

## Community dialogues to build resilience: Ethiopia's policy context



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### KEY MESSAGES

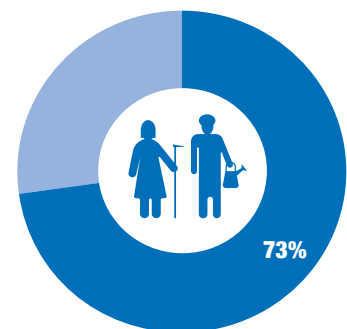
- Ethiopia is a rapidly developing economy, continuously facing climatic shocks such as droughts and floods that affect agricultural production, and national and local food security.
- Ethiopia has been subject to more than 30 years of sustainable land and water management interventions. During the last 10 years there has been an explicit element of community participation in the implementation of land and water management projects.
- This review proposes to strengthen local resilience against climate variability through improved watershed management with the added consideration of ecosystem services.

### Background

Ethiopia has been experiencing the impacts of climate variability for decades, with devastating effects on food security and livelihoods, climate change is a relatively new policy concern. Agriculture remains the backbone of the local and national economies, generating almost 42% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014 and providing employment for 73% of the population (World Bank 2016b). Much of the agriculture is rain-fed, making the country particularly vulnerable to extremes of rainfall and temperature.

### Agriculture and climate change in Ethiopia

On June 9, 2016, the Government of Ethiopia made a high-level policy commitment to holistic and sustainable use of land to achieve social and economic development. Hailemariam Desalegn, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, exhorted all “federal and regional government officials to ensure that the country’s land and natural resources are put to their best use until the policy comes into effect and the national land use plan is implemented” (Dibaba 2016).



73% OF THE POPULATION OF ETHIOPIA  
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## A review of policies

Climate change presents an opportunity to put Ethiopia on a path towards economic growth that incorporates climate resilience. To this end, the Ethiopian government has enacted a number of policies, strategies and laws over the last 10 years to specifically address climate change adaptation and mitigation, leading to a climate-resilient green economy (CRGE 2011). Some of the more fundamental efforts address the development and management of water and land resources, and targeted areas for investment (Fig. 1).

The objective of the *Community-based Participatory Watershed Development Guidelines* (Desta et al. 2005) is to enhance resilience to climate shock. The Guidelines promote local conservation of the natural resource base and rehabilitation of degraded lands through improved soil, water, nutrient and vegetation management. The participation of stakeholder communities promotes more sustainable pathways to prosperity. Indeed, sustainability and well-being are the reasons why participatory landscape management is an integral part of the planning and implementation of the government's 2006 *Food Security Strategy* and central to environmental policy.

Ethiopia's *Program of Adaptation to Climate Change* (2014) updates the *National Adaptation Program of Action* (2007) with a more participatory approach at the grassroots level

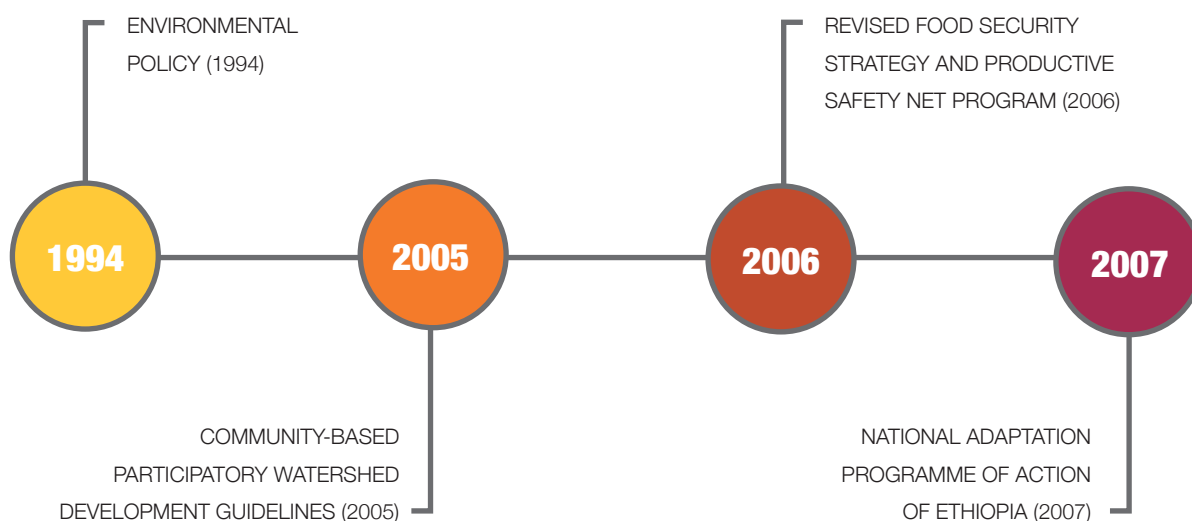
(Solomon 2014). It gives communities the responsibility to develop their own work programs and bylaws to enhance climate resilience.

The *Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management* (2010) is grounded in the role of sustaining biodiversity and ecosystem services to enhance productivity and alleviate rural poverty. Watershed planning is a salient feature of the framework; local communities articulate their needs and priorities through a participatory planning process, with technical support from development agents and *woreda* experts. The government selected this approach because of the failure of previous top-down efforts.

## A participatory tool to build resilience

Climate change impacts the livelihoods and economies of agricultural and livestock producers. Healthy ecosystem services can support communities to cope and manage climatic shocks and variability. The policy review around agriculture, water, environment sectors showed a comprehensive portfolio to meet the challenges of land degradation in particular. An opportunity exists to complement and extend the impact of the existing policy portfolio by incorporating an explicit consideration of ecosystem services. This approach would support Ethiopia's climate-resilient policies and strategies that are grounded in participatory approaches, and specifically complements the

**Fig. 1. A timeline of key policies and strategies that support climate resilient land and water strategies at community level**



government's *Community-based Participatory Watershed Development Guidelines*. Participatory approaches can be used to develop data and information on the essential role of ecosystem services in transforming vulnerable livelihoods while strengthening climate resilience in the local landscapes.

The communities participating in the dialogue develop a watershed action plan that communities and local officials can follow to improve water and land management strategies and strengthen the climate resilience of agro-ecological landscapes. Local government can use the plan to build climate resilience through sustaining ecosystem services. Basically, the tool responds to the stated government objective of developing “effective methods of popular participation in the planning and implementation of environmental and resource use and management projects and programmes” (Abyssinia Law 2011).

### Moving forward

During the next phase of this project, IWMI staff will collaborate with national partners on the strategic refinement of the tool to enhance the ecosystem services approach so that it builds climate resilience in community management of agro-ecological landscapes. The work will also identify appropriate mechanisms for implementation, in dialogue with partners in Ethiopia and other sub-Saharan African countries.

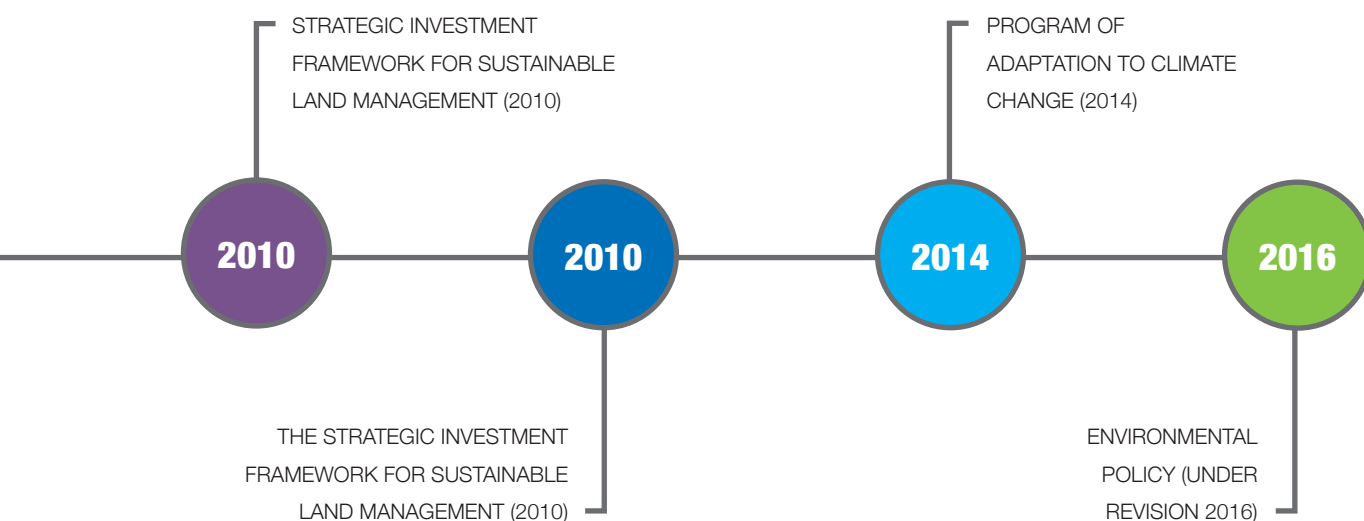
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### Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) CGIAR-natural resource management (NRM) Public International Organization (PIO) grant no. EEM-G—00-04-00010 to the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), with additional support from the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE).



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