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# Abune Tedros

This small community church is found in central Tigray, a region nearly permanently affected by shortages of water. The woodland is small and heterogeneous, but considering its small size it is species rich. It suffers from heavy grazing pressure by livestock and as a result much of the hill slopes are severely eroded.



Name: **Abune Tedros**

Status: church

Site Code: TU02

Floristic Region: TU

Region: 1 (Central Tigray)

Altitude: 2230 m

Latitude: 14° 07' N

Longitude: 38° 39' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: < 0.5 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Acacia etbaica*, *Acacia seyal*,

*Euphorbia tirucalli*

shrub/ground: *Maytenus obscura*

No of woody species: 34

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 2

Threats: grazing, erosion, lack of regeneration

Photograph: Abune Tedros was established on the top of this small hill next to the main Axum to Wukro road.

The small community church of Abune Tedros lies on the top of a small hill in an undulating landscape of central Tigray. The church woodland covers nearly all the small hill. The species composition is variable and the shrub and ground layer is nearly non-existent, with severe soil erosion in places. The various woody species tend to form small monotypic patches. Although some species (legumes) are clearly aligned in rows, the locals insist that none of these species have been planted.

Graves are found in the inner churchyard, delineated by a stone wall, which was recently extended into the outer yard. Despite re-using graves on a 6-10 years basis the original size of the inner churchyard was not sufficient to accommodate all the dead in recent years.

The tree/shrub resource around Abune Tedros is abundant, although mostly small stems, and dominated by legumes (e.g. *Acacia* spp.) adapted to dry conditions. Natural regeneration of trees appear to occur at irregular intervals.

The countryside around Abune Tedros is dry and nearly marginal for crop production. However, there is a large irrigated field system within site of the Abune Tedros community, but the locals have no rights to any of the land or the water.

### History

This appears to be a long-established community and church. Especially in recent years, these farmers have been finding hard to make ends meet as both the quality of the land has deteriorated and the amount of land is now not sufficient to provide necessary food to the existing population. Land is so scarce that graves are being regularly re-used as

an expansion of the graveyard is not viewed as being in the interest of the community.

### Conservation status

In view of its small size the woodland is species rich and it has a value in its own right, being the only conserved woodland in the area.



The undergrowth of this woodland is non-existent and in many areas severe soil erosion occurs as here at the edge of the woodland. Dominant species here are *Acacia* spp. in the foreground and *Euphorbia candelabrum* to the left.



View of the nearby countryside from the church hill. Habitations are restricted to the vicinity of the church where agriculture is possible. Then the landscape is dominated by open acacia scrub.

### Threats

Heavy grazing by livestock prevents natural regeneration and perpetuates severe soil erosion in much of the woodland.

Drought does not appear to have a direct impact natural tree regeneration as indicated by the important tree recruitment observed at a nearby abandoned farm. Its impact is indirect through grazing, livestock all available edible plants.

### Management

Ideally the hill should be fenced off to keep herbivores out of the woodland or at least to regulate the grazing pressure. In practice all available greenery is viewed by the locals as essential to keep their livestock alive as local plant resources are so limited. This issue can only be resolved in conjunction with an improvement of the community's agricultural resources.