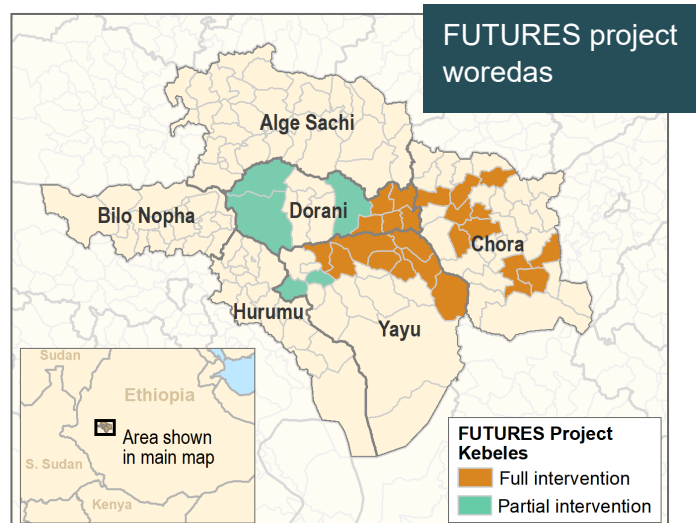


FUTURES Project Midline Evaluation: Most Significant Change (MSC) Results

Background

Data for Impact (D4I) conducted a qualitative midline evaluation of the Packard Foundation-funded My Forest, My Livelihood, My Family (FUTURES) project in the Yayo Coffee Forest Biosphere Reserve in the southwestern Oromia Region of Ethiopia to understand perceptions and outcomes of the project's multisectoral approach to combining interventions in reproductive health (RH), agricultural practices, forest conservation, and livelihood improvement.

D4I, in collaboration with local research partner Jimma University, conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with project participants, implementors, and collaborators. The Most Significant Change (MSC)¹ approach was used to understand changes resulting from the project.



How were MSC stories collected?

Purposive sampling was used to identify informants with the most knowledge related to project activities. FGDs were held with zonal and *woreda* (district) level FUTURES staff. KIIs were conducted with project participants, FUTURES staff, and governmental and nongovernmental (NGO) collaborators including health extension workers (HEWs), natural resources experts/development agents (DAs), and local and regional sector representatives (see Table 1). KII respondents were asked what they felt was the MSC in communities served by FUTURES and how this change had occurred. During FGDs, respondents were asked to share stories of significant change and given the chance to agree or offer differing opinions.

Table 1. MSC data collection methods and respondents

Method and respondent type	Total	Female	Male
FGDs with MSC component Project staff (n=2)	13	1	12
KIIs with MSC component	28	8	20
FUTURES staff	3	0	3
Government and NGO collaborators	17	4	13
Project participants	8	4	4

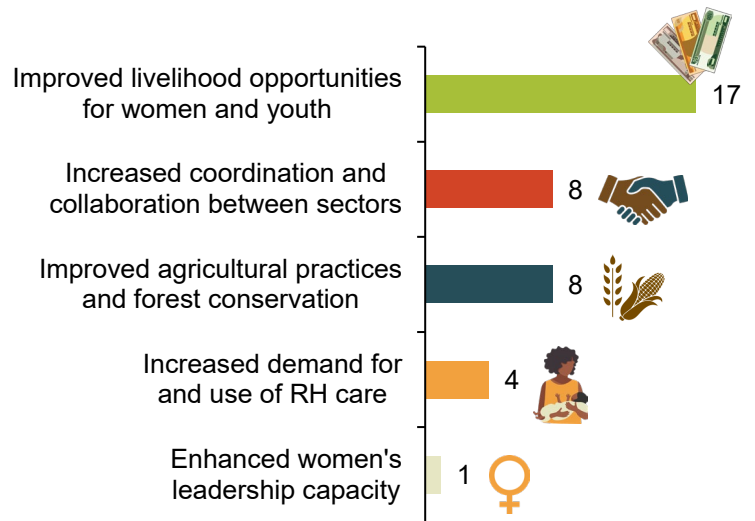
¹¹ Davies, R., and Dart, J. The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique. Available at: <https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf>.



What were the most significant changes?

When asked to identify the MSC or outcome resulting from project activities, respondents most commonly named **improved livelihood opportunities**, specifically for women and youth. This was followed by increased coordination and collaboration between sectors and improved agricultural and forest conservation practices (shown in Figure 1). Increased demand for and use of RH care and enhanced women's leadership capacity were also noted as significant changes by respondents.

Figure 1. MSC outcome areas identified during KIIs and the FGD



What led to the changes?

Respondents were asked to describe how those changes had occurred and what specific FUTURES project interventions they felt had led to those changes. Specific interventions are described in Table 2. **Improved livelihood opportunities** were named by nearly all respondent types. Respondents felt this change had occurred specifically through participant engagement in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and an increased savings culture. VSLAs were also seen to provide valuable linkages to services from other sectors, such as RH care and training in improved agricultural practices.

I joined the VSLA and after my savings reached 3,000 ETB, I borrowed 9,000 ETB, three times my savings. I grew my business by purchasing 50 kilos of flour, 20 liters of oil and coffee. I have grown my business into a shop with the money I made from these activities...I am repaying my team's debts and running my own business in a good way. Now I am an owner of a shop!

– Female youth participant, Yayo woreda





Increased coordination and collaboration between sectors was commonly thought to be the MSC by project implementors and local government stakeholders. Respondents felt this had been accomplished through increased communication and commitment between sectors and organizations initiated by the FUTURES project and the alignment of project activities with existing mandates in government sectors.

I think that our sector's commitment to coordinate across sectors working on forest management, agriculture, health, and livelihood support has increased; mainly because the cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination have enabled us to fill some of the existing gaps (for example, in relation to budget deficit) we have in our sectors. It made us more efficient by coordinating and integrating activities.

– Local government collaborator



Improved agricultural practices and forest conservation were also often mentioned as a MSC, most commonly by project participants and implementors. Specific reasons for the change were engagement in nursery activities, linkages to market opportunities for livelihood, and changes in attitude related to the importance of conservation practices.



They trained me on beekeeping technologies, bee feeding and management, nursery establishment and management, and various spice technologies... I was able to establish my own apiary site which has 20 hives... What I now understand is that there are many more opportunities to improve the livelihood of people in our area if everyone opens their eyes. FUTURES project is now opening our eyes.

– Male adult participant, Chora worda

Conclusion

The multisectoral approach of the FUTURES project was designed to meet crosscutting needs of individuals and communities, minimize the duplication of services, and address complex problems that single-sector approaches may not be able to. Improved livelihood opportunities were commonly seen to be the MSC resulting from the project by all types of respondents. As a key strategy to improve livelihoods, VSLAs also provided important linkages to resources in other sectors. The results suggest that while different aspects of the integrated FUTURES approach were most valued by different types of stakeholders, livelihood generation was a common motivational driver connecting outcome areas and helping to meet the needs of individuals and communities.

The full midline evaluation report is available online: <https://www.data4impactproject.org/publications/evaluation-of-the-futures-project-midline-report/>

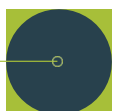






























Table 2. MSC by project outcomes and associated interventions as reported by respondent type

Respondent type	Outcome or change area	Interventions that brought about the change(s)
 DAs (2 male)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement in VSLA and nursery activities Attitude shifts on savings and loan practices Cross-sectoral integration
 HEW (3 female)	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness creation of family planning services facilitated by the project Provisions of family planning supplies to health facilities by the project and training for health workers Alignment of project activities with existing mandates in government sectors
 Local government collaborators (12 male/1 female)	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased communication and commitment between sectors and organizations initiated by FUTURES Saving culture developed through VSLA participation Production of seedlings in nursery groups Improvements in youth-friendly services
 NGO stakeholders (2 male)	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saving culture developed through VSLA participation Changes in societal attitudes on forest protection
 FUTURES staff KIIs (3 male) and 2 FGDs (12 male/1 female)	  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness creation and attitudinal changes fostered through VSLAs Awareness raising on the importance of conservation Training specifically on vermicompost and beekeeping Multisectoral collaboration Empowerment of women in various social affairs and leadership capacities
 FUTURES participants (4 male)	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursery activities and YSLAs Training and capacity building, especially on beekeeping and vermicompost Market linkages to engage in business and livelihood generation Awareness building on the importance of forest conservation
 FUTURES participants (4 female)	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to engage in small business through VSLAs Training on savings and credit and small-scale trading activities Training on good agricultural practice

-  Improved livelihood opportunities for women and youth
-  Increased coordination and collaboration between sectors
-  Improved agricultural practices and forest conservation
-  Increased demand for and use of RH care
-  Enhanced women's leadership capacity

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