

First Draft for Internal comment- Restricted Circulation

SOS Sahel Ethiopia Five Years Strategy (2026 -2030)

*Shaping a sustainable future where both people and Planet
Thrive*

January 31, 2026

Addis Ababa

1.1. Background and History

SOS Sahel Ethiopia has nearly **36 years of experience** working alongside rural communities and government partners to combat poverty and promote sustainable development across Ethiopia. Originally established as the country program of **SOS Sahel (UK)**, the organization transitioned into an **independent national NGO** in November 2007, marking the beginning of its locally led journey. In compliance with Ethiopia's evolving legal frameworks, SOS Sahel Ethiopia was **re-registered as an Ethiopian Resident Charity in October 2009** under the Charities and Societies Proclamation. Following the repeal of this restrictive law (Proclamation No. 621/2009) and the introduction of a more enabling civil society environment, the organization was **re-registered as an independent local NGO in 2019**.

This transformation represents a **pivotal milestone** in SOS Sahel Ethiopia's history—symbolizing a shift toward **African-led development** rooted in local ownership, accountability, and innovation. It also strengthened the organization's ability to **build a national constituency, diversify its partnerships and funding sources, and enhance long-term institutional sustainability**.

1.2 The Rationale for crafting the new Country strategy.

In an era defined by complex global challenges—climate change, resource degradation, social inequality, and economic uncertainty—nonprofit organizations must continually evolve to remain impactful and relevant. For **SOS Sahel Ethiopia**, this moment calls for renewed vision, strategic focus, and bold leadership. The development of the **Five-Year Strategy (2026–2030)** marks a decisive step in charting the organization's path toward a more resilient, innovative, and transformative future.

This new strategy is both a **continuation and a renewal**. It builds on the strong foundation laid by the **2020–2025 Strategic Plan**, which positioned SOS Sahel Ethiopia as a credible and financially stable national organization following its transition from an international entity in 2007. Over the past years, we have deepened our impact—**empowering smallholder farmers and pastoralists, influencing national policy, and forging dynamic partnerships** across civil society, government, academia, and the private sector. These achievements have established SOS Sahel Ethiopia as a **trusted agent of change** and a **leader in community-centered development**.

The 2026–2030 Strategy sets out to **amplify this impact**, driving the organization to think and act beyond traditional boundaries. It provides the space to **reflect, reimagine, and reposition** SOS Sahel Ethiopia in light of rapidly evolving development paradigms. By aligning with emerging global and national priorities—such as the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, the **Paris Climate Agreement**, the **UN Food Systems Transformation Agenda**, **Africa's Agenda 2063**, and **Ethiopia's Ten-Year Development Plan**—the new strategy reaffirms our commitment to **people-centered, planet-sensitive, and policy-influencing development**.

The rationale for this new strategy is grounded in a forward-looking vision:

- **Strategic Focus and Direction:** To sharpen our purpose, unify our mission, and direct collective energy toward high-impact priorities that drive systemic change.
- **Resource Effectiveness:** To ensure every investment—financial, human, and intellectual—yields sustainable value for communities and ecosystems.
- **Resilience and Agility:** To anticipate and adapt to social, environmental, and economic shifts with creativity and foresight.
- **Partnership and Accountability:** To strengthen trust and collaboration with communities, government, donors, and the private sector through transparency and shared learning.
- **Sustainability and Legacy:** To embed long-term thinking and resilience into all we do—leaving behind not only successful projects, but stronger institutions, empowered people, and thriving landscapes.

This strategy is more than a roadmap—it is a **renewed commitment to transformation**. It signals SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s determination to remain a **catalyst of hope, resilience, and innovation, *leading the way in harmonizing people, nature, and prosperity***. Through this strategic vision, we reaffirm our belief that **sustainable development begins with empowered communities and restored ecosystems—where people and planet thrive together**.

1.3. The strategic development processes and methodology

To ensure rigor, inclusiveness, and quality, SOS Sahel Ethiopia engaged a **senior consulting firm** with extensive experience in supporting civil society, government, and bilateral and multilateral development organizations for over **35 years**. The firm was selected through a **competitive procurement process**, following a call for consultancy services and submission of technical and financial proposals in response to the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** issued by SOS Sahel Ethiopia.

The **Strategic Plan (2025–2030)** was developed through a **highly participatory and consultative process** that actively involved SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s key stakeholders—**community representatives, government counterparts, development partners, the Board of Directors, staff, and management**. A **Strategic Planning Task Force** was established, composed of members from the management team and key staff drawn from both the head office and project locations. The process also included **field visits** to SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s operational areas, notably **Hawassa and Bale**, to gather first-hand insights and evidence from communities and partners.

The strategic planning process followed a structured sequence of steps:

1. **Strategy Development Kick-off Workshop:**
A consultative workshop was held with the Board, management, and staff to establish a shared understanding of the purpose, scope, methodology, and expected deliverables of the strategic planning exercise.
2. **Contextual and Policy Analysis:**
An in-depth review was conducted of SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s operational, policy, and institutional contexts at both national and global levels to identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities.
3. **Field Consultations and Stakeholder Engagement:**
Field visits were undertaken to flagship projects in **Bale** and **Hawassa** to appreciate on-the-ground achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. These visits enabled the team to capture the views, expectations, and aspirations of key stakeholders, including **farmers, farmers’ unions, local and regional government officials, natural resource experts, academic partners, and community leaders**.
4. **Review of Organizational Identity:**
The process revisited and refined SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s **Vision, Mission, and Core Values** to ensure continued relevance and alignment with the evolving development landscape.
5. **Institutional and Strategic Analysis:**
A **SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)** was conducted to identify internal capacities and external factors influencing the organization’s performance and strategic positioning.
6. **Identification of Key Strategic Issues and Objectives (2026–2030):**
The analysis informed the identification of SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s **key strategic issues, priorities, and objectives** for the strategy period.
7. **Strategy Formulation:**
Specific strategies and result-oriented interventions were developed for each strategic objective to guide implementation, resource mobilization, and performance monitoring over the five-year period.

Through this inclusive and evidence-driven process, the new strategy reflects both **the voices of communities and partners** and **the strategic foresight of SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s leadership**, positioning the organization to deliver transformative and sustainable impact in the years ahead.

2.1. The Shifts in the Global Political Economy and Funding Trends: Implications for the NGO Sector

The global political economy is undergoing a structural shift that is fundamentally reshaping the development and aid landscape. The traditional Western-led, grant-based aid model is giving way to a multipolar, finance-driven system shaped by emerging economies, climate finance instruments, and private capital. Development finance is increasingly channeled through blended mechanisms that combine public, private, and philanthropic resources, often aligned with geopolitical and commercial interests. Emerging actors such as China, India, and Gulf States—alongside regional development banks—are expanding influence through infrastructure- and investment-led cooperation rather than conventional aid.

At the same time, Official Development Assistance (ODA) from OECD/DAC countries is declining and becoming more volatile. Aid budgets are increasingly redirected toward domestic pressures, humanitarian crises, and geopolitical priorities, resulting in shorter funding cycles, heightened competition, and declining core institutional support for NGOs. In parallel, climate and blended finance instruments—such as green bonds, guarantees, and results-based financing—are gaining prominence. Funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) increasingly prioritize scalable, bankable interventions capable of leveraging private co-financing, raising the technical and financial threshold for NGO participation.

The regulatory environment is also tightening. Market-based compliance frameworks, notably the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), are reshaping global commodity supply chains by embedding environmental and social standards into market access. While these frameworks create opportunities for NGOs supporting sustainable, traceable value chains, they also increase compliance costs and technical demands for producers and implementing partners. Concurrently, the localization agenda is advancing, with donors committing to channel more resources directly to southern NGOs. However, in practice, less than 10% of global development finance reaches local organizations, largely due to stringent fiduciary, safeguard, and reporting requirements.

For SOS Sahel Ethiopia, these shifts present both strategic risks and opportunities. Declining and unpredictable grant funding threatens program continuity and institutional stability, reinforcing the need to diversify revenue streams and build financial reserves. Accessing climate and blended finance requires new capabilities in financial modeling, risk management, and impact measurement—capabilities that go beyond traditional grant administration. Without demonstrable financial and operational “bankability,” local NGOs risk exclusion from future funding windows.

Engagement with geopolitically motivated financiers also introduces political and reputational risks, necessitating strong due diligence, transparent governance, and ethical safeguards to preserve neutrality and legitimacy. Meanwhile, compliance-driven market opportunities in sectors such as coffee, honey, and forest products require investment in traceability and verification systems to ensure inclusive participation by smallholders.

To remain relevant and competitive, SOS Sahel Ethiopia must transition from a grant-dependent NGO into a locally rooted, financially agile, and investor-ready development actor. This requires repositioning flagship initiatives—such as the Bale Water Fund and Enset value chains—as investable, high-impact solutions; institutionalizing political economy and funding-risk analysis; strengthening internal fiduciary and compliance systems to enable direct access to funding; and leveraging deforestation-free, climate-smart value chains to attract green and impact finance. Throughout this transition, transparency and accountability must remain central to sustaining credibility with donors, partners, and the Ethiopian public.

2.2. The Ethiopian Political Economy and Its Implications for NGOs operating in the country

Ethiopia's political economy is marked by simultaneous economic reform, fiscal austerity, political fragmentation, conflict, and climate stress, all of which directly shape SOS Sahel Ethiopia's operating environment. The government's Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda—supported by the IMF and World Bank—aims to liberalize markets and attract investment, but high inflation, foreign currency shortages, and rising public debt continue to constrain public spending and donor co-financing. This creates heightened financial risk for NGOs and underscores the need for diversified funding and internal financial buffers.

Persistent regional conflicts, large-scale displacement, and recurrent climate shocks have entrenched a protracted humanitarian–development continuum. For SOS Sahel Ethiopia, this increases **programmatic risk** and requires adaptive, modular interventions capable of shifting rapidly between humanitarian response, resilience building, and systems-level development—particularly in food security, livelihoods, and landscape restoration.

The governance and regulatory environment presents **compliance and reputational risk**. While the 2019 CSO Proclamation expanded operational space, recent regulatory tightening and heightened scrutiny of funding sources and partnerships demand stronger fiduciary management, legal compliance, and transparency. NGOs are increasingly expected to align with national development priorities and focus on service delivery, requiring careful calibration of advocacy and policy engagement.

Macroeconomic volatility compounds **operational and workforce risk**. Inflation and currency depreciation erode project budgets and staff welfare, while donor funding volatility—linked to conflict and governance concerns—disrupts program continuity and staffing stability. Security and access constraints in conflict-affected regions necessitate remote management, stronger local partnerships, and institutionalized risk and security systems.

Strategically, these dynamics reinforce SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s need to: (i) diversify financing toward climate, market-linked, and philanthropic sources while building reserves; (ii) design flexible, risk-aware programs with built-in adaptive management; (iii) strengthen governance, compliance, and audit systems to safeguard credibility and enable direct funding access; (iv) deepen localization through structured capacity-building and equitable risk-sharing with local partners; and (v) sustain constructive, evidence-based policy engagement aligned with national priorities while preserving institutional independence. These shifts are essential to maintaining resilience, legitimacy, and impact in Ethiopia’s volatile political and economic landscape.

2.3 Internal analysis of SOS Sahel Ethiopia

2.3.1 Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Overview: SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s management and staff conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis, incorporating insights from funders, development partners, and key government stakeholders. The assessment employed the **Integrated Organizational Model (IOM)** as a diagnostic framework to holistically examine the organization’s internal capacities, external environment, and strategic positioning.

SWOT ANALYSIS

SOS Sahel Ethiopia

STRENGTHS

- Strong environmental leadership in sustainable land, water, and ecosystem management
- Proven results in food and nutrition security through climate-smart agriculture
- Inclusive business models empowering smallholders, women, and youth
- Culture of innovation, learning and adaptive programming
- Integrated approach combining community projects, research, and policy advocacy

WEAKNESSES

- Difficulty attracting and retaining skilled staff due to limited pay competitiveness
- Limited use of digital tools for data, monitoring, and communication
- Weak communication and visibility for scaling successful models
- Lack of long-term institutional investment from donors
- Financial and logistical constraints restricting scale and reach

OPPORTUNITIES

- Global momentum toward aid localization and direct funding to local NGOs
- Growing blended finance opportunities for climate and environmental programs
- Expanding philanthropic support for youth employment and entrepreneurship
- Advancing digital transformation in rural development

THREATS

- Climate change impacts – droughts + floods, and land degradation
- Political instability and regional conflict affecting access and delivery
- Economic volatility, inflation, and currency depreciation
- Rising competition for limited donor resources
- Operational and security risks in conflict-affected

1. Strengths:

- **Environmental Leadership and Expertise:**
SOS Sahel Ethiopia stands out for its deep commitment to environmental sustainability, with a strong focus on building resilience to climate change through sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration, and water conservation. These initiatives, which address both immediate needs and long-term environmental health, significantly empower vulnerable communities such as smallholder farmers and pastoralists, allowing them to withstand climate shocks and improve their livelihoods.
- **Comprehensive Focus on Food and Nutrition Security:**
Addressing food and nutrition poverty is central to SOS Sahel's work, and its efforts have positively impacted the nutritional well-being of many communities in rural Ethiopia. By promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, enhancing food systems, and improving access to nutritious food, SOS Sahel not only tackles immediate food insecurity but also helps communities establish sustainable food sources for the future.
- **Inclusive Business Models and Economic Empowerment:**
Through inclusive business models, SOS Sahel Ethiopia has empowered smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and rural entrepreneurs, particularly women and youth, to enhance their economic standing. The organization supports rural communities through cooperatives, market access, and value chain improvements, helping to build sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty over time.
- **Innovation and Risk-Taking:**
SOS Sahel Ethiopia has demonstrated remarkable courage in pushing the boundaries of development thinking and practice through innovation and calculated risk-taking. The organization's willingness to experiment with new, potentially transformative approaches—while accepting that failure is part of the learning process—has resulted in creative solutions and flexible, adaptive programming that meets the dynamic needs of rural populations.
- **Three-Pronged Approach to Poverty Reduction (Community-Based Projects, Action Research, Policy Engagement):**
The organization's strategic approach integrates:
 - **Innovative Community-Based Projects** that are locally driven, culturally relevant, and designed to deliver sustainable solutions.
 - **Action Research** that ensures programs are continuously evaluated and improved, based on real-world data and feedback from communities to feed into policy making processes.
 - **Policy Advocacy** to influence national and local policies that support sustainable development, food security, and environmental conservation.

- **Humanitarian-Development Nexus with Proven Results:**
SOS Sahel Ethiopia's ability to integrate humanitarian response with long-term development efforts has been central to its success in fragile and vulnerable regions. By addressing immediate needs while simultaneously focusing on building resilience and sustainable livelihoods, SOS Sahel has consistently delivered positive results, demonstrating its capacity to provide both short-term relief and long-term solutions.
- **Strong Leadership and Dedicated Staff:**
A key strength of SOS Sahel Ethiopia is its able leadership and the commitment of its staff, who have successfully navigated the organization through challenging transitions, including its transformation from an international to a national organization. During this period, SOS Sahel managed to maintain operational effectiveness while adapting to a new organizational structure. The leadership's ability to guide the organization through an increasingly difficult funding environment and the limited operational space for civil society organizations in Ethiopia speaks to their resilience, strategic vision, and dedication. This has allowed the organization to continue making meaningful progress despite external challenges.
- **Strategic Partnerships and Alliances:**
Partnership is integral to SOS Sahel Ethiopia's approach, and the organization has built strong, collaborative relationships with local and international organizations, including governments, INGOs, and community-based organizations. These alliances amplify SOS Sahel's impact, providing access to additional resources, knowledge, and networks that support its development and humanitarian programs.

2. Weaknesses:

- **Challenges in Talent Acquisition and Retention:**
Despite the organization's strong track record, attracting and retaining skilled personnel remains a challenge. This is partly due to the limited financial capacity of SOS Sahel Ethiopia compared to larger INGOs and multilateral organizations that can offer higher salaries and more competitive benefits. Consequently, SOS Sahel often faces difficulty in securing the necessary expertise and maintaining long-term staff retention, particularly in technical and senior management roles.
- **Limited Use of Digital Technology:**
Although SOS Sahel Ethiopia has successfully implemented traditional community-based development programs, the organization has yet to fully embrace digital tools that could enhance operational efficiency, monitoring, and communication. There is a significant opportunity to incorporate digital solutions to improve data management, provide remote support for rural farmers, and strengthen internal operations. Lack of digital infrastructure also limits the scalability of some of its successful models.
- **Difficulty Communicating and Scaling Successes:**
Despite its proven track record in delivering impactful results, SOS Sahel Ethiopia struggles to effectively communicate its successes, scale its programs, and increase its influence on policy and practice. The ability to amplify and replicate successful initiatives is constrained by human and financial limitations, particularly in the absence of dedicated communication, advocacy, and scaling resources. Furthermore, while SOS Sahel has a strong operational presence in Ethiopia, limited capacity in advocacy and communications prevents it from reaching broader national and international audiences or leveraging its success to influence policy changes at scale.
- **Lack of Strategic Investment from Donors:**
While SOS Sahel Ethiopia has been able to secure project-based funding for its programs, the organization faces difficulties in attracting strategic, long-term investment for institutional growth. Many donors prioritize short-term programmatic funding rather than supporting the core infrastructure and development of local NGOs. This lack of commitment to funding organizational capacity building, such as staff training, technology investment, and operational scaling, limits SOS Sahel's ability to invest in long-term institutional growth and development.
- **Resource Constraints in Scaling and Expanding Reach:**
Although SOS Sahel has delivered significant impact, scaling successful projects across Ethiopia, especially in remote or conflict-affected areas, remains a challenge due to financial constraints and logistical complexities. The organization's limited resources also hinder its ability to expand its geographical reach and to implement large-scale programs that can affect more people across the country.

3. Opportunities:

- **Global Focus on Localization of Aid (Grand Bargain and Charter for Change):**
The global shift towards the **localization of aid**—highlighted by initiatives such as the **Grand Bargain** and the **Charter for Change**—presents significant funding and partnership opportunities for local NGOs like SOS Sahel Ethiopia. The emphasis on channeling more aid directly to local organizations opens up new pathways for securing funding and enhancing the role of local actors in humanitarian and development efforts. As international donors prioritize local ownership, SOS Sahel stands to benefit from increased financial support and recognition as a key player in driving development outcomes in Ethiopia.
- **Blended Financing for Climate Initiatives:**
The growing interest in **blended financing**—combining public and private sector funding for climate and environmental projects—creates opportunities for SOS Sahel Ethiopia to secure resources for its climate resilience and sustainability programs. By aligning its initiatives with global climate goals, SOS Sahel can tap into blended finance mechanisms to expand its environmental programs, enhance climate adaptation efforts, and foster partnerships with the private sector, development finance institutions, and philanthropic organizations.
- **Sustainable Finance for Climate Change Mitigation, Biodiversity and Social Equity:**

Sustainable finance integrates Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into investment decisions and business strategies to promote long-term, sustainable economic growth. SOS Sahel Ethiopia will access ESG-focused funds and impact investing to promote long-term, sustainable economic growth by designing and implementing environmental and social development projects that ensure climate change mitigation, biodiversity and social equity.

Philanthropic Funding for Youth Employment Initiatives:

Philanthropic foundations like the **Mastercard Foundation**, which focus on youth employment and economic empowerment, offer new funding opportunities for SOS Sahel Ethiopia. This aligns with SOS Sahel's goals to support youth entrepreneurship, vocational training, and skills development in rural areas. By leveraging such funding, SOS Sahel can scale its youth employment initiatives, provide young people with the skills they need to thrive in the rural economy, and create sustainable opportunities for them to contribute to Ethiopia's development.

- **Collaboration with Government on National Resilience and Poverty Programs:**
With Ethiopia's increasing focus on poverty reduction and climate resilience, there are strong opportunities for SOS Sahel Ethiopia to partner with the government on initiatives such as the **National Forestry and Food systems strategy, and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)**, and other government-led development frameworks. These programs present an opportunity for SOS Sahel to enhance its impact, access government funding, and collaborate on large-scale, national projects aimed at reducing poverty and promoting resilience.
- **Digital Transformation in Rural Development:**
As Ethiopia embraces digital technology, there are vast opportunities for SOS Sahel Ethiopia to integrate digital tools into its programs. Innovations such as mobile-based agricultural extension services, digital financial services for farmers, and data analytics for monitoring and evaluation could enhance the reach and impact of its programs, enabling the organization to scale efforts and increase effectiveness. By adopting digital technologies, SOS Sahel can further bridge the gap between rural communities and broader development networks.

4. Threats:

- **Climate Change and Environmental Degradation:**
Despite SOS Sahel Ethiopia's focus on climate resilience, the increasing frequency of climate-related events such as droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall poses an ongoing threat to rural livelihoods. These environmental stresses undermine food security, agricultural productivity, and community resilience, making it difficult to achieve long-term development goals.
- **Political Instability and Conflict:**
Political and security instability, particularly in regions like Tigray and parts of Amhara and Oromia, presents a major threat to SOS Sahel's operations. Ongoing conflict disrupts access to vulnerable populations, impedes program implementation, and jeopardizes the safety of staff and beneficiaries. Furthermore, political uncertainties can limit the organization's ability to engage with local governments and stakeholders.

- **Economic Instability and Inflation:**
Economic challenges in Ethiopia—such as inflation and currency devaluation—can significantly affect the purchasing power of vulnerable communities and the cost-effectiveness of SOS Sahel's programs. These challenges also pose risks to the organization's financial sustainability, particularly as funding sources become more constrained globally.
- **Increased Competition for Resources:**
As the number of local and international NGOs increases, SOS Sahel faces growing competition for funding and partnerships. Larger organizations with more resources may overshadow smaller, local players, making it harder for SOS Sahel to secure adequate funding, form strategic alliances, and expand its operations.
- **Operational Risks in Conflict Zones:**
Operating in conflict-affected areas, SOS Sahel faces significant risks related to access, safety, and the ability to deliver services effectively. Conflict zones present additional logistical challenges and often limit the organization's ability to implement long-term development initiatives in areas with unstable security conditions.

III. Strategic Directions of the Organization: Mission, Vision, and Values

Organizational Identity

SOS Sahel Ethiopia's **vision** and **mission** were revisited through a consultative process involving management and key staff to reaffirm the organization's direction, commitment, and guiding principles.

Our Vision

To see a just, prosperous, and equitable world on a livable planet.

Our Mission

To enable smallholder farmers and pastoralists to thrive and prosper by enhancing environmental management, increasing agricultural incomes, and ensuring reliable market access.

At the heart of SOS Sahel Ethiopia's mission lies the aspiration to create a just, equitable, and prosperous world where people and the planet coexist in harmony.

Our Values: The values that guide our day-to-day work and mode of engagement with the community we serve, our development partners and stakeholders are centered on **community-driven innovation, collaborative partnerships, and sustainable solutions**, with a commitment to **bold risk-taking and dare to fail, inclusive development, pushing the frontiers of thinking and practice** and **policy advocacy**, all aimed at creating a thriving future where both people and the planet flourish.

Agility: We act with agility — adapting quickly and intelligently to a changing world.

Integrity: We uphold integrity as the foundation of our credibility and trust.

Inclusiveness: We believe that sustainable development must leave no one behind.

Impact: We are driven by results that transform lives and landscapes.

Risk Taking and Daring to Fail: We dare to take bold steps and learn from failure.

Pushing the Frontiers of Thinking and Practice: We are pioneers of ideas and catalysts of transformation.

Learning Organization: We learn, adapt, and evolve together.

Partnership: We believe in the power of partnership to multiply impact.

Strategic Alliance and Networking: We engage in strategic alliances and networks to amplify influence and scale impact.

IV. Identification of SOS Sahel Ethiopia's Key Strategic issues and priorities

The SWOT, PESTL, and stakeholder analyses have identified several key strategic issues that SOS Sahel Ethiopia must address to remain relevant, effective, impactful, and sustainable in a rapidly changing national and global context. Tackling these issues will enable SOS Sahel to strengthen its role as an enduring agent of change and continue making a meaningful impact on the lives and livelihoods of the communities it serves.

- 1. Financial Sustainability:**

Securing consistent funding remains a major challenge due to increased competition and declining government support for the NGO sector. To ensure long-term sustainability, SOS Sahel must diversify its revenue streams, explore innovative and non-traditional funding sources, strengthen partnerships with donors and the private sector, and continuously demonstrate measurable impact and value to stakeholders.
- 2. Adapting to Technological Change:**

The organization has yet to fully harness the potential of digital technology to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. Embracing digital transformation can significantly improve operational performance, communication, and outreach. SOS Sahel should therefore invest in digital tools and platforms to streamline operations, strengthen financial and program management, enhance data-driven decision-making, and expand engagement with partners and communities.
- 3. Talent Management:**

Attracting and retaining skilled and motivated staff is an ongoing challenge. SOS Sahel must offer competitive compensation, invest in continuous professional development, and foster a positive and inclusive work environment. Building a culture that values learning, innovation, and employee well-being will be essential to retaining top talent and achieving organizational excellence.
- 4. Demonstrating Impact:**

Although SOS Sahel has a strong record of delivering tangible results, these achievements have not been fully leveraged to enhance visibility, credibility, and resource mobilization. The organization should develop and institutionalize robust impact measurement and communication systems to systematically capture, analyze, and share evidence of results—showcasing its contribution to sustainable livelihoods, environmental protection, and community resilience.
- 5. Collaboration and Partnerships:**

While SOS Sahel has built long-standing partnerships with a few trusted organizations such as Farm Africa, there is a need to broaden its collaboration base. Strategic partnerships with other national and international NGOs, private sector actors, academic institutions, and government agencies can amplify impact, foster innovation, and unlock additional resources. Building diverse, value-driven partnerships will be central to achieving transformative change.
- 6. Proactive Crisis Management:**

Operating in a context frequently affected by natural and human-induced crises—such as conflict, drought, and climate shocks—requires a proactive and adaptive approach. SOS Sahel must strengthen its crisis preparedness and response capacity through comprehensive risk management frameworks that ensure business continuity, safeguard staff and assets, and maintain delivery of essential services during emergencies.
- 7. Regulatory Compliance and Donor Accountability:**

Donors and regulatory bodies increasingly demand high standards of transparency, accountability, and performance. To meet these expectations, SOS Sahel should continue strengthening its monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems, ensure adherence to humanitarian and CSO accountability standards, and maintain robust internal control and compliance mechanisms. Staying current with financial, legal, and regulatory requirements will be key to sustaining credibility and donor confidence.
- 8. Mission Alignment and Strategic Focus:**

As the external environment evolves, it is crucial for SOS Sahel to remain grounded in its mission and values while adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities. Balancing the pursuit of social impact

with financial sustainability and organizational growth will ensure long-term relevance and effectiveness.

9. **Investing in Organizational Growth and Development:**

To remain a high-performing and future-ready organization, SOS Sahel must continuously invest in its core institutional pillars—**values and culture, leadership and governance, strategy, resources, and systems**. Strengthening these foundations will enhance the organization’s innovation, adaptability, resilience, and overall impact in an increasingly complex development landscape.

V. Strategic Aims, Objectives, Approaches, Targets, and Key Actions

1. Strategic Framework and Directions

SOS Sahel Ethiopia believes that lasting change happens when communities are empowered to lead, ecosystems are managed sustainably, markets and policies become inclusive, and institutions remain adaptive and accountable. Over the next five years, the organization will drive transformation through five interlinked pillars that together form a single change pathway — from local empowerment and ecological resilience to national policy influence and institutional sustainability.

Building on its strong legacy of community empowerment, participatory natural resource management, and landscape restoration, SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s Five-Year Strategy (2026–2030) positions the organization at the forefront of integrated, inclusive, and climate-resilient rural development.

Over the next five years, SOS Sahel will consolidate its efforts around five strategic aims- (1) Sustainable Ecosystems and Climate Resilience, (2) Inclusive Livelihoods and Resilient Economies, (3) Inclusive Markets and Value Chains, and (4) Knowledge, Policy Influence, and Institutional Learning. (5) A [Future-Proof, Sustainable, and Impactful SOS Sahel Ethiopia](#)

Each strategic aim reflects the organization’s belief that people and nature thrive together, and that sustainable development must be built on empowered local institutions, equitable access to opportunities, and evidence-based policy transformation. The following sections describe the strategic directions, innovations, and partnerships that will guide implementation.

Strategic aim One: To Protect and Conserve the Natural Ecosystems Where Both People and Planet Thrive

SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s first strategic aim focuses on protecting, restoring, and sustainably managing Ethiopia’s natural ecosystems—forests, rangelands, watersheds, and biodiversity—so that people and nature thrive together. SOS Sahel Ethiopia will strengthen community stewardship of natural resources, enhance ecosystem services, and build climate resilience through locally led conservation, restoration, and sustainable landscape management. This will restore balance between nature and people by conserving ecosystems, protecting biodiversity, and promoting sustainable natural resource management as the foundation for resilient livelihoods and climate security.

Over the next five years, SOS Sahel will intensify its work in forest landscapes, dry lands, rangelands, and watersheds—supporting communities to become stewards of the ecosystems they depend on. Through community-led conservation and ecosystem-based adaptation, SOS Sahel will safeguard critical landscapes such as the Bale Eco-Region, the South and Southwest highlands, and the drylands of Oromia and other regions. The organization will promote participatory forest and rangelands management, watershed restoration, and land rehabilitation, combining indigenous knowledge with modern science to ensure sustainability and equity in resource use.

At the heart of this pillar is the conviction that healthy ecosystems underpin food security, climate resilience, and economic well-being. SOS Sahel will therefore strengthen local institutions and customary systems to manage forests, rangelands, and watersheds more effectively. Restoration and protection efforts will be linked with green enterprises and ecosystem services, ensuring that conservation directly contributes to livelihoods and poverty reduction.

SOS Sahel will also expand partnerships to mobilize climate and biodiversity finance, including through carbon markets, payment for ecosystem services, and sustainable landscape financing. The organization will

work with government, research institutions, and private actors to pilot innovative mechanisms such as Water Funds, community carbon projects, and biodiversity-friendly enterprises.

Policy influence will remain central to this effort. SOS Sahel will engage in national and regional policy processes to promote integrated land use planning, sustainable forest management, and climate-aligned development pathways. The organization will generate evidence and advocate for stronger governance, equitable benefit-sharing, and gender-responsive natural resource management systems.

By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia envisions landscapes that are restored, resilient, and productive—where forests, water, and biodiversity thrive alongside vibrant rural communities. Through this pillar, the organization will not only conserve nature but also empower people to live in harmony with it, laying the ecological and social foundations for a sustainable and climate-secure future. By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia contributes to:

- **Restored and climate-resilient ecosystems** across priority landscapes
- **Strong community stewardship** with inclusive and gender-responsive governance
- **Reduced deforestation and land degradation**
- **Sustainable livelihoods anchored in ecosystem services**
- **Scaled climate and biodiversity finance** for long-term conservation

Strategic aim 2: To End Food and Nutrition Poverty through Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems

In the coming five years SOS Sahel aims to end food and nutrition poverty by transforming local food systems into resilient, inclusive, and sustainable ecosystems—where smallholder farmers and pastoralists are empowered as agents of change, ensuring that every household has access to safe, nutritious, and climate-resilient food.

Food and nutrition poverty remain among Ethiopia’s most persistent challenges, particularly in rural areas where livelihoods depend heavily on rain-fed agriculture and fragile ecosystems. Cyclical droughts, soil degradation, declining biodiversity, and limited access to diversified diets continue to undermine both human wellbeing and ecological balance. SOS Sahel Ethiopia envisions a future where no community faces hunger or malnutrition—where the food system not only feeds people but regenerates the environment, supports livelihoods, and sustains local economies.

Building on decades of experience in natural resource management, rural livelihoods, and resilience programming, SOS Sahel will advance a transformative agenda to rebuild food systems from the ground up. The organization will work with communities to transition from vulnerable, input-dependent agriculture toward agroecological and regenerative food production systems that restore soil health, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity. Through these efforts, SOS Sahel aims to secure the foundations of food and nutrition security while strengthening the adaptive capacity of households to climate shocks.

At the heart of this pillar is the belief that smallholder farmers and pastoralists are not passive recipients of aid but innovators and stewards of the land. SOS Sahel will promote climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agriculture through farmer field schools, women-led demonstration plots, and integrated crop–livestock–forestry systems. These approaches will enhance productivity, dietary diversity, and resilience while reducing dependence on external inputs.

The organization will also promote diversified and nutrition-rich value chains, with a particular focus on indigenous and climate-resilient crops such as enset, pulses, vegetables, and fruits, alongside sustainable livestock and apiculture systems. By strengthening linkages between production, nutrition, and markets, SOS Sahel will contribute to improved household diets and sustainable rural incomes.

Food and nutrition security cannot be achieved without equitable access and social inclusion. Therefore, SOS Sahel will prioritize women’s empowerment and youth participation throughout the food system. Women will be supported as decision-makers, innovators, and entrepreneurs in food value chains, while youth will be engaged in agri-entrepreneurship, input supply, digital agriculture, and local processing enterprises.

To ensure sustainability, SOS Sahel will integrate climate adaptation and ecosystem-based resilience into food system interventions. This includes restoring degraded landscapes through agroforestry, soil and water conservation, and watershed management, while promoting diversified livelihoods that reduce pressure on

natural resources. The organization will also support the establishment of local seed systems, water-harvesting structures, and community food banks to strengthen resilience against climate variability.

Recognizing that food and nutrition outcomes are shaped by governance and policy, SOS Sahel will engage with local and national stakeholders to influence food system policies and strategies. The organization will generate and share empirical evidence to advocate for inclusive, climate-aligned, and nutrition-sensitive policies—ensuring that Ethiopia’s food system transformation leaves no one behind.

Innovation, knowledge, and partnerships will underpin this pillar. SOS Sahel will collaborate with research institutions, private sector actors, and government agencies to pilot and scale innovations such as regenerative agriculture, digital extension services, and bio-fortified crops. The organization will also promote nutrition education and behavior change communication to strengthen local knowledge on healthy diets and food preparation practices.

Through these integrated efforts, SOS Sahel aims to break the intergenerational cycle of hunger and malnutrition while building resilient communities capable of thriving under changing climatic and economic conditions. By 2030, the organization envisions a significant reduction in food and nutrition poverty among target communities—marked by improved dietary diversity, restored ecosystems, and resilient livelihoods that sustain both people and the planet.

By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia contributes to **Ending food and nutrition poverty by transforming local food systems into resilient, inclusive, and sustainable ecosystems including:**

- **A major reduction in food and nutrition poverty** in target communities
- **Resilient, agro-ecological food systems** that withstand climate shocks
- **Improved diets particularly for women and children**
- **Restored ecosystems** that sustainably support food production

Strategic Aim 3: To Enhance Inclusive Markets and Value Chains to End Rural Poverty and Promote Social Equity.

Over the next five years, SOS Sahel Ethiopia will place **dignified and fulfilling employment for rural unemployed youth—especially young women—at the center of its market systems transformation agenda**. The organization will prioritize **nature-positive, climate-smart, and high labor-absorptive value chains**, with **apiculture emerging as a flagship pathway** for inclusive rural employment, enterprise development, and ecosystem restoration.

Inclusive, resilient, and transparent markets are essential for equitable rural transformation in Ethiopia. For decades, SOS Sahel Ethiopia has observed how **youth unemployment, market exclusion, and environmental degradation reinforce one another**—locking young people, smallholders, and pastoralists into low-productivity systems while forests, rangelands, and biodiversity are depleted to sustain short-term survival strategies. Under this strategic pillar, SOS Sahel will pursue an ambitious agenda to **convert ecological assets into sustainable employment opportunities**, enabling rural youth to transition from informal and precarious livelihoods into **resilient green jobs and enterprises**.

SOS Sahel’s market systems development approach is grounded in three mutually reinforcing principles: **inclusion, sustainability, and traceability**. The organization will strengthen value chains that generate both **employment and environmental returns**, ensuring that rural youth, women, smallholders, and pastoralists are not only producers but **entrepreneurs, service providers, and value-chain leaders**. This approach supports Ethiopia’s vision for sustainable rural industrialization and aligns with the World Bank’s **AgriConnect initiative**, which promotes digital connectivity, private investment, and climate-resilient agrifood systems.

Within this framework, **apiculture will be scaled as a cornerstone youth employment value chain**. Beekeeping is uniquely suited to Ethiopia’s rural contexts: it is **forest-friendly, low-land-intensive, quick to generate income, and capable of absorbing large numbers of young people across production, processing, aggregation, quality control, branding, and marketing**. SOS Sahel will support youth-led apiculture enterprises that produce internationally competitive honey and beeswax while simultaneously **incentivizing forest conservation, pollination services, and biodiversity protection**. Apiculture will also

serve as an entry point for youth engagement in **deforestation-free supply chains**, ecosystem stewardship, and climate finance opportunities.

At the same time, SOS Sahel will position youth-led and community-based enterprises to comply with the **EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)**, which requires commodities entering EU markets to be legally produced and free from deforestation after December 2020. Rather than treating EUDR as a barrier, the organization will leverage it as a **market differentiation opportunity**, enabling Ethiopian honey, coffee, and forest-based products to compete as **trusted, traceable, and youth-powered green commodities**.

To respond to this evolving global market reality, SOS Sahel will facilitate **traceable, transparent, and deforestation-free value chains** for priority commodities including **honey, coffee, non-timber forest products, enset, essential oils, and medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs)**. Youth and women's cooperatives will be supported to adopt **geospatial traceability systems, digital producer registries, and certification schemes**, ensuring compliance with environmental and social standards while unlocking access to premium markets and long-term trading relationships.

Digital transformation will be a core enabler of dignified youth employment. Building on LerSha and AgriConnect's digital infrastructure framework, SOS Sahel will promote **mobile-based platforms, e-payments, digital extension services, and data-driven farmer and youth enterprise registries**. These tools will improve price transparency, enable climate advisories, and expand access to financial services—allowing young entrepreneurs to build viable green businesses rather than remain subsistence producers.

Private sector engagement and de-risking mechanisms will underpin this employment-led market transformation. SOS Sahel will broker partnerships among **youth enterprises, cooperatives, private buyers, and financial institutions**, deploying blended finance, concessional capital, and risk-sharing instruments to crowd in investment into **apiculture and other green value chains**. These partnerships will ensure that youth employment outcomes are commercially viable and scalable.

Infrastructure and skills development will complement financial and digital innovations. SOS Sahel will invest in **aggregation centers, honey processing and certification facilities, cold storage, and logistics hubs**, while delivering **entrepreneurship, quality management, cooperative governance, and leadership training** for young women and men. Particular emphasis will be placed on enabling youth to move into **higher-value segments** of supply chains, including branding, export readiness, and ecosystem service markets.

Recognizing that sustainable employment requires an enabling environment, SOS Sahel will engage in **policy dialogue and advocacy** with government and development partners to align youth employment, green growth, and trade policies with global sustainability standards such as **EUDR compliance, deforestation-free sourcing, and carbon and biodiversity labeling**.

By 2030, this pillar envisions a rural Ethiopia where **market growth, youth employment, and ecosystem restoration reinforce one another**. SOS Sahel Ethiopia aims to have enabled **hundreds of thousands of rural youth—particularly young women—to secure dignified and fulfilling green jobs**, increased rural incomes by at least **30 percent**, and positioned Ethiopian honey and other commodities as **global exemplars of sustainability, traceability, and youth-led transformation**.

We envision to Create inclusive, climate-smart, and deforestation-free markets that generate dignified and fulfilling green jobs for rural youth, women, smallholders, and pastoralists (with apiculture as a flagship value chain).

Strategic Aim 4: To enhance Knowledge, Policy Influence, and Institutional Learning

SOS Sahel Ethiopia aims to become a leading knowledge-driven organization that generates, applies, and shares evidence to shape policy, practice, and innovation in rural resilience, natural resource management, and sustainable livelihoods.

SOS Sahel Ethiopia's fourth strategic pillar underscores the organization's commitment to generating, applying, and sharing knowledge that drives transformative change in policies, practices, and institutions. It positions SOS Sahel as both a learning organization and a credible voice in shaping Ethiopia's and the Horn of Africa's development agenda—bridging evidence, community realities, and national policy dialogue.

Over the next five years, SOS Sahel will strengthen its role as a knowledge-driven organization that not only implements projects but also influences systemic change. The organization will invest in action research, data-driven insights, and innovation labs that capture lessons from the field—transforming practical experience into evidence for policy and advocacy. These efforts will support evidence-informed decision-making in environmental governance, climate resilience, food systems transformation, and inclusive market development.

The organization will establish a Knowledge and Learning Hub to coordinate evidence generation, knowledge curation, and dissemination across programs and partners. This hub will serve as a center for data management, participatory learning, and adaptive programming—enhancing the organization’s ability to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. SOS Sahel will leverage digital platforms, publications, and national dialogues to share practical lessons and best practices widely.

Policy influence will be deepened through constructive engagement with government institutions, research bodies, civil society, and development partners. SOS Sahel will champion policies that promote ecosystem-based adaptation, deforestation-free supply chains, land tenure security, gender equity, and community-led development. By linking community-level innovations with regional and national policy frameworks, the organization will contribute to stronger and more inclusive governance systems.

Institutional learning will be mainstreamed across all levels of the organization. Continuous reflection, monitoring, and evaluation will drive adaptive management—ensuring that programs evolve in response to evidence and context. Regular learning reviews, staff exchanges, and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing will foster a culture of openness, collaboration, and improvement.

Strategic partnerships with universities, think tanks, and policy networks will expand the organization’s influence and credibility. Through these alliances, SOS Sahel will co-produce policy-relevant research, contribute to global dialogues on climate and development, and elevate the voices of local communities in shaping environmental and socio-economic policy agendas.

By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia aims to be recognized as a national center of excellence in policy influence, knowledge generation, and institutional learning—a trusted source of evidence and innovation that bridges local action with global ambition. This pillar will ensure that SOS Sahel not only does the right things on the ground but also helps Ethiopia and the wider region to think, plan, and act smarter for people and the planet.
Pillar Four – Headline 2030 Ambition

By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia is **recognized nationally and regionally as a trusted center of excellence** in:

- Evidence-based policy influence
- Knowledge generation and learning
- Bridging community-level innovation with national and global development agendas

Knowledge, Evidence, and Policy Influence for Transformative Rural Resilience and Sustainable Development

Strategic Aim Five: To Create a Future-Proof, Sustainable, and Impactful SOS Sahel Ethiopia

SOS Sahel Ethiopia aims to build a resilient, adaptive, and future-proof organization that upholds integrity, transparency, and innovation as core values and evolve into a financially sustainable and high-performing institution capable of delivering lasting impact for communities and ecosystems in a rapidly changing world.

SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s fifth strategic pillar focuses inward—on building the institutional strength, agility, and sustainability necessary to deliver long-term impact in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world. This pillar recognizes that to drive transformative change externally, the organization must itself embody resilience, innovation, integrity, and adaptability.

Over the next five years, SOS Sahel will invest in strengthening its governance, systems, people, and partnerships to become a future-proof institution that is financially sustainable, digitally enabled, and learning-driven. The organization will modernize its management systems, enhance accountability, and foster a culture of excellence and emotional connectedness across teams and leadership.

Institutional governance will be revitalized through a strengthened Board of Trustees, performance-based management, and transparent accountability systems. SOS Sahel will establish a Risk Management and Compliance Unit to safeguard integrity, prevent fraud, and promote ethical practice across all operations. It will also adopt a “one-SOS Sahel” organizational culture—anchored in the core values of Integrity, Inclusion, Agility, Partnership, and Stewardship—ensuring coherence and trust at every level of the organization.

Financial sustainability will be advanced through strategic resource mobilization and diversification of income streams. SOS Sahel will expand partnerships with bilateral and multilateral donors, philanthropic foundations, and private-sector actors, while also developing homegrown revenue mechanisms such as endowment funds, consultancy services, and social enterprises. The organization will also strengthen its internal financial systems and digital reporting tools to improve efficiency, transparency, and decision-making.

Human capital development will remain a central focus. SOS Sahel will nurture a motivated, capable, and emotionally intelligent workforce through targeted learning programs, leadership development, and wellbeing initiatives. By promoting gender balance and intergenerational leadership, the organization will ensure continuity, inclusivity, and innovation in its future leadership pipeline.

Institutional learning and innovation will be deepened through a dynamic Knowledge and Learning Hub. This hub will promote evidence generation, digital knowledge management, and strategic communications, positioning SOS Sahel as a national thought leader in climate resilience, inclusive livelihoods, and ecosystem restoration.

By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia envisions itself as a trusted, agile, and sustainable organization—recognized nationally and regionally for excellence in delivery, thought leadership, and transformative partnerships. Through this pillar, SOS Sahel will not only sustain its mission but also amplify its impact, ensuring that the institution itself remains as resilient and adaptive as the communities and ecosystems it serves. By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia is:

- **Financially sustainable and institutionally resilient**
- **Digitally enabled and evidence-driven**
- **Recognized for integrity, innovation, and excellence**
- **A trusted development partner nationally and regionally**

Attaining Institutional Resilience, Sustainability, and Organizational Excellence

Key Strategic Shifts of SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s Five-Year Strategy (2026–2030)

Transforming Local Solutions into National and Global Impact

SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s new five-year strategy (2026–2030) marks a bold transformation in the organization’s positioning, approach, and institutional orientation. Building on decades of experience in community-based natural resource management and livelihood development, the organization is making deliberate strategic shifts to deepen impact, strengthen sustainability, and scale influence across systems and policy levels.

1. From Project-Based Implementation to Policy and Practice Influence

SOS Sahel Ethiopia will move beyond isolated, project-based interventions to influence policies and practices at regional and national levels. The organization will scale up and institutionalize tested climate, food systems, and market innovations—such as REDD+, contract farming, climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and participatory forest and rangeland management—by embedding them within government systems. This shift aims to ensure that proven local solutions inform and shape national frameworks for sustainable development, climate action, and rural transformation.

→ **Outcome: Proven local solutions institutionalized in government programs and influencing policy frameworks.**

2. From External Funding Dependence to Sustainable Financing Models

Recognizing the need for financial sustainability, SOS Sahel Ethiopia will diversify its financing base and reduce dependence on short-term donor projects. The organization will leverage sustainable financing mechanisms such as Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), drawing lessons from successful models like the Upper Tana–Nairobi Water Fund. Through public–private–community partnerships, SOS Sahel will promote investment in ecosystem restoration and water security, linking environmental stewardship with economic incentives and long-term financing.

→ **Outcome: Diversified financing base anchored in ecosystem service markets and blended finance mechanisms.**

3. From Local Project-Based Development to Holistic Landscape Approaches

To address the interconnected challenges of land use, climate change, and livelihoods, SOS Sahel Ethiopia will transition from localized project-based development to an integrated landscape approach. This will enable the organization to harness synergies, manage trade-offs among different land use systems (forests, agriculture, rangelands, wetlands), and align the interests of diverse stakeholders—government, private sector, and communities—within shared ecological and economic boundaries.

→ **Outcome: Integrated landscape management that harmonizes people–nature relationships and enhances ecosystem resilience.**

4. From Fragmented Data to Evidence-Based Systemic Change

The new strategy emphasizes evidence-based systemic change, underpinned by robust data and digital innovations. SOS Sahel will strengthen its research and monitoring capabilities to generate actionable evidence on climate resilience, food systems, and environmental management. By doing so, the organization will provide critical insights to inform national policies and global commitments, including the Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

→ **Outcome: Data-driven decision-making and policy influence grounded in credible local and scientific evidence.**

5. From Operational Survival Transformation Toward a Future-Proof, Impactful, and Sustainable Organization

SOS Sahel Ethiopia will invest in its institutional transformation to become a future-proof, agile, and high-performing local organization. This includes strengthening organizational systems, nurturing leadership and talent, and harnessing the full potential of digital technology. The organization will also broaden its funding base beyond bilateral and multilateral donors to include foundations, sustainable finance and blended finance mechanisms, and social enterprises, ensuring long-term sustainability and adaptive capacity.

→ **Outcome: A resilient, agile, impactful, and digitally empowered organization with diversified and sustainable financing.**

6. From Project-Based Market Development to Market Ecosystem Transformation

Moving beyond isolated value chain development, SOS Sahel Ethiopia will adopt a market ecosystems development approach—fostering market anchored jobs, inclusive, climate-resilient, and deforestation-free supply chains. The organization will support farmers and pastoralists to meet emerging international compliance standards, such as the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), while enabling government and private actors to strengthen national market competitiveness and environmental governance.

→ **Outcome: Inclusive, deforestation-free, and climate-smart market systems that link smallholders and pastoralists to sustainable trade.**

7. From Manual Monitoring → Digital Landscape Change Tracking

Building on the Forest for Sustainable Development Project in the Bale Eco-Region, SOS Sahel will scale up its innovative digital landscape change-tracking system—developed in partnership with Hawassa University and Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources. This technology enables real-time monitoring of land use and vegetation dynamics across cropland, grassland, wetlands, shrublands, and settlements. By institutionalizing this system within government agencies, SOS Sahel will help strengthen Ethiopia’s capacity to generate reliable data that directly feeds into its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and SDG reporting frameworks.

→ **Outcome: Government-enabled digital monitoring system that tracks land use dynamics and supports national and global commitments such as NDC and SDGs.**

Key Strategic Cross-cutting Change Drivers (Enablers) of the Strategy (2026–2030)

SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s strategic approach is anchored in a **triple nexus framework** that integrates **humanitarian response, peacebuilding, and development**. Recognizing the interconnected nature of crises affecting rural communities—climate shocks, resource-based conflicts, and livelihood insecurity—the organization will work to build resilience at multiple levels. **Humanitarian actions** will provide lifesaving support and protect livelihoods in times of crisis, while **peacebuilding efforts** will foster dialogue, trust, and social cohesion among communities and institutions. **Development interventions** will then strengthen systems, markets, and ecosystems to enable long-term, sustainable recovery and prosperity.

At the heart of this approach is a deep **commitment to gender and climate justice**. SOS Sahel Ethiopia will promote equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power, ensuring that women, youth, and marginalized groups are central actors in shaping climate-resilient futures. Through a justice-oriented lens, the organization will challenge structural inequalities and advance inclusive governance over land, forests, and natural resources.

The strategy further emphasizes the integration of **action research, community-based development, and constructive policy engagement**. Action research will generate empirical evidence and local innovations that directly inform practice and policy. Community-based approaches will empower local institutions and indigenous knowledge systems to lead transformative change. Constructive engagement with government, civil society, and the private sector will translate grassroots experiences into **policy influence and systemic reforms**.

A central driver of this transformation is **partnership and strategic alliance building**. SOS Sahel Ethiopia recognizes that achieving sustainable impact requires working collaboratively across sectors and scales. The organization will forge **strategic partnerships** with communities, research institutions, government agencies, development partners, private sector actors, and social enterprises to co-create and scale innovative solutions. Through **networks and alliances**, SOS Sahel will leverage complementary strengths, mobilize resources, and amplify collective influence to shape national and regional agendas on environment, livelihoods, and resilience.

Ultimately, SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s strategic approach aims to drive **systemic transformation**—shifting from fragmented, short-term interventions to **holistic and scalable solutions** that address the root causes of vulnerability and environmental degradation. By bridging **knowledge, practice, policy, and partnerships** within the triple nexus, the organization will position itself as a **catalyst for resilient ecosystems, inclusive livelihoods, and sustainable peace** across Ethiopia’s highlands, drylands, and forest landscapes.

SOS Sahel Ethiopia Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Accountability (MELA) Framework (2026–2030)

Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) is a **core strategic function** underpinning SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s 2026–2030 Strategy. It is designed to support leadership decision-making, strengthen accountability to communities and partners, and generate credible evidence of **systems-level change** across priority landscapes, value chains, and institutions.

The MEAL system tracks progress toward the strategy’s overarching impact: **resilient ecosystems and inclusive rural economies that enable sustainable livelihoods, food and nutrition security, and reduced**

inequality in Ethiopia. It is fully aligned with the four strategic goals—ecosystem restoration, inclusive rural economies, enabling institutions and finance, and organizational resilience—and focuses on outcomes, behavioral change, and institutional performance rather than activities alone.

Guided by principles of **systems orientation, learning, inclusion, adaptability, and proportionality**, MEAL integrates quantitative and qualitative evidence from multiple sources. These include community-based monitoring, remote sensing and GIS, household and enterprise data, administrative records, and policy tracking. Digital tools and data quality assurance protocols ensure timely, reliable, and decision-relevant information.

Strategy-level indicators capture changes in ecosystem management and resilience, women’s and youth livelihoods, food and nutrition security, governance and policy influence, and the mobilization of climate, biodiversity, and private finance. Monitoring is complemented by three core evaluations—a baseline (2026), a mid-term strategic review (2028), and a final evaluation (2030)—using mixed methods and contribution analysis to understand SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s role in complex systems change.

Accountability to affected populations is embedded through accessible feedback and grievance mechanisms, community scorecards, and transparent communication of results. Learning is institutionalized through regular reflection forums and annual strategy reviews, ensuring evidence is actively used to adapt programs, strengthen partnerships, and inform policy engagement and resource mobilization.

By 2030, MEAL will function as a **strategic institutional capability**, enhancing SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s credibility, adaptive capacity, and long-term impact across Ethiopia’s priority landscapes and rural economies.

SOS Sahel Ethiopia’s Program Quality Assurance System in place (2026-2030)

On top of its MEAL system the organization will introduce a relevant Program Quality Assurance (PQA) Framework by establishing standard operating procedures and promoting continuous improvement. This will enable the organization to attest and ensure that its programs are effective, efficient, and impact-full, fostering trust with beneficiaries and donors, and promoting accountability and continuous improvement. By 2030, SOS Sahel Ethiopia aims to achieve measurable transformation across the five strategic areas.

SOS Sahel Ethiopia – Strategic Outcomes, Targets & Indicators (to 2030)

Strategic Aim	Key Strategic Outcomes by 2030	2030 Targets	Core Indicators
1. Protect and Conserve Natural Ecosystems where People and Planet Thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restored, resilient forests, rangelands, watersheds and biodiversity Communities empowered as ecosystem stewards Sustainable landscape financing mechanisms operational Stronger ecosystem governance and policy alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 500,000+ ha under improved ecosystem management 150,000 households benefiting from ecosystem-based adaptation and conservation-linked livelihoods 3–5 operational landscape financing mechanisms (Water Funds, carbon/PES, biodiversity finance) 5+ national/regional policies influenced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hectares restored or under participatory management % reduction in deforestation and land degradation in target landscapes Reduction in GHG emission Number of functional community natural resource institutions Volume of climate and biodiversity finance mobilized (USD) Number of policy frameworks influenced
2. End Food and Nutrition Poverty through Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced food insecurity and malnutrition Agroecological and regenerative food systems scaled Improved dietary diversity and nutrition outcomes Climate-resilient livelihoods strengthened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30–40% reduction in food insecurity in target areas 200,000 households adopting climate-smart/agroecological practices 25% improvement in dietary diversity (HDDS/MDD-W) 50% of supported food enterprises led by women and youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food insecurity prevalence (HFIAS/FIES) Household and women’s dietary diversity scores Hectares under agroecological production % of households with diversified and resilient livelihoods Women and youth leadership in food systems
3. Enhance Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smallholders and pastoralists integrated into 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300,000 producers connected to inclusive and deforestation-free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of producers participating in inclusive

Strategic Aim	Key Strategic Outcomes by 2030	2030 Targets	Core Indicators
Markets and Value Chains to End Rural Poverty and Promote Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inclusive, deforestation-free markets Increased and equitable rural incomes Traceable, climate-smart value chains aligned with global standards Private investment leveraged for green growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> value chains ≥30% increase in net household incomes 100% of export-oriented value chains EUDR-compliant USD 5–10 million private and blended finance mobilized 300,000 youths attain dignified and fulfilling jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> markets Average % income increase per household % of commodities with traceability and geospatial compliance Volume of private investment leveraged Share of women and youth in higher-value market roles
4. Enhance Knowledge, Policy Influence, and Institutional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOS Sahel recognized as a national knowledge and policy influencer Evidence-based adaptive programming institutionalized Community voices influencing policy processes Strong research and policy partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30+ policy-relevant studies, briefs, and learning products published 5+ national or regional policies influenced Fully operational Knowledge & Learning Hub Annual organization-wide learning and reflection cycles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and quality of knowledge products disseminated Policy citations and formal engagements supported % of programs applying adaptive management Number of active research and policy partnerships
5. Create a Future-Proof, Sustainable, and Impactful SOS Sahel Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financially resilient and diversified institution Strong governance, accountability, and risk management Motivated, skilled, and gender-balanced workforce Recognized national and regional institutional leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No single donor exceeding 25% of total budget 20–30% of income from non-traditional sources Gender parity in senior leadership and management 100% compliance with governance, audit, and safeguarding standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding diversification index % unrestricted and self-generated income Staff retention, wellbeing, and performance scores Governance and compliance audit results Institutional reputation and partnership growth