

Smallholder Market-Led Project/Climate Smart Agriculture for Resilient Livelihoods, Eswatini

Local level partners: Traditional Authorities and Regional Administrators, 37 Chiefdoms across three of the four regions in Eswatini

National level partners:

1. Ministry of Agriculture - (Department of Agriculture and Extension, Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services, Land Use Department, Early warning Unit,

Agricultural Marketing Unit, and Communications department).

2. Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs - (Forestry Department, Eswatini Environment Authority, Eswatini National Trust Commission).
3. Ministry of Tinkhundla and Development - (Community Development Department, Decentralisation Unit, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit)

International partners:

1. International Centre for Agriculture and Forestry (ICRAF)
2. International Potato Centre (CIP)
3. WFP
4. UNDP
5. FAO



Sikhunyane Land Rehabilitation and Re-use Project: A response to the 3 RIO Conventions and more...

Compiled by: Lynn Kota

Authors: Contributions by officers and community members



What approach did the team take to achieve the impact?



Awareness raising with Traditional Authorities on the detriments of land degradation and how it affects the livelihoods of the communities they have been entrusted to lead. Awareness on how such can be reversed, where it has already occurred and prevented where land degradation has not occurred.



Awareness raising with the whole community on same, led by the trained Traditional Authorities, with the team providing only deeper technical issues.



Exposure visits to communities that have successfully rehabilitated their lands and are realising tangible economic and health benefits from the land, including Global Environment Benefits (e.g. increase in bee population, restoration of indigenous fruit trees, a 'come back' of wild mushrooms, and a 'come back' of small wild animals like rabbits, monkeys and other small wild animals).



A series of **training events** for the whole community on environmental management.



Selection of an **Environmental Management Committee** by the community.



Intensive residential trainings of the Environmental Management Group.



Identification of a degraded site that would yield the most benefit if it was rehabilitated.

The site will have some of the benefits below:

1. It is close to a graveyard, so their dearly departed were in danger of being exposed.
2. It is upstream of a river that feeds the Multi-million Lubovane reservoir, thus rehabilitation will decrease chances of siltation of the reservoir.
3. It will shorten the distance to essential services, which had been increased as a result of the huge gullies.
4. The nearby river would provide the much needed water for irrigation of the crops and plants that would be planted etc.



Acquisition of a **Chief's Letter of Consent**, for the group to have indefinite user rights of the land, even if it had been allocated to a homestead before it was degraded.



Allocation of another piece of land to the homestead that had been allocated the land previously. (In this case no homestead came forth to say the land had been allocated to them).



Identification and selection of **community members** that would dedicate their time and effort to carryout the rehabilitation works, and then benefit from its re-use. This was open to all members of Sikhunyane. (A majority of households in this community form the user group).



Identification and selection of two community-based facilitators, who would be on site during the times set for working by the group.



Commencement of works, with the **technical and social assistance** of project officers and the relevant partners.



What impact did the effort have and on/for whom?



Knowledge for the whole community, including traditional Authorities on issues of land degradation, biodiversity conservation and climate change, and how they relate to each other.



Specific knowledge on the **rehabilitation of degraded lands**.



Knowledge on the use of solar energy, and other renewable energy sources. (Since the previously degraded land is upstream of a river, solar energy is used to pump the water, thus saving on electricity costs).



Awareness on the power of collaboration and partnership among men, women and the youth. (Project activities were carried out as per the ability and suitability of the different groupings. For example, manning of the solar energy plant is done by the youth, fencing of the whole area was done mostly by men, planting of crops and fruit trees was done mainly by women etc.).



Increase in **food and nutrition security** for the community.



Restoration of individual household dignity. They no longer have to depend on food aid.



Awareness of the power of **collaboration and partnership among development agencies** working in the same communities.



Caring for the welfare of others without expecting reward. The river that feeds the Lubovane reservoir, which was in danger of siltation within a few years, does not benefit the Sikhunyane community. It benefits sugar cane farmers downstream.

The concept of catchment management has been planted in the minds of the Sikhunyane community, and whenever they have people visiting their project, they always emphasize that. Rivers do not have boundaries. Always be aware that what you do or do not do upstream will affect downstream users.



What were the main ingredients that led to the impact?

1. **Information dissemination and access to that information** from previous similar initiatives to communities and development practitioners.
2. **Political will** from both the **Government of Eswatini** and from the **Traditional Authorities**.
3. Willingness of the people to **bring back their lost resources** as a result of either their carelessness or lack of knowledge.
4. Willingness of **development agencies** to collaborate and assist the community.
5. Willingness of communities to offer their **indigenous knowledge** and readiness of development practitioners to learn from the communities.
6. Knowledge of the dire consequences of **doing nothing to resolve the problem by the community**.



Where or under which circumstances could this effort be scaled?

1. **This is not a 'one size fits all' kind of a project.** It would therefore be scalable in communities with similar circumstances. For example being aware that the shoe that is pinching will not stop doing so until I do something about it, and not expect the Government to come to my rescue.
2. Where the **Traditional Authorities have the political will** to restore degraded lands.
3. Political will from the **Government of Eswatini** is also essential.
4. Where there are other **development partners with different skills and expertise**, so that available funds go a long way as opposed to depending on consultants and contractors.



What are the main lessons that were learned?

- **Collaboration and Partnership** is key at all levels.
- **Communities learn better from each other that from the so called experts.** Exposure visits and exchange visits among communities are therefore key.
- **Indigenous knowledge has to be documented.** It has to be. It is so valuable.
- **Traditional Authorities and Communities** must be the ones realizing that they have a problem and be prepared to lead to achieve the solution.
- It is high time that the **Government of Eswatini considers elements of bottom-up budgeting.** Projects at the end of the day must eventually be part of the mainstream government programmes.
- For sustainability, project initiatives have to have some **economic use value** for the communities.