

DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE AND PROFITABLE DAIRY MARKET SYSTEM FOR PASTORALIST COMMUNITIES IN BORENA ZONE, ETHIOPIA

Mestawot Ketema Aleab¹; Belete Shimelash Abebe¹

¹Ecocert SA, POBox 22527, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History:</p> <p>Received 15.11.2025 Accepted 15.03.2026 Published 25.04.2026</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p>Dairy Market System Development, Pastoralist Communities, Value Chain, Women Empowerment, Rangeland management</p>	<p><i>Consortium of Community Initiatives Facilitation and Assistance (CIFA), Oromia Pastoralist Association (OPA), and Fair & Sustainable (F&S) led by CST implemented the Project. The aim of the project was developing an inclusive and profitable dairy value chains for pastoralist communities in Borana zone, the Project begun in October 2020 in five Kebeles within Moyale Woreda with direct reach to 5,351 women and youth. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess if the Project has been able to achieve its target as well as assessing if any system changes has come because of the Project implementation from October 1, 2020 – December 30, 2023. The evaluation team applied mixed methods approach involving secondary data review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) as well as observations. The approach is summarized in an evaluation design matrix showing the source of data, method of data collection, and the tool used to answer each evaluation question. In total, the team collected quantitative and qualitative information of 15 KIIs, 12 FGDs and surveyed 157 project beneficiaries. Qualitative data was organized and analyzed based on a framework developed for this purpose, a context analysis was applied during analysis, and the quantitative data was collected using online tablet devices with KoBoToolbox application and was analyzed using SPSS. As a result, the Project goal “improving household resilience” is considered satisfactory since the Project has contributed to beneficiaries’ resilience absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacity. The dairy market systems in targeted district of Borena improved in ways that socially and economically empower women and conserve the ecosystems. The degree of progress towards the Project strategic objective is encouraging, and the Project has improved average level of impact of women in formal/informal decision-making structures. The Project has facilitated market linkages between 3 input suppliers, i.e. union, MFI, vet drug suppliers and the producers themselves. The Project supported two MFIs, Sinke bank and Oromia Coop bank, by strengthening & linking them to with cooperatives. We Recommend that it is essential to institutionalize the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP), develop evidence-based documents, use the platform to influence critical advocacy issues and it is crucial that a clear gender strategy and men engagement are planned from beginning. The “co-investment model” needs adaptiveness and thorough actor engagement for co-creation.</i></p>

Copyright© The Author(s) 2025. Open Access under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). This license permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution, and reproduction in any medium or format, giving proper credit to the original author, including a link to the license, and indicating if any changes were made. To view a copy of the licence, please visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

1. Introduction

The project entitled ‘Developing Inclusive and Profitable Dairy Market Systems for Pastoralist Communities in the Borena Zone’ been implemented for a period of October 1, 2020 – December 30, 2023. The project has a goal of benefiting pastoralist and agro-pastoralists, improving economic opportunities of 5,351 women and youths in 5 kebeles (Tuqa, Maddo, Bakola, Argane, and Mude-Ambo) of Moyale Woreda. The project followed Market Systems Development (MSD), Rangeland Management (RLM), and Women Empowerment (WE) for inclusive growth. The project has been led by consortium partners of CIFA and F&S OPA for the three thematic areas.

The project aimed to economically and socially empower women by engaging both women and men in environmentally sustainable livelihood activities, strengthening local market systems, and promoting the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources. This evaluation assessed the project’s performance and results against baseline indicators, evaluating its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Objectives of the evaluation were: (a) to assess the achievement of project key results; (b) assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the project; (c) harvest system-level outcomes generated by the project; and (d) document learning and practices that will be shared with actors working on the field.

2. Methodology

The evaluation was guided by a purpose-built Evaluation Matrix that defined key questions, data sources, and methods. The team used mixed qualitative and quantitative approaches, designing and applying data collection tools aligned with the evaluation questions, criteria, and objectives. In addition to KIIs and FGDs, the team conducted field observations, debriefing and consensus building sessions. In total, the team conducted 15 KIIs, 12 FGDs and project beneficiaries. A thematic analysis was applied for qualitative data analysis, and the quantitative data was collected using KoBoToolbox application and was analyzed by SPSS.

The quantitative data was collected from selected project beneficiaries at kebele level using a random sampling approach. The sample consisted of 157 households¹ from 4 kebeles (Tuqa, Maddo, Bakola and Argane). The evaluation team supervised the locally recruited enumerators. Enumerators collected the data using the standard questioner. The data was entered into SPSS and frequencies analysis, means analysis, and statistical significance testing were conducted to better understand the existence of statistically significant differences.

Limitations on data collection—one of the project implementations kebele (Mude Ambo) was hard to reach due to security issues and the team were unable to cover it.

Project Development and Review Documents - Project initiation and design— the evaluation team reviewed project documents including project proposal, study reports, and project reports and records. They were informative and helpful to better understand the project concept,

¹ Standard survey sampling size for small numbers based on 95% confidence with 7 % error can be calculated: $n=196 \div ((1+ (196/N)))$. Therefore, our sample size will $n=196 \div ((1+(196/1070)) = 166$ will be selected for survey

strategy, implementation approach, and achievements. At the inception stage, we used the inputs from the desk review in the development of instruments for data collection and setting hypotheses that were tested during evaluation.

Based on the view of evaluation team, the project document is well structured, clear, and contains the basic elements of the development project. The project interventions reinforced each other and aimed to empower women in the 5 project kebeles.

The data obtained from CST demonstrate that the project reached out multiple target groups and other community members. Out of the total 60% were female which were interviewed for the survey. The distribution of survey respondents across the 4 accessible kebeles, with a total of 157 participants. Representation was relatively balanced, ranging from 20.4 % in Bakola to 28 % in Tuqa strengthening the reliability of the findings across intervention areas.

Table 1 Project Target Groups (October 1, 2020-December 2023)

No	Category	Planned			Reached			Percent =2/1
		Male	Female	Total (1)	Male	Female	Total (2)	
1	Direct beneficiaries	2600	3900	6500	2660	3940	6600	102
2	Indirect beneficiaries	5200	7800	13000	5200	7800	13000	100

Source: CST project document

3. Evaluation Findings

The six OECD/DAC project evaluation criteria in combination with appropriate indicators were selected and used to measure the achievement of the project results. The primary data generated through survey and qualitative methods were integrated in the analysis.

(1) Profile of Survey Respondents

Respondents in the survey— the respondents were 92.5 % female and 7.5% male. The number of respondents from each kebele was equal. Except 1.4% of respondents who live in urban areas, the other 98.6% live in rural areas. The minimum and maximum ages of respondents were 20 and 77 years respectively.

78.6% of the survey respondents were married, 12.5% widowed, 8.1% divorced, and the rest 0.8% never married or separated. The family size in the household (HH) was between 3-15. From the total respondents, 35.8% constituted heads of their HH. 62.2% of respondents were Muslim followers, followed by 13.3% Wakefata. In-addition 71.4% of respondents could not read and write while 28.6% completed grade 1 up to degree level of education.

The data indicated that the serious drought that happened in 2022 teaches the community livelihood diversification like livestock keeping in combination with production of vegetables and fruits as an alternative livelihood source. In addition, petty trade was one of the important livelihood options. The mean annual income of respondents was reported to be 34,586 Birr.

(2) Project Relevance

The relevance of interventions in addressing gender relations— respondents who believed that the project interventions were relevant and moderately relevant to increase the participation of women in HH, and local affairs constituted 84% and 16%, respectively. We further probed respondents to give responses from their partners on their increased participation

in the livelihood options as well as in VSLAs and CMDRR activities. As shown in Table 2, 80% of respondents said that the project has brought changes in their business environment (input, skill, finance and market).

Table 2: Outcome-Efficient dairy market systems functional in targeted districts in Borena

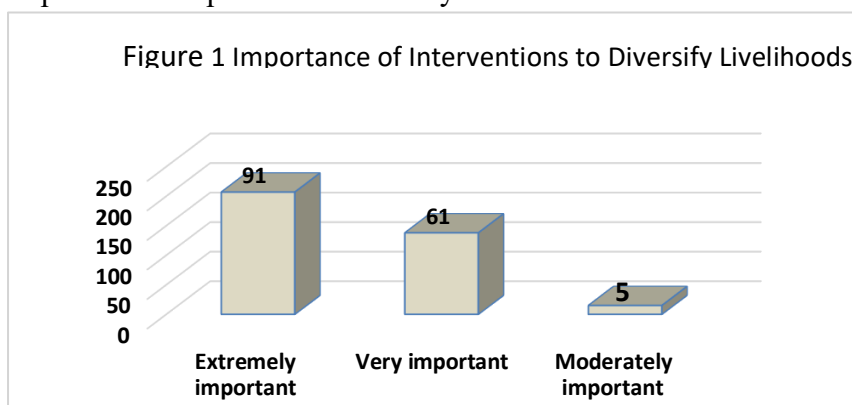
Indicators	Baseline	Target	Endline point	Effect generated
% of Project participants reporting tangible benefits from the supported changes in their business environment	0%	80%	99.2%	Improved producer’s knowledge and skills on cow management and milk handling, supported and facilitated 3 input suppliers’ linkage with producers. ✓ 99.2% facilitated input supply including finance from Sinke bank ✓ 490 underserved and remote target beneficiaries accessed to input (veterinary drug, feed through Oda Roba Cooperative Union) and 450 producers benefited. ✓ Functional Stakeholder Platform established and improved networking

Source: Author’s work

The above table summarizes and focuses on the functionality of dairy market systems. It compares baseline, target and end-high values for the percentage of participants reporting benefits from improved inputs, skills, finance and market access changed.

Relevant component of the project- The establishment/strengthening of VSLAs and CMDRR was the most relevant project component. Respondents reported that the project components (access to financial services and improved variety of livestock) were less relevant. The possible explanation for such response can be related to inadequacy of access to loans and quality of the improved variety of livestock.

The evaluation further assessed the relevance of the project components by posing appropriate questions. The majority, 57.9% rated that the interventions were extremely important to improve and diversify their livelihoods.



Source: Author’s work

(3) Project Coherence

The alignment of the project intervention with the local context was one of the important factors that influence the achievement of results. The project interventions were coherent with

the government policies pertaining to pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. These among others include pastoral development, rangeland management, pond development and watershed management, women policy, agriculture policy, and cooperative policy. It has been found that the engagement of enterprises in the market system development has made a positive contribution to creating effective demand for privately provided services, which is essential to attract other businesses to operate. The evidence shows that the 3 consortium partners have adequate experience in execution of development projects through employing applicable strategies and approaches. However, it is found out that the concept of MSD was new to the 3 consortium partners (APCFC, CIFA, and Fair & sustainability).

(4) Project Effectiveness

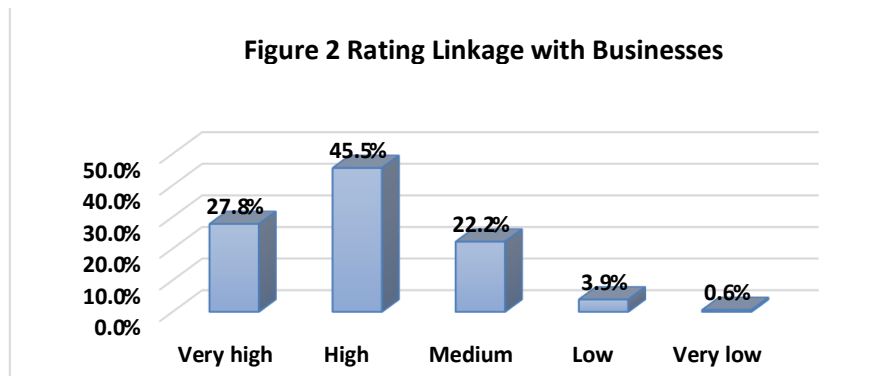
The project has made remarkable achievements with regard to diversification of the livelihoods of target groups, conservation of natural resources, facilitating access to financial services, linking target groups with businesses. The comparison of the outcome and output indicators of end-line values against the baseline and logframe values depicts a good achievement of the project. The use of methods such as THM has been effective in addressing gender inequality and creating harmony among men and women. In addition, the project reached out to the desired number of target groups and stakeholders. MSD is an important instrument to ensure the benefit of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists from their produce. There are some pointers that indicate inadequacy of technical support provided by the zonal government authorities.

Synergy between project interventions and other programmes of *CIFA*, *APCSC*, and *F&S*— the evaluation team assessed the complementarity between the project under evaluation and other programmes of the organizations. CIFA and APCSC have been implementing community-based projects focusing on enhancing natural resource management, agriculture and poultry keeping. Through their interventions, the consortium partners address gender issues at HH and community levels. On the other hand, F&S is a consulting firm which provides professional support to actors in value chain development. The reflections of participants on the coherence of interventions with business principles and practices were recorded with direct quotes.

(5) Project Efficiency

95% of respondents accessed financial services from Singe Bank and VSLAs. During the baseline, the response for access to financial services from the bank and MFI was 23.7% and 21.5% respectively. Overall, the project has been efficient in utilizing local resources including knowledge, experience, material, and natural resources. The evaluation team has observed tracking systems for diversified livelihoods when the drought becomes saviour and outputs of petty trade, VSLAs, and trading shoats. However, the tracking system to measure the progress of the competitiveness of the market for privately provided services in the project areas had not been well developed. Establishing linkage between women operators and businesses is essential to benefit both parties. For this to happen, the bargaining power of women operators should be developed. Respondents who rated the current linkage with

businesses as high and very high constituted 45.6% and 27.8% respectively. A small number of respondents, 4.5% reported that the linkage was low and very low (See Figure 2).



Source- Author's work

When participants were asked to rate the current knowledge and skills on cow management, milk handling, and processing, 53.1% and 37.2% of respondents rated very high and high, respectively. A few numbers of respondents rated medium (8.3%) and low (1.4%)

(6) Project Impact

99.2% of respondents validated the increase in their/family income due to diversification of their livelihoods. The responses on improvement in power within, power to, power with, and power over were range in 82.8%–83.9%. The project impact has been aligned with facilitating the transit of pastoralists into agro-pastoralist way of living. Although the MSD is at its peak, it has facilitated the move from monopoly to competitiveness in supply of inputs and service markets. One of the project approaches (co- investments with enterprises) has increased access to privately provided services in the project kebeles. The project has also made a positive impact on non-target groups and communities at large have copied some of the project results without external support. The endline values for SCIAF standard indicator have shown, 99% of respondents reported that their livelihoods have been diversified due to project implementation.

(7) Sustainability of Project Results

Poultry keeping, goat trading, and petty trade will likely continue without much expansion of business size because the local communities have already had similar experiences prior to the implementation of the project in addition to dairy production. The sustainability of growing vegetables and fruits will also be efficient through technical support to be extended by government stakeholders. The VSLAs will continue if they dynamically grow and become responsive to the social, financial and technical needs of target communities. The CLA is expected to lobby government authorities and manage the legal issues related to VSLAs. The enterprises will continue providing services to communities given there is effective demand backed up by the ability to pay in the target areas. Sinqe Bank will continue providing financial services to target groups. However, closer monitoring is required by the cooperative office to oversee the appropriateness of the management of the revolving loan.

4. Challenges, lessons learned and good practices

Challenges—the drought has been a cause for diversifying the project interventions from the dairy value chain to alternative IGAs; the project has insufficiently benefited from the expertise of Irrigation and Pastoralist Development and Agriculture Offices at zonal level; and internalizing the concept of MSD among the consortium partners, enterprises, and target groups has taken some time.

Lessons—the integration business approach in the development undertakings through engaging government authorities, enterprises, and NGOs helped partners to understand their role in addressing poverty; economic empowerment is an entry point to successfully address the gender inequality at HH and community levels; MSD has been found to be requiring adequate time and financial investment; and the dams constructed by the government in Borena are a springboard to facilitate the transition from a pastoralism way of living to agro-pastoralism. Adequate participation of stakeholders in the project adaptation plan has positively contributed towards its successful execution.

Good practices— non-target groups analyse and copy the project approaches and practices suiting for them; THM is an approach that facilitates social empowerment of women and brings change in gender power relations. Public-private-partnership is an effective strategy to address the root causes of poverty in pastoralist communities— it addresses scarcity of pasture and water and improves access to privately provided services; and MSD is an approach that brings better result when it is implemented in a phased manner.

5. Conclusions And Recommendations

Conclusions—the project is relevant and addressed the needs and priorities of the target groups and their organizations. It is consistent and responsive to local context, government policies, and mission of consortium partners. The project has made remarkable achievements to develop the knowledge and skills of target groups, to diversify livelihood options and increase their income. The evaluation team has not observed the availability of an efficient system to monitor and track results in competitiveness of privately provided services in target kebeles and performance of revolving loan managed by Sinqe Bank. The project has improved the wellbeing of target groups and their families in terms of diversifying livelihoods, accessing financial services, and producing vegetables. There is a significant improvement in attitude, behavior, and practice among community groups towards gender equality and conservation of natural resources. The target groups will continue running petty trade, goats trading, and poultry keeping. The continuity of producing vegetables and fruits will depend on the extension of technical support from government authorities and access to market.

Recommendations—develop and implement the next possible phase of the project; there is a need to address the technical aspects that increase the production of vegetables, fruits, and crops; intervene in MSD selecting a value chain for selected products; establish a system to facilitate a pre and post follow up and monitoring of the revolving loan fund allocated by Sinqe Bank; develop the capacity of CLA to involve in lobby and advocacy activities that benefit VSLAs; and support the efforts of restocking of livestock in the project areas.

References

- Project Consortium. (2020). Project Baseline survey, and Project inception phase report.*
- Project Consortium. (2022). Project midterm evaluation survey report.*
- Project Consortium. (2021 & 2022). Project monitoring visit report.*
- Implementing Partners. (2021). Project targeting criteria set by implementing partners.*
- Wereda Administration. (2021 & 2022). Wereda monitoring visit report.*
- Project Partners. (2021 & 2022). Annual progress report submitted by partners.*
- Project Partners. (2021 & 2022). Biannual project report submitted by partners.*
- Government of Ethiopia. (2022). GTP 2 Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan*
- Project Partners. (2021). Annual progress report submitted by partners.*
- Project Partners. (2022). Annual progress report submitted by partners.*
- Project Partners. (2021). Biannual project report submitted by partners.*
- Project Partners. (2022). Biannual project report submitted by partners.*
- Government of Ethiopia. (2022). GTP 2 Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan.*

How to cite this article:

Aleab M. K., Abebe B. S. (2026) 'Developing Inclusive and Profitable Dairy Market System for Pastoralist Communities in Borena Zone, Ethiopia', *International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, Volume: III; April 2026; Page 82-89. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47722/imrj.2001.81>