriculture in Ethiopia by Meseret Tsegaye**

Meseret Tsegaye from the Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI) presented how climate change is profoundly transforming Ethiopia's landscapes, and its impact on agriculture and food production systems. The agricultural sector is the backbone of the country's economy, providing employment opportunities and food production, which are essential for both rural communities and the country's overall development. Despite this fact, the increase in temperature and rainfall variability threatens agriculture by reducing the yield of staple crops such as maize, sorghum, and wheat. Findings also show that Ethiopia is facing increasing exposure to extreme weather events including drought and floods impacting rural livelihood and community well-being. Furthermore, climate change has also exacerbated soil degradation, soil erosion, and loss of biodiversity and farmlands across the country. Moreover, its impact has had far-reaching consequences for the livestock industry as the reduction in water and pasture availability has led to decreased livestock productivity, increased mortality rates, and diminished livelihoods for agrarian and pastoralist communities. Meseret concluded his presentation with a call to action to adopt a more integrated approach to tackle challenges by all stakeholders.

## Capacity Gap Assessment Questionnaire – Brief overview and online Filling of Questionnaire led by Dr. Ezana Amdework

Dr. Ezana gave a brief description of the online questionnaire, its purpose, and how participants can access the questionnaire using their phones. Each table had two copies of the QR-Code for participants to scan and fill out the capacity needs assessment survey questionnaire. FSS team members were on hand to assist participants with any questions and difficulties they encountered in accessing the online questionnaire.

### First Round Discussion

The discussion session was chaired by Dr. Ezana who first highlighted some of the key points raised by presenters while reminding participants of the significance of obtaining feedback for this research. Participants were then allowed to reflect on the presentation and forward any comments or questions to the presenters.

*Endashaw Mogessie (from Population, Health, Environment (PHE) Ethiopia Consortium):* when discussing the need to integrate gender into climate change and nutrition, Tadesse emphasized the economic empowerment of women. Isn't gender more than just women's empowerment? How do you see that?

- What concrete facts are there regarding the integration of gender, climate change, and nutrition besides what you described? What quantitative data can you mention that highlights this integration? We need scientific data to convince policymakers and argue how gender, climate, and nutrition are integrated.
- For Dessalegn, is there any concrete data that can show what is taking place on the ground instead of simply reporting on what farmers have stated? Can you provide data that not only highlights what is happening on a selected site in Soth Wollo but can apply at the country level? Does the data show the link between climate change and land tenure? Can we argue the report offers a comprehensive look at what is happening?
- To Meseret, you mentioned that there is an increase in soil erosion. But is that because of climate change or is it caused by our actions e.g. due to farming practices? Have you considered other contributing factors to the increase in soil erosion?

*Mekonnen Fufa (from the Ministry of Agriculture):* regarding the issues raised by Meseret, one of the key contributing factors to climate change is the increase in greenhouse emissions. Agriculture is one of the main sources of greenhouse emissions. So we can say it is both a source and a victim of climate change. Another contributing sector is livestock production. To address this challenge there was an attempt at policy intervention to shift cattle production which is one of the

contributing sectors to methane emission, to poultry production, and to shifting to raising sheep and goats which are more environmentally friendly as opposed to cattle production. In addition, the government is also currently working on climate-smart agriculture, but we have yet to compile the findings into a complete report. So, we need to think of agriculture as one way to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change.

*Dr. Gudina Abashula (from AAU Gender Studies):* The issue of gender is broad. One thing we need to consider is that women do not equally participate in climate protection and rehabilitation activities like men. We need to engage women in the different activities whether it's soil conservation, afforestation, or water conservation activities. So, we need to be cognizant of such differences. Second, to combat climate change we may develop different strategies. One of the focus areas has been to emphasize empowering women within the agriculture sector. I think we need to give adequate attention to off-farm activities to empower women as well. For example, in some rural areas women in drought-prone areas are making charcoal to generate income for their families. So, we need to identify and scale up different coping strategies.

*Tsegaye Alemu (from Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands):* we need to categorize and make the issues more specific rather than offering general ideas when speaking about these issues. For instance, we encounter different extreme weather conditions and challenges like drought and flooding. We need to distinguish and present which areas are more prone to drought and flooding, plot these sites accordingly, and then offer recommendations and possible interventions.

Second, we need to look at the pastoral communities and their experiences separately from other areas. Pastoral areas have different agroecology, economy, and culture. Hence, we must look at their conditions differently as well. Thirdly, we also need to look at the impact of climate change on our infrastructure, and development activities specifically as it relates to flooding. We have to look at its impact on people's livelihood as it is related to gender and nutrition. So, I would suggest the next workshop highlights these issues.

*Girma Borena (Ministry of Agriculture):* climate change is a global issue affecting the agriculture sector particularly. Women are one of the most vulnerable to climate change impacts as well. If you look at what happened in Borena, women were one of the most affected as a result of the drought in the area.

My question for Tadesse, you stated climate change has an impact throughout the agricultural value chain. If you have the data can you specify at which stage of the value chain the impact of climate change is more pronounced?

Dessalegn stated yes farmers have small lands and we at the ministry have made efforts to integrate intervention strategies with technology to address some of the challenges they face. My question is have you done any research on climate-smart agriculture and if so what has been your finding?

One thing I will add to Meseret's presentation which he did not mention is the impact of pests and insects. Over the years farmers have been losing crops as a result of pests like weevil. If the issue has not been considered I recommend that it be added to the next session.

## Responses to the first round of discussion

*Dessalegn Rahamato:* the report that was presented can be said to be enough as it is based on scientific research that shows existing conditions in that particular area (i.e., South Wollo). However, we must note that the research findings may not accurately reflect the experience and conditions of farmers across the whole of the country.

Concerning climate-smart agriculture, we did not discuss it because we have yet to conduct research specifically focusing on the issue. At the time of the data collection when we made inquiries to stakeholders including the Ministry of Agriculture, it was stated that they had not started implementing a climate-smart agriculture program yet.

*Tadesse Zerfu:* Regarding why people link gender with women and why we focus on women, we use a gender lens because climate change disproportionately affects women and children specifically. That is not to say other people are not affected by climate change. However, women are the most affected by climate change because they shoulder the burnt of the household responsibilities including fetching water and firewood, caring for children and the elderly as well as cooking and cleaning for the household. It is estimated women work more than 15 hours a day. And when there is drought the burden of caring and meeting the daily needs of the family will further become more challenging for them. That is why we focus on women.

As to why we focus on the integration of gender, climate change, and nutrition, that is because this link had not been highlighted before. As I mentioned in my presentation, gender, climate change, and nutrition are interrelated with one another. There are many studies done on the relationship between gender and nutrition or climate change and nutrition. It is clear that they are related to one another, but the problem is we usually see studies highlighting this relationship separately. But what makes this project unique is we see the three factors together and believe that this integrative approach will be transformative and impactful to people when addressed together.

Regarding the difference in participation in rehabilitation and conservation work among men and women, it is clear there are gender roles but that does not mean women are excluded from engaging in such activities. They do participate in some capacity but at the same time, they also are the ones that are feeding the men and taking care of the children.

*Meseret Tsegaye:* regarding the cause of soil erosion, I can say that climate change is the main culprit for the increase in soil erosion. Of course, other factors may contribute to soil erosion in

some areas like, wildfires, and conflict and there were even some issues that were raised about the COVID pandemic. But our study excluded these other factors to see how climate change affects the agriculture sector and we found the impact we observed was largely related to climate change.

There is an ongoing project to mitigate the impact of climate change at the federal level as stipulated by one of the participants. One issue I want to reflect on, however, is the issue of decreasing livestock numbers. This is a very controversial issue. I can say it is impossible to reduce the number of livestock right now. The policy direction the government is currently following is to focus on other solutions instead of decreasing heard numbers. Most of the cattle are found in pastoral areas like Somali, Borena, and Afar. We want people in these areas to use and benefit from a much smaller number of livestock, but it is impossible to achieve that at the moment. So we are now working on other livestock management approaches focusing on animal health, foraging, and food preparation for the cattle and turning manure into biogas. One thing I agree with the comment made earlier is, that we still lack adequate data when it comes to the impact climate change has on our agriculture sector, social sector, and infrastructure. We need area-specific time-bounded data on the impact of climate change across the country.

I agree that off-farm activities have to be given attention besides agriculture as they can aid in dealing with shocks among households.

Regarding the impact of climate change on infrastructure, although I selectively discussed only climate change and its relationship with agriculture, gender, and nutrition, the report does assess implications for infrastructures. As you stated Tsegaye, when there is a flood it may destroy dams, schools, health institutions, roads, and even the livestock of farmers. That means it may destroy the livelihood of communities. This has been recognized and adequately assessed in the research.

Besides these issues, the relation between climate change and the spread of diseases like cholera and malaria has to be assessed as well.

Moreover, we have to recognize that challenges linked with the food system must be addressed through a multi-sectoral approach as it involves various stakeholders including the private sector, civil society organizations, development partners, and others. So FSS can serve as a key platform where we can advocate and propose solutions that address food system and climate change challenges in the country.

## Second Round Discussion

*Aynalem Getie (From LEM Ethiopia):* how have socio-cultural adaptability and cultural sensitivity considerations been made in this proposed project? How can the project ensure the sustainability of its intervention? What makes your approach different?

- You took renewable energy as a key issue in the call to action. Wouldn't it be good to start our approach at the manufacturing and production stage?

*Eyerusalem (from WISE Ethiopia):* the presentations were excellent, but I think we should focus more on the coping mechanisms and prevention activities. As stated, climate change is a global issue however, the most affected countries are those in the developing part of the world and of course women. So, we should tease out more information on the coping mechanism and prevention aspect.

*Habtamu Abera (Ministry of Innovation & Technology):* Different issues and problems regarding climate, nutrition, and gender have been raised by the presenters. However, we need to prioritize and find solutions for the challenges outlined. We have been hearing about this issue for years and we will continue to hear about it since climate change is not just an issue for Ethiopia but for the rest of the world. So what then is the solution? We should emphasize that.

Our country has a science, technology, and innovation policy. The policy has 8 main goals. Our ministry is in the works to implement this policy currently at the country level. So, we need to align our work with the country's policy.

*Tesfa Demelew (Ethiopian Health Professional Association):* we saw a call for action in one of the presentations, but my question is who is this call directed to and how do you monitor its implementation?

*Kassahun Lemi (from MLCA- Ethiopia):* MELCA Ethiopia with the German agro-action organization had established a coalition to work on the right to food movement. The question of the right to food is not just about the right of individuals to get adequate food but it is also related to the means of production and nutrition issues. Thus, such types of events that discuss and bring solutions to pressing issues are a great opportunity.

- Meseret has raised specific points in his call to action statement. What I failed to see was what is the commitment of the government to implement this recommendation into action. This is an important aspect of the policy direction.

*Abebe Haile (AAU Center for Food Security):* as we face climate change, we have to be selective of the crops we cultivate. For Dessalegn, I know the area you spoke of and have had the chance to observe the vegetable cover. There is this one plant 'cassava' which grows in the area. But the

people are not aware of how to cook the plant and make it part of their diet. This plant is drought-resistant and can be turned into injera and bread. So I wonder whether you have observed this fact.

*Asaye Nigussie (from SEEDACT):* The agroecological zoning approach is a well-known approach. Our organization in collaboration with Agrico conducted suitability modeling to show what crops can be adopted when one area's climate changes. Using this data, we developed and published a country-wide map that reflects the findings. So, my question was to what extent have you incorporated findings from such types of pilot projects into your assessment? Has the study assessed how farmers adopt different crops from areas with similar climatic conditions as their environment changes?

## Responses to the second round of discussion

*Meseret Tsegaye:* regarding the call to action to whom, my answer would be to us. When we talk about development, I believe each one of us has a stake in the matter. So my call to action is to everyone who is here representing different organizations in this event. We have to ask ourselves where and on what issue we can contribute to as a stakeholder. Hence, I say this concerns all of us.

Another comment was that the responsibility of the government is not clearly stated. However, the government has been working on climate issues for years. I believe the main concern should be how we aid the ongoing efforts that have been put into effect throughout the country. For example, if you take the national adaptation plan, goals have been set to be achieved in the upcoming decades for the country. It lists the different activities, rules and regulations, and the responsibilities of stakeholders. So, each stakeholder must identify and see what policies and strategies have been developed and what their role is in addressing the impact of climate change at different levels.

*Taddesse Zerfu:* The socio-cultural adaptability and sustainability issue is an important issue. This project aims to identify existing gaps in integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition and build the capacity of stakeholders who work on the three strategic areas at the grassroots level. The research and the capacity-building activities included in the project thus take into consideration the sustainability issue. Cultural sensitivity is also an important issue, and we will take it into account.

Regarding the issue of resilience, this project aims to ensure resilience supported by evidence-based research and capacity building.

## **Conclusion**

Before wrapping the discussion section Dr. Ezana reiterated that the GCAN project has two wings, knowledge-based research, and capacity building. Following this workshop, four other similar multi-stakeholder platform sessions will be organized by the team, and we will reach out to stakeholders to engage in active discussions. Additionally, based on the findings of the capacity needs assessment we will organize a training session with our partner WE-Action on selected topics. We hope to continue with our cooperation in subsequent events as well.

Overall, the first multi-stakeholder platform workshop was a success. The team obtained valuable feedback from participants and identified areas for improving project outcomes moving forward. Following the question-and-answer session Dr. Ezana thanked participants for their contribution and closed the meeting.