

Integral:

Planting Resilience in a Neglected Crisis

How Integral Alliance Members and local church partners are helping coffee farmers adapt to climate change.

In Ethiopia, where coffee farming has sustained families for generations, climate change is quietly reshaping daily life. Rainfall is more unpredictable, temperatures are rising and coffee yields are declining. Many in Ethiopia face pressure from climate change, hunger and an unstable economy but rural communities receive little international attention.

This is what Integral Alliance describes as a “neglected crisis”. A complex crisis where there are high levels of need but little global attention from the media and donors.

For farming families in the Dilla area of Southern Ethiopia, these challenges are deeply personal. “We were struggling with falling coffee yields,” explains one farmer called Selam*. “If the season is good, we can earn enough from coffee,” she says. “But it fluctuates. Everything depends on the weather.”

Climate change is no longer a future threat. It is already affecting harvests, livelihoods, and long-term stability.



Picture Credit: Salem and her husband were selected as a “model farmer household” because of their hard work and the quality of their agricultural practices. Credit © Veronika Macsai, Integra Foundation (Slovakia)

In response to these growing pressures, Integra Foundation (Slovakia) launched a joint initiative introducing macadamia trees as a long-term climate resilience solution for smallholder coffee farmers. The aim of the project is to help farmers adapt to the changing climate by diversifying what they grow.

Integra has started this project with support from fellow Integral Members Tearfund Netherlands and Baptist World Aid Australia, and in close collaboration with its local joint-venture company TSE and the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Development Commission (EKHC).

Macadamia trees are particularly suitable for the region. They can be intercropped with coffee, help improve soil quality, support biodiversity and provide farmers with an additional long-term source of income. Macadamia trees can remain productive for decades — even

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more than a century.

For Salem, this project is also about opportunity and stability for the next generation. Four of her children already attend a private school and she hopes that income from macadamia production will enable all her family to have an education.

“Our main focus is our children,” she says. “We want them to have a better education and a better life in the future. We do not want them to repeat the life we are living now.”

Salem and her husband were selected as a “model farmer household” because of both their hard work and the quality of their agricultural practices.

“We support the community in two ways,” she explains. “We invite people to work with us so they can learn, and we also advise other farmers so they can practice the same activities on their own farms.” Salem is also a member of a women’s self-help group, where knowledge and experience are shared among community members.

The project brings together three Members of the Integral Alliance, the local church Partner and another local Partner. During a joint monitoring visit in 2025, representatives from all Partners visited farming communities together, listening to farmers, learning from local experiences and strengthening their shared response to this neglected crisis. Integral Alliance believes that collaboration between international agencies, local churches and community organisations can help ensure these crises are not forgotten.

Yet for families facing the slow-moving impact of climate change, resilience is built gradually — tree by tree, season by season.

“God knows the future,” Salem says quietly. “But we are working hard so our children can have a better one.”

Story based on field interviews conducted in Dilla, South Ethiopia, in the framework of the joint macadamia climate resilience initiative implemented by Integra Foundation, Tearfund Netherlands, Baptist World Aid Australia, and Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Development Commission (EKHC).

** Names have been changed for protection.*