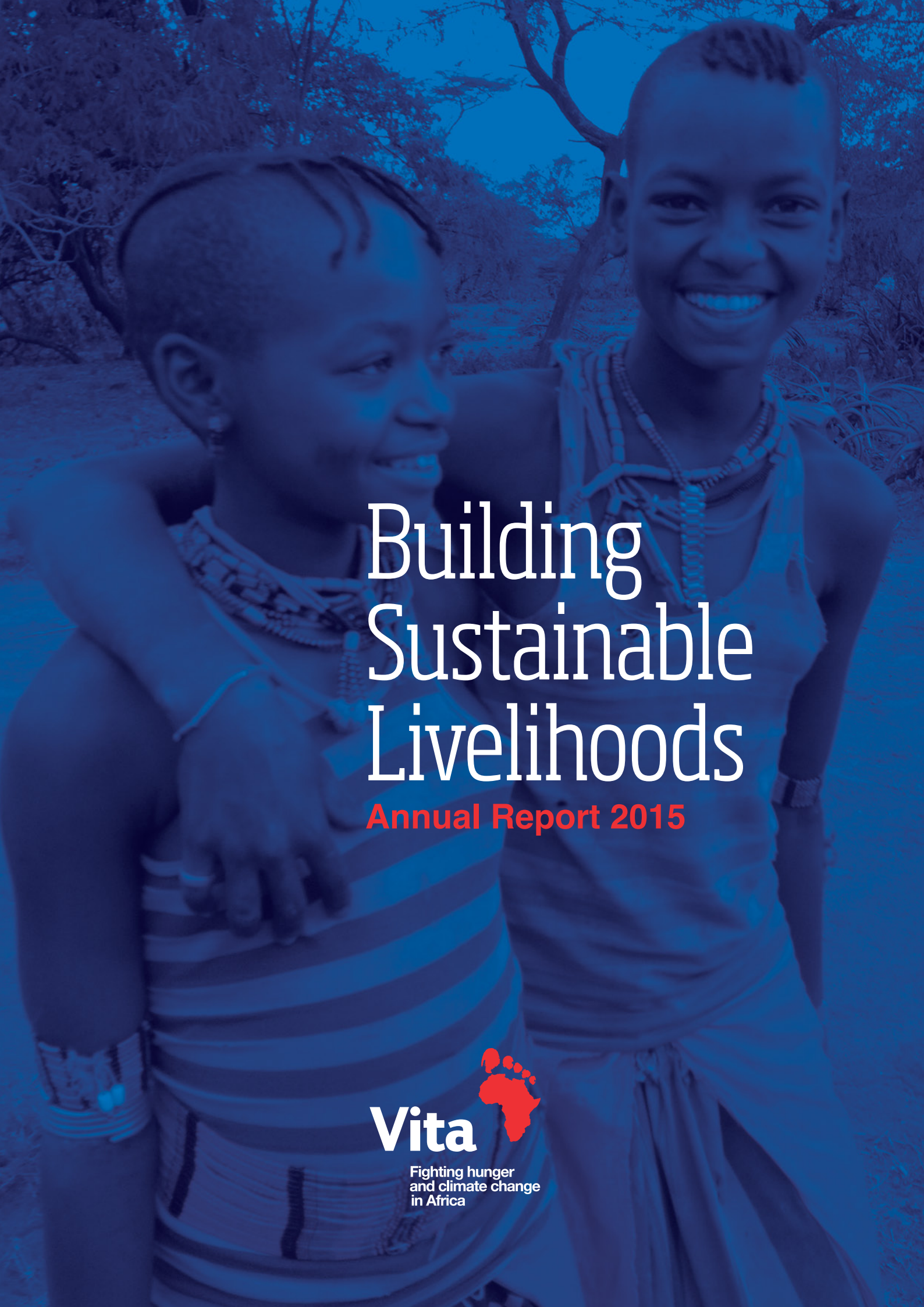


Building Sustainable Livelihoods

Annual Report 2015

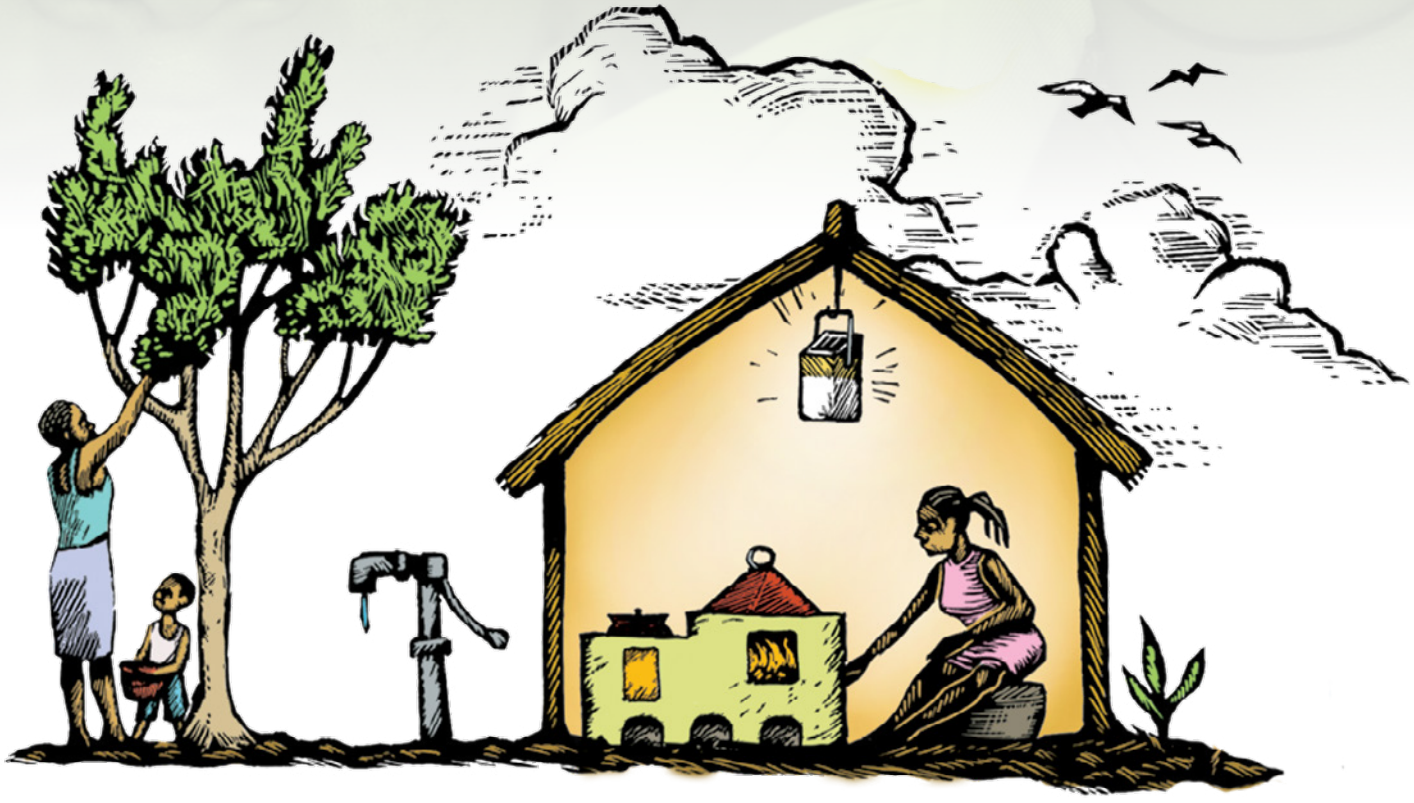
Vita

Fighting hunger and climate change in Africa

Irish Aid
Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

EUROPEAID

Vita would like to thank Irish Aid and the EU for their support during 2015



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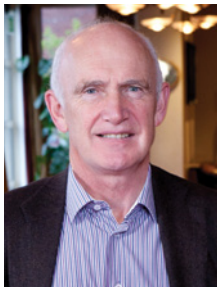
Chairman's report



Dermot Byrne
Chairman

Having joined Vita as Chairman in June 2015, succeeding the very capable and knowledgeable Dr Séamus Crosse, my first priority was to get a thorough understanding of Vita and the team behind it. This included getting to know many new Board members who were appointed at the same time and this proved to be a great opportunity to introduce new committee structures.

It was a very busy year for Vita. Financially, 2015 saw the highest turnover in our history which meant that we also spent more and achieved more than we have in any other year. This is reflected in the fact that the Vita team is 70 strong now, working in Dublin, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

A key priority for the Board was to put in place the highest standards of governance for the Vita Green Impact Fund which will deliver a platform for sustainable funding for Vita over the next several years. I am confident that this Fund, which enables families in East Africa to build sustainable livelihoods while lowering carbon emissions, will prove to be a milestone for Vita and ensure that we remain relevant, impactful and effective for many more years to come.

In July I travelled to Eritrea with Vita CEO John Weakliam to meet the Vita team in Asmara and visit some key projects. I saw first-hand how the Vita team evoke the spirit of community – led development which is such a strong feature of our work. I met with many of our local partners and travelled to Adi Tekelezan to see some improved stoves and meet with the women who built them.

I was lucky enough to meet some of the dairy farmers taking part in the pilot programme that will eventually transform the national dairy herd in Eritrea, in what is a very compelling project.

In 2015 Eritrea became the seventh country to join the Vita-led Irish Potato Coalition, and I met with some of the potato farmers in the Maekel region. It became very apparent to me, as I visited potato and dairy farms, just how much more is achieved by working with strategic partners like Teagasc, Dovea Genetics and members of the Irish Potato Federation. Not only do our partners have world class skills, experience and knowledge in their fields but their generosity of spirit means that our teams and farmers learn best international practice.

I rounded out the year with a visit to Ethiopia, meeting the teams in the Vita offices in Addis Ababa and Arba Minch. I again met with many farmers, whose businesses ranged from growing haricot beans and mango to hybrid maize and potato, all supported by Vita.

I was particularly impressed with some of the newer programmes such as the Chencha Stoves Manufacturing and Marketing Co-op and the Doko Yoyery Women's Savings and Investment Co-op, where we met two incredibly articulate and enterprising women, Damanich Degaga and Sefate Oda. Over 30% of households in East Africa are female headed, and this creates a huge amount of social problems. Vita and Irish Aid have devised very impactful and scalable programmes like these co-ops that enable women like Sefate and Damanich to earn a living. Crucially, their improved circumstances give them the opportunity to provide better and more nutritious food for their children, as well as keeping them in education longer.

This past year has given me the opportunity to understand how Vita works, and I see that by integrating programmes that focus on energy, food and water security, problems are being addressed in a holistic way, with much greater impact. I also recognise the importance of community – led development, and how this value has enabled Vita to be incredibly effective in delivering programmes. But above all, I see the strategic partnerships that Vita has forged, from the Sisters of Mercy to the EU and the Irish Embassy in Ethiopia has really enabled us to achieve far more that our relatively modest size would suggest.

Message from Vita CEO

John Weakliam
CEO

2015 was a year of great change and growth for Vita, as we welcomed many new Board members and a new Chairman who were immediately tasked with helping us a deliver a strategy for the next five years.

I would like to thank the outgoing chairman, Seamus Crosse for his unique knowledge and leadership throughout his tenure and outgoing Board members Brian Weber and Dermot Nolan for the support, guidance and great skill that they brought to the role.

The latter part of 2015 was also a time for finalizing all details for the Vita Green Impact Fund, and we are truly grateful for the invaluable and sustained advice that we received from world class legal firms Sidley Austin and Matheson.

The establishment of the Vita Green Impact Fund will allow Irish and International social impact and energy investors to directly reach rural African households, providing vital water, sanitation and household energy.

This next generation model of development positions Vita at the heart of the global struggle against hunger and climate change as captured in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and COP21 in 2015. It is central to Vita's strategy of building resilience to hunger and climate change within our partner communities.

These farm families in Eritrea and Ethiopia are at the epicentre of hunger and climate change, suffering erratic rainfall, failed crops and a degraded environment. Solutions are at hand and the will to change is gaining momentum. 2016 and beyond will see the 100 state signatories to the COP21 Paris Agreement begin implementing their climate mitigation plans. COP22, scheduled for November 2016, will act as an audit forum for the signatories. Standing shoulder to shoulder with these governments, many global corporates have embedded climate change and environmental protection at the centre of their strategies. Finally and most significantly – ordinary people are accepting that reality of climate change and the urgency for action.

The VGIF is far removed from the traditional models of aid as it delivers real impact to our partner communities while providing a realistic return to the investor as well as a certifiable and significant reduction in carbon emissions into our precious atmosphere. This has enabled Vita to create a platform for sustainable funding, and is completely unique in the Irish development landscape.

Vita has always striven to provide a bridge for African communities to access the technology, means and skills to build sustainable livelihoods. In 2015 that bridge allowed Ireland's best agricultural knowledge to reach potato and dairy farmers in Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well creating a portal for the other five members of the Irish Potato Coalition to access this knowledge. The solution that Vita offers will enable many thousands of farm families to access improved food, water and energy. We offer this in partnership with our valued supporters, the Sisters of Mercy Western Province, Chantal McCabe, Electric Aid and Bank of Ireland and well as the Quinn Family, John O'Shea and Joe Dennigans.

We have used the strategic exercise we engaged in at the end of 2015 to redefine who we are, and establish a future direction for Vita. This not only embraces all of our organisational goals, but reflects the changes in the international development sector - from donor behaviour to the increased emphasis on climate mitigation and resilience programmes. This is covered in detail in our chapter on strategic direction.

Vita has a vision!

What we want to see is thriving rural economies in Africa with access to services, markets and livelihoods for all.

We want to see rural communities become independent of traditional charity models and instead engaging with investors and partners to build sustainable livelihoods.

We recognise that to combat hunger, you have to combat the impacts of climate change at the same time, and this integrated approach is the key to delivering sustainable livelihoods to families in East Africa.

What's our mission?

We feel strongly that our mission is to reduce poverty, hunger and inequality amongst rural households through knowledge-backed, community-led initiatives, leading to sustainable livelihoods.

We don't do this on our own! Vita can only achieve this by partnering with people and organisations of exceptional skill, talent and experience who bring tremendous energy and value to our programmes.

About Vita - FIGHTING HUNGER AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFRICA

Vita is a smart, successful next generation Irish development partner working in Ethiopia and Eritrea to fight hunger and climate change. Vita works with rural families in these countries to achieve sustainable livelihoods via integrated water, food and household energy programmes that seamlessly integrate with our climate smart agriculture programmes .

Our programmes impact on the lives of thousands of families through our innovative food, water and energy security work. We improve the capacity of our local partner communities and develop solutions that are replicable beyond the boundaries of our projects.

Vita is funded by the Irish Government through Irish Aid, the European Union, philanthropic organisations, religious communities, the Irish agri – food sector, public donations and private individuals.

Vita is keen to move beyond the restrictions of the traditional charitable model towards one which embraces genuine and viable partnerships with the communities within which we work, in a role more akin to development investment partner and facilitator.

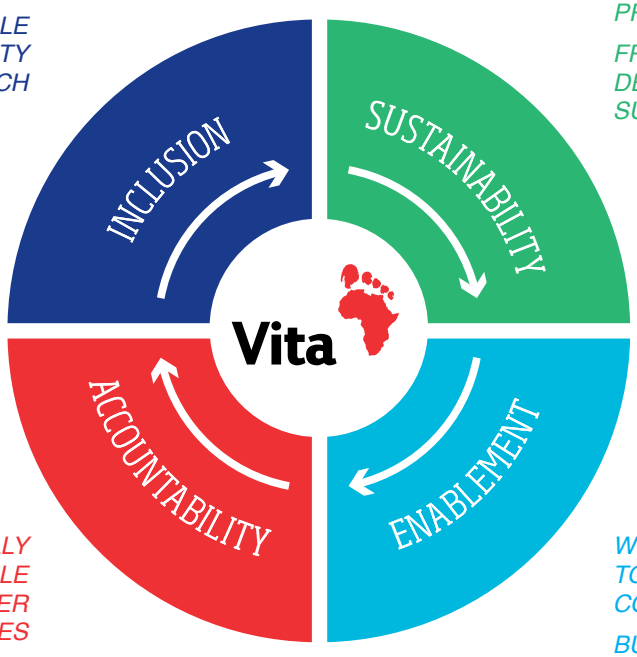
Our Values

NOBODY GETS LEFT BEHIND

WHOLE COMMUNITY APPROACH

BENEFITS OUTLIVE VITA'S PRESENCE

FREE FROM DEPENDENCY OR SUBSIDY



FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TO PARTNER COMMUNITIES

COMMITMENTS, QUALITY & RESULTS

WORKING TOGETHER WITH COMMUNITIES

BUILDING ON LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

ETHIOPIA

Highlights of 2015

Approx. €2.5m Invested

14,790 Farmers Training Hours

10,000 Farmers

140 Community Potato Stores

663,000kgs Seed Potato

161 Seed Producer Groups

1,072 Women Goat Farmers

3,000 Families

25 Women's Investment & Savings Co-ops

275,000kgs Seedlings

6,432 Goats

500 Families in Sustainable Livelihoods

ERITREA

Highlights of 2015

27,100 Farmers Training Hours

30,000 Litres of Milk

29 Calves

26 Cows and 1 Bull

Approx. €0.5m Invested

300% increase in potato production

21,786 Stoves

2,000 Women Trained

25,000 People Directly Benefitting

Living Our Values: INCLUSION

In our experience, successful projects are ones in which communities themselves identify areas where improvements are required and work with Vita to deliver solutions. All of our projects are designed and managed in conjunction with local steering committees and as a part of this ethos, communities contribute to delivering all projects. Normally, this contribution comes in the form of labour or supplies. Our community-led approach also ensures that the project is planned with sustainability in mind, and can scale up quickly and efficiently. Fundamentally, this model is fully inclusive and ensures that nobody gets left behind.

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is a means of mobilising communities to eliminate open defecation, and the concept was devised by Dr Kamal Kar in India in 2000. Communities take their own action to become open defecation free, with advice and support from Vita on how best to achieve this. We focus on community education around issues of health and sanitation and the importance of latrine usage. They provide their own labour and materials to construct private and communal latrines. Vita's initial leadership work with CLTS has led to the model being adopted by neighbouring communities, with no direct Vita inputs. This is a great endorsement of the success of this initiative, which has now been adopted by 200,000 households in the Gamo Gofa zone alone. At a national level, the Ethiopian Government now has a programme in place to deliver CLTS to 24 million households by 2020.

Another way to ensure inclusion across a community is to implement programmes through a co - operative structure. This not only ensures inclusion, but also supports quality control, fair pricing, knowledge sharing and downward pressure on pricing. The co-operative model also allows smaller, remote communities to connect with, learn from and trade with larger communities. Vita provides important supports to communities when setting up co-ops, from financial management, book keeping and documentation to skills training and field schools. The system can be applied to all programmes, from potato seed multiplier co-ops in Ethiopia to stove making co –ops in Eritrea. Since July 2015, Vita has supported the setup of 25 women's savings and investment co-ops in the Gamo Gofa zone alone, with many more planned.

INCLUSION - *We take a whole community approach and strive for all households in the communities where we work to have access to services, technologies and skills through our programmes.*

Zenesh's Story

Zenesh Yatare and Tekle Gutalo first heard of the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) about five years ago from Vita. *"Back then it was impossible to walk around without stepping in faeces,"* says Zenesh. *"Vita facilitators showed us the impact of the flies on the faeces, and asked us what the solution might be. There were many questions when we got stuck in - who was going to dig the hole, who will build the structure, but Vita impressed on us that it was up to us. The hole is at least 2m deep and lasts for 2 years."*

"The difference?," emphasises Tekle, *"Before, there were between two and three people going to the hospital from the area every day, especially during the rainy season. It is seven kilometres by foot. People suffering from the likes of typhoid often had to be carried on stretchers that tied up their family members bringing them to hospital, along with the 100-200Br cost of the treatment. Often when a disease like that gets into the house, all the children are affected."*

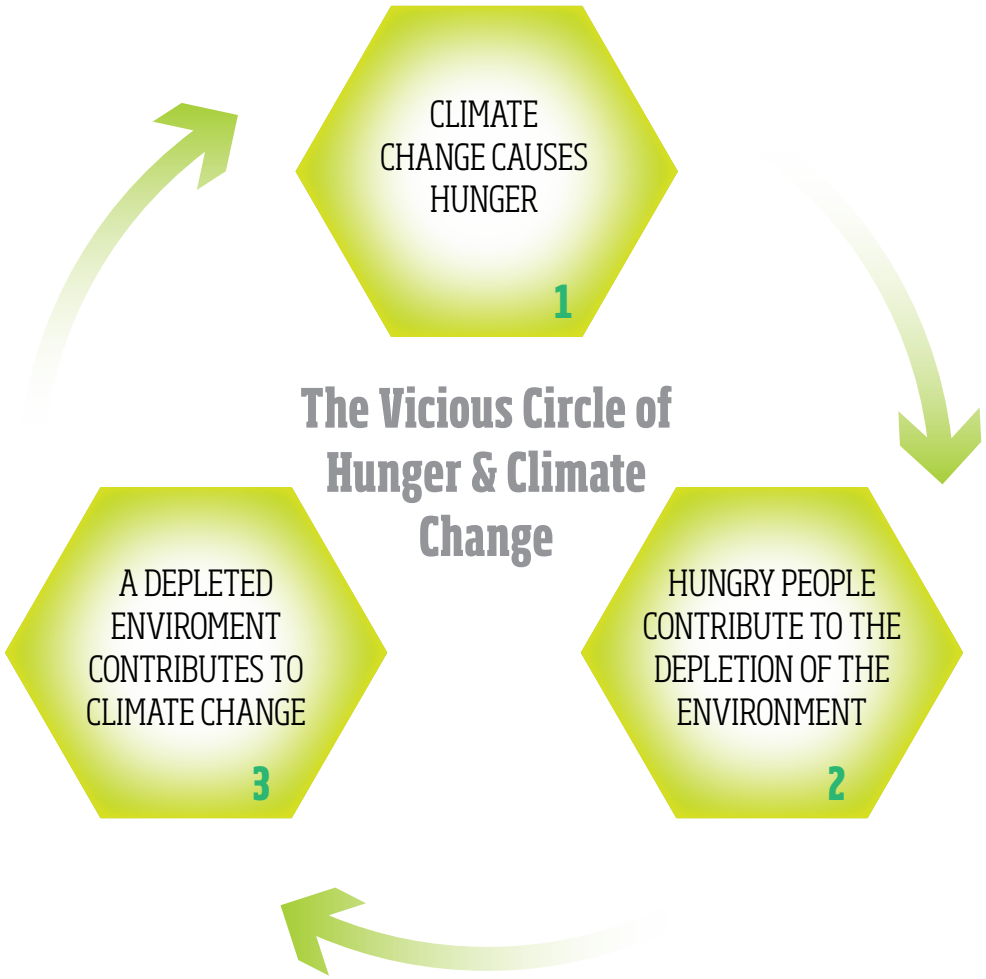
Now it's only one person every six months that needs to go to the hospital. It means that children get to school more, and more work happens in the fields.

Climate Change & Vita

The world has moved on from the days when the occasional church gate collection ensured that Ireland was 'doing it's bit' for the poor of Africa. Back then poverty, coupled with a lack of both education and opportunity, were considered the only barriers to a better quality of life for the vast majority of Africans. However, even though the newest and gravest enemy of progress, climate change, began to develop in the late nineties, its potential for future devastation and the undermining of generations of work to alleviate poverty is only now being accepted.

One of the key drivers of hunger now is climate change, and the World Bank estimates that 100m more people will be hungry as a direct result of climate change by 2030.

Vita has long recognised this link between hunger, our degraded environment and climate change. Our teams build in climate adaption and mitigation measures to all of Vita's programmes. Sustainable livelihoods are not just about food, water and energy security – our programmes must also encapsulate the long term sustainability of the environment around the communities we work with.



1 *The World Bank says that climate change will cause an extra 100m people to experience poverty*

2 *80,000 acres of forest disappears from the earth every day to clear land for food production (WWF)*

3 *Deforestation accounts for 11% of human-caused emissions*

Climate Change - Real Life Applications

It's a huge undertaking to change the way people have farmed since biblical times but when drought, environmental destruction and erratic weather patterns are reversing progress and causing widespread poverty, change becomes necessary for their very survival.

Vita and the Irish Embassy in Ethiopia are working together to introduce new methods and approaches in farming that will help combat the challenges presented by climate change. These include everything from better water management to more climate smart crops like haricot beans, potatoes and maize.

In Eritrea, Vita has introduced dairy and potato programmes designed to enable farmers thrive under these challenging conditions.

However in Eritrea, a land of over four million people and Ethiopia, which has a population of 90 million, the ability to scale up is vital to success. Vita has a number of dynamic relationship with other development partners, including AFAP, Gorta SHA and Concern Universal that enable us to have a much broader impact than our size would normally allow.

Living our Values: SUSTAINABILITY

Integrated Household Package

The best indicator of success for any NGO is when we are no longer required by our partner communities, and achieving that must be our sole aim and focus. In order for people to have the best chance of achieving self-sufficiency, Vita takes an integrated approach which addresses the household energy, water and food security needs of families. Resolving these needs is the only way to create solid foundations for sustainable livelihoods.

Families do not thrive in depleted environments, and the principle of sustainability that is woven through all of Vita's projects is not confined to the home or farm. Rather, it must embrace the wider environment that the community occupies. Vita's programmes embrace the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and biomass, as well as carbon – reducing technology and processes.

The Women of Adi Kieh

Adi Keih is a modest village in Eritrea, about 18 Km to the south of the capital Asmara in a mountainous, hostile and unforgiving landscape. The residents of this harsh land must work hard to make a living – more challenging these days because of the impacts of climate change on the weather patterns.

Critical to any sustainable livelihood is access to water, and the people of Adi Keih have been desperate for a number of years to get their old community water pump fixed. Three of those families affected are the Emhatsions and the Kibroms. These are farming families, and they grow Sorghum, wheat and maize to sell in the local markets. But they have to walk at least two kilometres and back again to collect water from the nearest working pump, often twice daily. This water isn't even clean, so they then have to collect fuel wood to boil it. This is both arduous and time consuming, and in many cases it is the women and children who perform these menial tasks.

Hansu Emhatsion is 35, she lives with her husband and six children and she spends at least three hours each day fetching water – she often has to go to the well twice under a blazing sun. She is used to it, but sometimes she needs to ask her older children to come with her and she hates this. *"Often they are late for school, or can't go at all because we are fetching water. I feel so bad when that happens. Having the local pump fixed would mean a lot to the families around here."*

Vita has recently incorporated Adi Kieh into it's Water Bore Hole Rehabilitation Scheme, much to the delight of and their neighbours. *"Almost 500 people live in this village,"* says Mehret. *"Think of all the hours walking and carrying that this pump will save. The whole village will be better because of it."*

Hansu and the other women in the village have seen huge improvements in the daily lives since they got access to water and improved cook stoves. Hansu feels that she has a lot more time now. *"I make baskets in my spare time, which I can sell in the markets in Asmara. Nowadays, because I don't have to spent so much time fetching and gathering wood and water, I can make a lot more baskets. This extra money is very useful to me, as I have six children. I feel we have a better life now than before, and a better future for our children."*

SUSTAINABILITY *We work together with local communities to ensure that our support builds on existing local knowledge and community expertise, thus enabling people to have more control over their livelihoods.*

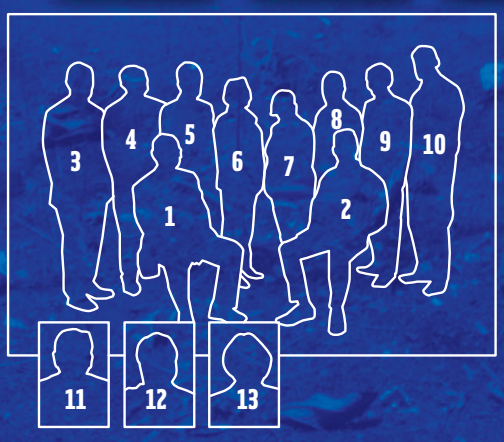
The Board

Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2015

VITA (RTI) Limited

(A Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital)

Registration Number 152968
Charity Number CHY 9670
Charity Regulator Number 20024192



1 *Dermot Byrne (Chairman)*
2 *John Weakliam (Chief Executive)*
3 *Noel Griffin*
4 *Gerry Murphy*
5 *Kevin Farrell*
6 *Jean Marie Duffy*
7 *Deirdre Hannigan*
8 *Padraig O'Ruairc*
9 *John Wallace*
10 *Roughan Mc Namara*
11 *Larry O'Loughlin*
12 *Barry C Magee*
13 *Maureen O'Dea*

Company Information

TRUSTEES	**Dermot Byrne** (Chairman, appointed 29th June 2015) **Fr. Norman Fitzgerald** (President) **Rebecca Bristow** (Resigned 14th September 2015) **Dr. Seamus Crosse** (Resigned 24th September 2015) **Jean Marie Duffy** (Appointed 29th June 2015) **Kevin Farrell** (Appointed 29th June 2015) **Noel Griffin** (Appointed 29th June 2015) **Deirdre Hannigan** (Appointed 24th September 2015) **Barry Charles Magee** (Appointed 29th June 2015) **Roughan Mc Namara** (Appointed 29th June 2015) **Gerry Murphy** (Appointed 29th June 2015) **Maureen O'Dea** **Larry O'Loughlin** (Appointed 10th December 2015) **Padraig O'Ruairc** (Appointed 29th June 2015) **Brian Weber** (Resigned 13th April 2016)
SECRETARY	**John Wallace**
COMPANY NUMBER	152968
REVENUE CHARITY NUMBER	CHY 9670
CHARITY REGULATOR NUMBER	20024192
REGISTERED OFFICE	Equity House Ormond Quay Upper Dublin 7
AUDITORS	Anne Brady McQuillans DFK Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors Iveagh Court Harcourt Road Dublin 2
BUSINESS ADDRESS	Equity House Ormond Quay Upper, Dublin 7
PRINCIPAL BANKERS	Bank of Ireland Kill O' The Grange Co. Dublin Bank of Ireland Drumcondra Dublin 9 Bank of Ireland O'Connell Street Co. Dublin
SOLICITORS	Matheson Ormsby Prentice Solicitors 70 Sir John Rogerson's Quay Dublin 2

Financial Report

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2015

(Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	Total	Total
	2015	2015	2015	2014
	€	€	€	€
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:				
Charitable activities	2,448,068	-	2,448,068	1,930,813
Voluntary income	-	855,494	855,494	450,339
Trading activities	-	64,329	64,329	63,595
Other incoming resources	-	6	6	114
Total income	**2,448,068**	**919,829**	**3,367,897**	**2,468,934**
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Charitable activities	2,448,068	532,547	2,980,615	2,153,059
Governance costs	-	63,811	63,811	81,824
Cost of generating voluntary income	-	197,736	197,736	179,116
Cost of generating trading income	-	39,363	39,363	37,906
Total Resources Expended	**2,448,068**	**833,457**	**3,281,525**	**2,451,905**
Net Incoming Resources for the year	-	86,372	86,372	17,029
Total funds brought forward	-	421,994	421,994	404,965
Total funds carried forward	**-**	**508,366**	**508,366**	**421,994**

Income and expenditure arises from continuing operations. The organisation has no recognised gains or losses other than the movement in funds for the period therefore there was no requirement to produce a statement of recognised gains or losses.

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 30/06/16 and signed on its behalf by

Dermot Byrne
Chairman

Date: 30/06/16

D Hannigan
Deirdre Hannigan
Trustee

Date: 30/06/16

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2015

	2015		2014	
	€	€	€	€
FIXED ASSETS:				
Tangible Assets		3,942		1,644
CURRENT ASSETS:				
Debtors	254,657		151,147	
Cash at bank and in hand	477,995		937,127	
	732,652		**1,088,274**	
CREDITORS:				
Amounts falling due within one year	(228,228)		(667,924)	
NET ASSETS:				
Net Current Assets (Liabilities)		504,424		420,350
Net assets		**508,366**		**421,994**
FUNDS:				
Unrestricted funds		508,366		421,994
Restricted funds		-		-
Total funds		**508,366**		**421,994**

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 30/06/16 and signed on its behalf by

Dermot Byrne
Chairman

Date: 30/06/16

Deirdre Hannigan
Trustee

Date: 30/06/16

CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2015

	2015	2014
	€	€
CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	(455,322)	261,476
CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Returns on investments and servicing of finance	6	114
Capital expenditure	(3,816)	(369)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	**(3,810)**	**(255)**
CASH FLOW FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities	**-**	**-**
Change in cash and cash equivalents during the reporting period	(459,132)	(261,221)
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December 2014	937,127	675,906
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December 2015	477,995	937,127

What is the Green Impact Fund ?

The Vita Green Impact Fund invests in high impact projects that reduces emissions, generates funds in communities and provides a return to investors through the provision of improved cook stoves, clean water, solar lights and sustainable tree planting schemes. This sustainable, innovative, next generation model of development provides investors with a triple bottom line;

Green – Climate Change Mitigation (400,000 tonnes of CO2 emission savings)

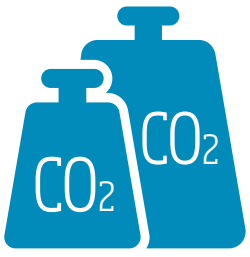
Impact – Social, health & financial transformation for 200,000 people in Africa

Fund – 10% cumulative return on investment

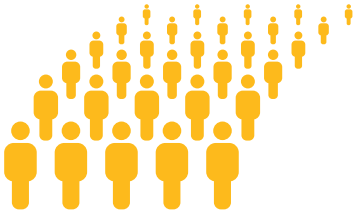
THE CLIMATE IMPACT

Fighting climate change requires transitioning our global energy to run on wind, solar and other renewable sources and improving the ways in which we leverage existing energy. It is about growing food for a global population approaching nine billion people and making the earth's population more efficient and less pollutant. The challenge is to achieve climate justice for those most adversely affected. Developed countries are primarily responsible for climate change through economic development, from which they have previously benefited.

The 2015 climate change summit in Paris clearly demonstrated the need for all countries and individuals to consider and reduce their carbon emissions, and pursue less polluting models of development. The conference negotiated a global agreement on the reduction of climate change, which represented a consensus of the representatives of the 196 parties attending it which have been formalised in a legally binding agreement.



420,000 tonnes in verified CO_2 emissions reduction



200,000 people using low-carbon and low-cost energy solutions

500,000 trees planted

Carbon Finance

LOCATION

In ERITREA, Vita intends to invest in **18 PROJECTS:**

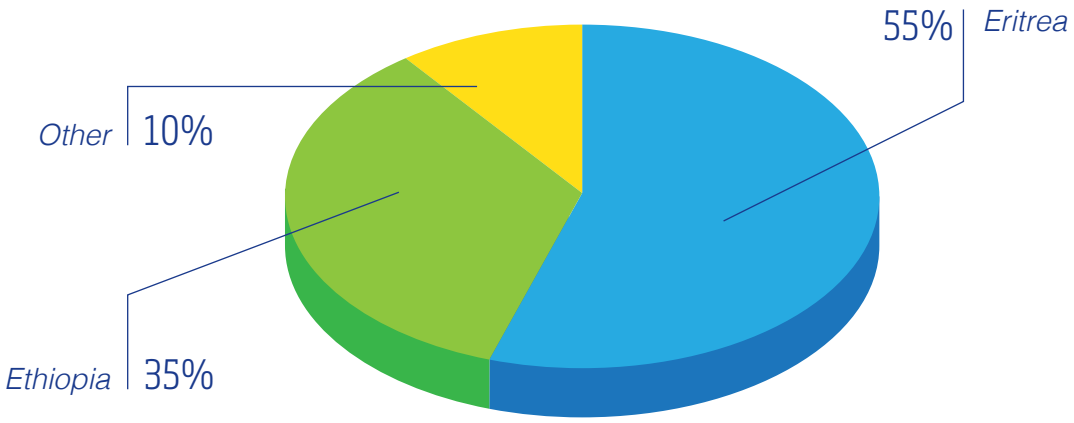
- 12 water projects
- 6 cook stoves projects

In ETHIOPIA, Vita intends to invest in **14 PROJECTS:**

- 10 water projects
- 4 cook stoves projects

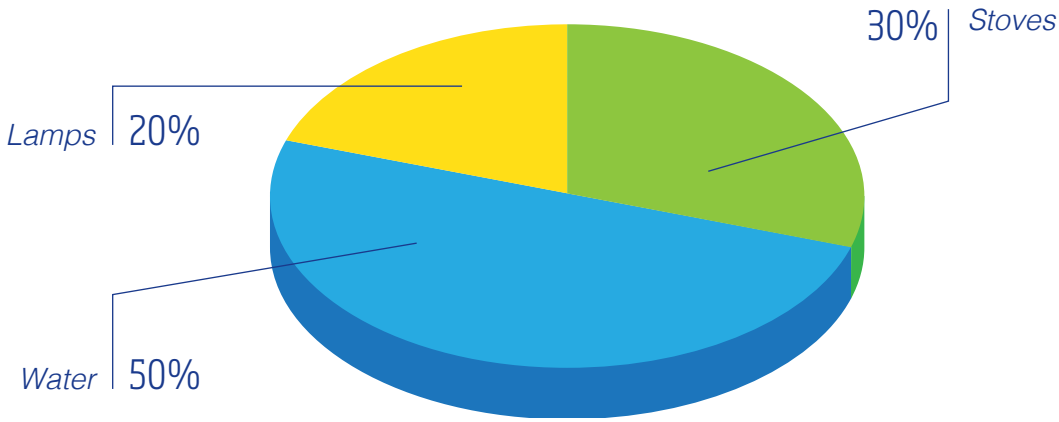
ALLOCATION OF FUNDS BY COUNTRY

In East Africa, Vita intends to invest in 10 water projects through local partners



PROJECTS

Vita intends to invest in **42 PROJECTS** which will generate carbon credits. This would provide 200,000 people with fuel-efficient cook-stoves and a sustainable water supply through repairs to hand pumps. In addition, investment will be made into lighting and, as a result, up to 100,000 of those people receiving stoves and water will also get solar lamps.



How it Works

Loans

Investment Programme

Services provided by Vita

Transforming People's Lives

Revenue from Carbon Credits

Voluntary Carbon Market

CO_2 Emmissions Savings

Community Impact

Verified Outcomes

Water

WATER - THE GAME CHANGER FOR AFRICA

Over the decades, billions of euros have been poured into community water access projects in East Africa by a variety of government and development agencies with the best of intentions. However, after a number of years, many of these water pumps (approximately 50% in East Africa) have fallen into disrepair due to a lack of spare parts and the local skills required to fix them. Now, as drought sweeps across the East Africa region, repairing these pumps is absolutely critical. The Vita Green Impact Fund will enable 320 communities, over 200,000 people, to source spare parts and learn to maintain their own water pumps. Already over 48 communities have renewed access to clean water and the rest will have access before the end of 2017.

Dirty water needs to be boiled to make it safe to drink – clean water does not which saves wood from an already severely depleted resource and reduces the amount of carbon released when fuel is burnt. Community wells also have tremendous health benefits for families as there is a drastic reduction in water borne diseases because people are not drawing their drinking water from the same sources as those used by animals.

But access to clean water not only has an impact beyond the health and environment of families, but also on their mental welfare and future prospects. In East Africa, women and children often lead lives of drudgery spending many hours every days fetching clean water and sticks. Access to local clean water means that women's time can be used more effectively and children can concentrate more on their education and play.

Solar Lights

SOLAR ENERGY LIGHTS UP AFRICAN HOMES AND FUTURES

620 million people in sub Saharan Africa live without access to electricity and the impact on these families' lives is tremendous. Solar light kits are a cheap and obvious solution to some of the challenges faced by these families.

Traditional lamps are lit by kerosene, the fumes of which are quite toxic in enclosed areas such as the mud huts common in East Africa, and are also highly flammable. Eye and respiratory illness is very common in families which rely on Kerosene as a source of lighting.

It is also relatively expensive for a family and can cost up to €50 a year, in places where sometimes the average income is less than €1 a day. The solar lamp kits that Vita is investing in cost about €30 each and so will pay for themselves in a matter of months. They are very robust and can last for many years. The money saved can be diverted into health, food and education.

Each solar kit consists of two lights and a mobile phone charger, which connects even the most rural families to the outside world. Having access to solar lights means that children can study in the evenings in a safe, clean environment, while women can support themselves with small scale enterprises such as handcrafts.

In Zada, Southern Ethiopia, a selection of solar lights were trialled before the most appropriate one was selected. Vita's Tadele Girma is shown demonstrating one of the models to local farmers

Trees

GREENING THE LANDSCAPE

For the women of sub Saharan Africa, the only source of cooking and lighting for their homes is the trees that grow around them. Millions of women and children spend many hours a day living lives of drudgery as they trek further and further afield in the search for wood which is then gathered into huge bundles that they must carry home on their backs.

As a result of many years of this practice as well as unsustainable industrial logging the land is now devoid of forests. This is catastrophic for the environment and the communities who live there.

Trees anchor the soil, they retain water and they provide food, shade and habitat to animals, insect and humans alike. The depletion of the forests in Africa has helped drive climate change and hunger, and further increases the vulnerability of these people.

The Green impact fund focuses not just on saving trees, through improved stoves, solar lights and clean water but also on sustainable forestry programmes. For example, each stove recipient will get a number of saplings. These are grown in a plantation in the village and the women are taught how to manage the trees sustainable to ensure reduced carbon emissions and better energy security for all of the village.

The saplings are also sustainably sourced, coming from a series of co-op nurseries that Vita has set up to ensure a constant flow of trees to the communities in the Green Zones. The most commonly planted tree is the Moringa, or miracle tree, so-called because every bit is usable, and the leaves are extremely nutritious. In the last few years Vita has planted over 1.5 million trees in Eritrea and has started a similar programme in Ethiopia.

Stoves

TEKEA'S STORY - When cooking can save the planet

Tekea Tsefagherghesh keeps her home spotlessly clean – not an easy task in Eritrea, a hot and dusty sub-Saharan country. Tekea's village, Adi Tekelezan, is 2,500 metres above sea level and about 40 minutes' drive north of Eritrea's capital Asmara. Within the low walls is the mid-sized hut that contains Tekea's most proud possession; her self-built improved cook stove.

The traditional stove with its open flame and voracious appetite for fuel is very detrimental for the health of families and their living environments. One familiar image of Africa is of women and children carrying heavy bundles of sticks, sometimes for many miles. Tekea was one such woman, gathering sticks three or four times a week and carrying them many miles back to her home, or spending her little amount of cash buying them instead.

Tekea's new stove is quite substantial, at over two metres in length. It has various doors and openings to regulate the temperature as well as large, round hotplates so that she can cook Injera, the traditional bread eaten all over East Africa. Tekea has decorated her stove with hand painted flowers and leaves. The huge advantage of the stove is that it uses nearly 60% less fuel than the traditional stove and any harmful fumes are funnelled out of the small, enclosed kitchen hut. All of the materials used to build the stove are sourced locally.

In this community-led programme, Vita supplies the moulds and the knowledge, but the women themselves contribute towards the cost, as well as building each stove with the help of the other village women. Involving the whole community ensures that no individual family is left out. Tekea is now a trainer, and works with Vita's home economists to bring the programme to the wider community. Vita has an integrated approach to enabling farm families achieve sustainable livelihoods, involving not just stoves but clean water pumps, solar lights latrines and trees. This creates 'green zones' that not only benefit the families but have a hugely positive impact on the environment.

For Tekea, the drudgery of gathering sticks is dramatically reduced, and this has given her far more time to spend working to better her future and that of her children. Tekea, like more than 40% of women in Eritrea, rears her family of seven children alone. The extra income she can now earn is used to buy milk and help pay for her children's education

Living our Values: ENABLEMENT

Every community builds up it's own bank of knowledge and expertise, and the role of an organisation like Vita is to enable those communities to enhance that core knowledge, and add new skills to their repertoire. Vita can draw on a range of skills internally, due to a very well educated and experienced staff. However, we also have access to tremendous knowledge and experience across the agriculture and business sectors which our partner communities can access for their own betterment.

Vita isn't a hand out organisation, either. We see ourselves as partners, and we work in partnership with our communities to enable them to be free of poverty. This means that there is a 'nothing – for – nothing' thread running through all of our work. Communities can access services and resources, but they must do some of the heavy lifting themselves, which usually means building the infrastructure required for the programme, whether that is the water gullies for an irrigation project of the storage units for potatoes.

A great example of this is the Irish Potato Coalition projects. The farmers of East Africa have been growing potatoes for generations, but with very mixed results. Their seed is worn out, the soil is spent and the intermittent rains can cause chaos in the fields.

Vita has tapped into the basic skills and knowledge of the farming community and enhanced them through a variety of means. A knowledge led programme with Teagasc, Vita and Irish Aid is producing better quality seed, with regular field schools and co-op training to teach the basics on crop rotation, soil sanitation and the use of fertilisers.

Sirene's Story

Sirene Meshesha is one of the potato farmers from Dita in the Gamo Gofa zone, where she also keeps a cow. She is a 45 year old woman and mother of seven children. She always grew potatoes alongside her false banana plants but her yields were quite low and what she didn't sell was quickly eaten by her large family. Sirene has been in the Vita potato programme for the last four years and one of the first improvements she made was a very basic step – she started to plant her potatoes in drills. *"I was amazed at how this cut down on weeding - especially after the rains when everything grows so quickly!."* Planting in drills also helps with disease control which is very welcome in an area that suffers from the dreaded bacterial wilt.

As part of the programme Sirene also joined the co-op, and that has given her access to better seed, fertilisers and pesticides. She attends Vita – run field study classes to learn about soil sanitation and rotation, and perhaps most significantly, she has built a potato store herself in her compound to keep her potatoes fresh for longer.

During the first year she got a 13-fold increase on what she planted and this increased to 18-fold in the second year. Her yield dropped back by 30% again in the 3rd year due to the introduction of bacteria wilt, which she is now learning to manage.

ENABLEMENT

We work together with local communities to ensure that our support builds on existing local knowledge and community expertise, thus enabling people to have more control over their livelihoods.

Living our Values: ACCOUNTABILITY

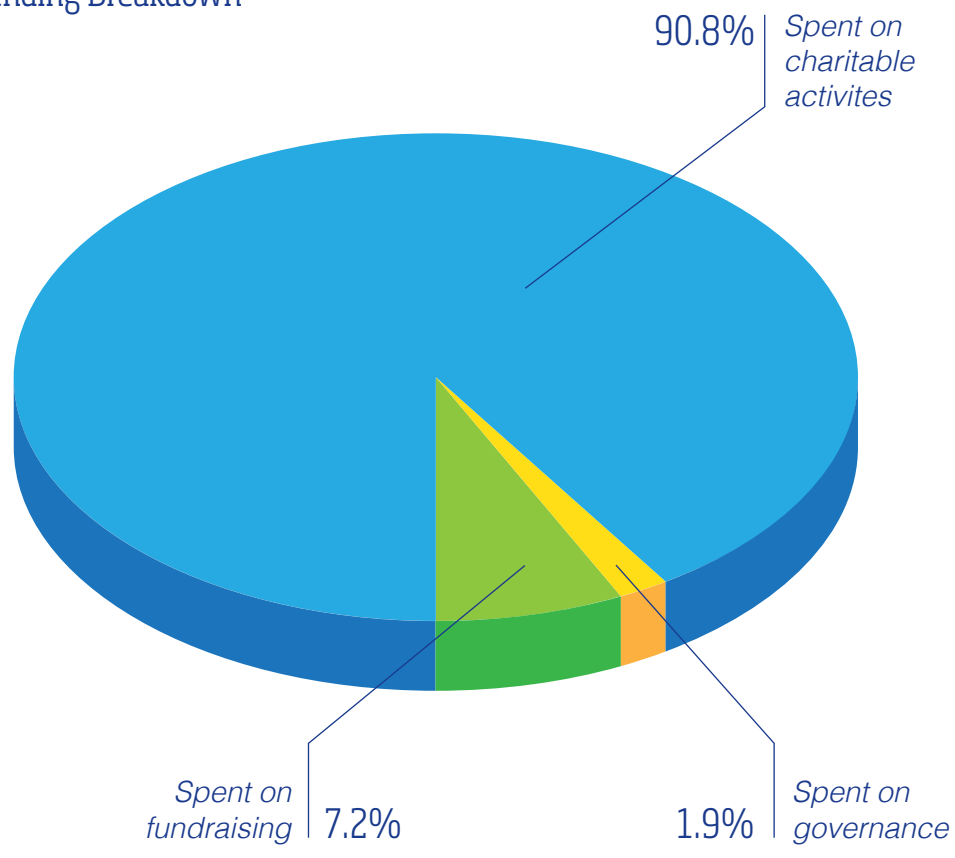
We ensure downward accountability through our community-led approach. Part of this is the collaborative local engagement in Project Steering Committees which operate at regional level and Project Implementation Committees at village level. These are established for all Vita programmes and provide the opportunity for representatives of the communities, women's groups, farmer's groups and local government workers to discuss and agree projects, processes, budgets and monitoring reports. These committees also allows all the participants to agree next steps and evaluate the outcomes as well as platforms for raising issues and concerns.

It's important that our partner communities have a strong voice throughout the process, from planning onwards, and the programme content is based on the outputs of workshops, analyses and surveys. These fora provide for accountability and participation in the implementation through regular reporting to them by Vita.

These structures ensure that we are always accountable to our primary stakeholders, the partner communities in Ethiopia and Eritrea. However, we are also accountable to every donor, institutional or otherwise, for every penny we spend. Below is a graph of how we spent our money in 2015.

ACCOUNTABILITY *We are committed to ensuring that we are fully accountable to our intended beneficiaries and to all other stakeholders for our agreed commitments, for the quality of our programmes and for the results achieved*

Spending Breakdown



Aberesh's Story

Being accountable brings strength to a community

You would be hard pressed to find a cleaner living compound than the one belonging to Aberesh Tomuko, who lives here with her five children. Her youngest, a curious and energetic little two year old called Shuluka, is inclined to take visitors by the hand and show them around the family farm, in southern highlands of Ethiopia. It is a tropical, green and abundant region, predominantly populated by small farmers like Aberesh whose average farm size is 0.2ha.

Aberesh used to grow barley, beans, false banana and the local varieties of potato on her farm but struggled to keep the family fed and make a living. Life was very difficult for the Tomukos, as indeed it was for her many neighbours in this very populous part of rural Ethiopia.

Four years ago, Aberesh was invited to join a newly formed famer's co-op, which Vita instigated to develop potato farming in the Gamo Gofa Region. The potato is one of the world's most important foods containing all the vitamins and minerals needed for a body to sustain itself. It grows well in these high altitudes and is a staple food in east Africa. However, the local variety was not performing well, with yields very low. This was because the seed being used was poor quality and the plants were prone to disease, due to poor soil management and outdated farming practices.

Vita is a community led organisation, and Aberesh, alongside 19 other women and 140 men were selected by their village councils to join the co-op.

Being in the co-op enables groups of farmers to bulk buy fertilisers and pesticides, as well as sell in bulk to local distributors. Participants are trained in book keeping and document management, and their results are audited routinely. The systems within the co-op structure are designed to keep standards high, underpin quality and enable transparency for all participants. This ultimately ensures a good, marketable product whose success benefits the whole community and makes them more resilient to hunger.

Vita is also accountable to Aberesh and her co-op colleagues, the village council and the local government outreach workers who form the project working group that oversees the programme. If a project in underperforming, it is beholden upon Vita to investigate and determine the cause. Vita's funding partners for this programme include Irish Aid, the Irish Potato Federation and individual farmers from Ireland. Robust audits, frequent public communications and regular, detailed reports are amongst the tools Vita uses to demonstrate accountability to all of our stakeholders.

Meanwhile, Aberesh and her family are thriving. The seeds she uses are high yielding, and she has also got two potato stores to help her keep her potatoes for longer periods of time. This is important as the prices are low when everyone is harvesting at the same time.

"The most important thing for me and my family is food security" says Aberesh. "I need to know that my family will eat all the year round. I hadn't grown potatos before because the local variety was low yielding and troublesome, but now most of my land is used for potatos. I have listened to everything the potato coalition experts have told me."

Aberesh is doing her best to better her situation. She has installed a latrine and hand washing facilities and this year she hopes to purchase and improved cook stove.

Vita

Fighting hunger
and climate change
in Africa

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