



# POLICY Brief<sup>1</sup>

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## **Community Participation in the Green Legacy Initiative (GLI) of Ethiopia**

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### **Executive Summary**

This policy brief presents the assessment of farm households' perception towards the benefits of the Green Legacy Initiative (GLI) and their willingness to participate in future. The findings show that households are well aware of the benefits of GLI and willing to participate and allocate a fair amount of budget to keep it going for the next five years. The results suggest that it is good to capitalize on the benefits of GLI for initiating the community for future tree planting campaigns. Moreover, it is advisable to consider the interest of the households in the community that are more likely to support the initiative. Finally, it is suggested that continuous involvement of various government and non-governmental organizations is imperative to make the initiative institutionalized and ensure its sustainability

### **1. Introduction**

Forests play a significant role in the livelihood of the people in the developing world, including Ethiopia. Studies indicated that forest and tree-based economic systems can serve as a buffer in maintaining livelihoods, represent natural insurance, and provide environmental services such as carbon sequestration, water protection and biodiversity preservation. Moreover, forests provide social and/or cultural benefits to the local people. However, deforestation and forest degradation are still rampant in many parts of Ethiopia. For instance, it is known that the net average deforestation rate is around 72,000 ha per annum; which makes rehabilitation of degraded lands through afforestation/reforestation crucial to the country.

<sup>1</sup> This policy brief is extracted from a research report on 'Green Legacy Initiative for Sustainable Economic Development in Ethiopia'

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Recognizing the problem of the forest sector, Ethiopia has put tremendous efforts to reverse the situation and enhance the social, economic, and environmental benefits of the sector. As part of these efforts, the Green Legacy Initiative (GLI) was initiated by the Prime Minister in 2019. The initiative, among others, has a significant role in terms of fulfilling the climate related commitments of the country if it has been implemented effectively. However, the success of the program mainly depends on the extent of participation of the local community and the government's effort to involve other relevant stakeholders.

Thus, this policy brief is drawn from the study on 'Green Legacy Initiative for Sustainable Economic Development in Ethiopia'. Its aim is to provide readers in general and policymakers in particular with information on the determinants of participation, perceptions and attitudes of the local communities towards GLI. It also forwards policy recommendations to enhance people's participation in afforestation related practices.

## **2. Rationale for Action**

Ethiopia's effort to restore the degraded lands through afforestation/reforestation requires close supervision and assessment of the views and opinions of the main stakeholders, and the local community. Thus, it is timely to assess the perception of households and identify the determinants of their participation in the GLI. Furthermore, there is a need to understand rural households' willingness to pay for GLI programs in the future. Scholars argued that socio-economic factors play significant role in shaping both participation and participatory outcomes. In this regard, the role of gender, economic status, level of education, family size, access to extension, and location factors has been analyzed. Hence, understanding the perceptions and level of participation of households in the GLI can lead to better planning for future tree planting and related campaigns. Therefore, the study was instigated to answer the following research questions: are local communities willing to participate in the GLI? What are the determinants of participations? And how do local communities perceive the benefits of GLI?

## **3. Results and Discussions**

### **3.1. People's Perception on the Benefits of the GLI**

The household level data used for this study was collected from purposely selected districts in three regions, namely: Oromia, SNNP and Amhara. The study collected data on people's perception about the benefits of GLI. Likert scale (strongly agree (1), agree (2), neutral (3), disagree (4) and strongly disagree (5)) was used to check perception of respondents on the advantage of the initiative. The average values of household's perception on each of the benefits of GLI was less than 2 showing that respondents are all in favor of the benefits. Most of the respondents stated that the GLI has benefits such as: land restoration, increase in fodder supply, improving soil fertility, and increasing the water supply. In addition, respondents understand the role of trees in creating employment, which in turn improve livelihood of the local people. Moreover, they are also aware of the importance of trees in mitigating global warming.

The findings suggest that it is important to capitalize on the positive perception of the communities to broaden the socioeconomic benefit of GLI. To this end, enhanced tree planting campaign is crucial to involve and mobilize large number of people for pre-planting, planting and post-planting activities.

### **3.2. People's Participation in the Green Legacy Initiative**

The survey data show that most of the sampled households (86-94%) participated in the GLI. The average number of seedlings planted per household are almost the same in all the three periods, which was 74, 74, and 75, in years 2019, 2020, and 2021 respectively. The descriptive result also revealed that, different groups of the society: the youth and elderly, male and women, educated and uneducated, employed or unemployed, were all involved in the campaign. This indicates that the initiative was successful regarding participation of different groups of the society both at the national and regional levels. While this is an encouraging step, continuous involvement of the various groups of the society in post planting activities is necessary. Meaning that, similar effort should be exerted in the post planting phase to ensure the success of the initiative in the long run. The study also identified that the role of social infrastructure such as schools, public health centers, recreation or sport centers, market facilities (shopping centers) and cooperatives is limited. Hence, it is crucial to integrate the different kinds of social infrastructure during planning and implementation phase of the GLI.

The quantitative analysis shows that participation in GLI depends on household's characteristics, in which older household heads are less likely to participate. Households that own large number of livestock are more likely to participate in the GLI, *i.e.*, number of livestock owned is positively and significantly associated with the decision to participate but does not affect the number of seedlings planted. Cropland owned, which is a wealth indicator, does not affect both decisions to participate and willingness to plant more trees. On the other hand, higher income households tend to plant more trees. Hence, the study suggests that to increase households' participation in forest programs, attention should be given to those households who are relatively younger, own more number of livestock, but small cropland size, and those relatively closer to the forest.

Access to extension agents do have also a positive and significant effect on both the decision to participate and the number of trees planted. It is important to use development agents as they already have a strong relationship with the local community in the process of accomplishing other agricultural activities. Hence it is advisable to provide extension agents with training on natural resources, in this case forest management, as most of them had a focus on crop production or animal husbandry

### **4. Conclusion and Policy Implications**

This study identified that the local community is aware regarding importance of GLI suggesting that the initiative is successful in creating awareness. It is also successful in terms of participating different groups of the society both at the national and regional levels. However, it has been suggested that the role of public infrastructures such as schools, public libraries, and city/town sport offices to be enhanced to plant, manage and maintain the trees. This has to be properly planned and implemented by the relevant government organization starting from the federal to the district level.

The local communities are also willing to participate in all future activities regarding the GLI program. This suggests that it is good to consider those households in the community that are more willing to support the tree planting program. Finally, to accomplish the aforementioned activities properly and sustainably the concerned government office should institutionalize the initiative, GLI.



## Further Readings

Beyene, A.D. 2022. Green Legacy Initiative for Sustainable Economic Development in Ethiopia. A Research Report submitted to the Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA).

Lee T-H, Lee B, Chen Y-L, Sun L-C, Chang H-H. 2020. What Determines Forest Farmers' Participation in Afforestation Programs? Empirical Evidence from a Population-Based Census Survey. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 17(11):3962.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between researchers.

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