

SUMMARY OF THE EXCHANGE VISIT AND STUDY TOUR TO THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA – October 2011

Introduction

Within the framework of the Poverty and Environment Initiative PEI - a study visit to Rwanda was held from 23 to 29 October 2011, which brought together a team of the Government of Malawi and a team of the Government of Mozambique. The main objective of the study visit was to exchange experiences and learn from successful practices and innovations in the implementation of PEI project in Rwanda, Malawi and Mozambique. Visiting teams learned from Rwanda on how they overcame challenges in the implementation and manage to focus on developing a knowledge base on poverty and the environment linkages based on studies and analysis carried out.

The team includes two representatives from Mozambique's Ministry of Environmental Coordination (MICOA), two representatives from the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD), one representative from the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), namely:

- 1.Sr. Erasmo Nhachungwe - Director of Planning and Studies - MICOA
- 2.Sra. Lolita Hilário Fundo - PEI Project Coordinator Phase II
- 3.Sr. Albano Manjate - Head of Planning Department - MPD
4. Sra. Graciete Socrates - Head of Planning Department - MICOA
- 5.Sra. Eulalia Macome - Environment Focal Point - Ministry of Agriculture
- 6.Sra. Nadia Adrião - Coordinator of the Pillar of Cross Cutting Issues - MPD
- 7.Sra. Paula Bila - Focal Point for the Environment in the National Budget Directorate

Exchange visit progress

The agenda of the visit was divided into three parts namely:

1. Presentations on the work of the project in three countries;
2. Visits to the government institutions that PEI Rwanda works with;
3. Visit to the demonstration project.

The Coordinator of the PEI-Rwanda made a brief presentation on the Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), and work within the PEI in conjunction with United Nations organizations (UNEP / UNDP)

During the presentation, it was seen that PEI Rwanda develops activities aimed at integrating environmental aspects in policies and sector plans and management of natural resources particularly aimed towards ecosystem restoration and maintenance. In this context some activities have been developed by REMA as well as other government institutions committed to environmental conservation and development, some examples being: the recovery of degraded land through recharging of rain water, through the use of sand dams and sub-soil, water retention dams and reforestation, construction

of tanks with community and domestic gutters and tanks for human consumption and livestock watering, conservation farming and production of biogas for household communities.

The Mozambican delegation shared their experiences concerning the integration of environmental aspects in plans, the creation of the matrix of cross-cutting issues as well as the economic study that is underway in Mozambique which aims to analyze and establish links between natural resource management on the one hand, and poverty reduction, sustainable development and economic well-being on the other. During an introductory visit from the Director General of REMA, she made some considerations about the sector and its commitment to environmental causes, and recommended the need for visiting countries to strengthen environmental education and prioritize dialogue with other institutions, as well as having a direct involvement in the activities and processes for the environment. It was also noted that political commitment is of great importance to compliance with any environmental agenda.

The second part of the program consisted of meetings with various sectors that have been working with the PEI-Rwanda in implementing the programme. In particular:

- United Nations Development Program UNDP-Where the debate focused on the role that UNDP plays in implementing PEI, its role in resource mobilization, as well as to sustain the project through new and additional interventions;
- Ministry of Natural Resources where the REMA is integrated. The Permanent Secretary shared the experience of Rwanda in implementing the environmental agenda in particular in implementing the land use plan, in particular waste management program for the banishment of plastic, wetland protection and erosion.
- Ministry of Economy and Finance has played a vital role in ensuring the inclusion of environmental considerations into other sectors, particularly in budgeting, having used as a basis the MDG 1 and 7 to allocate resources to the environment. It was explained that the environmental sector has worked hard in order to provide the finance sector with guidelines on the integration of environment into other sectors and once again it was noted that the role of decision makers was very important;
- Ministry of Agriculture, this is one of the sectors which in a way has conflicting interests with environment, but it was assured that in Rwanda the environmental legislation is always taken into account in the various activities of the agricultural sector.
- The Ministry of Industry and Trade shared the work that promotes the industrial and commercial activity based on the environmental law and the requirement for EIA projects. They also referred to the promotion of business activities with tax incentive programmes.

During the visits to the sector ministries the group was briefed on the integration of environmental aspects in plans and sector programmes. It was clear that the project had been accepted and assimilated by the part of leaders in other ministries, thanks to the role played by REMA (PEI host institution).

Visit to demonstration project

The third part of the study tour consisted of a visit to the demonstration project funded by the PEI and in collaboration with other entities; situated in the district of Rubaya, NW Rwanda. It was seen the great impact made by the project by the construction of collection system for rainwater, livestock, production of bio-gas and water collection to decrease erosion in an integrated system consisting of the ecosystem and community development aimed at poverty reduction.

Findings

Visits to the Ministries

The planning processes have incorporated environmental aspects and all activities are funded in accordance to the plan.

At the end of the planning process, all ministers, general director and province leaders sign a contract with the President in which they undertake to comply with the annual plan prepared, this is called a performance contract; yearly, it is monitored that the contract has been met. This government's commitment allows a harmonized planning and execution of environmental activities to be undertaken efficiently.

Visit to the demonstration project

- A water harvesting system was built to store rain water for human consumption; it consists of collection in the houses from the roofs and 7 storage tanks with a capacity of 1000 liters each. The initiative benefits 200 families and their livestock;
- The rainwater was also directed and stored in another tank to avoid surface run off and consequently soil erosion.
- The installed capacity (300,000 liters) was defined in terms of average annual rainfall, which is 2000mm, and the slope of the land;
- The system was built and is being managed by the local community, supported by PEI and other donors under the coordination of REMA.
- Each family is entitled to 80 liters of water / day, and therefore need to contribute to the maintenance of the system. People who are disabled and the elderly are entitled to equal amounts of water for free.

In the early implementation of the system there was resistance from the communities to change, as other organizations with similar projects had previously tried to implement and had no impact on the wellbeing of the communities. During the assessment, it was found that women easily adhere to these jobs compared to men because men work outside of the community or move to the city in search of employment. Within all the families involved, 75% of the turnout of people for daily work in construction and management of water are women, particularly mothers heads of households.

Visit to the Memorial

The memorial (Museum) was built to honor and remember the genocide of 1994/98 and the previous years. The history of genocide is represented in photos, newspaper clippings, videos, human bones and other belongings from the victims which were about 800,000.

Final meeting and presentation of the balance of the visit

Following the working visits to various institutions, the delegation had a meeting in which a general assessment of the lessons learned during the visit was carried out.

The UNDP-UNEP PEF and PEI Regional team expressed its joy at having seen that the attitude and group discussions between the first day, and the balance after the final study visit, changed with regards to their approach to PEI. They emphasized the idea about the need of a more comprehensive approach and to develop integrated programs at the high level design of policies and plans for joint management of these tools.

Conclusions

The Rwandan government, through REMA has managed to have the environmental agenda understood and implemented at all levels and in different sectors. The PEI has come to add value on the work already underway in REMA. The continuous process of making the case of the economic value of environmental protection at the Ministry of Finance has proved very useful in achieving the objectives of REMA.

The Rubaya district that was visited has a soil and rock texture which facilitates the construction and effectiveness of collection systems and water conservation;

- The Rwandese take very seriously the issue of environmental management especially the collection and conservation of water;
- Communities have a good knowledge of techniques and awareness of the need for collection, water conservation and ecosystem restoration using environmentally friendly techniques;
- Mobilizing the community is crucial to the success of such programs. There was a strong community awareness campaign on the acceptance of this project.
- Women are the main driving force behind the development of family and community, women's involvement in the activities of collecting water is higher than for men because they are children and those responsible for water demand.

Experiences gathered that can be applied to projects and planning processes in Mozambique:

- Increased aggressiveness in environmental awareness programs;
- Higher commitment from decision makers;
- Increased emphasis on management of natural resources and ecosystems;
- Restoration of ecosystems using sand dams to reduce soil erosion;
- Conservation agriculture;
- Rainwater harvesting, with the construction of storage tanks to be used in the dry season;

- To implement the biogas production in the communities with the aim to decrease the heavy pressure on natural resources and poverty reduction.
- Sectoral planning needs to be synchronized with the emphasis on environmental causes;
- To intensify awareness campaigns in rural communities and in the urban capital, on the mitigation of environmental problems;
- Advocate to the communities about the economic return of natural resource management.

Some of these experiences can be implemented quickly and without great cost, however others will require additional funding and assistance, not only in terms of technical experts, but also of craftsmen who are knowledgeable about this type of construction.

Maputo on November 11, 2011