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**Strategic Partnership Agreement
(SPA II) Project: Stories of Change
and Impact 2025**

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SPA II Project Booklet

Stories of Change and Impact: 2025

Introduction

ActionAid Ethiopia (AAE) is a gender justice, good governance, and poverty eradication organization. It envisions a country where all enjoys their rights equally and live a decent life. Its heart lies on gender equality where it designs its frameworks and operations on women's and girls' empowerment and abolishing root causes of Violence against women and girls. Its interventions are guided by the Human Rights Based Approach, Transformative Feminist Leadership, and Intersectional Feminist Analysis tools. AAE has been implementing programs in Ethiopia under both humanitarian and development contexts for 35 years. Young people especially young girls are primarily target of the organization in terms of working with them, their organizations, and networks.

AAE has been implementing various projects in order to realize the achievement of missions and intended objectives. Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA II) is a four-year project (2022-2025) that has been undergoing implementation with the technical and financial support of AADK through the fund of DANIDA. The overall objective of the program is that young people, especially women and marginalized people, enjoy fundamental rights through improved access to well-resourced programs and public services and enjoy improved, sustainable livelihoods, resilience, and protection including in climate disasters, fragile situations, and protracted crisis contexts in Ethiopia.

AAE has been working with local partners and key stakeholders to support youth, especially young women to access youth-led spaces and platforms, advancing their digital skills and knowledge and strengthening their capacity.

And it aims to build climate-resilient livelihoods, meaningfully engage with government line ministries and implementers on climate change adaptation and mitigation and build leadership in humanitarian preparedness and response and peace building. In 2025, SPA II continued to create opportunities for young people in the different areas of implementation in **Ameya, Elfeta, Guna, Semen Bench, Dessie Zuriya district, Raya and the National level in Addis Ababa** to engage in decision-making spaces, build sustainable livelihoods, and address social challenges within their communities.

This booklet presents key highlights, achievements, and experiences from the Strategic Partnership Agreement II (SPA II) project implementation during the first period of 2025.

It brings together stories and results from the **Ameya, Elfeta, Guna, and SYHLA** local rights programmes (LRPs), showcasing how young people are driving change in areas of democratic governance, gender equality, climate-resilient livelihoods, and peacebuilding.

Through real examples of youth engagement, innovative livelihoods, and community advocacy, the booklet captures how SPA II continues to strengthen youth leadership and build more just, inclusive, and sustainable communities across Ethiopia.

Key Accomplishments of SPAII in 2025

The following sections highlight progress and achievements across the project's core themes.

1. Democracy, Governance, and Youth Participation

In 2025, GP Ethiopia conducted Active Citizenship training for 21 participants from multiple local GPs, including new staff, and cascaded the learning through six youth-led discussion sessions reaching a wide range of peers across Addis Ababa and LRPs, fostering civic awareness, leadership, and peer-to-peer knowledge transfer.

Young participants also engaged in national and international opportunities, including the Pan-African Leadership Summit, young women's empowerment guide workshop, and a Youth-Led Vulnerability Assessment webinar, ensuring youth voices, particularly of young women, were represented in policy and advocacy spaces.

Complementing in-person initiatives, 30 online sessions via the GP Ethiopia Telegram group engaged 534 participants, reinforcing digital inclusion and sustaining youth participation in dialogue and leadership development.



Figure 1: Active citizenship training for young people at the National level

Across the LRPs, SPA II created platforms for young people to hold discussions with decision-makers, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and promote active citizenship.

In Ameya, youth dialogues with duty bearers brought service gaps in education, health, and water to the attention of woreda officials, while Social Accountability Committees (SACs) were strengthened and linked to kebeles.

Elfeta placed emphasis on Active Citizenship Dialogue sessions, where young people, including ActionAid Ambassador students, built skills in democracy, good governance, gender-responsive public services, and advocacy.

In Guna, youth-led accountability took a more structured form, with young people using Citizen Score Cards to assess the quality of rural roads and transportation services.

These processes not only exposed major infrastructure and service gaps but also led to commitments from local authorities to take corrective action.

Despite school closures due to conflict in **Guna**, special planning meetings were conducted to develop action plans, supported by SYHLA through

material and financial aid. Students and teachers organized a peace event at St. Michael's Church, engaging over 500 community members (50% women/girls) and raising **17,302 Birr** for holiday assistance.



Figure 2: *Linking SAC structure to duty bearers at Elfeta*

Similarly, in Semen Bench LRP, young women organized a social accountability process focused on the Genja Health Center. Through data collection, focus group discussions, and advocacy with local officials, they successfully influenced the allocation of budgetary support to improve service quality.

These experiences demonstrate SPAII's strong integration of civic engagement with evidence-based advocacy, empowering young women to transition from participants to influential change agents.

In Ameya, youth organized nine youth dialogue sessions involving more than 120 participants, where they raised critical issues around education, health, and water services. Safe spaces for girls and young women were also strengthened, with bi-weekly meetings enabling them to continue discussions on personal and community issues.

In Elfeta, ActionAid Ambassador students joined Active Citizenship Dialogue sessions, gaining leadership and advocacy skills while strengthening links with broader youth platforms.

In Guna, 78 young people participated in Active Citizenship Dialogues, with many of them graduates of child sponsorship programs who transitioned into Global Platform membership, ensuring sustainability of youth engagement structures.

Through these initiatives, SPA II demonstrated that when youth are equipped with knowledge and platforms for engagement, they can play a direct role in shaping governance processes, ensuring transparency, and holding duty bearers accountable for service delivery.

2. Climate-Resilient Livelihoods and Green Initiatives

A key focus of SPA II is enabling young people to build sustainable and climate-friendly livelihoods.

In Ameya, youth were supported in green businesses, including seedling production using a hand-drilling machine to access shallow water.

Young women's groups there also began producing energy-saving stoves, reducing firewood consumption while generating income. In Elfeta, youth groups engaged in multiple livelihood initiatives such as sheep fattening, seedling production, and reusable sanitary pad production, which not only

provided income but also addressed critical community needs such as menstrual hygiene management.

Meanwhile, in Guna, young people led environmental rehabilitation efforts, practiced vermicomposting, and worked with university and government offices to revive indigenous seed varieties.

Women watch groups also scaled up energy-saving stove production, selling products at public events and linking them with local markets.

Vermicomposting at Kimer Dingay generated 16 kg of compost for 9,500 Birr, supplementing school income and supporting low-income students.



Figure 3: Energy Saving Stove production to minimize firewood consumption at Ameya

GP Ethiopia commemorated International Earth Day online, raising awareness on environmental issues and mobilizing youth engagement in climate action through digital content, curated

posts, and visual materials that encouraged reflection and practical contributions to sustainability.

As part of these activities, the youth-led organization Enfluencers produced documentary **“Where Is the Promised Money?”** was released, amplifying youth voices on climate finance, accountability, and climate justice advocacy.

In Semen Bench LRP, GCAs played a vital role in advancing agroecological practices. They conducted home visits to provide mentoring and follow-up support to married young women and distributed vegetable seeds, enabling beneficiaries to engage in sustainable gardening and improve food security.

Complementary environmental campaigns, including World Environment Day celebrations and indigenous tree planting, reinforced the program’s green legacy objectives.



Figure 4: GCA supported young woman at Semen Bench

Promoting gender equality and building young women's leadership remained central to SPA II's work.

In Ameya, Gender Change Agents (GCAs) carried out home visits to support married young women, encouraging them to engage in gardening, organic compost production, and discussions on social issues.

Elfeta facilitated safe space sessions for young women drawn from different groups, where they explored topics such as gender, reproductive health, and gender-responsive budgeting.

In Guna, safe spaces for women and girls became not only venues for empowerment and learning but also networks for protection, particularly in the face of GBV and harmful practices.

These activities demonstrated how women and girls, when provided with supportive structures, can develop the confidence and skills to influence service providers, participate in decision-making, and challenge deeply rooted inequalities in their communities.

Through these combined efforts, SPAII's climate-resilient livelihood component has contributed to improved economic independence for rural women, strengthened environmental stewardship, and fostered a model of locally led adaptation.

Together, these initiatives highlighted the creativity and resilience of young people in addressing the dual challenges of climate change and unemployment, while promoting environmentally sustainable practices that benefit larger communities.

3. Strengthening Community and Women Based Protection and GBV Response Mechanisms

SPAII has made notable progress in improving community protection systems, particularly through the coordinated efforts of Beza for Women and Elfeta LRP.

In Dessie Zuria district, Beza for Women conducted refresher training for 15 volunteers (10 women and 5 men) on mental health, psychosocial support, and GBV response.

The trained volunteers later facilitated dialogue sessions across five kebeles, reaching 75 participants including survivors, community leaders, and youth.

These initiatives created safe platforms for discussing sexual and reproductive health, trauma healing, and violence prevention while promoting survivor-centered community action.

At Elfeta LRP, targeted interventions focused on supporting GBV survivors through economic and psychosocial measures.

Fifty survivors received multipurpose cash and livelihood support, including livestock and household materials, to help restore their independence.

Referral linkages with one-stop service centers and health facilities were strengthened to ensure coordinated care. Additionally, training on sexual and reproductive health, including menstrual hygiene management, reached 35 youth participants and enhanced local awareness of reproductive rights.



Figure 5: Dialogue sessions with young women on mental health, psychosocial support, and GBV response by Beza for Women

Together, Beza for Women and Elfeta LRP have strengthened the protective environment for vulnerable women and youth, ensuring that GBV response moves beyond awareness to tangible action and survivor empowerment.

These interventions highlight SPAII's commitment to fostering safe, resilient communities through local capacity building.

4. Youth-led Humanitarian Action

SPA II also worked to strengthen young people's roles in peacebuilding and humanitarian preparedness.

In Ameya, youth organized a mass campaign against harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and abduction, bringing together 150 community members, duty bearers, and youth leaders in collective advocacy. In Elfeta, safe space participants mobilized to influence local authorities on the barriers faced by young women and girls, helping ensure that protection and equality remained central to service provision.

In Guna, safe space groups became particularly significant amid local conflict, as they created networks for young women to report GBV cases and support survivors, contributing to broader community resilience. Through these actions, young people not only responded to immediate protection concerns but also built a culture of peace and solidarity in their localities.

Across SPAII implementation areas, youth groups have demonstrated leadership in humanitarian response and resilience building.

In Semen Bench LRP, trained youth under Global Platform and EFAST led disaster risk management activities following capacity-building sessions facilitated by local authorities.

Their initiatives included landslide mitigation through floodway cleaning, tree planting, and community education on disaster preparedness.

The Kasha youth group, in particular, played a crucial role in assessing landslide-affected households and coordinating early responses with local duty bearers.

A significant part of the Guna GP effort during international youth day focused on gathering resources from the community.

This mobilization proved very successful, leading to significant donations.

These included over 995 dozen exercise books, 9 packs of pens for students, and 176 items of clothing and blankets for the elderly.

The activities also included hands-on volunteer work, such as maintaining 36 elderly homes and conducting a community cleanup campaign.



Figure 6: *Guna GP organize community resource mobilization of school items for students during IYD*

Elfeta LRP complemented these actions by mobilizing youth and community volunteers to respond to flooding in the West Shewa zone.

Together with Women Watch Groups and Disaster Risk Management offices, youth-led committees identified vulnerable families, facilitated transparent cash assistance, and supported the rebuilding of homes for affected women-headed households.

These activities showcased effective collaboration between local structures and youth groups in addressing emergencies.

Through these efforts, SPAII has strengthened community-based preparedness and positioned young people at the center of humanitarian leadership.

5. Active Citizenship and Digital Empowerment

Global Platform Ethiopia continued to play a vital role in nurturing youth leadership, confidence, and digital education.

Digital platforms continued to serve as powerful tools for young people under SPA II to connect, learn, and influence change.

Through the availability of GP Ethiopia Telegram group, youth participants gained practical exposure to digital advocacy, leadership, and content creation.

GP's trainings and dialogue sessions enabled young people to explore how technology can strengthen civic engagement, enhance accountability, and amplify their voices on social and governance issues.



Figure 7: GP Ethiopia youth online engagements

In Elfeta, ActionAid Ambassador students who took part in Active Citizenship Dialogue sessions received digital literacy support to enhance their leadership and advocacy work, allowing them to share their experiences and campaigns through social media.

In Guna, seventy-eight young people—including graduates from child sponsorship programs—joined digital-focused dialogues and activities that helped them document community issues and connect with peers across regions through GP's online network.

By combining civic education with practical platforms for engagement, SPA II helped young people enhance their critical thinking, advocacy, and problem-solving skills, while creating stronger linkages between grass-roots youth groups and national networks.

6. SPAII Engagement in the Second Africa Climate Summit

ActionAid, through the SPA II project and Global Platform Ethiopia, took part in the Second Africa Climate Summit (ACSII) held in Addis Ababa from September 8–10, 2025. The side event, **“Green and Just Jobs for Youth in Africa,”** brought together 114 participants from across sectors to discuss how skills, financing, and supportive systems can unlock Africa’s green potential.

During the session, Nigus Simane, Interim Country Director of ActionAid Ethiopia,

emphasized that Africa’s transition to a green economy could create millions of decent jobs in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-innovation.

Panelists from the ILO, Reach for Change, and ActionAid Zambia echoed the call for action—stressing the importance of green and digital skills, access to financing, and policies that enable youth-led solutions.



Figure 8: Green and Just Jobs in Africa, Side event at ACSII

Youth representatives from Global Platforms across Africa closed the session with a Call to Action, urging governments and partners to invest in green skills and education, ensure inclusive financing, and design systems that recognize young people as leaders in Africa's just transition.

The event reinforced SPA II's commitment to advancing climate justice and green livelihoods by amplifying youth voices in regional and global spaces.

Case Stories

The following stories capture the real experiences of young people and women whose lives have been transformed through SPA II.

From building green livelihoods and promoting gender equality to taking leadership roles and protecting their communities, these stories reflect the human side of change.

They illustrate how local action, when supported with knowledge, confidence, and opportunity, can drive powerful social and economic transformation. Each story is a testament to the resilience, creativity, and leadership of young people shaping a more just and sustainable future.

1. Turning Menstrual Health into Opportunity: Reusable Pads Producers (Elfeta and Guna)

In Elfeta and Guna, a group of determined young people identified a problem that affected

countless schoolgirls in their community: lack of access to affordable menstrual hygiene products.

Many girls were missing classes during their periods due to stigma and limited resources, which directly affected their education and confidence.

With support from SPA II, the youth group received formal training and began producing reusable sanitary pads. Using locally available materials, youth in Elfeta manufactured more than 3,000 pads, which were distributed in schools and communities.

The initiative had a dual impact, providing a reliable and sustainable menstrual health solution while also generating income for the young producers.

In Guna district, the youth successfully began selling their reusable sanitary pads, earning 275 Birr which they reinvested into their IGA. Demonstrating their commitment to community well-being, they also donated dignity kits to 10 high school girls from economically challenged households.

To empower local communities and preserve the dignity of women and girls, Gunna WWG purchased 300 reusable sanitary pads from Rama, a local producer based in Gunna.

This strategic procurement supports a community-based enterprise and strengthens local capacity, with the pads acquired at 60 birr each to provide to the Kimir dingay Debre Tabor Hospital One-Stop Center (OSC) based on a needs assessment.



Figure 9: Gunna WWG providing reusable sanitary pads and non-medical material for K/DInagy HC GBV room

The journey was not without challenges. Access to key sewing machinery limited their ability to meet growing demand. Instead of giving up, the group pooled resources and began fundraising among members to purchase the necessary equipment.

They also developed partnerships with local schools and the Youth and Sport Office to expand distribution and awareness.

Beyond income, the project created a safe space for dialogue about menstrual health and stigma.

Teachers and students alike reported more open conversations about hygiene and dignity.

By combining health advocacy with entrepreneurship, these young people showed how youth-led innovation can tackle sensitive social issues while improving livelihoods.

2. Restoring the Environment and Building Futures: Indigenous Seed Bank (Guna LRP)

Agriculture in Guna faces increasing threats from climate change, soil degradation, and dependence on commercial seed markets.

Recognizing these challenges, the Trudel Seed Multiplication Cooperative, supported by SPA II, decided to revive indigenous seed varieties that are better suited to local conditions and more resilient to drought.

In 2025, the cooperative, which included five dedicated farmers (three of them women), partnered with the local Agriculture Office, Cooperative Office, and Debre Tabor University.

Together, they identified two indigenous crops; local onion (Keyshinkurt) and Yewuha Bakila beans to propagate and distribute. These crops are not only drought-resistant but also carry deep cultural significance, linking present farming practices with ancestral knowledge.



Figure 10: Rama preparation of land for Keyshinkurt (red onion) production; they are one of targeted actors for indigenous seed multiplication of this Variety

The farmers allocated plots of land to demonstrate indigenous seed cultivation, while students and researchers provided technical support on viability and storage methods. The initiative quickly gained traction: local farmers expressed interest in buying seeds, and the cooperative began planning for larger-scale multiplication and training programs.

For youth in Guna, this project represents more than just farming; it is about seed sovereignty and climate resilience.

By reviving indigenous seeds, they are protecting biodiversity, strengthening food security, and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

It also shows how young people can bridge tradition and innovation, ensuring their communities adapt to future challenges.

3. Women Leading with Fire: Energy-Saving Stove Producers (Ameya & Guna LRPs)

For many rural women in Ethiopia, cooking over open fires is both a necessity and a burden.

It consumes hours of labor in collecting firewood, exposes families to harmful smoke, and contributes to deforestation.

In Ameya and Guna, youth and women watch groups, supported by SPA II decided to change this by producing energy-saving stoves.

In Ameya's Tumi Kebele, twelve married young women organized themselves into a cooperative. With training and partial cost coverage from SPA II, they began producing durable stoves that use far less firewood than traditional methods.

In their first production cycle, they manufactured 51 stoves, selling them to local households and opening a group bank account to manage profits.



Figure 11: Women engaged in energy saving stove production in Ameya

Similarly, in Guna's Rama kebele, young women scaled up their energy-stove production, selling products during public events such as International Women's Day.

Beyond sales, they received technical support from local government offices and even conducted experience-sharing sessions with other producers.

The impact has been significant. Families using the stoves save time and labor, while reducing pressure on local forests.

Women producers gained income, financial independence, and community recognition. Through innovation, persistence, and entrepreneurship, these women have become champions of both climate justice and economic empowerment, demonstrating how small technologies can bring big changes.

4. Youth Leadership and Influence in Environmental Governance (Addis Ababa)

As a result of his participation in Active Citizenship discussions, capacity-building trainings, and online engagements facilitated by GP Ethiopia, Tsegamlak Alemayehu, a youth representative from Global Platform Addis Ababa, was able to actively participate in a stakeholder meeting hosted by the Addis Ababa Environmental Protection Authority on June 5th, 2025.

The meeting brought together a diverse set of stakeholders, including women's representatives, elders' organizations, disability organizations, local community institutions, and government bodies, to review the Authority's achievements and discuss plans for the upcoming year.

His prior exposure to civic engagement and structured discussions equipped him with the confidence and knowledge to raise key issues effectively.

During the meeting, he contributed to discussions on social accountability in major projects, the sustainability of the Green Legacy initiative, citizen complaint mechanisms, and the creation of a Youth Advisory Council. His insights reflected not only his own understanding but also the learning and leadership skills he had developed through GP's programs.

These contributions were recognized and appreciated by other participants, demonstrating how sustained engagement in youth-led spaces can translate into meaningful participation in formal governance processes.



Figure 12: Tsegamlak participating in the stakeholders meeting hosted by the Addis Ababa Environmental Protection Authority(EPA)

As a direct result of the inputs provided by Tsegamlak and other youth representatives, the Authority accepted the recommendation to formally include young people in its

Environmental Council. This led to Tsegamlak's selection as a delegate to the newly formed Youth Advisory Council.

This outcome highlights how GP Ethiopia's cumulative support through discussions, capacity-building, and digital engagement; empowers young people to influence environmental governance, participate in decision-making, and support impactful initiatives such as the "Clean Ethiopia" campaign and ongoing Green Legacy tree-planting efforts.

5. Resetting the Narrative: A Young Leader's Journey in Tigray (Raya)

Negasi Aberhe was born and raised in southern Tigray. As a child he enjoyed school and performed well, later earning a place at Addis Ababa Science and Technology University (AASTU) far from home. But while he was in his fourth year of studies, armed conflict broke out.

He graduated in chemical engineering and returned to a hometown deeply affected by conflict.

Feeling responsible for supporting his single mother and younger sister, Negasi became disillusioned.

"I thought I would get opportunities and make something of myself if I went to school but I was wrong.

I got it into my head that one out of ten thousand people would make it in this economy," he recalls.

In his search for a better future, Negasi decided to migrate illegally by sea to another country.

When he reached Djibouti, an act of compassion changed his path. "She didn't want to go on the water, she was scared.

I felt sorry for her and interfered while the brokers were yelling at her. They got angry and left both of us behind," he explains. Forced to return home, he felt hopeless until he came across the Global Platform (GP), a youth space supported under the SPAII project.

"I enjoyed the topics that were being raised at the GP. I stayed for a while," he says. Through the GP, Negasi received trainings on peacebuilding, gender-based violence (GBV), harmful traditional practices (HTP) and climate justice.

"GP gave me purpose. I started being active. It wasn't long when I was elected as the Raya local GP leader," he says. "Before joining GP, I only worried about my economic stability.

I felt lonely. GP gave me a space to find the likes of me. I have had a mindset shift which has made me happier in life. I am not alone now; I am more confident, sociable and focused on my goals."

Negasi now finds satisfaction in advocating for social justice and warning his peers about the dangers of illegal migration. He has used platforms such as the local Edir - a traditional community-based social insurance group, to share his story.

Together with peers, he turns his experiences into a **“movie-like”** narrative to spark discussion. **“The biggest win is that they go back home and talk about it,”** he says.

For the future, Negasi hopes to reach more passionate youth and strengthen the national GP network so it can lead youth-led community initiatives and sustain itself economically.

Personally, he plans to build a business producing environmentally friendly soap, linking to his

degree in chemical engineering. “I want to show my peers that there is hope for them if they reset their thinking, shift their narratives and believe in themselves. And I want to show this in action”.



Figure 13: *Negassi Abrehe, youth leader*

