A workshop on 'Project Work in Conflict-Affected Contexts' The case of Ethiopia

By: Hafte Mebrahten TESFAY (PhD.)

Institute of Forest Ecology
Department of Ecosystem Management, Climate and Biodiversity

9th Austrian Development Conference

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

21- 23 November 2025
Innsbruck, Austria

Ongoing projects in Ethiopia and South sudan

Ro.no	Project name	Partner/s	Project duration	Funding source
1	STRENGTH	Bahirdar Uni	2023-2026	Ministry
2	REVITAL-MU-ADU	MU, Adigirat Uni	2025-2027	ADC-APPEAR
3	Re-BUILD	MU	2025-2027	OeaD/KoEF
4	HIGH FIVE	EFD, Bahirdar Uni, BFW	2023-2026	BMK
5	COPE-North Gondar	Gondar Agri. Research centre	2013-2043	BOKU, Caritas Austria
6	SPEEC	South Sudan	2023 - 2028	BOKU, Caritas Austria
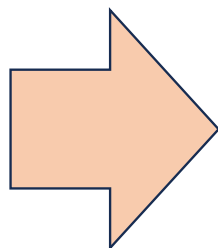
How can we strengthen higher institutions and revitalize local communities in Ethiopia?

Ways of strengthening

Knowledge sharing

Student exchange

Partnership

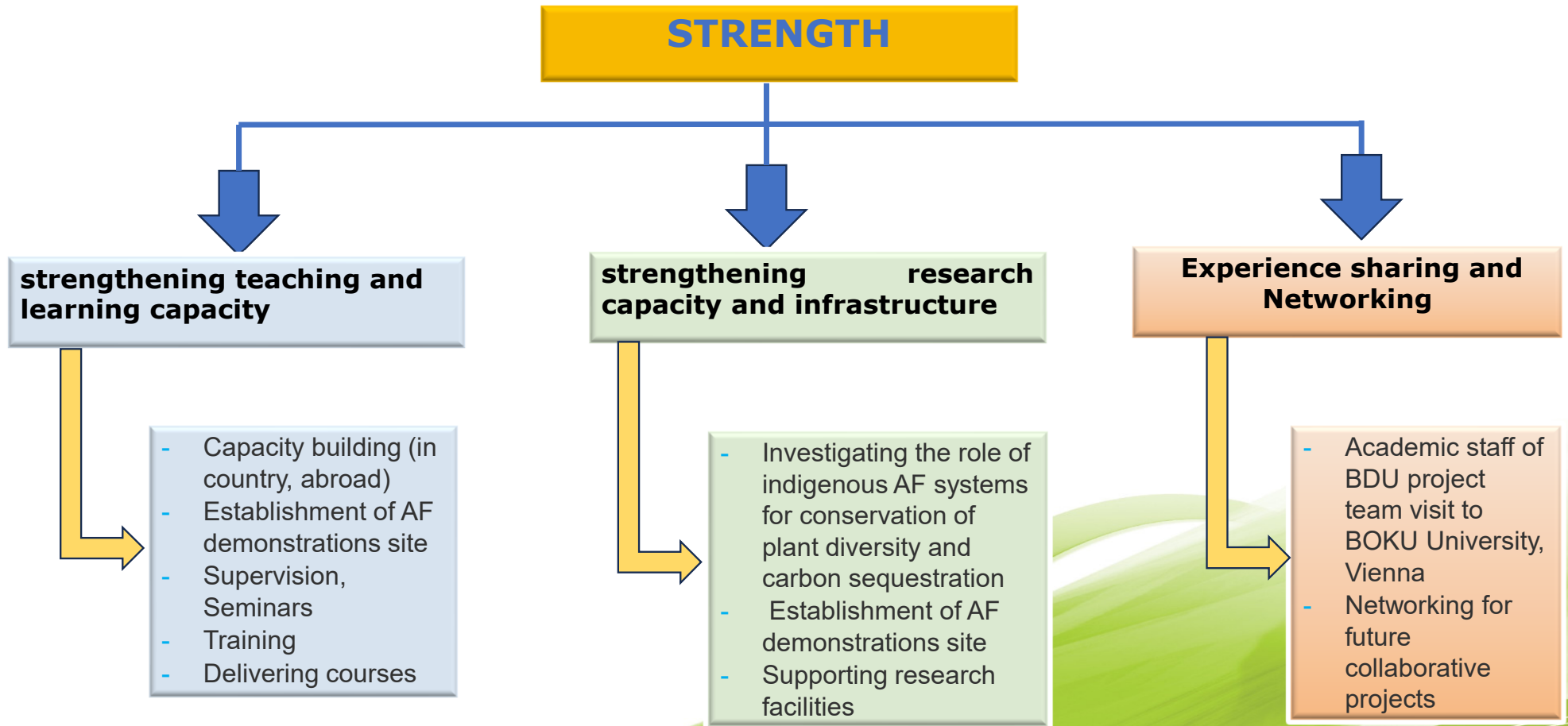Capacity building

Collaborative research

KoEF project:

"Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of Bahir Dar University in the role of indigenous agroforestry system for climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience of livelihood in Fogera district, Ethiopia"(STRENGTH)

Objectives

➢ Enhancing the teaching and learning capacity in AF practices

➢ Establishing an AF demonstration site

➢ Empowering women academic staff through providing training opportunities

➢ Contributing to climate resilience, forest restoration and livelihood improvement efforts in Amhara region by expanding AF practices

➢ Networking

STRENGTH project has 3 pillars

STRENGTH

strengthening teaching and learning capacity

- Capacity building (in country, abroad)
- Establishment of AF demonstrations site
- Supervision, Seminars
- Training
- Delivering courses

strengthening research capacity and infrastructure

- Investigating the role of indigenous AF systems for conservation of plant diversity and carbon sequestration
- Establishment of AF demonstrations site
- Supporting research facilities

Experience sharing and Networking

- Academic staff of BDU project team visit to BOKU University, Vienna
- Networking for future collaborative projects

BOKU UNIVERSITY

OEAD appear

Which project objectives have been achieved so far?

➢ Experience sharing, networking

➢ AF demonstration site Established

➢ Training in country

➢ Research stay at BOKU University
➜ in progress

STRENGTH project AF demonstration site, Zenzelma, Bahir Dar

STRENGTH projct training in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
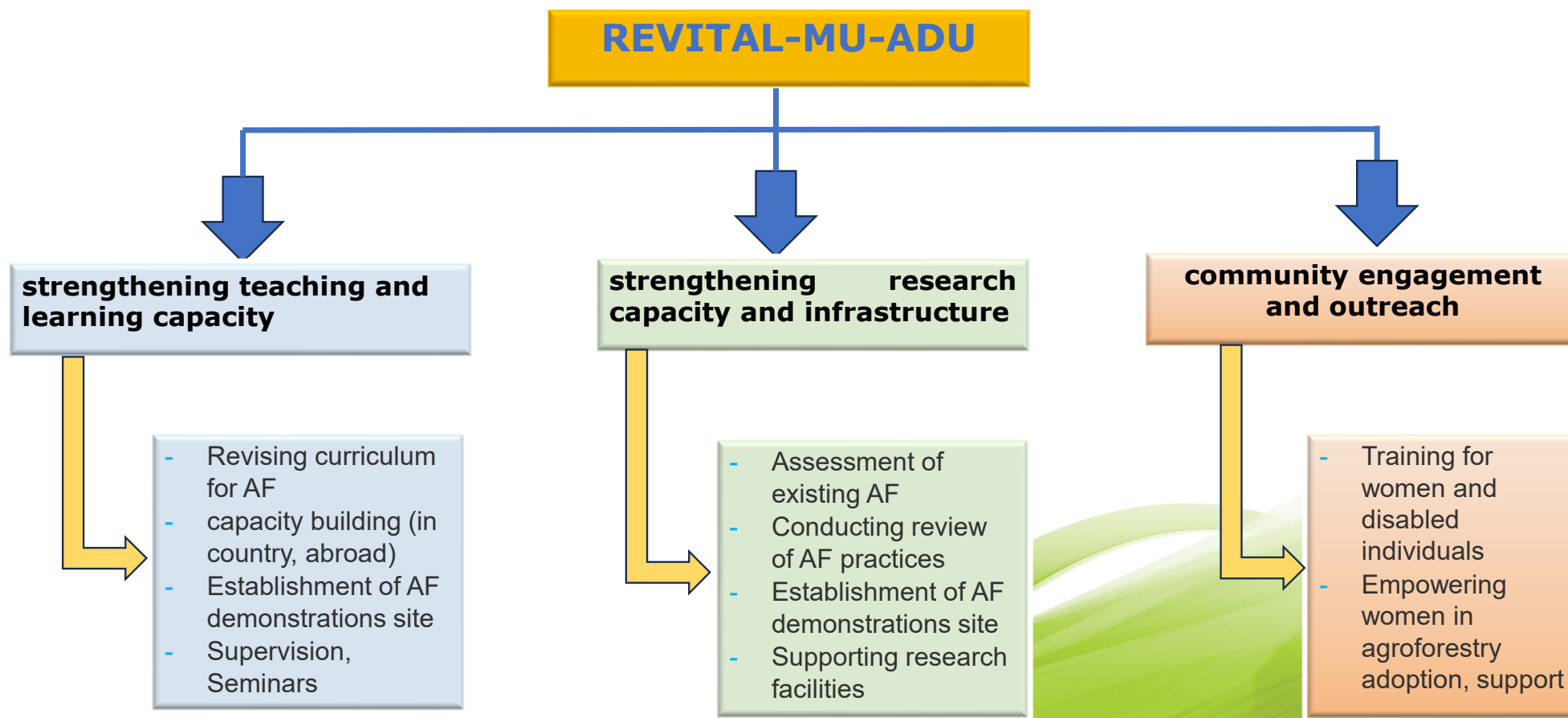
APPEAR project:

Revitalizing Mekelle and Adigrat Universities' Academic Capacity Post-Conflict: Introducing Peri-Urban Agroforestry for Climate Resilience, Forest Restoration, and Women's Livelihood Enhancement (REVITAL-MU-ADU)

Objectives

➢ Enhancing the teaching and learning capacity of the two target Uni in AF practices

➢ Introducing AF in peri-urban areas and co-designing a strategy for its implementation

➢ Empowering women and girls affected by the armed conflict through training and resources provision

➢ Contributing to climate resilience, forest restoration and livelihood improvement efforts in Tigray by expanding AF practices

REVITAL-MU-ADU APPEAR project has 3 pillars

```
REVITAL-MU-ADU
```

strengthening teaching and learning capacity

- Revising curriculum for AF
- capacity building (in country, abroad)
- Establishment of AF demonstrations site
- Supervision, Seminars

strengthening research capacity and infrastructure

- Assessment of existing AF
- Conducting review of AF practices
- Establishment of AF demonstrations site
- Supporting research facilities

community engagement and outreach

- Training for women and disabled individuals
- Empowering women in agroforestry adoption, support

Which project objectives have been achieved so far?

➢ Project launching workshop has been conducted

➢ AF demonstration site Established

➢ Team for curriculum revision formed

➢ Project site visited

Project launcing workshop, Mekelle, Ethiopia

AF demonstration site, MU, Ethiopio

Contribution of STRENGTH and REVITAL MU-ADU project to SDGs

SDG 1

1 NO POVERTY

SDG 4

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

SDG 5

5 GENDER EQUALITY

SDG 13

13 CLIMATE ACTION

SDG 17

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

BOKU UNIVERSITY

Mekelle University

ADIGRAT UNIVERSITY

OEAD appear

Challenges in project implementation

Limited Mobility and Access

➢ Unable to travel from Austria to project site

➢ Poor or damaged communication networks

➢ Information gap

Security Risks

➢ Threats to staff safety (violence, kidnapping, armed attacks)

➢ Difficulty accessing project sites due to active conflict or military restrictions

Weak or Collapsed Governance

➢ Absence of functioning local authorities to coordinate with

➢ Overlapping authorities, conflicting regulations, or a lack of rule of law

Financial and Logistical Constraints

➢ Increased costs for transportation, security, and logistics

➢ Difficulty procuring materials locally due to shortages or supply-chain disruptions

Measures taken/strategies employed to address the challenges

Stakeholder engagement

✓ Discussions with local authorities/ the ruling party and Rebels

✓ Cofinancing from the Uni/creating synergies/EFD

Shifting project research sites

✓ Discussions with project partners and with the funding organization

Changing modality of implementing project activities

✓ Remote project support and monitoring

✓ Remote supervision of PhD students

✓ Delivering trainings and courses online

✓ Shifting training site and budget re-allocation/EFD cotribution- Flexibility

✓ Training local graduates

Highlights:

✓ Commitment

✓ Dedication

✓ Strong motivation

✓ Never give up

✓ Strong communication

Perseverance!

Vielen Dank!

አመስግናለሁ!