

# Preparation for sustainable forest resource management on communal land at Lake Chamo watershed



## Implementation manual

### **Global Programme Responsible Land Policy (GPRLP)**

Thematic Pilots on the Valorisation of Land Rights in Benin, Ethiopia, Madagascar and  
Uganda

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## List of Acronyms

BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
DEM	Digital Elevation Model
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
F4F	Forests for Future
FLLC	First Level Land Certification
FCCC	Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change
FLR	Forest Landscape Restoration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
SEWOH	Sonderinitiative "Eine Welt Ohne Hunger" Special initiative „One world without hunger“
GPRLP	Global Project Responsible Land Policy
KLAUC	Kebele Land Administration and Use Committees
LaGo	Land Governance
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
NILUPP	National Integrated Land Use Planning and Policy
NRLAIS	National Rural Land Administration and Information System
PC	Primary Cooperatives
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning
S2RAI II	Support to Responsible Agricultural Investments II
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SLLC	Second Level Land Certification
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training centre
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenures

# 1 Summary

The Global Programme "Responsible Land Policy" (GPRLP) is part of the BMZ Special Initiative "Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems" which aims to reduce extreme poverty and hunger. The GPRLP is implemented by GIZ and has nine country components. Among these, Ethiopia faces a pressing issue with its natural forest landscapes, which have been steadily disappearing. In the early 20th century, forests covered approximately 40% of the country's land, but today, that figure has dwindled to around 4%. The primary drivers of this forest decline is the ever-increasing demand for wood for various purposes, like construction, firewood as a source of energy, agricultural encroachment for crop production and livestock grazing. The consequences of such uncontrolled resource exploitation and change of land-use type include serious environmental degradation. This manual outlines **five key elements** to achieve sustainable use of communal land in degraded landscapes:

## Element 1) Study challenges and opportunities

which encompasses a review of the circumstances in the watershed area and an examination of the legal frameworks in the context of communal holdings. This involves identifying relevant stakeholders, informing them about their opportunities and identifying the communal land holdings to be certified. Additionally, this element includes ground verification of the land-use types, and an approach to quickly assess the current communal land holdings.

## Element 2) Identification of selection criteria for intervention areas

by focusing on the characteristics for areas to be included in the Nexus pilot. Also, carry out an evaluation of degradation caused by current land management practices, incl. mapping the watershed to indicate levels of degradation. Thereafter, use these observations to establish a comprehensive set of criteria for the selection of areas. Based on the selection criteria, the final step is to identify the pilot sites.

## Element 3) Developing alternative management models

which includes a discussion with Kebele administrators on areas to be included, a desk study to explore potential alternatives, an analysis of viable production and management systems and a discussion of practical arrangements with potential cooperative members to select product types and associated management practices.

## Element 4) Finalization of cadastres between Kebeles

which includes mapping of community areas and their boundaries. This involves delineating and rectifying communal land holdings through participatory discussions with Kebele representatives. Field visits are necessary for border identification and final demarcation.

## Element 5) Establishment of cooperatives

by developing of eligibility criteria for cooperative memberships, considerations and selection of sustainable land use practises, management and production types. The element further includes establishing and certifying cooperatives by initiating cooperative formation processes, organizing a general assembly, ensuring that initial administrative decisions are taken, formulating bylaws, drafting the business plan, and ensuring the final approval.

A model for sustainable forest management, tenure security, legal recognition of communal holdings, the demarcation of Kebele boundaries, and an improvement in land governance practises from the Kebele administrations are evident results of this piloting exercise. Beyond being a standalone initiative, the outcomes serve as a valuable reservoir of knowledge and experience for other projects and initiatives in different locations or on larger scales.



## 2 GIZ engagement in securing land rights in Ethiopia

The Global Programme Responsible Land Policy (GPRLP), is part of the BMZ special initiative "Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems" and it has country modules in Uganda, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.

Ethiopia faces a pressing issue with its natural forest landscapes, which have been steadily disappearing. In the early 20th century, forests covered approximately 40% of the country's land, but today, a century later, that figure has dwindled to around 4%. The primary drivers of this forest decline are the continuously growing demand for wood for various purposes, like construction, firewood as a source of energy, agricultural encroachment for crop production and livestock grazing.

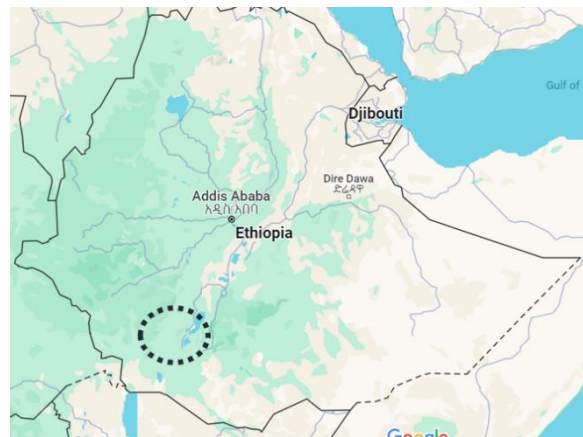


Figure 1: Map indicating the pilot project area.

Ethiopia is Africa's second most populous country with a population of around 126 million, and grapples with a population growth rate of approximately 3% annually. The majority of Ethiopians reside in rural areas and depend on subsistence farming. In total, 86% of the farmers are either in crisis or are worried about their food security. Another 12.75% can be considered as self-sufficient and only 1.25% are considered enterprise farmers. Such poor conditions for wealth and prosperity in conjunction with population growth, exert enormous pressure on available farmland, worsening issues of forest clearance, overgrazing and unsustainable farming practices, which are degrading the land. Loss of fertile soil, advancing desertification, and the impacts of climate change further complicate productive land use, particularly in the vulnerable highland, which face severe erosion leading to the deterioration of ecosystems.

The Nexus pilot focuses on developing a gender-responsive forest resource user system, officially recognized by local government authorities. It employs forest resource user permits on communal land to secure the rights of community members within the Lake Chamo watershed area. Key interventions include:

1. Setting up a standardized and legally recognized gender-responsive forest resource user system with active involvement from regional government stakeholders.
2. Granting forest land tenure rights to specified community members, delineating clear roles, responsibilities, incentives, and obligations over defined degraded land. The Pilot emphasizes equal participation of women and men and strives for a fair equalisation of benefits.
3. Document project experiences/processes for knowledge management and upscaling.

The initiative should be seen in a larger context where several projects, funded by various donors, are contributing to improved land management practises. Through various implementations by the development organisation GIZ, the BMZ as its main donor has kept a longstanding commitment to agricultural productivity and rural development including aspects of forest landscape restoration, land use rights, land registration, and certification, especially through the country package "Support to Responsible Agricultural Investment (S2RAI)" as part of the GPRLP. The S2RAI project aims to strengthen the institutional

frameworks and coordination structures at federal and regional levels relating to responsible agricultural investment all over the country. The project also supports its partner organisations in enhancing their knowledge and skills on land management and responsible agricultural investments and supports local communities in securing their tenure rights.

In Ethiopia, GIZ is implementing multiple projects supporting the land-use sector, such as the Forests for Future (F4F) initiative, which is dedicated to restoring forests and productive forest landscapes in vulnerable localities, in particularly around Lake Chamo. The support further includes the Land Governance (LaGo) initiative which main purpose is to enhance agricultural productivity and land tenure rights in Ethiopia's highland and the Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) project which is dedicated to move the implementation of the National Integrated Land Use Planning and Policy (NILUPP) Office's roadmap to improved land use planning forward.

### 3 Scope and use of the implementation manual

The manual derives insights from Ethiopia's existing national and regional legal framework for land administration and land use, incorporating technical methodologies and insights gained from responsible land administration practices throughout the Nexus pilot. It also draws inspiration from global good practices in land governance.

The fundamental purpose of this manual is to provide users with a systematic, step-by-step guide. It outlines processes and procedures aimed at enhancing land governance and promoting sustainable management of communal forest land in Ethiopia. It's important to note that users have the flexibility to adapt the information in the manual in accordance with evolving policy landscape, legislative changes, and local contextual variations.

**Aim of the implementation manual:** The aim of the implementation manual is to introduce the model and approach developed in the Nexus pilot, intended to be utilized for replication in similar contexts. Specifically, the manual aims to support initiatives for scaling up communal land development in Ethiopia. It serves as a comprehensive guide for future application in communal land development and governance projects. The manual includes detailed procedures and processes aligned with existing laws on Ethiopian land administration-, watershed management-, Forest Development, Conservation, and Utilization, as well as the regulations on the development of cooperatives and societies. The key themes covered are the development and governance of communal land as well as the establishment of tenure security. It provides technical methods and shares experiences from the developed model to help users effectively manage community forests and communal land in Ethiopia.

**Target audience:** The manual is designed for a diverse audience, including government authorities, civil society organizations, and private sector entities involved in communal land development in Ethiopia.

**Limits:** While the manual is comprehensive in addressing communal land development and governance, it may not delve deeply into other aspects of land and forest management under other tenure systems, as it's primarily centred on the specific challenges and opportunities associated with communal landholding.



**How to use the manual:** Users are encouraged to use the manual as a step-by-step guide for enhancing communal land holding tenure security and governance in Ethiopia. Users are advised to consider the approaches and principles outlined in FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the context of national food security (VGGTs) which have been ratified by the Ethiopian government as well as go through the respective VGGT-Technical Guides (e.g. TG2 on Improving Governance of Forest Tenure). Additionally, the manual should be used in conjunction with other relevant forest and land governing laws and policies mentioned in the document. Users are also advised to consider the concept and principles of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) to ensure sustainable land use and conservation practices.

## 4 Context and Objectives of the intervention

Ethiopia's land governance sector operates within a complex and evolving legal and socio-economic context. The legal background of land governance in Ethiopia has seen significant changes over the years, with the most notable being the 1975 land reform that nationalized all land. However, in the 1990s, Ethiopia embarked on a decentralization process, leading to the adoption of a federal system that grants regional states significant autonomy over land administration. The development and establishment of a modern land administration system began in the early 2000s in the Amhara region by the regional government's strong commitment with the support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Based on the results from Amhara, First Level Land Certification (FLLC) and Second Level Land Certification (SLLC) approaches were designed and expanded throughout the country.

Land governance in Ethiopia is influenced by its diverse landscape, historically varying land tenure systems, and rapidly growing population. The country's agricultural-dependent economy relies heavily on secure land tenure, which is crucial for rural livelihood and food production. However, particularly around communal land resources, challenges such as land disputes, tenure insecurity, and land degradation persist. Therefore, Ethiopia has made efforts to improve its land governance system and the Federal Government has enacted the Land Administration and Use Proclamation 456/2005, which serves as the overarching law governing land administration. Regional states have issued their own regional land laws to ensure tenure security within their designated jurisdictions. These laws categorize land into three types of holdings: 1) government holding, 2) private holding, and 3) communal holding.

The legal aspects have been followed up by capacity-building efforts in Ethiopia's land governance sector, with investments in training and institutional development. Various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and development partners, have contributed to building the necessary capacities for effective land governance. The first higher education programme on land administration opened in 2006 in Bahir Dar University. Today land administration education at BSc level is offered in seven universities and in one Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centre.

Despite these efforts, Ethiopia still faces challenges in land governance, including the need for further legal reforms, addressing land tenure issues intensively, and managing conflicts related to land access and use. Especially, the communal land seems to remain relatively unattended as this land type is often left without any notable governance action.

## 4.1 Analysis of the major issues

Major issues in land governance include several aspects of capacities both at staff and institutional level as well as challenges related to sustainable forest and land management. At the federal level, rural land administration and land use fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture. However, there are variations in institutional arrangements across the regions. Some regions have independent institutions responsible for rural land administration and use, accountable to the regional government, while others follow the federal arrangements.



Figure 2: Unsustainable forestry land use.

In Ethiopia, land is primarily owned by the state and thereby the people of Ethiopia, and citizens are granted land use rights. However, the allocation and security of land tenure have been problematic in the past, leading to disputes and conflicts. Inconsistent land registration and documentation processes, specifically communal holdings, have resulted in unclear land rights, which have often hindered investment and economic development.

In response, Ethiopia has developed a nationwide rural land surveying, registration, and certification program known as the SLLC program. However, this initiative primarily focuses on systematic and compulsory registration, with an emphasis on private land holdings. Communal and state land holdings have received less attention. The certification process does not always align with legal provisions, as it designates all Kebele members as holders of communal land rights, leading to an overly broad definition. This has severe practical implications, as it hinders the clear identification of rights holders. The lack of clarity of this definition and thereby also the lack of responsibility of the communal land has led to unsustainable logging practices, expansion of agriculture into the forest areas, fuel wood collection, and thereby contributes to deforestation and forest degradation.

Government partners assume responsibility of land administration and governance in the region. These partners include regional and federal government agencies responsible for land administration and use, as well as educational institutions that provide land administration training. Therefore, the regional governments and their affiliated institutions are instrumental in implementing land governance initiatives, aligned with the federal model of institutional arrangement. Addressing these land governance challenges and improving forest management practises, requires an integrated approach that considers legal compliance, community involvement, and sustainable resource utilization. Hence, collaboration among government partners and other stakeholders is essential to achieve these goals.

## 4.2 Addressing identified key issues

The primary objective of the Nexus pilot is to facilitate communal land titling as a catalyst for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) in Ethiopia, establishing the important link between land tenure security and the development of forest resources. This initiative primarily focuses on addressing key issues affecting smallholder farmers in vulnerable watershed areas. The main challenges targeted by the intervention include:

**Land tenure and responsibilities:** The intervention primarily focuses on reinforcing secure communal land holdings, which are lacking a clear and transparent process for communal land tenure registration. By aligning communal land tenure security with legal provisions, promoting sustainable resource management, and fostering awareness, the intervention is aimed at creating lasting positive impacts for both local communities and the natural environment.

**Unclear administrative boundaries between Kebeles:** The intervention addresses the issue of unclear administrative borders between Kebeles. In instances where borders between two or more Kebeles are located within communal land, unclear constellations of accountabilities might occur, leading to differing opinions on the precise division of administrative units. This ambiguity complicates the allocation of responsibilities (and possible benefits) and the implementation of sustainable management practices.

**Uncertainty of ownership:** Another critical issue tackled by the intervention is the inadequate planning of communal forestry land in circumstances where ownership is poorly defined. In certain cases, all Kebele members are designated as rights holders of communal land, resulting in vague definitions for all land users involved. Practically, this lack of definition means that responsibilities and benefit sharing are imprecise, allowing for unsustainable management practices (over-exploitation of available resources) and significant eco-system degradation.

**Land degradation and soil infertility:** The intervention also addresses the challenges of land degradation and soil infertility, which significantly impact Ethiopia's agricultural productivity. Soil erosion, driven by unsustainable farming practices, population pressure, and climate change, all have dual negative effects: reducing land productivity on-site and causing off-site issues such as siltation of lakes and streams. The intervention aims at mitigating these impacts and promoting sustainable land use practices.

### 4.3 Response approach

The overall goal of the Nexus pilot is to develop a model for introducing environmentally sustainable management practises for forest landscapes. This can be achieved by ensuring access to communal land/forest resources through tenure arrangements that grant communities secure and exclusive use rights and the sovereignty and capacity to impede external involvement. The pilot intervention encompasses two key approaches:

- 1) Strengthening tenure security:** The first approach entails establishing a robust tenure security for communal land holdings in alignment with existing federal/regional land laws. This involves ensuring that legal provisions governing communal land tenure are upheld, providing local communities with secure rights to these resources. By adhering to these regulations, the intervention ensures that its efforts are legally compliant. Additionally, and as presented here, it lays the groundwork for the formation of forest producer cooperatives, fostering institutional transformation and sustainable resource management.
- 2) Community organization in forest producers' cooperatives:** For the second approach, it is important to collaborate closely with relevant government institutions at the federal, regional, zonal, and Woreda levels as well as Kebele executive committees in the project area. This will ensure that local perspectives and needs are considered and addressed. The newly formed cooperatives will be granted legal certificates for communal land holdings, enabling them to develop and utilize forest resources sustainably. Capacity building measurements will have to be provided to educate members on their rights, responsibilities, and restrictions.

The Nexus pilot has political partners from Ethiopian Environment and Forest Development, Land Administration and Land Use, Natural Resources Development, and Cooperative Society Development. Environment and Forest Development and Cooperative Society Development are independent institutions while Land administration and Natural Resources Development are part of the Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia. Each institution plays a specific role in the project, collaborating on themes like forestry, land administration, natural resource development, and promoting cooperative societies. Together, these partners aim for a comprehensive approach to address different aspects of agricultural and rural development.

The intervention is in line with **Ethiopia's national strategies and legal framework**, including:

- Proclamation 456/2005: Enacted by the Federal Government, this law governs Rural Land Administration and Land Use.
- Proclamation 110/2007: Enacted in the SNNP region, this law addresses Rural Land Administration and Land Use.
- Regulation 66/2007: Issued for the implementation of Proclamation 110/2007 in the SNNP region.
- Proclamation 1065/2018: This law, enacted by the Federal Government, focuses on Forest Development, Conservation, and Utilization.
- Proclamation 1223/2020: Enacted by the Federal Government, this law addresses Development, Management, and Utilization of Community Watersheds.
- Proclamation 985/2016: Enacted by the Federal Government, this law pertains to Cooperative Society development.

### 5 Implementation process

In the following section, the elements that were used in the Nexus pilot are presented. These can be adjusted or reformulated according to the specific local context where a new intervention will take place. The selection and realisation of the specific elements, incl. the aligned steps, will involve close collaboration with both (governmental) partners and target groups (beneficiaries). During this process government partners, including regional and local authorities responsible for land administration and forest management, will likely identify additional issues to be addressed. Their insights into the existing challenges and legal frameworks will guide a project's specific focus.

The Nexus pilot **comprises five interconnected elements** that constitute the intervention process. The elements should be implemented in a specified sequence as the numbers indicate, although it is not mandatory for the full completion of one element before commencing the next. The crucial aspect is ensuring that the preparatory conditions are satisfied before initiating each element. The main components are outlined below and expounded upon in subsequent chapters.

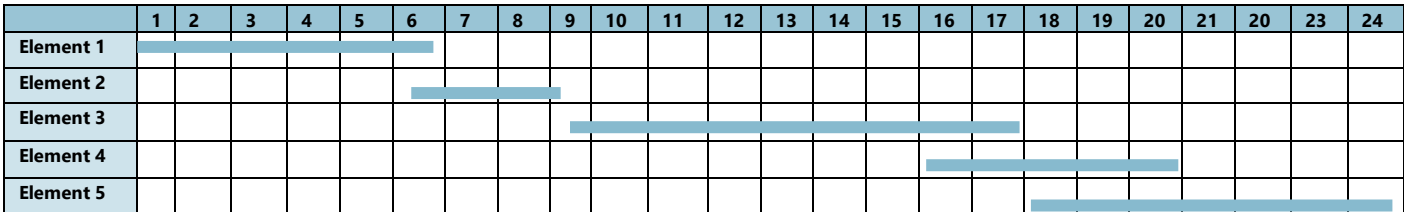


Figure 3: Timeline in months after commencement.

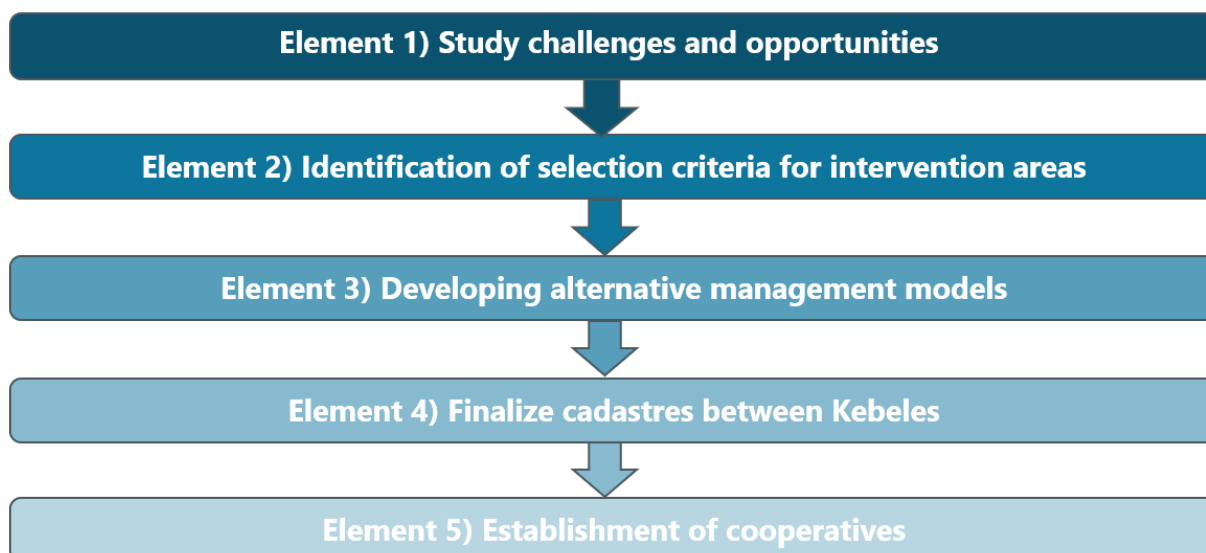


Figure 4: Five interconnected elements of the Nexus Pilot in Ethiopia.

## 5.1 Element 1: Study challenges and opportunities

The challenges and opportunities of this intervention should be perceived as a combination of legal and administrative regulations in combination with the physical setting, the environmental limitations and the perspective of the people living in the area. The element consists of 6 steps:

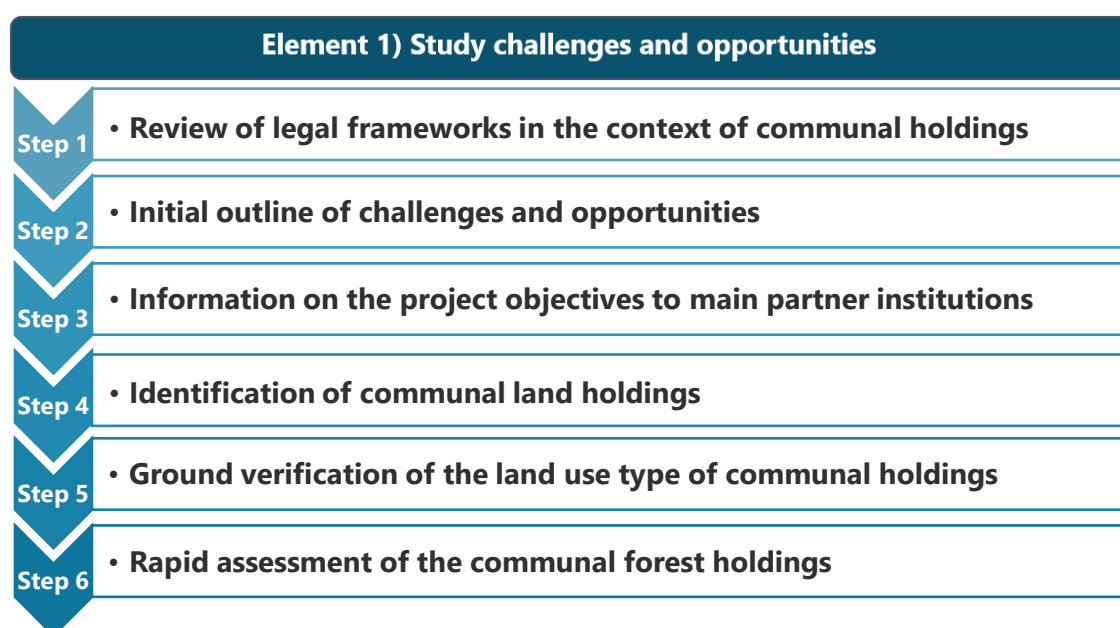


Figure 5: Six Steps of Element One.

### 5.1.1 Review of legal frameworks in the context of communal holdings

In Ethiopia, customary land is governed by the rural land law. Additionally, specific laws concerning communal land holdings are in place, with important articles being selected and presented below. Communal land tenure security must be determined either by formal law or customary law. Below is a presentation of the most important laws and regulations.

**Federal proclamation 456/2005.** The proclamation holds the various definitions of rural land and communal holdings. Rural land for example is to be used for conservation and sustainable land use practises outside designated municipalities. Communal holding is government-granted land for collective use, while state holdings, under federal or regional jurisdiction, includes diverse sloping terrains, national parks and designated forests, etc. The government can authorize the transformation of communal land to private holdings. The law prohibits farming on land with a slope exceeding 60%, mandating cultivation for trees and forage production.

**Regional proclamation 110/2007.** The regional proclamation stipulates private holdings for peasants or individuals with legal rights. Communal holdings serve the local community collectively. State holdings include various terrains, managed by federal or regional authorities. The law allows the government to convert communal land to private holdings. A landholding certificate is issued to proof user rights for communal land and is held at the local Kebele office. As stated in the proclamation, evicted landholders receive compensation, which could be in the form of land elsewhere. The law allows to re-allocate unoccupied or community/government-held land to landless youth and peasants.

**Regulation 66/2000 (2007), issued for implementation of proclamation 110/2007.** Efforts, with community involvement, mandates proper use of communal land, including baren, unproductive and hilly areas. Transfer to private ownership is allowed for forestry, grazing, and perennial crops, with details decided by directives. Communal land shall not be transferred to private ownership for the purpose of cultivating annual crops, unless facing farmland scarcity and subject to community decision based on slope suitability. Landholders must obtain a land use right certificate within a month after taking possession of the land.

**Proclamation 1223/2020, enacted for development, management, and utilization of community watersheds.** This proclamation defines "Community holding" as the collective management of rural land within a watershed, excluding private, governmental, and non-governmental presence. Therefore, selected areas are transferred to local communities for communal use, fostering natural resource conservation and development. The concept of "participation" outlines the right of individuals with customary or legal entitlements to engage in decision-making for affected resources, ensuring equitable representation. The proclamation also establishes a unique "identifier" code for small community watersheds, facilitating differentiation and coordination with regional, zonal, and woreda administrative boundaries, as well as the main watershed, using geographic information systems and coordinates. The proclamation has three main objectives:

- 1) Reducing vulnerability to drought and enhancing resilience by preventing environmental and natural resource degradation, protecting biodiversity, developing water resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2) Enhancing land productivity, increasing yield and productivity of peasants and pastoralists, and ensuring food security and job creation through sustainable community watershed protection, development, and utilization.
- 3) Establish a system enabling community watershed users to protect, develop, administer, and use natural resources with a sense of ownership to increase their capacity.



The proclamation provides legal grounds for cooperatives in watershed development and utilization. Cooperatives must align with the boundary of the community watershed, with unions at the zonal level and federations at the regional level. It outlines the memorandum of cooperatives, discussing detailed provisions agreed upon by the user community for managing the watershed area with a sense of ownership. Community watersheds' cooperatives, upon fulfilling requirements, obtain legal eligibility from the relevant authority. Criteria for membership are outlined, including those with landholding, people without landholding using resources, and farmers with rental arrangements in the watershed.

Article 14 details the rights of members, allowing the use of natural resources privately or collectively, engaging in income-generating activities, and participating in awareness forums. Article 15 outlines rights of non-members to use resources on verified private, community, or communal land, with the option to become a member after meeting requirements. Article 16 details obligations of cooperative members, including participation in development activities, protecting watershed resources, and paying membership fees. The cooperative structure comprises three divisions of power: the general assembly, executive committee, and necessary sub-committees.

**Proclamation 1065/2018 enacted for forest development.** This proclamation classifies forest tenure into four categories: private forest, community forest, association forest, and state forest. It details the rights and privileges of private forest developers, including acquiring forest land for development, obtaining a certificate of title deed, and distributing forestry products locally and internationally.

Community forest developers receive similar rights and incentives. They can obtain a certificate of title deed, access professional support, and receive compensation in case of expropriation for public interest. It also grants extra benefits to this group, such as exemption from forest development income tax for the first two production cycles and eligibility for loans when given requirements are met.

Associations of forest developers, enjoy similar rights and incentives like private forest developers, including tax exemption during the initial production period and access to loans in accordance with predefined requirements. It outlines obligations for these associations, emphasizing member education and training and the obligation to pay income tax after two production periods.

**Proclamation 985/2016, enacted by the Federal Government,** states the mandatory requirements for membership in a cooperative society in article 24. According to the proclamation, if the membership is for primary cooperative society, the following individual requirements apply. An eligible member:

- has attained the age of 18.
- is able to pay the share capital and registration fee required by the cooperative society.
- has accepted the objectives of the cooperative society and its bylaws and is willing to fulfil his or her obligations.
- meets other requirements specified in the regulations and directives issued for the implementation of this proclamation.

### 5.1.2 Initial outline of challenges and opportunities

Based on desk studies and experiences from previous interventions, the anticipated challenges and opportunities should be outlined to be used for analysis and discussion with the administrators and inhabitants. During the discussions, other issues will likely be raised, but the paragraphs below summarize common issues likely to occur during implementation.

One of the issues that can emerge is the exclusive allocation of benefits from communal land holdings to the Kebele administration, a long-standing practice, however, not officially recognized by law. Overcoming this hurdle requires a strategy on how to transfer the management and benefits of communal land holdings to the community, as rightfully stipulated by the land law.

Furthermore, demarcation, and registration of communal holdings in the database, will highlight the absence of a clearly defined right holder, either a natural person or legal entity, and will probably pose a critical deviation from the land law. Notably, the registration in the name of geographic locations will contradict the legal framework as it has to be for the communities to use.

The likely issue of unclear boundaries between communal land holdings across different Kebeles will add an additional layer of complexity, demanding immediate negotiations and resolution to come to an agreement. Despite the challenges with data quality, the presence of rural land information in the National Rural Land Administration Information System (NRLAIS) will serve as a tool for effective intervention and resolution.

The presence and involvement of key governmental bodies, such as the Woreda Office of Agriculture, the Office of Land Administration, the Office of Forest Development and Environment Protection, and the Office of Cooperative Societies, will provide a valuable opportunity for collaboration and the utilization of their expert resources. Leveraging the influence of the Woreda Office of Administration will be crucial for making decisions from a political perspective. Involving Woreda administration in the process contributes to decision-making that requires action/measures on a political level. At the Kebele level, the involvement of the Kebele administration, Kebele Land Administration and Use Committees (KLAUC), and expert resources can be crucial assets for effective project implementation.



*Figure 6: Consulting communities about concerns and expectations.*

### 5.1.3 Information on project objectives to main partner institutions and beneficiaries

A series of meetings is required to inform communities and discuss the purpose of the intervention with them. Depending on the local context the meeting agenda might include the discussion on and presentation of following topics and issues:

- Introduction to the intervention, incl. its objective and the roles and responsibilities involved.
- Concept of sustainable forest management and utilisation (forest/land degradation and its consequences, the concept of annual forest growth/increment and annual harvest levels, overview of sustainable land management practices).
- Forest ownership types (state, communal and private forest holding types).
- Importance of forest resources management for community livelihood improvement, biodiversity protection, soil and water conservation and climate change impact mitigation.
- Legal frameworks to be considered in the project (laws/legislation on forest development, environmental protection, land administration, watershed development, cooperatives society development, etc.).
- Planned project implementation approach and expected outcomes.

The feedback gathered during the Nexus pilot provide valuable insights into the **challenges and issues faced in the watershed area**. Here's a breakdown of the main points extracted:

- **Forest and land degradation:** Identified as a severe problem in the watershed area. This could have detrimental effects on the environment, biodiversity, and the communities dependent on the land.
- **Silt/soil load impact:** The soil erosion within the lake Chamo watershed is contributing to silt and soil load, affecting the lake's water holding capacity. This in turn leads to increased flooding in lakeshore areas, causing damage to crops and villages, particularly during the rainy seasons.
- **Issues with communal holdings:** Although communal holdings are delineated, mapped, and registered, they face challenges such as encroachment and degradation. The existing certification format may not be sufficient to protect these parcels, indicating a need for additional measures.
- **Information gap in legal framework:** There is a significant information gap in the legal framework. Experts and stakeholders alike are not well-informed about the laws in place. This emphasizes the importance of promoting awareness and educating stakeholders about the legal framework related to land and environmental protection.
- **Importance of awareness on environmental protection:** There is a need to intensify awareness creation on the importance of environmental protection. This suggests that there may be a lack of understanding or appreciation for the significance of protecting the environment within the communities.
- **Sustainability of projects:** Previous soil and water conservation projects and government programs have not yielded sustained results. There is a recognized need to design strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of such initiatives, possibly through improved planning or community engagement.
- **Landless youths and illegal forest cut:** The presence of landless youths in rural areas is noted. To address this issue, it's recommended to design income generating activities (alternatives) that discourage illegal forest cutting while promoting sustainable land use practices.

### 5.1.4 Identification of communal land holdings

The identification of the communal land holdings will probably reveal several significant aspects, shedding light on the complexities and challenges as well as possible solutions for them. However, one notable issue that likely will emerge during the analysis will pertain to communal areas situated between different Kebeles, where the accurate demarcation of boundaries has not yet been properly established, leading to potential ambiguities and disputes regarding land ownership and usage.

The utilization of aerial imagery in the survey and demarcation of communal parcels will provide a comprehensive visual representation of the land, contributing to a more precise and accurate understanding of the geographical distribution of communal holdings. The field work and data processing, conducted at the office level for communal land holdings, will mirror the procedure employed for private holdings under the SLLC framework, ensuring a standardized approach to data management and verification.

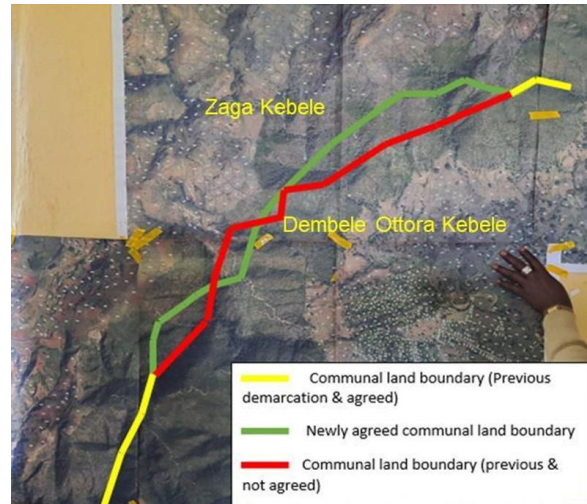


Figure 7: Ortho-photo technology used in the pilot area.

The survey may reveal a significant problem related to the content of the map or the data on which the map is based. Even to the extent that it is contradicting the federal and regional rural land laws. Specifically, if the designations of communal holdings are wrongly inserted, a clear deviation from the legal requirements is evident. Such a mistake would raise doubts about the accuracy and legality of the communal land holdings certification. It calls for a closer look at the procedural errors and adjustments needed to follow the legal regulations properly.

### 5.1.5 Ground verification of the land use type on communal holdings

After delimiting the parcels digitally, there is a need for on-the-ground verification to ensure that the digital information aligns with the actual situation on the ground. This means to physically check and confirm the accuracy of the digital findings and current use of the communal forest areas. Experts from partner institutions should be involved in this process.

**Consideration for certain parcels:** Some parcels may require special attention during the verification process. For example, parcels located in inaccessible or isolated locations or those allocated for different purposes may need more thorough consideration.

**Checking the certification process:** Once the parcels have been successfully verified, a thorough check of the certification process can begin. Certification in this context likely refers to officially confirming the ownership or tenure of the communal land. This step is essential for legal and administrative purposes. Some communal holdings may not be certified at all.

**Checking spatial and textual data capturing processes:** The data capturing process involves collecting both spatial, either geographic or location-based, and descriptive information about the communal land. This is done following the SLLC protocol. Adhering to established protocols ensures consistency and reliability in the data collection process.



**Systematic approach:** The overall emphasis lies on maintaining a systematic approach to data collection and verification. The entire process should be conducted in an accurate and organized, procedural, and reliable manner.

### 5.1.6 Rapid assessment of the communal holdings

During the rapid assessment of communal land holdings, a concerted effort should be made to establish effective communication channels with various offices and stakeholders. This will include engaging with the Zonal Office of Forest Development and Environment, and the Zonal Office of Land Administration and Use. The primary aim of these interactions will be to assure seamless coordination and a shared understanding of the objectives and scope of the imminent rapid assessment. At the Woreda level, participation of experts from the Land Administration and Use office, Forest Development, Environment and Natural Resources is key.

At the local Kebele level, steps should be taken to engage with the Kebele administration offices, the members of the land administration and land use committee, and the local communities, including potential beneficiaries (inclusive approach with representation of elderly, women, marginalized groups and youth). These stakeholders must be thoroughly briefed about the overarching goals and expected outcomes of the rapid assessment, ensuring transparency and collective participation.

The assessment will focus on several key aspects to shed light on the current state of the communal land holdings and their management. Observations will be made regarding the levels of degradation prevalent within the selected communal area, with a specific emphasis on the types of degradation identified in prior discussions. Additionally, efforts should be dedicated to identifying the predominant tree-species on communal land, providing insights into the ecological composition of these forests.



*Figure 8: Ortho-photo for boundary line identification.*

The assessment should also entail an examination of any instances of illegal encroachments and unauthorized tree cutting, pinpointing to critical locations requiring immediate action. Concurrently, close attention should be paid to any re-investments or re-planting initiatives underway on the communal land, signifying the potential for sustainable reforestation efforts. Furthermore, the assessment will involve extensive discussions with the potential beneficiaries of the communal land, offering a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives and aspirations.

Key topics of discussion will include the current utilization patterns of the communal land, the existing management arrangements, the distribution of benefits derived from this land, and the community's long-term plans for forest development and tenure security. The endeavour could culminate in a depiction of the dynamics governing the communal land holdings, laying the groundwork for informed decision-making. Therefore, targeted interventions aimed at fostering sustainable forest management practices and equitable distribution of benefits within the local communities should be put in place.

The following are the **main outputs from the rapid assessment**:

- Communal forest holdings are managed according to the guidance of the agriculture office and Kebele administration, but are lacking a participatory approach.
- Exotic species like *Eucalyptus* and *Cypress* are present in some plantations, but the majority of communal forest holdings are characterized by indigenous species.
- Indigenous species include *Terminalia Brownie*, *Juniperus Procera*, *Syzygium Guineense*, *Highland Bamboo*, *Acaccia Species*, *Combretum Molle*, *Croton Macrostachyus*, *Olea Africana*, and *Cordia Africana*.
- As they've been initially developed for soil and water conservation, communal forest holdings permit communities to collect dead wood and branches for fuel. Marketable wood and thatch grass are harvested and sold by the Kebele administration, with generated income used for the running costs of the office.
- There is no sustainable forest management/development implemented, resulting in a lack of replanting and rehabilitation activities.
- Encroachment and illegal cuttings are widespread, resulting in a decrease in size and density of vegetation cover over time.
- An absence of bylaws for the protection and utilization of communal forests, leaving only limited options for enforcement, which again contributes to management challenges.
- Communities express interest in future developments, if they directly benefit from marketable products, such as wood and thatch grass, while honey production is seen as a potential income source.
- Despite communal land being registered in the name of the Kebele administration, federal and regional rural land laws define communal land as belonging to the local community for common use.
- Certification processes are found to be contradictory to rural land laws, prompting communities to believe that direct entitlement would lead to better management and increased benefits.

## 5.2 Element 2: Identification of selection criteria for intervention areas

The areas for implementing the interventions need to be selected based on certain criteria to fulfil the requests for utilization by the local people and to serve the purposes of good governance and environmental restoration. Before commencing the fieldwork to assess land degradation, initial data on the current conditions of the land must be gathered from secondary sources.

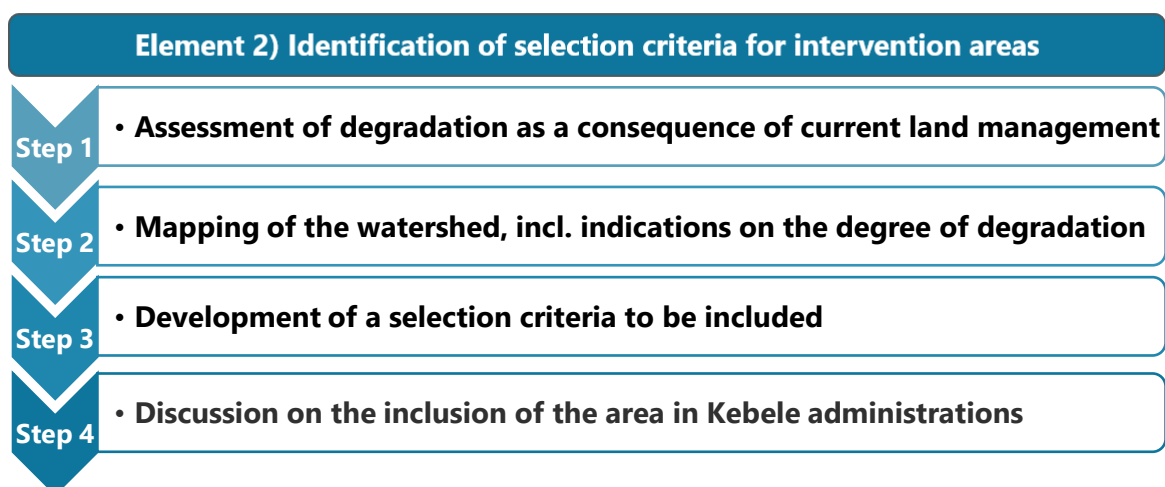


Figure 9: Four Steps of Element Two.



### 5.2.1 Assessment of degradation as a consequence of current land management

The assessment to determine the extent of degradation involves employing different methods to categorize the degradation, but the visual observation will serve as the primary method to become a general overview of the degraded area. Visual observation allows for a quick understanding of the changes occurring in the landscape. In communal holdings, this approach may reveal concerning facts when certain areas show signs of serious degradation. Such signs could include soil erosion, loss of vegetation cover, or other indicators of environmental stress. The presence of degradation in communal holdings requires attention to prevent further deterioration.

The agricultural fields surrounding these communal holdings usually paint a more alarming picture. The assessment is expected to highlight a clearly notable level of land degradation in these agricultural areas. This degradation is likely to be a result of contemporary agricultural practices that may contribute to soil erosion, depletion of fertility, or other adverse impacts apparent on the land.

### 5.2.2 Mapping of the watershed, incl. indications on the degree of degradation

The mapping of the watershed area will emerge as a critical component of the ongoing conservation efforts, geared towards achieving a deeper understanding of the degradation levels and terrain dynamics within the region. The mapping process will include several steps, each tailored to extract and synthesize data points for a successful assessment of the area.

As a start, the Kebele shapefile of the watershed area should be extracted from the NRLAIS database, providing for seamless merging of the parcel data. This step will also facilitate a detailed Kebele boundary shapefile for each Kebele in the intervention area. The aggregation of the different Kebele boundaries will result in the creation of the Kebele boundaries, serving as the cornerstone for the subsequent stages of the mapping process.

An important data resource, the Digital Elevation Model (DEM), can be sourced from the regional office of land administration, and provides a robust foundation for the intricate calculations of the terrain surface across the watershed Kebeles. Leveraging the powerful capabilities of GIS software, the watershed area of the DEM data will be meticulously extracted and cropped, ensuring a precise delineation that corresponds seamlessly with the Kebeles' boundaries.

The resulting map will provide an array of indispensable information, ranging from topographical contours, including 100m contour intervals, to the nuanced assessment of the slope dynamics, encompassing a range from flat to steep. The culmination of the mapping effort will be a comprehensive terrain model map, displaying spatial insights into the watershed's degradation. This detailed mapping effort will stand as a milestone in the collective pursuit of a sustainable environmental management system and will provide new data-driven conservation strategies.

### 5.2.3 Development of a selection criteria for areas to be included

The need for comprehensive land management strategies becomes evident from the assessments discussed in step 5.2.1. These strategies should prioritize sustainability and environmental preservation, entailing practices that promote soil health, prevent erosion, and maintain biodiversity. By emphasizing sustainability and environmental preservation, the management efforts can contribute to a more resilient and ecologically balanced future.

The selection criteria for the areas to be included should be based on the strategy, and to facilitate discussions on watershed management and identify sustainable solutions, it is recommended to establish some draft selection criteria reflecting possible management solutions. These criteria should then be collaboratively discussed with the experts from the Woreda technical offices and administrations. One suggestion is to consider canopy cover and the combined area of communal holdings as selection criteria. Establishing selection criteria is very helpful to prioritize communal land holding management one after the other according to the availability of management resources.

**Criteria 1: Canopy Coverage.** The canopy closure can be divided into e.g. three classes:

- Non-forested parcel: Canopy cover less than 20%.
- Partly forested: Canopy cover between 20% and 70%.
- Forested parcel: Canopy cover above 70%.

**Criteria 2: Area of Communal Holdings.** The size of communal areas can be subdivided e.g. into three categories:

- 0 – 25 ha
- 25 – 50 ha
- Above 50 ha

These criteria should be endorsed and used for the selection of the piloting sites, ensuring a systematic and comprehensive approach to watershed management. The division into clear classes for both canopy coverage and communal holding area enhances simplicity, clarity and comparability during the selection process, making this information well suited for discussion and implementation. In additions to the criteria presented above, more criteria can be developed depending on the situation on site. These could include:

- **Ecosystem diversity:** Identify areas with diverse ecosystems, including forests, wetlands, grasslands, and vulnerable ecosystems.
- **Endangered species habitat:** Prioritize areas that serve as habitats for endangered or threatened species.
- **Soil Health:** Areas with fertile naturally stratified soils are crucial for sustainable agriculture and vegetation growth. Consideration could also be given to areas with potential for soil restoration. Identify areas prone to erosion and soil degradation.
- **Water Resources:** Consider the proximity of areas to water bodies, such as rivers, lakes, and aquifers.
- **Accessibility and Corridors:** Identify areas that serve as wildlife corridors or are critical for maintaining accessibility between different habitats.
- **Climate Resilience:** Prioritize areas that can adapt to changing climate conditions and support the survival of diverse endemic species.

Examine the history of land use in potential areas and select those with a minimal history of intensive agriculture, deforestation, or other activities that may have negatively impacted the environment. Take existing environmental regulations and legal frameworks into account and ensure that selected areas comply with relevant laws and have the potential for long-term protection.

### 5.2.4 Discussion on including the area in Kebele administrations

The process of identifying potential areas for each communal land holding involves a combination of desk analysis, ground verification, and confirmation from local administrations.

**Desk analysis:** The process will begin with a desk analysis, where available data, maps, and documents are reviewed to identify potential areas suitable for communal land holdings. This will involve examining land use maps, ecological data, and other relevant information.

**Ground verification:** Following the desk analysis, ground verification should be conducted to physically assess the circumstances in the previously identified areas. This will involve field visits to confirm the suitability of the areas for communal land holdings, taking into consideration factors such as biodiversity, ecosystem health, and community accessibility.

**Presentation to Kebele administrations:** Once the final piloting sites are established, based on the verification work in the field, the findings should be documented and prepared for presentation. The findings regarding the identified communal land holding sites are presented to each Kebele administration. This step will aim at informing authorities, as well as seeking permission to involve the selected sites into the initiative.

**Support with orthophoto:** The presentation to Kebele administrations could be supported with orthophotos obtained from the regional office of land administration. Orthophotos, which are high-resolution aerial images corrected for distortion, can provide a clear visual representation of the identified areas. If the communal land holding is found entirely within one Kebele, there may not be any issues related to confirming the use of the area, while initiatives in border regions may lengthen the permission process.

## 5.3 Element 3: Development of alternative management models

The determination of current management practises needs to be accompanied by suggestions to new and more sustainable management alternatives. These need to be studied and re-designed for the local environment, but also discussed with the users of the communal land.

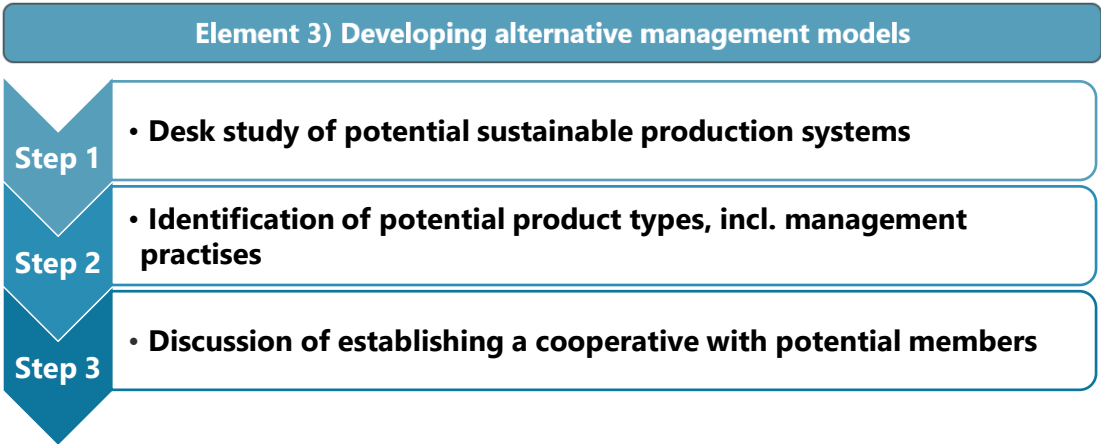


Figure 10: Three Steps of Element Three.

### 5.3.1 Desk study of potential sustainable production systems

Once the area and its potential are known, a desk study and evaluation of potential sustainable production systems for the given watershed area can take place. Considerations shall include thorough examination of various elements as outlined below as well as the legal instruments for potential sustainable production systems, as described earlier in chapter 5.1.1.

**Existing production and management systems on communal land:** Next step is understanding the current state of communal land and forest management practises. Start by examining and evaluating historical data on communal land use and management practices, as well as existing production systems to identify strengths and weaknesses. Complementary, interviews with key stakeholders, such as local communities and traditional authorities, should be conducted, to gather insights into current practices and existing or missing capacities.

**Existing practices for certificating communal land holdings:** The certification is laying out the framework for the management options. To evaluate the certification for communal land holdings, records of communal land holdings that have already been certified must be studied, the certification criteria assessed and compliance with certification requirements investigated. Based on the assessment and review, the following three options should be considered for further suitability analysis:

- **Scoping a community-led system:** Evaluate the feasibility and potential benefits of a community-led system by investigating community willingness and capacity to form cooperatives or associations. Review of successful case studies of community-led systems in similar contexts and identification of potential challenges and proposed mitigating strategies.
- **Strengthening the current Kebele-led system:** Analyse the potential for improvement within the existing Kebele-led system by assessing the effectiveness of the current system as well as identifying areas for improvement and propose relevant concepts. Consider the scalability and sustainability of the current system with the theoretical improvements.
- **Listing individual or household rights:** Explore the option of assigning individual or household rights to communal land parcels. Investigate the legal and social implications of transitioning to individual or household-based rights. Assess community perceptions and preferences regarding this alternative and examine case studies where such an allocation of resource rights has been successful. The selection from the three options presented above require a political decision. Within this Nexus piloting, the decision was made by the F4F project steering committee.

### 5.3.2 Identification of potential product types, incl. management practices

The process of discussing sustainable management practices and compiling the development plan for communal land holdings involves several steps.

**Thorough investigation of the site:** The process will include repeated fieldwork where general observations will be made to assess the potential and feasibility of a specific production system in the area. This will involve studying the local environment, ecosystems, and existing land-use practices. Specific attention should be given to the sites where communal land holdings are located as mentioned under 5.1.4. Observations will be made to understand the potential of these areas for sustainable management practices.

**Assessment of small-scale enterprises:** The presence of small-scale enterprises that will demand raw material for processing from the cooperatives will be assessed. This step is meant to reveal potential economic opportunities and partnerships for the cooperatives.

**Identification of potential product types:** A range of suitable product types should stand out based on the observations and assessments. In the present case and pilot intervention at the lake Chamo watershed these could include wood production, seedling production, organic honey production, organic goat meat production, moringa plantation, and silk production, but this will ultimately depend on the area in question. The identified and potential product types will be presented to the woreda experts seeking their opinion, advice, and validation of the identified products.

### 5.3.3 Discussion of establishing a cooperative with potential members

Overall, there are three management systems for communal land. The first is the Kebele-led management system, which is the concept which is currently applied where the communal land falls under the governance of the Kebele administration, and no specific users are declared. The second is the community-led approach, where certain and specified groups or communities are responsible for the land use. Lastly, another option would involve handing over land use rights to singular legal entities, such as individuals or households. This manual follows the



*Figure 11: Discussion among potential members of the cooperative.*

approach of community-led systems. If the Kebele-led or the listing of individual solutions were selected, then the following considerations will be obsolete. In contrast to the other approaches, the community-led solution entails the establishment of a cooperative or another formally recognised association. The actions suggested below are to be applied as preparation for establishing a cooperative.

**Identification of potential cooperative members:** The process begins by identifying potential cooperative members, whose information can be sourced from the NRLAIS (National Rural Land Administration and Information System). This step targets to identify individuals or groups with an interest in participating in the cooperative. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure carrying capacity and sustainability of the cooperative before its establishment.

**Gender and inclusion:** It is crucial to prioritize gender and social inclusion to ensure the equitable participation and benefits for all community members. Begin by discussing on the existing disparities and challenges faced by women and marginalized groups to reach consensus among the future members. Design inclusive policies and programs that actively involve women in decision-making processes, leadership roles, and income-generating activities within the cooperative. Consider training or other initiatives to empower both men and women with the necessary skills and knowledge for active participation. Foster an inclusive environment that respects cultural diversity, recognizing the varying needs and contributions of different social groups. Also consider how the age-requirement of min. 18 years might impact the opportunities for the youth.

**Discussion with Kebele executive committees:** All considerations and suggestions about potential cooperative members should be discussed with the executive committees of the Kebele administration for each Kebele to be involved. This step eventually involves compiling a list of selected individuals besides seeking input and approval from the Kebele executive committees.

**Delegation of responsibility to the Kebele administration:** The Kebele administration will be given the responsibility to further discuss potential cooperative membership with various groups within each Kebele. This responsible delegation suggests a decentralized approach, getting local administrations in the decision-making process.

**Information sharing and practical arrangements:** The Kebele administration will engage in discussions with the various groups and during these discussions, practical arrangements related to the formation of future cooperatives will be communicated. This will include details such as the purpose of the cooperatives, benefits of the membership, and the responsibilities of cooperative members.

**New list of potential cooperative members:** Following the discussions with the sub-Kebele groups, the Kebele administration should compile a new list of potential cooperative members in the future. This list will reflect individuals who have expressed interest in becoming members of the cooperatives. It may also consider factors such as commitment, willingness to participate, and eligibility for cooperative membership according to the criteria defined by the cooperative.

**Discuss sustainable land management with community members:** Community members will engage in a series of meetings to address challenges in sustainable land management. The process begins with introducing the topic at repeated community meetings as part of a broader initiative for environmentally friendly land-use practices. Participants will discuss key challenges, such as limited opportunities for expanding land, land occupation and certification issues, and the search for sustainable solutions within existing lands. The emphasis will be on recognizing sustainable land management as the major viable option for enhancing productivity within occupied and certified lands, forming the foundation for discussing specific practices and measures.

The issues raised during the discussions in the Nexus pilot covered a range of **themes**:

- Understanding the relationship between population growth and its impact on land degradation.
- Recognizing the widening gap between the demand and supply of wood products and the implications for sustainable land management.
- Discussing the consequences of land degradation on soil fertility, water resources, and overall ecosystem health.
- Exploring practices to prevent soil erosion and degradation through physical structures and restoration efforts.
- Introducing agroforestry practices with species that improve soil fertility, promote biodiversity, and provide additional economic benefits.
- Discussing the benefits of composting and its application to improve soil health and fertility.
- Exploring methods to enhance the water retention capacity of farms, especially in the context of water conservation and efficient use.
- Addressing the impacts of climate change on land.



## 5.4 Element 4: Finalization of cadastres between Kebeles

Problems and questions will arise if the boundary line of a communal land holding passes between two Kebeles. This scenario will present challenges related to jurisdiction, management responsibilities, and potential conflicts on benefit sharing among the members of the cooperative in the effected Kebeles. These discussions may result in recommendations for further work to demarcate the boundaries of the communal holding that is shared by two Kebeles. This recommendation will then have to acknowledge the need for clear delineation by encouraging agreements on boundaries to avoid potential disputes and ensure effective management. The actual recommendation for further work will indicate if additional efforts are deemed necessary to demarcate such boundary lines. This process may involve surveys, mapping, and negotiations between the involved Kebeles to establish clear and agreed-upon boundaries. The following steps apply:

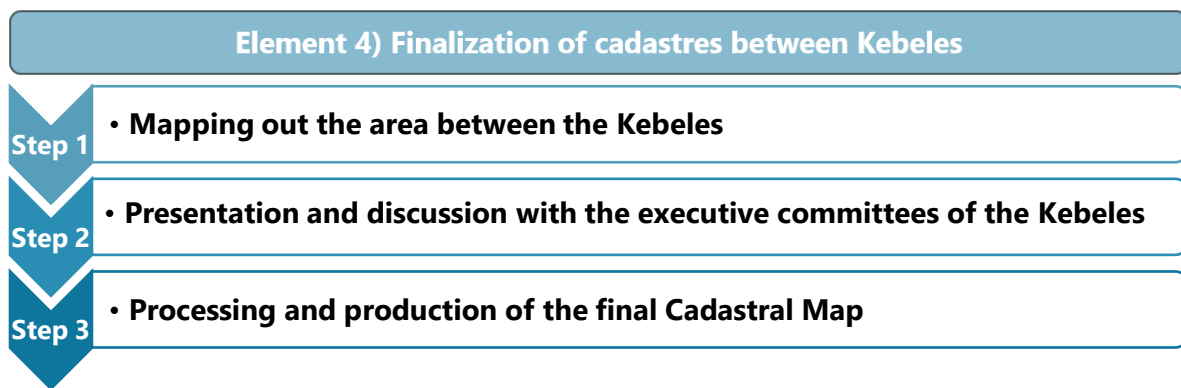


Figure 12: Three Steps of Element Four.

### 5.4.1 Mapping out the area between the Kebeles

If the communal land holdings' boundaries are situated between Kebeles, this will prompt a demand for resurveying and demarcation to ensure the accuracy and legitimacy of the communal boundaries. To undertake this task, an ad-hoc committee dedicated to the resurveying and demarcation process should be established. This committee should represent all people involved and could comprise:

- Three elders from each Kebele (6 in total)
- Administrators of the two Kebeles (2)
- Managers of the two Kebeles (2)
- Chairmen of the land administration committee of the two Kebeles (2)
- Secretaries of the land administration committee of the two Kebeles (2)
- Development Agents of natural resources of the two Kebeles (2)
- Women representatives of the two Kebeles (2)
- Youth representatives of the two Kebeles (2)

Additionally, representatives from:

- Office of Woreda Administration (1)
- Office of Agriculture and Natural Resources (1)
- Office of Land Administration (2)
- Office of Forest and Environment (1)

This diverse committee should make use of orthophoto images to facilitate and decide on the demarcation of boundaries between Kebeles. An agreement must be reached that entrusts the subsequent digitization process to the land administration office. The digitized maps, once completed, will then be printed and displayed in the Kebele office. This public display is deemed essential, providing an opportunity for community members to confirm and provide comments on the demarcation, ensuring transparency and inclusivity in the communal land management process.

#### 5.4.2 Presentation and discussion with the executive committees of the Kebeles

The next activity will revolve around the digitalization and demarcation of the agreed-upon boundary lines. This task can be entrusted to the Woreda Office of Land Administration, marking a crucial step toward ensuring accuracy and transparency in the delineation of communal land holdings. The outcome of this process must also be presented and displayed at the respective Kebele offices.

In some cases, the digitized and demarcated boundary lines will be agreed and approved during the public display, which is already a significant milestone in the communal land management journey. In other circumstances, this will not be the case. Despite the digital representation of the boundary lines, a lingering disagreement can persist between two or more Kebeles regarding the precise delineation of their communal land holdings.

In response to such an impasse, the matter must be escalated to the Woreda Authorities, signaling the need for a definitive and lasting solution to the boundary dispute. The ad-hoc committee members, key stakeholders in this process, will be summoned to the Woreda Administration Office. The meeting will convene with the participation of various institutional representatives, striving for deliberating and resolving the contentious boundary issue. In such a meeting, the process followed for the demarcation of the boundaries must be meticulously presented and consensus must be reached.

Following the consensus reached in the meeting, an agreement protocol should be prepared in the Woreda Administration Office. This protocol will outline the agreed-upon boundary lines and the collaborative process that will be undertaken for their physical demarcation. With the agreement protocol concluded, the responsibility for the final digitization of the boundary lines will be entrusted to the Woreda Office of Land.

#### 5.4.3 Processing and production of the final version of the cadastral map

With the decision on boundary lines firmly settled, the focus will shift to the finalization of the documentation. A dedicated team will undertake the remaining editorial work to refine and perfect the details of the agreed-upon boundary lines. This editorial phase will be indispensable, ensuring that the final version accurately and comprehensively captures the consensus reached during the extensive discussions and negotiations.

As the editorial work progresses, the final version will take shape, embodying the collective decisions and agreements made in the Woreda Administration Office. The document will undergo thorough scrutiny, incorporating any necessary adjustments or clarifications that will emerge during the editorial process. This step will add a layer of precision to the documentation, ensuring that it accurately reflects the intricacies of the demarcation process and the consensus achieved among stakeholders.

With the completion of the editorial work, the final version of the Cadastral Map will stand as a comprehensive and conclusive record of the agreed-upon boundaries, ready to be formalized and integrated into the broader framework of communal land management. This map provides a detailed representation of property boundaries, land parcels, and related information, which can be used for legal and administrative purposes, such as land ownership records.

### 5.5 Element 5: Establishment of cooperatives

The community-led management will take form as a cooperative managing the communal holding. The cooperative will be established with the purpose of managing the watershed area in a sustainable manner, ensuring the continued presence of natural resources available for the livelihood of the people inhabiting the area.

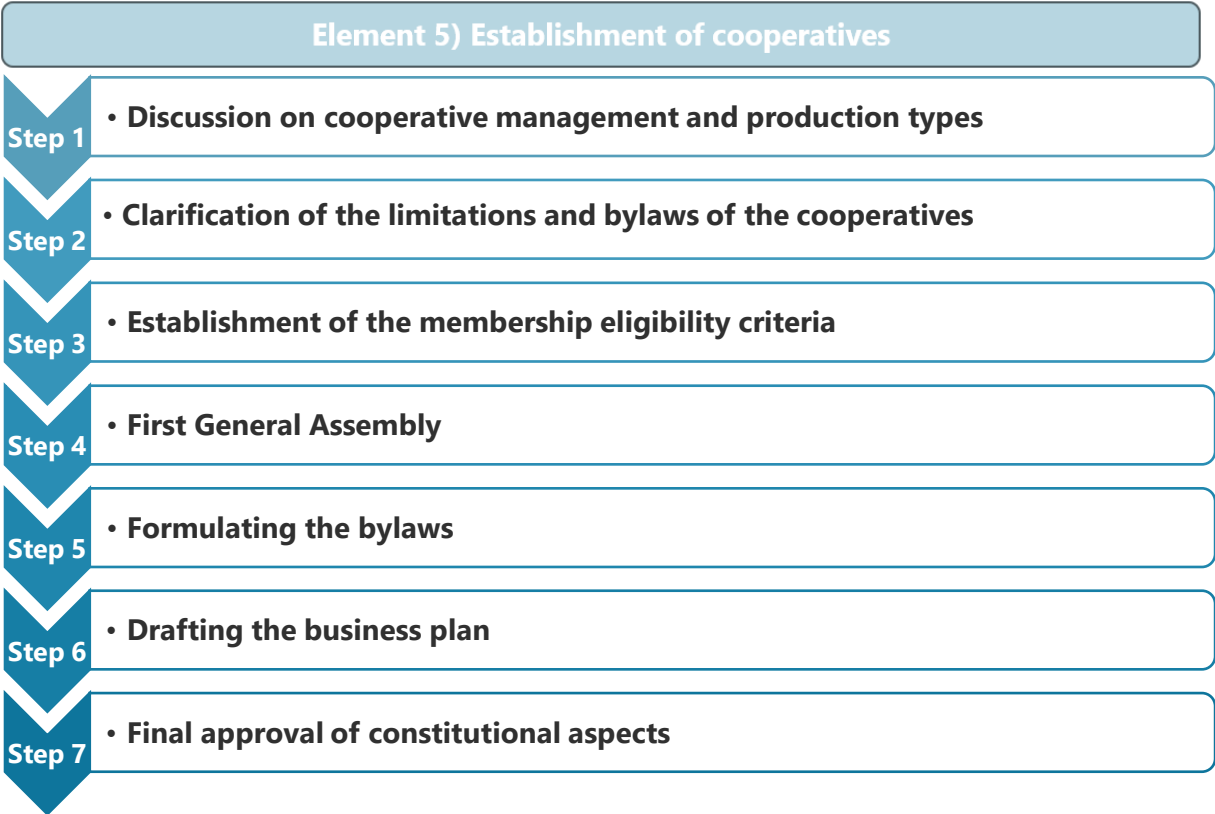


Figure 13: Seven Steps of Element Five.

#### 5.5.1 Discussion on cooperative management and production types with potential members

Identifying sustainable production options is key for forming and building a cooperative. The first step is to pinpoint specific products suitable for the cooperative, considering factors like local demand, market potential, and feasibility within the community. In an already degraded mountainous watershed area, potential products could include wood, bamboo, seedlings, organic honey, organic goat meat, moringa leaves, and silk cotton.

The selection of products should be based on discussions involving the community, considering the local ecological conditions, traditions, and skills of the members. The final list depends on the specific watershed area and its unique characteristics.

The suggested production types should be recommendations arising from participatory decision-making processes. It's crucial to engage the Kebele administration executive committees in these discussions to enable local leadership and alignment with broader community development goals. Their involvement is essential for effective planning and cooperative formation.

The discussions with various stakeholders should not solely focus on the production side but rather consider market aspect too. The availability of markets for the identified product types must be considered, emphasizing the importance of ensuring economic viability and sustainability. These processes will later play a crucial role in shaping the cooperative's business plan. The customized portfolio of product types, along with market considerations, will be integrated into the overall strategy and development plan of each cooperative.

By involving Kebele administration, and temporary steering committees, besides internalizing the information by the cooperative members, there will be a sense of community involvement and ownership. This can contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of the cooperative.

Building on this foundation, a strategic and indicative plan can be developed to serve as a guiding framework for subsequent activities. With a roadmap in place, the focus will shift towards a deeper level of awareness creation. This phase, concentrated at the Kebele level, will seek to impart a comprehensive understanding of the legal underpinnings, particularly the Cooperatives Proclamation 985/2016.

### 5.5.2 Clarification of the limitations of forest development and bylaws of the cooperatives

The process begins with the identification of the limitations associated with forest development, which is the rather long time periods required to reap the rewards of forest development and wood production. This recognition is crucial for setting realistic expectations and planning for alternative revenue sources during the initial stages of the cooperative.

**Diversification of product types:** To address the long gestation period, the cooperative needs to take proactive steps to identify other product types that can generate income in the meantime. This diversification helps to counteract the limitation and establishes alternative revenue streams.

**Discussion of rights, responsibilities, and restrictions:** The bylaws go beyond product types and address the rights, responsibilities, and restrictions of the cooperative members. This comprehensive approach ensures that all aspects of cooperative governance, including the roles and limitations of all members, are clearly defined.

**Legal compliance:** The bylaws serve as a legal document that outlines the rules and regulations governing the cooperative. This ensures compliance with national and local laws and regulations, contributing to the cooperative's legitimacy and stability.

**Regular review and updating:** The bylaws are not static, as they are subject to regular reviews and updates. This flexibility allows the cooperative to adapt to changing circumstances and rules, address new challenges, and seize emerging opportunities.

### 5.5.3 Establishment of the membership eligibility criteria

As the cooperative is about to reach the point of actualization, the need to establish eligibility criteria to obtain membership becomes indispensable.

According to Federal Proclamation 456/2005, Article 2.12, a communal holding is defined as rural land granted by the government to local residents for communal grazing, forestry, and social services. This definition is echoed in the regional rural land laws. However, both laws have overlooked an important question: "How far away to from the edges of the forest does the land has to be located to be eligible?" It is the responsibility of the Kebele administration to define this criterion, but the implementing team must ensure that it is clearly defined before embarking on the establishment of the cooperatives.

Having outlined the eligibility criteria, as outlined in chapter 5.1.1, a workshop should be organized to discuss and obtain endorsement. The workshop should have sufficient representation from local administrations to be authorized to endorse these requirements. A collaborative effort involving various institutions should welcome the participation of:

- Relevant Regional offices
- Relevant Zonal offices
- Relevant Woreda offices
- Kebele administrations
- Kebele Land Administration & Land Use Committees
- Civil society organizations

### 5.5.4 First general assembly and initial administrative decision

An initial general assembly should be conducted for the cooperative, which is a critical step in establishing a cooperative's foundation and ensuring active community participation and engagement

**Preparation and planning:** A suitable venue for the general assembly that can accommodate all expected participants is needed. Thus, an agenda has to be drawn up, including key topics such as the Cooperative Proclamation 985/2016, like the benefits of cooperatives, the project objectives, and the cooperative's role in sustainable forestry for instance.

**Information dissemination:** Information needs to be disseminated among community members prior to the general assembly to inform them about the purpose, benefits, and potential impacts of the cooperative on their livelihoods and the environment.

**Facilitation and interactive discussion:** An interactive discussion should be facilitated during the general assembly to encourage active participation from all attendees. The format through which to facilitate the discussion will depend on the participants, but it could include group discussions, guiding questions, providing examples from stories and folklore, using visual material such as posters, charts and maps to convey information, role-play and drama or community mapping. Participants should be allowed to ask questions, share their opinions, and contribute to the decision-making processes.

**Decision-making process:** Participants should be encouraged, to actively engage in the decision-making process, as it is their cooperative and their livelihood that is being addressed. This includes providing them with necessary information and guidance on key issues such as share price, registration fees, cooperative name, logo, and other relevant matters related to the cooperative's establishment.

**Establishment of share price and registration fees:** Participants will be allowed to collectively decide on the share price and registration fees based on their financial capabilities and the operational requirements of the cooperative. Care is taken to make sure that the determined amounts are reasonable and feasible for all members.

**Establish a temporary steering committee:** An interactive and inclusive discussion should be facilitated during the first general assembly to encourage active participation from all attendees and invite a group of volunteers to a temporary steering committee. The temporary steering committee should be gender- and age-balanced, as it has the task of facilitating the initial establishment of the cooperative.

**Selection of cooperative name and logo:** Active involvement could also be encouraged in selecting the cooperative's name and logo, emphasizing the importance of choosing a name and logo that reflects the cooperative's values, mission, and vision of sustainable forestry.

**Opening of cooperative bank account:** The process of opening a cooperative bank account must be facilitated jointly by the elected temporary steering committee members, ensuring that all necessary documentations and procedures are followed in accordance with banking regulations and cooperative governance guidelines.

**Record keeping and documentation:** Detailed records of the general assembly, including attendance lists, minutes of the meeting, and any decisions made during the session, must be maintained. It will be ensured that all documents are properly filed and stored for future reference and compliance purposes.

### 5.5.5 Formulating the bylaws

Establishing the bylaws for cooperatives, with a focus on sustainable forest and land use is fundamental for ensuring effective governance and sustainable development.

**Introduction and background:** Provide a brief introduction to the purpose of the bylaws and the importance of sustainable land use within the context of the community and region.

**Clearly outline the Vision, mission, and objectives of the Primary Cooperatives (PCs)** in relation to sustainable land use and community development.

**Membership criteria and members' rights and duties:** Define the eligibility criteria for membership in the cooperative, including any specific requirements related to land use and environmental sustainability. Enumerate the rights and duties of members, emphasizing their responsibilities in applying, promoting and maintaining sustainable land use practices.

**Duties, responsibilities, and activities of the PCs:** Elaborate on the specific duties, responsibilities, and activities of the PCs in the context of sustainable land use, including aspects related to agricultural practices, forest management, and environmental conservation.

**Organisational structure and power:** Establish a clear organizational structure for the cooperative, including the roles and responsibilities of each person. Define the decision-making powers and responsibilities of each position within the cooperative to ensure effective governance and management of sustainable land use practices.

**Special privileges of the PC society:** Outline any special privileges or benefits that the cooperative society may enjoy, particularly those related to sustainable land use practices, such as access to government support, resources, or funding.



**Issues related to assets and funds:** Develop a comprehensive framework for managing the cooperative's assets and financial resources, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and responsible spending practices in the context of sustainable land use.

**Dissolution and winding up of the PC:** Establish clear guidelines and procedures for the dissolution and winding up of the cooperative, ensuring that any remaining resources or assets are used in a manner consistent with sustainable land use and community development goals.

**Settlement of disputes:** Define a fair and transparent mechanism for resolving disputes within the cooperative, particularly those related to land use, resource management, or decision-making processes.

**Compliance with legal frameworks:** Monitor that the drafted bylaws adhere to relevant national and regional laws, including Proclamation 985/2016, Federal Proclamation 456/1997, and regional land law 110/1999, to prevent any legal complications or conflicts.

**Review and approval process:** Establish a systematic review and approval process for the drafted bylaws, involving all relevant stakeholders, such as representatives from the Woreda Cooperative Office, the temporary steering committee members, and cooperative promoters from the Kebele communities.

### 5.5.6 Drafting the business plan

Creating a business plan for a cooperative focusing on sustainable forestry requires careful consideration of various factors to ensure the viability and success of the enterprise.

**The business elements:** Stipulate information on the main line of business, the members involvement, the current sales channels and anticipated future markets, a list of possible competitors incl. an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses and develop a cost-benefit analysis of the planned products range.

**Risk analysis and mitigation strategies:** Identify potential risks and challenges that may impact the cooperative's operations, including environmental risks, market volatility, regulatory changes, and community relations. Develop detailed strategies to mitigate these risks effectively. Conduct thorough market research to understand the demand for sustainable forestry products and services, as well as the competitive landscape. Develop a robust marketing plan that emphasizes the agreed commitment to sustainable practices, highlighting the unique value proposition and benefits of its forestry products to target customers.

**Financial plan:** Develop a comprehensive financial plan that includes projected budgets, income statements, cash flow forecasts, and balance sheets. Ensure that the financial plan aligns with the goals and the requirements outlined in the bylaws and business plan of the cooperative.

**Operational plan:** Sketch out the day-to-day operations of the cooperative, including details on sustainable forestry practices, resource management, production processes, and quality control measures. Ensure that the operational plan adheres to the environmental standards and regulations outlined in the bylaws.

**Management and organisational structure:** Define the roles and responsibilities of key management personnel and the organizational structure of the cooperative. Emphasize the importance of transparency, accountability, and effective communication in all decision-making processes.

**Community engagement and sustainability initiatives:** Highlight the cooperative's commitment to community engagement and sustainable forestry practices. Outline specific initiatives and programs aimed at promoting environmental conservation, fostering community development, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the cooperative's operations.

**Legal and regulatory compliance:** Ensure that the business plan adheres to all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, including environmental regulations and forestry laws.

### 5.5.7 Final approval of constitutional aspects

Before the second general assembly, member profiles should be prepared and documented in each cooperative. The activity has to be carried out in collaboration with temporary steering committees and Kebele and Woreda Cooperative Officers. The profiles should include the following information for each member of the cooperative:

- Name
- Sex and age
- Name of associated sub-Kebele
- Marital status
- Occupation
- Date of membership
- Family size and sex of family members
- Quantity of purchased shares
- Price of purchased share in Birr
- Names of heirs



Figure 14: Election for steering cooperative steering committee

A one-day second general assembly should be conducted in each established cooperative. The main purpose of the second general assembly is to discuss progress reports, approve bylaws and business plans, and elect different committees of the cooperatives. The following agenda is suggested:

- Progress report of completed actions presented by the temporary steering committee.
- Bylaw and business plan presented by Woreda Cooperative Office representative.
- Approval of the bylaws and business plans.

Electoral committees should be established based on recommendations by the general assembly to facilitate a fair and transparent election of executive committee, supervisory committee and other sub-committees of the cooperative. Accordingly, the following committees can be formed in each cooperative depending on the actual requirement of the internal structure. Suggested committees are:

- Executive committee
- Supervisory committee
- Loan committee
- Education & training committee
- Sales committee
- Purchasing committee
- Gender committee

## 6 Impact of the Nexus pilot model

In the pursuit of sustainable land use, a crucial foundation lies in ensuring the tenure security of those whose livelihoods rely on the land. This principle forms the basis for a comprehensive approach that goes beyond simple land management, acknowledging the relationship between communities and their environment. To solidify their standing and recognition, these users of communal land have to undergo a transformative process. Legal user status is granted to them through the application of cooperative law. This legal recognition not only cements their rights but also empowers them within established legal structures, laying the groundwork for a more equitable and participatory model of land use.

### 6.1 Sustainable forest management

In most Ethiopian watersheds, the need for sustainable forest management is crucial. The current situation is often alarming, with increasing deforestation, land degradation, and soil erosion. The foundation for transformative action has been set by this Nexus pilot, by granting the actual land users responsibilities to manage forests on communal land.

In addition the pilot has contributed to the three Rio conventions to which Ethiopia is a signatory FCCC (Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change), CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) and CCD (Convention to Combat Desertification) with a replicable model for sustainable land and forest management.

### 6.2 Kebele administrations to take ownership of transformation

In shaping the future of communal land holdings, the focus revolves around the key concepts of ownership and responsibility. At the core of the Nexus pilot strategy is the deliberate inclusion of the Kebele administration at every important step. The pilot has clearly demonstrated that the effect of inclusion can be seen in increased ownership and responsibility from the involved administrations. The inclusive approach has provided the foundation for an administrative approach in line with the community's interests.

### 6.3 Contribution to the land registration of communal land

In the changing landscape of communal land management in Ethiopia, a notable development can be attributed to the outcomes of this pilot initiative. For the first time a comprehensive development, management, and use of communal land holdings are carried out with legally binding land tenure security. This significant achievement marks substantial progress and sets a precedent for communal land governance and sustainability.

### 6.4 Establishment of cooperatives for sustainable land use

In this particular quest for sustainable land use, the most important role lies in developing cooperatives, highlighted by the necessity of establishing a strong legal foundation for them. This initial step forms a basis for a communal engagement model that offers practical options for sustainable land use on solid legal ground. During the Nexus pilot, 5 cooperatives in total were established and equipped with all required procedures and secure land tenure claims on communal land.

## 7 Lessons learned, innovations, and replicability

### 7.1 Lessons learned

**Farming communities:** Engaging with farming communities necessitates the cultivation of interpersonal qualities such as patience, openness, transparency, and a participatory mindset. It is imperative to approach the communities with deep respect for their cultural intricacies and nuances. Recognizing and embracing the entirety of the local cultures is essential for the success of any initiative.

**Kebele boundaries:** Addressing challenges related to communal land or grazing land situated between multiple Kebeles requires a nuanced understanding of administrative boundaries as well as the procedural knowledge to get the boundaries officially established. In such instances, involving community representatives, particularly village elders, becomes indispensable.

**Sustainable forest management:** Recognizing the diverse landscape of the Nexus pilot watershed, forest management is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, a contextualized strategy is necessary, covering various land use types and land use holder aspects. This multifaceted approach includes among others agroforestry, woodlot management and homestead practices. The diversity in these methods acknowledges that preserving the watershed's ecological balance requires tailored interventions aligned with different forms of land utilization.

**Local Kebele administrations:** Recognizing the importance of local administrations, it's crucial to carefully consider their opinions and suggestions. This collaborative approach could be reflected in the cooperative rules, which have two key points connecting the Kebele administration and the cooperatives. First, the Kebele administration reviews and shares insights on the cooperatives' progress during the annual general assembly. It's relevant to clarify that while the administration's opinions matter, they don't dictate the cooperatives' decisions, to promote a balanced and respectful relationship. The second point in the cooperative rules involves a financial commitment to strengthen the partnership. Cooperatives can choose to assign certain administrative tasks to the Kebele administrators and may pay a fee for these services.

**Legal access to communal land:** The establishment of a legal foundation ensuring access to communal land and establishing robust land tenure security is an important accomplishment, signalling a departure from conventional approaches and ushering in a new chapter in Ethiopia's land management history. Beyond its immediate impact, the expected ripple effects of this pioneering effort extend beyond its geographical area of effect. The results of the Nexus pilot initiative are likely to serve as a valuable blueprint for communal land not only within the region but across the entire country. The lessons learned and methodologies employed contribute to a growing body of knowledge that can inform and shape communal land policies in diverse landscapes.



*Figure 15: Members of a cooperative in the woreda administration.*

**Evaluate the function of cooperatives:** As communities venture into cooperative development, it's crucial to ensure that legal structures are not only established but also strictly adhered to. This involves not just formally recognizing cooperative entities but also incorporating transparency, accountability, and participatory principles into their operational frameworks. As such, the ongoing success of the cooperative model hinges on a commitment to regular evaluation. Time plays a critical role in this process, necessitating periodic assessments, whether after a specific duration after the project's end or annually. This evaluative approach enables stakeholders to measure the effectiveness of implemented strategies, identify areas for improvement, and adapt the cooperative approach to the evolving needs of the community, policy amendments, and changing dynamics of land use.

## 7.2 Innovations

The registration of communal land, as well as the issuance of land titles, has been somewhat overlooked amidst Ethiopia's impressive efforts to provide land titles to private land users. Recently, the registration of communal land has gained attention on the agendas of land administration, policy makers and development partners, partly due to the innovative approach of the Nexus pilot. There is now an increased focus on the control and management of communal land, exemplified by the Ministry of Agriculture by setting up a task force to identify gaps and shortcomings on communal land administration.

A pivotal step towards the sustainable management of fragile ecosystems is taken by empowering the users and communities of communal land, to assume responsibilities for these areas and to manage the ecosystems within them. Encouraging cooperative-led management not only fosters a sense of ownership among land users, who will be the members of the cooperative, but also facilitates the transition to more sustainable production systems. This shift replaces the current utilization of land, which is based on individual use without a collective responsibility for the overall well-being of the watershed area.

## 7.3 Replicability

Beyond being a stand-alone initiative, the Nexus pilot serves as a reservoir of knowledge and experience. This information is poised to inform and guide similar engagements in the future on a larger scale. The lessons learned, successes, and challenges have composed a roadmap for scaling up similar endeavours, offering insights that extend beyond the immediate context into broader discussions on sustainable land use and community empowerment.

The demonstrated methodology is transferable to other geographical areas, where there is a need for joint responsibility in order to address the fragile and threatened ecosystems on communal forest land. This speaks to the scalability of the piloting process, by offering a model that can be emulated in various regions with similar challenges and objectives.

Looking ahead, scaling up these initiatives is vital for both donor-funded projects and routine government activities. The urgency to address deforestation and land degradation requires holistic and impactful interventions, involving not only financial investments, but also a commitment to integrate sustainable forest management practices into land governance.

## 8 References

### List of the most relevant resource persons and institutions involved in the Nexus pilot

Position	Institutions
Land administration agency deputy head	Former SNNPR administration
Head of Agriculture and Natural Resources	Gamo Zone administration
Head of forest and environment	Gamo Zone administration
Head of Agriculture and natural Resources	Arbaminch Woreda administration
Head of Agriculture and natural Resources	Gerese Woreda administration
Land administration expert	Gerese Woreda administration
Cadastre expert	Gerese Woreda administration
Forest development expert	Gerese Woreda administration
Cooperatives society development expert	Gerese Woreda administration
Forest development senior expert	Gamo Zone administration
Forest Development expert	GIZ Ethiopia office
Project manager/director	GIZ, Forest for Future project
Project Zonal coordinator	GIZ, Forest for Future project
Land use expert	GIZ, S2RAI II
Kebele executive members	Various Kebele administrations

### List of the most relevant documents to be consulted

Federal Proclamation 456/1997	Federal Land Administration and Land Use
Regional land law 110/1999	Regional Land administration and use proclamation
Land Administration and Use Proclamation 456/2005	Enacted by the Federal Government, this law governs Rural Land Administration and Land Use.
Proclamation 110/2007	Enacted in the SNNP region, this law addresses Rural Land Administration and Land Use.
Regulation 66/2007	Issued for the implementation of Proclamation 110/2007 in the SNNP region
Proclamation 985/2016	Enacted by the Federal Government, this law pertains to Cooperative Society development.
Proclamation 1065/2018	This law, enacted by the Federal Government, focuses on Forest Development, Conservation, and Utilization.
Proclamation 1223/2020	Enacted by the Federal Government, this law addresses Development, Management, and Utilization of Community Watersheds.
NRLAIS (database)	National Rural Land Administration and Information System within Ministry of Agriculture



## 9 Annexes

The most important technical reports, guidelines etc. from the Nexus pilot are all in the local language, Amharic. Therefore, they are not attached here, but the relevant progress reports covering the time for establishing the cooperatives have been annexed instead.

Annex 1	Draft Table of contents of a Management Plan
Annex 2	PR April 2023
Annex 3	PR May 2023
Annex 4	PR June 2023
Annex 5	PR July 2023
Annex 6	PR August 2023
Annex 7	PR September 2023
Annex 8	Indicative plan for establishment of cooperatives