Ethiopians Motivating Enterprises to Rise in Trade and Agri-Business (EMERTA) project
MEDA’s Ethiopians Motivating Enterprises to Rise in Trade and Agri-Business (EMERTA) project, was an initiative aimed at increasing decent employment opportunities and the incomes of women and men in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. The project focused on the rice, vegetable, and gemstone sectors with a goal of benefitting 16,000 individuals and over 275 small businesses in the area.

The project built on the Ethiopians Driving Growth Entrepreneurship and Trade (EDGET) project, a previous MEDA project which ran in Ethiopia from 2010-2016. EMERTA began as a response to the under-performance of small-scale agriculture and artisanal mining activities, which are dominant in Ethiopia’s rural areas. In the agricultural sector, lower quality rice and vegetables were produced due to the lack of modern machinery, seed systems, and knowledge of improved agricultural techniques. In the mining sector, businesses faced several challenges including undeveloped market systems, a lack of marketing to promote business growth, and an undefined value addition in the marketplace.

EMERTA partnered with farmers and businesses in the rice, vegetable, and gemstone sectors to promote improvement in business performance. The project also collaborated with the Ethiopian government to create policies that supported small business success. In line with MEDA’s core areas of expertise, the project committed to promoting equitable growth, especially for women, and environmental sustainability.

EMERTA’s strategy was to strengthen the competitiveness and profitability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by identifying gaps and opportunities in value chains and actively encouraging market actors to take advantage of these opportunities. Using a business development approach, the project supported clients in overcoming common challenges to achieve business success. It delivered impact by working with rural extension agents and agricultural research institutes in rural communities to promote effective agronomic practices and provide reliable market information to women and men farmers. The project’s gender and environmental sustainability focus encouraged more women farmers and workers to participate in the labor force and ensured that work in these sectors was done in an environmentally sustainable manner.
Environmental challenges

The outbreak of war in multiple rounds over the past two years has affected EMERTA’s implementation particularly within the gemstone sector. The second round of fighting was active in the Eastern parts of the Amhara Region (North and South Wollo districts) where most of the project’s gemstone clients were located. Most gemstone businesses in that area were affected by vandalism and theft of their lapidary machines and gemstone products. At a more general level, the tourism sector in Ethiopia was impacted by the fighting which resulted in decreased sales revenue of small-scale businesses which resulted in staff layoffs. Some more well-established gemstone businesses were able to absorb the shock their businesses faced without being as highly affected as newer operations.

Since the fighting ended, EMERTA has actively supported clients with market promotion and demand creation, technical capacity building, and establishing business connections. Today, as a result, businesses involved with the project are now on the right track for business growth.

Rice and vegetable sectors were briefly impacted by the unrest related to travel restrictions and associated disruption in the supply chain but have since recovered.

Balew finds success in rice processing

Balew Tadesse, a rice processor from Ethiopia, lacked proper financial record keeping and struggled to compete in the market. With financial training and the proper tools, MEDA provided him with access to the knowledge and resources needed to expand his business.

Through market linkages and loan access, Balew was able to purchase a new combined rice processing machine. The new machine included destoner, de-husking, milling, grading and packaging compartments which made processing much more efficient and improved the quality of his product. In turn, it enabled Balew to increase his profits. Additionally, MEDA’s intervention provided training on work-related health and safety, which not only improved employee health but also saved Balew money on medical expenses.

Your support makes projects like EMERTA possible. Since project costs are not fully covered by institutional funding, we rely on your generous support to cover the remaining costs. Thank you for investing in entrepreneurs in Ethiopia and around the globe!
Your impact by the numbers

87% MSMEs added new jobs
36% of 155 jobs added, were specifically for women

77% (72% women) of producers reported an increase in income

81% (78% women-owned) reported an increase in their business’ net income. This is particularly high for rice MSMEs (83%), a sector which is relatively new to Ethiopia.

74% of producers reported the quality of their product has improved since being connected with MEDA

93% of MSMEs reported that their knowledge of environmentally sustainable technologies has improved since connecting with MEDA

83% of surveyed women producers reported they made business decisions last year (up 64% from the baseline survey)

PROJECT DETAILS
7 Years: 2016-2023
MEDA Private Supporters: $1.16M CAD
Global Affairs Canada: $18.7M CAD