



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

Reports on the Second Multi-Stakeholder Platform Dialogue Workshop

21 October 2025

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



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Forum for Social Studies

Organized by Forum for Social Studies (FSS)



Executive Summary

The second multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) workshop of the Gender, Climate Change and Nutrition Integration Initiative (GCAN) was held on 21th October, 2025 from 9:00am – 1:00pm at Forum for Social Studies Meeting Hall, Addis Ababa Ethiopia. The half day workshop was organized by Forum for Social Studies and included 21 representatives from ministry offices, delegates from non-governmental organizations (NGO), civil society organizations (CSOs), academic institutions as well as media representatives. Discussions following the presentation by Dr. Tirsit Sahledengle which was moderated by Dr. Selam Esayas representing the FSS and GCAN project.

Dr. Yeraswork Admassie, Executive Director of FSS, opened the workshop by emphasizing the organization's longstanding commitment to evidence-based dialogue and inclusive policy engagement. Dr. Selam Esayas, GCAN project lead, presented an overview of the GCAN project, activities undertaken and briefed the meeting on some of the findings of the capacity needs assessment with selected stakeholders.

A keynote presentation by Dr. Tirsit Sahledengle explored the nexus between climate change, gender, and mobility in Konso Zone. Her qualitative study documented how prolonged droughts have deepened gender inequalities forcing girls out of school, increasing early marriages, and pushing women into risky migration. The research also revealed the decline of Konso's terracing traditions, widespread water scarcity, limited sexual and reproductive health services, and economic challenges. Additionally, it linked growing outmigration of both men and women to other regions as a key adaptation strategy to growing population pressure, limited economic opportunities and the declining agricultural production sector which is hard hit by the impact of climate change in the area.

Discussions among participants underscored the need for context-specific, community-driven approaches, integration of SRH services into climate and nutrition programs, and market linkages for high-value crops. Furthermore, participants recommended formation of advocacy or lobby group to further push for change in policy and program design and implementations. Dr. Tirsit responded by stressing the importance of indigenous knowledge, qualitative research, and local relevance in designing climate interventions.

Second Multi-Stakeholder Platform Dialogue

Workshop on Gender, Climate Change, and Nutrition Integration (GCAN) Project

1. Introduction

The Forum for Social Studies (FSS), an independent and non-profit policy research institution dedicated to advancing inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue in Ethiopia, convened the Second Multi-Stakeholder Workshop under the Gender, Climate Change, and Nutrition Integration Initiative (GCAN) project on October 21, 2025, at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The project which is implemented in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), seeks to integrate gender equality, women's empowerment, and nutrition-sensitive approaches into Ethiopia's climate change policies and sustainable agri-food systems.

The workshop was designed to provide a platform for dialogue, reflection, and co-learning among diverse stakeholders working at the intersection of gender, nutrition, and climate change. Specifically, it aimed to share information on the ongoing GCAN project, present emerging academic research in these nexus areas, and facilitate an open exchange of perspectives on existing gaps, opportunities, and potential pathways for policy and practice. The event reaffirmed the importance of connecting research evidence to practical policy action and underscored the critical role of collaboration across sectors to achieve meaningful, sustainable outcomes.

2. Opening Session

The workshop commenced with opening remarks from Dr. Yeraswork Admassie, Executive Director of FSS, who welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude for their continued engagement in the GCAN initiative. In his address, Dr. Yeraswork highlighted FSS's long-standing mission and its experience in conducting policy-oriented research on a wide range of social, economic, and environmental issues in Ethiopia.

He emphasized FSS's unique role as a convener of evidence-based policy dialogue that is respectful, inclusive, and grounded in research. Dr. Yeraswork underlined that the success of initiatives such as GCAN depends on the commitment of multiple stakeholders including researchers, policymakers, civil society, and development practitioners to share knowledge and align efforts toward integrated and gender-responsive climate and nutrition policies. He concluded his remarks by encouraging participants to explore FSS's repository of research outputs and event archives, available through the organization's online platforms, as a means to further learning and policy engagement.

3. Project Overview

A detailed overview of the GCAN project and brief description of assessment findings was presented by Dr. Selam Esayas, the project lead at FSS. Dr. Selam explained that the GCAN project was conceived to identify systemic gaps and opportunities for mainstreaming gender, nutrition, and climate change adaptation within national and sectoral policy frameworks. She outlined key activities undertaken under the initiative and share information on data gathered from stakeholders on existing policies, strategies and programs implemented on gender, climate change and nutrition in Ethiopia.

The assessment had revealed several cross-cutting challenges. One of the most significant findings was the weak integration of gender, nutrition, and climate considerations across policies and institutional frameworks. Coordination among implementing agencies was often limited, leading to fragmented interventions and duplication of efforts. Funding for cross-cutting initiatives remained insufficient, and gender inclusion was frequently treated as an administrative requirement rather than a strategic objective. Dr. Selam also highlighted the prevalence of tokenism in gender-related initiatives and the tendency for stakeholders to work in isolation, each focusing on their own thematic area without pursuing the synergies that could arise from a more integrated approach.

Despite these challenges, the study also identified notable opportunities. Multi-stakeholder dialogues have become increasingly common in related areas, and there is growing political will to address the interconnected issues of gender inequality, climate change, and nutrition insecurity. Furthermore, the recognition of institutional capacity building as a prerequisite for effective integration was also highlighted as a key positive trend.

As a way forward, the GCAN team proposed a series of actions, including the design and rollout of capacity-strengthening trainings based on the assessment findings, continued engagement with relevant government agencies, CSOs, and academic institutions, and the use of accessible communication platforms such as policy briefs, blogs, and stakeholder workshops to disseminate findings and foster accountability.

4. Keynote Research Presentation

Following the project overview, Dr. Tirsit Sahledengle, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), presented her postdoctoral research titled “**The Nexus between Climate Change, Gender, and Mobility in Southern Ethiopia: A Case Study from Konso Zone**” a research which was funded by University of Oslo and Center for Sustainable Development at Addis Ababa University.

Dr. Tirsit’s qualitative study investigates how local communities understand, experience, and respond to climate change in Konso, a region well known for its traditional adaptation practices, especially terracing. Her research was also guided by critical questions exploring how women perceive and adapt to climate-induced changes, how gender influences patterns of mobility, and

how cultural norms, economic constraints, and religious values intersect to shape adaptive behavior.

She explained that for many local residents, the concept of climate change is perceived not in scientific terms but through lived experience and indigenous knowledge systems. Community members, for example, associate it with prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and declining soil fertility rather than abstract notions of global warming. Participants often viewed “climate change” as a donor-driven discourse, even though they acutely felt its daily consequences.

The study found that water scarcity had severe gendered implications. During the three-year drought beginning in 2016, adolescent girls were forced to walk long distances often more than four hours a day to fetch water, resulting in widespread school dropouts and an increase in early marriages. Faced with shrinking opportunities, many young women chose to migrate to urban areas such as Moyale or Arba Minch, where they often found themselves in precarious economic and social situations, including involvement in commercial sex work. This finding underscored the urgent need for reproductive health (SRH) services and livelihood alternatives for young women in drought-affected communities.

Dr. Tirsit also discussed how men in Konso engaged in seasonal and increasingly permanent migration for labor and trade, including to gold mining areas such as Shakiso area. Land ownership practices in Konso also remain deeply patriarchal, limiting women’s access to productive assets and decision-making power. Fertility preferences still heavily favor sons, and polygamy is common, further entrenching gender inequality.

Another critical finding was the decline of the terracing tradition, a hallmark of Konso’s identity and a UNESCO-recognized heritage practice. Reduced rainfall and changing aspirations among youth have led to the abandonment of this centuries-old adaptation technique. The shift toward oxen plowing and market-oriented trade signals broader socio-cultural and environmental transformations.

Nutritionally, many households survive on a single daily meal composed mainly of Moringa leaves and beans. While Moringa is nutritionally rich and holds commercial potential, limited market access means that farmers receive only a small fraction of the urban market price. The study also revealed serious reproductive health gaps whereby contraceptive use are reported to decline during climate change induced events like draught further creating a critical risk to the health and well-being of women in the area. Additionally, cultural taboos, weak health infrastructure and emergency-focused interventions were found deprioritize SRH services.

5. Discussion Session

The presentations were followed by an engaging discussion among participants. Attendees commended the originality of Dr. Tirsit’s research and its strong contextual grounding. Several

participants, however, raised questions about how such rich qualitative findings could be translated into actionable policies and avoid becoming “another shelf report.”

Discussions also highlighted the link between gender-based violence (GBV) and climate stress, noting that droughts and migration have intensified risks of sexual exploitation and forced marriages, particularly for young girls. Participants urged researchers and policymakers to explore these intersections further. Others emphasized the connections between malnutrition, limited contraceptive use, and high fertility rates, arguing that climate and nutrition programs must include strong reproductive health components.

Implementation challenges were another major theme. Despite the presence of multiple policies and disaster risk management frameworks, such as the woreda-level hazard profiles developed by the Disaster Risk Commission, participants noted that these instruments often fail to translate into effective local action. Economic discussions centered on the potential of the Moringa value chain, with participants asking how Konso farmers could gain fairer access to high-value markets and whether climate-resilient crops like Moringa might serve as alternative livelihoods.

Overall, workshop participants underscored the need for community-driven, context-specific approaches rather than top-down donor-led interventions. Participants called for policy frameworks that build on indigenous knowledge systems and strengthen local adaptive capacity. Moreover, participants also highlighted the evolving policy environment, noting that the updated Ethiopian Civil Society Proclamation has lifted previous restrictions on advocacy activities. Building on this positive change, they further recommended establishing a dedicated lobby or advocacy group to strengthen efforts in translating research findings into actionable policies and programs.

6. Response from Dr. Tirsit Sahledengle

In her response, Dr. Tirsit expressed deep appreciation for the participants’ constructive engagement and reflected on several key insights. She noted that the educational crisis among girls in Konso which is marked by widespread dropout due to drought and household burdens was one of the study’s most alarming findings. She emphasized that climate interventions must go beyond technical fixes and address the social structures that perpetuate gender inequality.

Dr. Tirsit further pointed out that many climate adaptation initiatives lack local relevance and fail to incorporate indigenous knowledge. She stressed that reproductive health services, often considered a “luxury” by overburdened local health systems, should be integrated into climate and nutrition programs. The decline of terracing, she observed, symbolizes not only further environmental degradation but also a cultural loss that weakens community resilience.

To translate research into action, Dr. Tirsit proposed the production of policy briefs and blogs to disseminate findings widely, as well as ongoing engagement with stakeholders to co-create practical, locally grounded solutions. She also called for greater advocacy to establish market

linkages for Moringa and other local products, enabling communities to benefit economically from their resources. Lastly, she reaffirmed the importance of qualitative, context-rich studies in complementing national-level quantitative data, ensuring that policies reflect lived realities.

7. Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks, Dr. Yeraswork Admassie thanked all participants for their thoughtful contributions and reaffirmed FSS's commitment to fostering platform where research evidence can inform public dialogue and influence policy. He highlighted that the GCAN project exemplifies the value of sustained collaboration among diverse stakeholders and reiterated that translating knowledge into practice requires both persistence and partnership. Dr. Yeraswork concluded by inviting all attendees to remain engaged as the GCAN initiative moves into its next phases focused on capacity building, advocacy, and policy influence.

The event was adjourned at 1:00 pm.

Annex I: Program schedule

Gender, Climate Change, and Nutrition Integration Initiative (GCAN) in Ethiopia

October 21, 2025 @ FSS Headquarters Office

Program

Time	Activities	Responsible
9:00am - 9:30am	Registration	FSS Team
9:30am - 9:40am	Welcome address	Dr. Yeraswork Admassie Executive Director, FSS
9:40am -10:00 am	Overview of the GCAN Project	Dr. Selam Esayas
10:00am - 10:30am	The Nexus Between Climate Change, Gender and Mobility in Southern Ethiopia	Dr. Tirsit Sahledengel Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES)
10:30 – 10:45am	Tea Break	FSS
10:45am - 11:45am	Discussion	Dr. Selam Esayas
11:45am – 12:00pm	Closing Remarks	Dr. Selam Esayas
12:00pm- 1:00 pm	Lunch	FSS

Annex II: Pictures from the Event

