STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP REPORT

Climate Finance, Carbon Credits and Women's Empowerment in Ethiopia's Coffee Sector

Empowering Ethiopian Coffee: A South–South Approach to Climate Finance and Carbon Credits

DATE	6 October 2026
VENUE	Lewi Hotel / Lewi Resort, Bonga, Kafa Zone, Ethiopia
CONVENOR	OSSREA, in collaboration with Bonga University
SUPPORT	Spanish Cooperation (AECID)

Prepared from the workshop agenda, presentation materials, participant register, and the organiser's confirmed record of stakeholder discussions and responses.

FINAL WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION | 8 OCTOBER 2026

Contents

Executive Summary 1

Key Workshop Messages 1

1. Background and Rationale 1

2. Objectives and Workshop Design 2

3. Organisation, Attendance and Proceedings 2

3.1 Convening and Participation 2

3.2 Opening Address 2

4. Summary of Technical and Policy Presentations 3

4.1 Project Progress and Implementation: Alemu Tesfaye 3

4.2 Technical Foundations and MRV: Dr. Yonas Yohannes 4

4.3 Comparative Carbon-Credit Evidence: Prof. Gezahegn Berecha 4

5. Stakeholder Questions, Observations and Project Responses 5

5.1 Dr. Kefyalew Adisu — Vice President for Research and Community Service, Bonga University 5

5.2 Dr. Ginjo Gitimo — Research Director, Bonga University 6

5.3 Dr. Woineshet Haile — Vice President, Bonga University 6

5.4 Mr. Geremew Gebre — Head of the Kafa Zone Agriculture Department 7

5.5 Mr. Dagimawi Mamo — Head of Bita Woreda 7

6. Media Coverage and Public Visibility 8

- Kaffa TV and Radio: https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1HEkE8VwXx/ 8

7. Conclusions 8

Executive Summary

The Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), in collaboration with Bonga University and with support from the Spanish Cooperation (AECID), convened a stakeholder workshop on 6 October 2026 at Lewi Hotel in Bonga. The workshop examined the progress and prospects of the project "Empowering Ethiopian Coffee: A South–South Approach to Climate Finance and Carbon Credits," a women-focused effort to link coffee-based agroforestry, climate resilience, carbon-market preparedness and South–South learning.

Thirty-two people participated, including five women and 27 men. The opening address was delivered by Ato Fitsum Mengesha, representing Dr. Adugna Debela, Director General of the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority (ECTA). Three substantive presentations were confirmed: a project progress review by Alemu Tesfaye, a technical presentation by Dr. Yonas Yohannes, and a comparative study presentation by Prof. Gezahegn Berecha. Dr. Yonas moderated stakeholder questions, and Dr. Yared Ayalew delivered closing remarks.

The presentations documented the pilot's evolution from the original 100-women concept to field activities in Sheda and expansion preparations in Gaweti, Bita Woreda. They described coffee, banana, shade-tree planting, farmer training, vermicomposting, planned beekeeping, project governance, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and preparations for certification under the Plan Vivo approach. The technical presentation reported 411 farmers and 138 ha in the emerging project portfolio.

Five stakeholder contributions shaped the discussion. University representatives raised land availability, trust, project sustainability, digital Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV), inclusion, learning partnerships and the status of a previous Bale-related initiative. Kafa Zone and Bita Woreda officials expressed support, suggested improvements to sequencing and seed varieties, emphasised apiary opportunities, requested fuller engagement by zonal institutions and asked about scaling beyond the pilot. The project team responded that it intends to develop the model on eligible bare land in the biosphere reserve transition zone; build cooperative and future union capacity for long-term management; operationalise its newly developed MRV information system; diversify benefits through nurseries, beekeeping and vermicompost; and expand only after testing the approach and understanding implementation requirements.

No formal resolutions or collectively adopted decisions were reported. Participants expressed support and willingness to cooperate.

Key Workshop Messages

- Trust and informed participation are central: FPIC, transparent benefit expectations and community representation should remain continuous processes.
- Scaling interest is strong, but expansion must be conditioned on demonstrated field performance, land eligibility, reliable data and workable financing.
- Cooperative capacity, women's voice in governance and control of benefits are decisive elements of the proposed exit strategy.
- The MRV system exists and data entry is under way; the next requirement is completeness, consistency, quality assurance and field verification.
- Complementary enterprises—particularly nurseries, apiaries and vermicompost—offer an opportunity to broaden benefits while requiring clear ownership and benefit-sharing arrangements.

1. Background and Rationale

The workshop formed part of OSSREA's project on climate finance and carbon credits in the Ethiopian coffee sector. Its four interconnected result areas are: research and mapping of climate-finance opportunities; comparative analysis and South–South exchange; design and implementation of a women-focused coffee agroforestry carbon pilot; and a sustained Community of Practice supported by webinars and digital knowledge products. The project presentation identified implementation in Sheda and Gaweti Kebeles of Bita Woreda, Kafa Zone, within the transition zone of the Kafa Biosphere Reserve.

The project seeks to demonstrate how climate-smart coffee systems can connect climate-change mitigation with household livelihoods and women's participation. The agroforestry package combines coffee, banana as temporary shade, permanent shade trees such as Albizia and Millettia, organic soil improvement through vermicompost, and complementary income opportunities. The project is working toward a credible Plan Vivo carbon-credit pathway rather than treating tree planting itself as automatic carbon-credit generation.

The workshop took place while the initiative was moving from initial field establishment and community mobilisation toward the more demanding tasks of large-cohort onboarding, monitoring, verification readiness, cooperative governance and potential scaling. The stakeholder discussion therefore tested both the practical suitability of the model and the institutional conditions needed for its continuity.

2. Objectives and Workshop Design

The workshop agenda was designed as a combined information-sharing, technical review and stakeholder reflection event. The organiser's presentation identified five intended outcomes: (i) build shared understanding of project purpose and design; (ii) review implementation progress and field evidence; (iii) examine carbon-project readiness and remaining gaps; (iv) identify implementation lessons and corrective actions; and (v) seek support and clarity on institutional roles. The comparative presentation added a policy and scaling perspective by examining what Ethiopia could adapt from carbon-credit projects in Latin America and from earlier Ethiopian experiences.

The scheduled format ran from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., including registration, opening remarks, keynote address, three presentations, moderated discussion, closing remarks and lunch. The organiser confirmed that the named presenters, moderator and closing speaker performed the scheduled substantive roles.

3. Organisation, Attendance and Proceedings

3.1 Convening and Participation

OSSREA convened the workshop jointly with Bonga University. Thirty-two participants attended: five women and 27 men. Delegates from relevant regional environmental and forestry structures; Kafa Zone agriculture, forestry and environment institutions; Bita Woreda; Bonga University; Bonga Agricultural Research Center; ECTA; Jimma University; Farm Africa and a REDD+ programme, alongside project personnel attended the workshop.

The attendance profile reflected the multisectoral character of the project. Climate finance and agroforestry require coordination among agriculture and forestry authorities, research institutions, local government, cooperatives, and the organisations responsible for technical support and verification.

3.2 Opening Address

The opening keynote address was delivered by Ato Fitsum Mengesha on behalf of Dr. Adugna Debela, Director General of ECTA. The address served as the formal institutional opening before the technical sessions. Ato Fitsum Mengesha expressed his appreciation to OSSREA for its longstanding contributions to addressing gender equality and climate change challenges in Ethiopia's coffee sector, beginning with the DeSIRA-supported Women, Coffee and Climate project. He highlighted the strong collaboration between the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority (ECTA) and OSSREA over the years and commended the current initiative as an innovative and pioneering approach to empowering women coffee producers through climate finance and carbon-credit opportunities. He called upon all stakeholders, including government institutions, research organizations, development partners, and local communities, to extend their full support to the project, emphasizing its unique nature in Ethiopia. He stressed that the successful implementation of the pilot could establish a replicable model for expansion into other coffee-growing regions of the country. Furthermore, he highlighted the project's potential to serve as a practical demonstration of Ethiopia's commitment to climate action, sustainable coffee production, and women's empowerment, which could be showcased at the upcoming COP32 climate conference that Ethiopia is preparing to host.

The subsequent project overview, technical presentation and comparative analysis were delivered respectively by Alemu Tesfaye, Dr. Yonas Yohannes and Prof. Gezahegn Berecha. Dr. Yonas Yohannes then moderated the discussion, through which five identified stakeholders contributed questions and comments. Dr. Yared Ayalew, Director of International Relations and Strategic Partnerships, gave the closing remarks. The available documents do not preserve his comments verbatim.

4. Summary of Technical and Policy Presentations

4.1 Project Progress and Implementation: Alemu Tesfaye

Alemu Tesfaye, OSSREA's Regional Programmes Manager and project coordinator, introduced the project as an integrated intervention linking coffee farming, resilience, women's empowerment, biodiversity, carbon finance and South–South cooperation. He outlined the four project result areas, the rationale for focusing on women producers, the implementation site in the Kafa Biosphere Reserve transition zone and the need to move beyond the number of women recruited to measuring women's decision-making, leadership, work burden and control over resulting benefits.

The presentation traced the practical implementation journey from the 2025 launch and stakeholder consultations to community meetings, plot mapping, socioeconomic and soil baselines, banana and coffee seedling planting, shade-tree distribution, local-language training and vermicompost demonstrations. It described the original target of 100 women; a socioeconomic survey involving 83 women in Sheda; subsequent Sheda enrolment estimates of 108–118; and a 97-member Gaweti cohort reported in the project slides in addition to more than 250 newly recruited cohorts from Sheda kebele.

Selected baseline findings presented for the 83 surveyed women included: 35% with no formal education, 79% identifying coffee among major income sources, 85% reporting land certificates and more than 90% practising some degree of shaded coffee cultivation. The speaker used the baseline evidence to motivate visual and local-language training, farmer-centred design and gender-sensitive governance.

The project overview reported, as implementation figures shown at the workshop, approximately 7,000 banana plantlets planted during early Sheda establishment, 3,000 shade-tree seedlings distributed, 97,000 coffee seedlings distributed and about 200,000 coffee and tree seedlings ready for planting. It also described field follow-up, monitoring needs, ongoing Plan Vivo documentation, emerging governance arrangements and beekeeping as a prospective complementary livelihood opportunity.

A key point was that project credibility depends on the quality of continuing implementation, not on distribution alone. Survival, replanting, land-use rights, FPIC, routine monitoring, safeguards, grievance response and benefit-sharing rules must be documented. The presentation recognised risks related to seedling mortality, drought and other climate shocks, inconsistent datasets, governance readiness and the complexity of carbon markets. It emphasised strengthening cooperatives and local extension arrangements to support the intended progression toward community-led management.

4.2 Technical Foundations and MRV: Dr. Yonas Yohannes

Dr. Yonas Yohannes presented the technical logic that connects coffee agroforestry with credible carbon benefits. He explained the three principal carbon pools considered in the conceptual model—above-ground biomass, below-ground biomass and soil organic carbon—and discussed the complementary contributions of perennial coffee plants, permanent shade trees, temporary shade species and improved soil management. His central distinction was that planting trees is not itself equivalent to generating a carbon credit: carbon outcomes must be measured, accounted for, monitored and independently verified.

The presentation explained the Plan Vivo project pathway, from design and baseline establishment through stakeholder engagement, validation, monitoring, verification and possible issuance of eligible certificates. It described a geospatial identity chain connecting farmer, farm, location, activity and carbon estimate, using mapped farm boundaries as the spatial foundation for field monitoring and quality checks. Software and information sources illustrated included SW Maps, QGIS, Esri imagery and potential use of Sentinel data. Such digital mapping supports but does not replace field-based measurement and carbon calculation.

The presenter reported 411 farmers and 138 ha in the current expansion-related project dataset. The presenter clarified that 411 was the actual number of existing and newly recruited farmers by October 2026, with their data and FPIC collected and some who have already planted and other planting expected to commence shortly.

MRV was presented as a sequence of measuring farmer and plot data, tree dimensions, survival, soils and management practices; reporting carbon calculations and data uncertainty; and verifying reported activity through field, spatial and independent checks. The presentation also recognised tree mortality, management changes and climate shocks as threats to carbon integrity. It positioned women not solely as recipients of climate finance but as potential actors in nursery management, agroforestry care, measurement, cooperative oversight and local financial decisions.

4.3 Comparative Carbon-Credit Evidence: Prof. Gezahegn Berecha

Prof. Gezahegn Berecha presented “From Carbon Projects to Scalable Climate Finance: Lessons from Ethiopia and Latin America for Ethiopia’s Coffee Sector.” The comparative study reviewed Ethiopian experiences—Humbo assisted natural regeneration, Bale REDD+ and EthioTrees—alongside selected Latin American cases from Nicaragua, Colombia, Honduras and El Salvador. It compared project types, governance systems, MRV, finance, benefit-sharing, safeguards, gender, policy frameworks, Article 6 readiness and scalability. The purpose was to identify transferable design principles while recognising that legal, institutional and market conditions differ across countries.

The presentation placed particular emphasis on the Nicaraguan CommuniTree experience as a learning case for smallholder aggregation, staged farmer incentives, cooperative participation and digital or participatory MRV. It stressed that Ethiopian institutions should adapt useful principles rather than replicate another country’s approach in full. Relevant themes included the financing gap between planting and carbon revenue, the risks of

overpromising future credits, the importance of clear carbon rights and distribution rules, and the need to pair national policy and registration capacity with locally trusted farmer institutions.

A dedicated gender discussion distinguished numerical participation from meaningful control. The comparison asked whether women have a voice in project design, governance positions, influence over financial decisions, direct access to benefits and channels for resolving grievances. It recommended gender-disaggregated monitoring rather than treating women-focused recruitment alone as evidence of empowerment.

The policy-oriented conclusion urged cross-institutional coordination; guidance for agroforestry carbon projects; transparent carbon rights and benefit sharing; potential establishment finance or payment for ecosystem services; affordable and credible MRV; gender safeguards; and programmatic scaling grounded in verified pilot experience.

5. Stakeholder Questions, Observations and Project Responses

The moderated discussion provided the principal opportunity for stakeholders to test the initiative's assumptions and raise institutional and implementation concerns. The following account preserves the substance of the five named contributions supplied by the organiser.

5.1 Dr. Kefyalew Adisu — Vice President for Research and Community Service, Bonga University

Dr. Kefyalew welcomed the project's gender dimension and its South–South cooperation approach. He then raised two interconnected questions about land use and long-term trust.

Concern / question. Given Kafa's existing coffee-forest resources, will sufficient land be available for the proposed model? Would it be preferable to regenerate existing coffee farms instead of opening new planting areas?

Project team response. The team explained that the project is concentrating on suitable bare land within the Kafa Biosphere Reserve's transition zone, rather than intervening primarily in existing coffee farms. The team stated that the transition zone exceeds 300,000 ha and presents potential room for future expansion.

Concern / question. Stakeholder engagement should be understood as a process of building stakeholder trust. How will that trust be fostered, and how will the project continue after the initial implementation support ends?

Project team response. The team agreed that trust is central. It described FPIC as its starting point for making sure participants understand the initiative and join voluntarily. It reiterated an intended exit pathway based on strengthening local cooperatives and eventually enabling cooperative unions or associations to assume progressively greater responsibility for project operation, with OSSREA supporting establishment and capacity building.

The discussion highlighted that project expansion must involve both ecological screening and social legitimacy. Land availability cannot be inferred from gross transition-zone area alone; farmers' rights, existing land use, conservation safeguards and the carbon methodology remain relevant.

5.2 Dr. Ginjo Gitimo — Research Director, Bonga University

Dr. Ginjo appreciated the reported progress and the decision to work in the coffee sector. He requested greater clarity on six technical, institutional and inclusion issues.

Concern / question. Does the initiative have a sufficiently developed MRV database for the expanded farmer portfolio?

Project team response. The project team reported that an MRV information system had already been developed by OSSREA to accommodate the required categories of project information. At the time of the workshop the team was entering project data into the system.

Concern / question. What is the exit strategy after the initial project period?

Project team response. The team repeated that cooperatives would be strengthened in governance, management and operational capacity so that they could, in time, organise into higher-level cooperative associations or unions and take over key responsibilities.

Concern / question. How can a pilot currently framed around 100 ha expand to a wider geographic area?

Project team response. The team confirmed an intention to scale, but only once the project has adequately tested its model and acquired a better understanding of operational, financial, environmental, carbon-accounting and governance requirements.

Concern / question. How will the initiative benefit vulnerable groups beyond the current women-coffee-farmer participants?

Project team response. The team recognised the value of wider inclusion. It identified community-led nurseries and beekeeping as possible ways for other community members, including vulnerable groups, to participate in and benefit from the initiative. The team also pointed out that local government and other projects can intervene in addressing challenges that the project can't and isn't mandated or designed to address. The project will talk to the relevant stakeholders about the challenge and create awareness towards it.

Concern / question. What arrangements are envisaged for knowledge management and collaboration with Bonga University?

Project team response. The team referred to the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bonga University and confirmed an intention to continue cooperating across technical and knowledge-management activities. It cited the joint organisation of the workshop as an immediate example of the relationship.

Concern / question. Are interventions envisaged beyond coffee-based agroforestry?

Project team response. Beekeeping and vermicompost are being pursued as complementary activities. The team indicated that additional livelihood or environmental interventions might be explored with participants in the future, without specifying or approving new components at the meeting.

5.3 Dr. Woineshet Haile — Vice President, Bonga University

Dr. Woineshet appreciated the overall objective and raised two issues regarding sustainability and learning from experience in other Ethiopian regions.

Concern / question. How will the initiative remain sustainable beyond its initial implementation phase?

Project team response. The team reiterated the cooperative-centred transition strategy: invest in local skills and institutions so that participating cooperatives, and eventually a union or association of cooperatives, can assume responsibility for continued project management.

Concern / question. Could the experience from the Bale carbon initiative be transferred to Kafa? What is the present status of a previously initiated effort?

Project team response. The project team stated that it did not have information about the status of the particular initiative referred to.

5.4 Mr. Geremew Gebre — Head of the Kafa Zone Agriculture Department

Mr. Geremew described the project as timely and conveyed support from the zonal administration. His intervention concentrated on technical sequencing, livelihood opportunity, expansion and the need for stronger engagement of zonal offices.

Concern / question. Banana and permanent shade trees should be established sufficiently early to protect young coffee plants.

Project team response. The team indicated that this sequencing was consistent with the project's approach. It added that farmers were also using Sesbania as a temporary shade species alongside banana and the planned permanent shade trees.

Concern / question. Apiary development is a particularly promising current opportunity for local farmers.

Project team response. The team confirmed that apiaries are part of the proposed complementary interventions at project sites. A practical constraint is locating suppliers who can provide beehives of reliable and appropriate quality; the project was seeking suitable suppliers at the time of the workshop.

Concern / question. Could the project expand beyond the current locations into other woredas? Mr. Geremew referred to 67 woredas in Kafa Zone.

Project team response. The team reiterated that wider expansion is an intention, subject to learning from the pilot, determining a replicable implementation model and securing the necessary support.

Concern / question. The zonal office responsible for agriculture, forestry and fisheries should be engaged in future activities.

Project team response. The team outlined earlier efforts to liaise with zonal authorities, including meetings with the zonal administration and vice-administration, and explained difficulties in obtaining contact details for the relevant agriculture office. It emphasised that it did not intend to exclude any stakeholder and undertook to strengthen direct coordination with the office in future engagements. The invitation to the workshop was presented as part of this outreach.

Concern / question. How can the project ensure long-term sustainability?

Project team response. The project team again identified cooperative strengthening and the formation of a higher-level cooperative union or association as the proposed basis for a locally governed exit strategy.

5.5 Mr. Dagimawi Mamo — Head of Bita Woreda

The Bita Woreda head raised practical questions about planting material and the institutional sustainability pathway.

Concern / question. Was the coffee seedling variety selected for the pilot sufficiently adapted to the local conditions, including drought and pest risks?

Project team response. The project team explained that the variety being planted had been supplied through the Woreda and considered appropriate for the intervention area. It stated that future consultations with the Jimma Agricultural Research Center (JARC) could identify improved or more resilient varieties for potential introduction, particularly where drought or pest tolerance can be demonstrated.

Concern / question. Will the project work through cooperatives so that they can develop into unions and ultimately take over the project?

Project team response. The team confirmed that strengthening cooperatives and supporting their eventual transition into a union or association is the central sustainability and exit-strategy concept.

6. Media Coverage and Public Visibility

The stakeholder workshop received media coverage from **Kaffa TV and Radio** and **South West Ethiopia Media**, contributing to increased public awareness of the project's objectives, progress, and potential contributions to sustainable coffee production and climate finance.

News about the workshop was broadcast through Kaffa television and radio and shared on the respective Facebook pages of the two media organizations, extending the event's visibility beyond the workshop participants to wider regional and local audiences.

The media coverage provided an opportunity to raise awareness about climate finance, carbon credits, women's empowerment, and climate-smart coffee agroforestry. It also helped highlight the importance of stakeholder collaboration, community ownership, and the potential for scaling the pilot initiative to other coffee-growing areas.

The coverage contributed to the project's **communication, knowledge dissemination, and stakeholder engagement efforts**, while reinforcing the visibility of OSSREA, the Spanish Cooperation (AECID), and collaborating institutions in advancing inclusive and climate-resilient coffee production in Ethiopia.

- **Kaffa TV and Radio:** https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1HEkE8VwXx/
- **Kaffa Zone Facebook Page:** https://web.facebook.com/share/p/19VApP5eqE/
- **South West Ethiopia Agriculture Bureau:** https://web.facebook.com/share/p/1c3g21y2Bs/
- **OSSREA LinkedIn:** https://lnkd.in/p/d82FwVPh

7. Conclusions

The Bonga workshop demonstrated substantial stakeholder interest in linking coffee-based agroforestry, women's empowerment and climate finance, as well as recognition of OSSREA's progress toward a locally grounded carbon-credit initiative. The three presentatizons provided complementary perspectives: field implementation and institutional development; the technical demands of carbon measurement and Plan Vivo readiness; and the broader lessons from Ethiopia and Latin American carbon projects.

The discussion was constructive. It confirmed that future success will be judged not solely by hectares enrolled or seedlings supplied, but by viable planting, measured survival, trusted institutions, reliable MRV, safeguarding of women's benefits, coherent partnerships and a credible plan for continuity beyond initial donor support.