

Project Evaluation Report on ‘Enhancing the Adaptive Management Capacities of Rural Communities for Sustainable Land Management in the Highlands of Eastern Africa’: Devolution of SLM scaling up roles and responsibilities.

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Project title: Enhancing the Adaptive Management Capacities of Rural Communities for Sustainable Land Management in the Highlands of Eastern Africa

Evaluation period: April 3-26, 2012

Region: Eastern Africa; Uganda and Ethiopia

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Devolution of SLM scaling up roles and responsibilities**

Summary

The African Highlands Initiative (AHI) of the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) and the Policy Analysis and Advocacy Programme (PAAP) of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) in partnership with Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), and National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) have been implementing a four year (2009-2013) IDRC-funded project entitled, ‘Enhancing the Adaptive Management Capacities of Rural Communities for Sustainable Land Management in the Highlands of Eastern Africa’.

The project’s overall objective was to improve agricultural productivity and increase rural income and food security from sustainable utilization of agro-based natural resources in the highlands of Eastern Africa. The purpose is to scale up integrated natural resources management innovations for sustainable agricultural productivity and food security in the highlands of Eastern Africa, with particular focus in Ethiopia and Uganda.

The ToR outlines that this consultancy study is expected to make an in-depth investigation of the likelihood of success of the project within the time frame, research quality and effectiveness, and value for money. The devolution process, with the aim of obtaining critical insights on the partnership dynamics in scaling-up SLM innovations in the decentralized settings in Uganda and Ethiopia, is considered as a central component of the mission. Moreover, the TOR emphasized that this study is expected to be embedded within a utilization-focused evaluation and assess the progress made in fostering functional IPs. The mission was expected to evaluate the progress made in achieving the following project objectives:

- a. Evaluating the action research implemented by the innovation platforms in terms of generating relevant policies for SLM and uptake of SLM technologies;
- b. Track strategies and actions being undertaken to achieve devolution;
- c. Monitoring of changes in capacities, behaviors and ways of working among the partners in the innovation platforms; and
- d. Evaluation of suitability and appropriateness of the local government, regional and international research organizations support to the devolution process.
- e. Identify the partners in the innovation platforms for SLM and their roles
- f. Assess the effectiveness of partnership as a mode of cooperation in the innovation platforms;
- g. Evaluate the importance of effective partnership in the context of devolution of SLM;

- h. Identify and compare the conditions in Ethiopia and Uganda that promoted or constrained partnership within the innovation platforms

The evaluation mission assembled and studied the available literature produced by the various actors over the life span of the projects, which was held between April 3rd and 26th, 2012. We have reviewed the available materials including the project proposal, annual technical and financial reports, minutes, internal reports of the respective teams, various posters, briefs and training materials produced by the respective teams. Review of materials was followed by three weeks of field visits to Ethiopian and Ugandan sites.

Key findings

1. This project was found to be very relevant to the countries, institutions and communities. For instance, for the communities residing in MT Elgon, where landslide has remained to be a threat for thousands of residents in the region, the project objective is top on their priority list. The relevance of the project was endorsed by a farmer in Werejarso, Ethiopia stating that the project is ‘activating change within the community. The communities have got a better understanding about their natural and social resources have realized the challenges and have started to manage them better.’
2. The effectiveness of the partnerships varies from country to country, based on historical interactions, priority of the respective institutions, presence of NGOs, facilitation skills of the lead institutions and availability of funds for enabling functional partnership. We have learned that there are two different types of partnership; those partners who are on the ground and work directly with the communities at watershed scales and those who are not directly working with communities but what they are doing influence action on the ground. Both groups are members of the innovation platforms. Although scaling up SLM is a common interest to the parties, there seems to be very weak and narrow-based partnership created at various scales. Particular concern is the challenge of the project to link grass root planning at the watershed level (watershed IPs) with district and higher level decision making processes. The diversity and quality of the partnership was short of facilitating action and scaling-up the approaches to higher government levels.
3. There was a substantial delay in starting up of the project for various reasons. Thanks to the strong support from the Site coordinators and Research Centre Managers of the respective countries, they made a considerable effort to compensate for the lost time and to facilitate commonly action on the ground. However, the major objectives of the project, including generating evidence-based policy options addressing key barriers for wide scale adoption, may not be achieved unless the project management and coordination responsibilities are better facilitated. While the devolution of roles and responsibilities require devolution on control of budgets and other resources, the direct transfer of funds from IDRC to the local partners may have reduced the negotiation power of the AHI PL and the level of influence in promoting adaptive management. The consequence was that site teams were more responsive to IDRC than to AHI as they had the leverage to directly submit their financial reports without the approval of the PL in terms of quality delivery of the agreed upon outputs. Moreover, the initial confusion of who manages the project within AHI and the multiple authorities has affected the coordination role.

4. The knowledge management and communication component has suffered all along due to various institutional and financial reasons. Except for the initial plans, there is no evidence suggesting that these facilities were in place. In fact, the slow operationalization of the IPs and site teams may have been due to the poor communication mechanisms established to date and the lack of responsible body to respond to the growing demands. The mission also would like to note the under budgeting of knowledge management and communication right from the beginning of proposal development, with only 7,000 USD was allotted. There was also no evidence that the project has produced communication products except for the ones developed by the PAAP team.
5. Despite the challenges, there are early indication of impact of the project on food security and environmental sustainability in the landscapes, particularly from the perspective of technology adoption & scaling out. For instance The Dendi communities in Ethiopia had difficulty of moving livestock around due to the recently developed large gullies created in the last few years. The project team have organized the community to build cross-over roads and initiated byelaws, limiting farming 10 mt away from the edges of the gully. Communities have also collectively constructed about 187 km long soil and water conservation bunds. Their site was used as a training site for district development agents and wider government campaign groups. There was also appreciation from the communities for the introduction of 16 improved cross-breed cows to the communities following the heifer international model, with recipients contributing less than 10% of the cost. Moreover, the teams have adopted the model to the cultural settings. The communities have also received improved crop and forage varieties from the project following seed revolving arrangement.
6. There was a general consensus among researchers that the poor and the venerable will not be able to avail the required inputs for the commodities and may not transfer the technology to the next client. The selection criteria included the education level of the client, the financial ability of the client to buy required inputs, the social value, the confidence of the community on the household in further transferring the technology and the overall perception of the community on the client. However, the mission was concerned about this approach, which is putting the poor and women in disadvantage.
7. In Uganda, they have created a strong community group keen to employ SLM interventions in their farms and watersheds. They have local groups known among themselves as ‘Uniform wearers’. The local ‘Uniform’ that differentiates them from other community members is the construction of terraces in their farms and home gardens. New members need to show a well-established ‘uniform’ protecting their farms and homesteads. The byelaws currently adapted by the communities in Uganda, include protecting landscapes and minimizing destruction of newly built terraces and vegetation by curbing free movement of animals is an important contribution to sustainable land management. The byelaws are adapted by the local council regardless of the approval by the district administration.
8. The project created an opportunity for NARI centers to reach out new communities with their improved technologies and practices. The ‘innovation platforms’ concepts introduced by this project have been already replicated by HRC in seven other districts, using their own resources. It created unusual partnership between research, NGO and district administration and within NGOs.

The early success of the project was considered as an incentive for EIAR to co-finance this project and provide support to achieve the intended objectives. This engagement also attracted the attention of governments, for instances in Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. HRC received awards and certificates from the regional government for their ‘outstanding contribution to agricultural development’.

9. The performance of the partner institutions vary. The ASARECA programme, PAAP, was very much appreciated by the partners for their support in capacity building, facilitation of linkages with the local governments, development and approval of byelaws and in engaging site team producing valuable publications. The Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) successfully engaged in introducing SLM interventions and conducting action research with local communities but also hugely subsidized the project. NARO have assigned a full time research officer to follow-up the formation and functionality of the community level ‘innovation clusters’ and have created strong relationship with the district focal personnel to assemble work plans and request for budgets. They have also done well in the devolution of resource management as the districts were getting their share of budgets as reflected in their work plans. Despite, the power struggle between elected district council and district government administration (the CAO and his associates) they were keen to facilitate action on the ground, but were not well linked to the communities. AHI did a good job at the inception phase of the project but their role dwindled over time.
10. The performance of the innovation platforms did also vary; the watershed level IPs were engaged in pursuing the SLM agenda. Despite the equity issues, they were able to collectively voice their concerns and tryout new interventions. On the other hand, the district IPs were keen mainly on the distribution of resources but rarely supported the watershed IPs, except for using them to push their own agenda. They had also failed to attract diversity, to continually meet, discuss and facilitate action. One of the key constraints identified by the mission for affecting active participation of district IPs was the lack of incentives.
11. Despite the short duration of the project and the challenges, there are indications that the project has contributed to policy changes at district and national scales. For instance, Holleta RC has decided to use innovation platforms as a means to scale out their SLM interventions to wider communities. They have now established five additional platforms using their own resources. The WerJarso district in Ethiopia is now advocating using platforms for scaling up proven SLM interventions. The Badwoo district in Uganda has already established seven additional community innovation clusters capitalizing on the two IPs supported by the project. Due to these achievements they have received additional grants of 20 million from the President of Uganda, HE Musovini, following his visits to the district. Assuming that the gaps are filled and corrected, the project should be able to further influence donors and development actors operating in the two countries to empower local institutions taking charge of scaling and dissemination responsibilities.
12. IDRC was courageous to directly release funds to partners along with clear objectives and responsibilities. It was an incentive for national partners to self-manage funds and act as they see it important. Despite the evolution of power and resources, at least in Uganda, there was a real

challenge for the lead institutions (AHI) to effectively coordinate, manage the partnership and facilitate action on the ground. Their influence was partly compromised by the fact that they have no control over budgets to demand outputs and effectively guide project directions. This was further complicated by limited amount fund available for AHI to create forums and pursue regular site visits along with the reluctance of the PL to confront the challenges.

13. **Likelihood of success:** The project has been delayed substantially due to slow start-up and poor cross-country and cross-site facilitation. Although encouraging progresses has been made in the last year, the probability that the project will achieve the stated objectives in the remaining time period is low.
14. **Research merit and effectiveness:** The research progress made in the two target countries differ both in its emphasis and depth. An effective facilitation to cross-fertilize the lessons emerging from the different sites could accelerate the innovation and learning process but could also provide robust methodology and framework within the time frame. However, it calls for an empowered coordination and facilitation team to effectively deliver the intended outputs and outcomes.
15. **Value for money:** The evaluation team is convinced that the action research implemented by the innovation platforms for influencing SLM policies and uptake of SLM technologies is worth the money invested, at least in the Ethiopian sites. The remaining questions is whether the site and regional coordination team would be in position to invest time and resources to capture these local lessons and convert them to usable tools and frameworks for devolution and up-scaling of SLM practices at higher levels.

Recommendations

1. While IDRC took a courageous move to directly allocate resource to national partners, the move had reduced the authority and control of AHI to enforce agreed upon objectives, effectively coordinate the project and make an adaptive management decisions. The devolution process may need to get through various steps, initially by facilitating the institutional setup and early start through the Project leader, which could be slowly devolve both the resources and the responsibilities to the national partners. We suggest for a four year project to successfully operate the budgets and overall coordination should pass through the coordinating institution for the first 18 months or so. In this case, IDRC may put additional resources to fill the current gaps for facilitation and coordination.
2. The mission learned that the major component of the project, which is overseen in the project document, is creating linkages across institutions and facilitation of action at various scales. The IPs at watershed and district scales are still disconnected. The project has also suffered from lack of cross-country and cross-institutional linkages, particularly in enabling IPs to create collective action and implement SLM interventions at watershed and district scales. This calls for an immediate intervention to assign short term facilitators at site and cross-country levels. The fund to cover this task should be available from the IDRC budget allotted to the national partners.
3. Coordination: There is an apparent gap in coordinating the project and guiding the site teams. There was also limited cross-country interaction and flow of knowledge and practices among site teams.

There is a need for empowering the PL, including through allocating enough funds for travel and facilitation.

4. The objective of the project, on devolution of scaling up strategies, considered communication and knowledge management s as its most important tool. This is unfortunately the weakest part of the programme. The project should start to organize regular forums for sharing lessons and communicate key insights within the team and with wider public. There is still a need to set various communication tools, including cross-country meetings, common wiki sites, websites, brochures, technical reports, air time and other and outside the team;
5. There is a need to cross-fertilization of proven experiences between the two countries. In Uganda, the teams did very well in devolution of responsibilities, including allocating budgets to the local governments; while in Ethiopia the team did very well in introducing proven SLM technologies and practices to the respective communities. The objective of the project could be achieved only if both interventions are hybridized and made to function together. This calls again for cross team interaction and exchange of practices and approaches.
6. SLM at landscape scales and its scaling-up process call for a broader and functional partnership. Innovation platforms that are set to achieve these objectives should be broad-based and accommodate actors beyond the natural resources offices of the respective districts. Traders, input suppliers, local leaders, research institutions, NGOs and government institutions all should play a critical role in making IP work. Hence the need for a proactive facilitation of partners.
7. One of the key constraints identified by the mission for affecting active participation of the local institutions was the lack of incentives for the IP to continually meet, discuss and act at district scales. Moreover, the IPs were isolated and rarely interact with the wider community, who also became suspicious about their motives. This calls for an active facilitation and sharing of responsibilities and benefits at IP, community and higher levels.
8. The mission is happy with the overall achievement of the project though there is a room for improvement. The gaps in terms of coordination, communication and facilitation should be filled as soon as possible. IDRC should encourage the institutions to validate the critical gaps identified by the mission and develop a strategy for remedy that would capitalize on the progresses made but also fill the gaps hindering progress to date. The mission is keen to advice that the project should be allowed to continue as far as the suggested remedies are put in place by AHI and the major partners.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Back ground of the evaluation

There has been a great progress globally in terms of increasing cereal yield per ha, producing more meat and milk per animal and producing more farm outputs per unit of labor. Meanwhile there was a decline in agricultural productivity in SSA at the same period, which increased the number of food insecure people from 125 to 200 million between the years 1980 and 2000. A decline in agricultural productivity in the region is both the cause and consequence of deterioration in the natural resource base on which agriculture depends. The major drivers affecting NRM are associated with demographic growth, poor local governance, poverty and limited institutional capacity at community

and higher levels to respond to environmental and market shocks. Extractive production systems aggravated by uncontrolled grazing, inappropriate land tenure, top down extension approaches, and diminishing farm incomes have further discouraged investment on land and water management and increased incidences of conflicts and eroded household assets.

The unholy linkages among Land degradation, decline in soil fertility, agricultural drought and decline in vegetation cover in East African highlands has been well recognized by African governments as a prime challenge, affecting food security, livelihoods and environmental services. Degradation of NR reduce crop and livestock yield, increase vulnerability to climate change, increase conflict due to access to natural resources and reduce labor and water productivity. Investment in INRM research for development has been increasingly considered as a strategy to arrest land and water in the last decade embracing a whole range of practices; from in situ moisture conservation to watershed management and management of communal resources. Sustainable land management (SLM) is considered as one of the most effective strategies to minimize erosion effects and foster maximum economic use of rainwater that falls on to the agricultural field.

The ecoregional programme, African Highlands Initiative (AHI) was one of the lead institutions, which embraced NRM research by integrating technologies to local socio-economic perspectives through promoting farmer innovation and enhancing the local capacity to adopt interventions that would curb land degradation and minimize climate effects. It also helped communities to improve productivity, income and livelihoods at farm, and watershed scales.

Despite multiple and continual engagement of research to improve natural resources in the region, including the development of SLM policies, resources degradation is still foremost concern of communities. The African Highlands Initiative (AHI) of the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) and the Policy Analysis and Advocacy Programme (PAAP) of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) in partnership with Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), and National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) have been implementing a four year (2009-2013) IDRC-funded project in five districts in Ethiopia and Uganda. The project entitled, 'Enhancing the Adaptive Management Capacities of Rural Communities for Sustainable Land Management in the Highlands of Eastern Africa' (G2S: SLM Innovations) is an action research project, focusing on reversing land degradation and improve productivity by devolution of roles and responsibilities in scaling up landscape-level Sustainable Land Management (SLM) innovations. The project builds on two success stories on 'INRM' that worked from AHI and evidence-based framework for influencing policy change of PAAP. The project was developed against a premise that despite the ample scientific technologies generated to mitigate natural resource degradation over the last decades, little has been translated into action on large scales. Yet, INRM has remained to be the turning key in order to make significant contributions to rural livelihoods, and reduce climatic and market shocks.

1. Goals and objectives of the project

The project's overall broad objective is to improve agricultural productivity and increase rural income and food security from sustainable utilization of agro-based natural resources in the highlands of Eastern Africa. The purpose is to scale up integrated natural resources management innovations for

sustainable agricultural productivity and food security in the highlands of Eastern Africa, with particular focus in Ethiopia and Uganda.

The specific objectives of the project were:

- Identify and promote appropriate strategies to accelerate uptake of pilot tested SLM innovations and provide an evidence based framework for their effective scaling-up;
- Develop partnership mechanisms for linking grassroots planning with district level decision making and policy implementation for landscape level SLM innovations adoption and impact;
- Provide insights for evidence based policy options that address key barriers and opportunities for wide scale adoption of SLM innovations in the selected districts;
- Develop, implement and evaluate a systematic strategy for devolution of structures and action research responsibilities to national partners in the selected countries;
- Promote and adapt iterative knowledge management and communication systems needed for scaling out / up SLM innovations

Terms of Reference of the Mission

The ToR outlines that this consultancy study is expected to make an in-depth investigation of the likelihood of success of the project within the time frame, research quality and effectiveness, and value for money. The devolution process, with the aim of obtaining critical insights on the partnership dynamics in scaling-up SLM innovations in the decentralized settings in Uganda and Ethiopia, is considered as a central component of the mission. Moreover, the TOR emphasized that this study is expected to be embedded within a utilization-focused evaluation and assess the progress made in fostering functional IPs. The mission was expected to evaluate the progress made in achieving the following project objectives:

- i. Evaluating the action research implemented by the innovation platforms in terms of generating relevant policies for SLM and uptake of SLM technologies;
- ii. Track strategies and actions being undertaken to achieve devolution;
- iii. Monitoring of changes in capacities, behaviors and ways of working among the partners in the innovation platforms; and
- iv. Evaluation of suitability and appropriateness of the local government, regional and international research organizations support to the devolution process.
- v. Identify the partners in the innovation platforms for SLM and their roles
- vi. Assess the effectiveness of partnership as a mode of cooperation in the innovation platforms;
- vii. Evaluate the importance of effective partnership in the context of devolution of SLM;

- viii. Identify and compare the conditions in Ethiopia and Uganda that promoted or constrained partnership within the innovation platforms

2. The challenge of scaling SLM

Although SLM interventions are found to be successful at small watersheds in selected landscapes and countries in the region, for instance in the Tigray region of Ethiopia the success is commonly associated with very strong financial support and external facilitation. The success stories from AHI benchmark sites in the ASARECA region is a case in point. The AHI programme facilitated integrated watershed management in selected bench mark sites in Uganda (Kabale and Kapcherwa), Kenya (Kakamega site), Tanzania (Lushoto) and Ethiopia (Areka and Ginchi sites) for about a decade through providing intensive training for researchers in participatory research, jointly designing the approaches and the methodologies for regional experimentation, testing and validating interventions together with the local actors, financing the training, implementation and facilitation of the watershed work, facilitating cross sites learning and creating collective action. It was also promoting institutional learning among national agricultural research institutes in the ECA region. Another successful experience in integrated natural resources management is from the joint program between MoA of Ethiopia and the World Food Program in food insecure parts of Ethiopia, whereby WFP created a strong partnership with communities to rehabilitate degraded landscapes through Food-for-Work arrangements, and safety-net programs along with technical backstopping, availing resources and helping communities to develop byelaws and collective action schemes.

In the absence of external support, scaling-up SLM has remained to be a challenge for various reasons;

- a) Scaling up of SLM is a resource intensive and knowledge intensive duty, which requires the participation and serious engagement of multiple actors at various scales. It demands the engagement of technology developers, technology multipliers, traders, local policy makers, law enforcement institutions and community mobilizers.
- b) Creating collective action and a functional partnership for promoting SLM has been a well-recognized challenge.
- c) While farmers are keen to test and adapt technologies and good practices that would bring immediate benefits, SLM commonly takes longer time to appreciate the impact and reap benefits. Moreover, the benefits are usually visible more at landscape scales than at individual household scales;
- d) SLM is a complex agenda that could not be solved by a single technology or practice. It requires linked technologies and flexible working approaches. Scaling these complex knowledge requires intensive engagement, resources and time,

The challenge of scaling up of SLM was also recognized by the donor community, including IDRC, and these are ongoing attempts to develop successful SLM scaling out approaches, including this project. The various consultations with the partners and implementers of the IDRC project, including local councils in Kween district in Uganda, have revealed the challenges they have faced in promoting SLM. For one, SLM doesn't bring immediate benefits to farmers: Those community members who are convinced in the long term benefits of SLM didn't have incentives to operate beyond their vicinities and farms. One

farmer, who is a member of the IP, in Kaseko watershed stated that ‘I have no time, no money and no interest to think about scaling up; if it works I will be very pleased in my farm; it is the responsibility of the officers to take it elsewhere’. Going to scale of SLM interventions is also of less interest to politicians as stated by the local council member. The priority of the politicians is to promote fast track technologies and interventions that would bring about immediate benefits, so that farmers will support their political campaign and election of the respective MPs.

5. Approaches and Methods

The evaluation mission assembled and studied the available literature produced by the various actors over the life span of the projects was held between April 3rd and 26th, 2012. The reviewed materials include the project proposal submitted to IDRC, annual reports submitted by the respective national teams to the project leader, minutes and internal reports of the respective teams, annual technical and financial report submitted to IDRC by AHI project leader and the various posters, briefs and training materials produced by the respective teams and other communication products. Review of materials was followed by three weeks of field visits.

In Ethiopia, we have conducted consecutive meetings with the core research team in Holleta and one to one discussion with the project leader (April 4 and 5), a round table discussion with the members of the district innovation platforms in Ethiopia (April 9th, 10th and 11th) in Dendi and WereJarso districts, but also site visits and discussions with community watershed IP leaders and the wider community members. We had also a one to one discussion with the Director of Soil and water of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, EIAR, on the 16th of April. We have cross-checked and validated the different issues and concerns raised by the various actors through discussing with key informants, community leaders and institution leaders.

In Uganda, the mission started on April 19th, by one to one meetings with the PL in Kampala (on April 19th) followed by a two day travel to Kapcherwa (April 20th and 21st). We had consecutive meetings with the core team, including the site coordinator. Consultative meetings were done with the watershed IP members, district IP members, Local council members and the CAO of the district and the research team of NARO. We had also a chance to visit the watersheds and the research institutions and interacted with the respective people in the area. On the final day in Uganda, the mission gave its feedback and overall impression to the core research team of AHI and PAAP in Kawanda research centre on April 23rd, followed by a one to one meeting with PAAP in Entebbe on April 24th, 2012. The mission continued its trip to Nairobi and met ICRAF regional coordinator on April 25th morning to seek additional information about the achievements of the project. The trip was completed by giving a briefing to the IDRC officer about the progress made, the challenges encountered and the overall direction of the project on April 26th, 2012 and briefed the outcomes of the mission but also interviewed.

4. Implementation partners and arrangements

The mode of partnerships varies from country to country, based on historical interactions, focus area of the respective institutions, presence or absence of NGOs in the area, facilitation skills of lead institutions and availability of funds for enabling functional partnership.

In Ethiopia, we have learned that there are two different types of partnership; those partners who are on the ground and work directly with the communities at watershed scales and those who are not directly working with communities but what they are doing influence action on the ground. Both groups are members of the innovation platforms. The IP members at district level includes all bureau heads of the district administration (agriculture, water, cooperatives, regulatory, extension, justice, livestock), NGOs (Giz-Amhara regional office, Save the children, CPAR) Ambo University and local watershed IP leaders from both districts and key personalities. However, the partnership with NGOs is weak NGO in both Ethiopian sites.

The situation was not different in Uganda. The Eastern highlands region of Uganda of Mount Elgon, where the three districts the ‘going to scale project has been operating is prone to land degradation and poverty, it is also an area where landslide and erosion is becoming a local and national concern. The recent landslides, which killed hundreds of people has happened in this area. However, the project partnership both in terms of numbers and diversity was very poor to the surprise of the mission. Even the major development NGOs operating in the region, including the Ugandan Wildlife authority, Nature Harness Initiative and IUCN did not take part in the project beyond the inception workshop. The major focus in establishing partnership in the project areas was given to NARO, the district councils of the respective districts and the local councils. Although scaling up SLM is a common interest to the different parties, there seems to be limited effort to join efforts and create an enabling environment to establish a wider-based partnership to date.

5. Performance of the project

6.1 Relevance

The desired impact, SLM for improved livelihoods and systems in the African highland could be achieved if the sustainable resource management practices developed in bench mark sites by various actors (including AHI and its partners) are scaled up to wider communities and systems. This could be achieved through developing scaling-up tools and methods considering socio-economic realities, agro-ecological characteristics and Institutional arrangements at various scales. It also calls for developing local capacity devolving roles and responsibilities to local institutions, improved knowledge management, developing socially compatible incentive mechanisms and facilitating institutional arrangements including formal and informal norms, rules, networks and organizations for joint learning and action. The IDRC supported project on ‘Going to scale: enhancing the adaptive management capacity of rural communities for SLM in the highlands of Eastern Africa’ has been attempting to address some of the above stated challenges and disseminate proven NRM practices across scales.

The Mount Elgon Region of Uganda has been a hotspot of landslides and flooding, which took the lives of hundreds and created a continuous threat to the livelihoods of both upstream and downstream communities. By being placed on the upper part of the watershed, the three project districts, namely Kapcherwa, Bukwo and Kweeni, are considered as the major sources of erosion and runoff due to recent deforestation for farming (since 1984), the limited conservation structures established and poor cereal-based farming systems. This project is particularly relevant in MT Elgon, where landslide has remained to be a threat for thousands of residents in the region and there are limited government efforts to arrest the

ongoing resource degradation and land slide threats. Similarly, poverty and resources degradation in Ethiopia is strongly associated with land degradation and associated decline in productivity. SLM could reverse the challenges to opportunities by employing participatory scaling up tools and methods.

6.1.1 Relevance to rural communities

The devolution project has been working on scaling up INRM practices in five districts, namely Dendi, Were Jarso in Oromia regional state of Ethiopia and in Kapcherwa, Bukwo and Kween districts in Uganda. In Ethiopia, the two sites are located in vertisol dominated areas practicing crop-livestock systems, and predominantly growing Teff as a food and cash crop along with diverse cereals and legumes. Livestock is an important part of the farming, as source of draught power, food, cash, and social value. The baseline survey collected by the respective teams from both sites showed that soil erosion, land degradation, shortage of livestock feed and overall low farm productivity are mentioned as the most important constrains of the system. The project has responded very well to these challenges by introducing soil and water management interventions, improved crop and fodder varieties, improved livestock breeds, organizing farmers in groups for collective action, assisting farmers in developing and adopting byelaws. Their contribution to the communities was explained by one farmer in Were jarso stating that the project is ‘activating change within the community’. The communities have got a better understanding about their natural and social resources have realized the challenges and have started to manage them better. Their practices have been seen by communities as learning sites and have encouraged the wider district officers to visit their watersheds much often than usual.

During the visit of communities in both countries, the mission learned that the ‘SLM’ is a top priority that farmers are keen to closely work with local administration, research institutions and other development partners. Similarly hillside communities in the Ugandan sites have indicated land degradation as a major constraints affecting their livelihoods and those residing downstream aggravated by deforestation and nutrient movement .In both countries, farmers have been suffering from washing away of seeds and fertilizers by erosion ,reducing crop yield and increasing production costs. The most serious effect was seen on downstream communities, who have been continually affected by flooding and landslides. The evidence on the relevance of the issue is that farmers in Kaseko watershed have organized themselves in to cells established watershed grouped as early as 2004 and became local champions. The farmers explained the effect of resources degradation in terms of high rate of poverty and deteriorating livelihoods.

6.1.2 Relevance to the local government institutions

In Ethiopia, the site coordination of the project has been done by the Holetta Research Centre, which the sole sources of good practices and technologies that should be scaled up to wider communities in Ethiopia. Moreover, the Government of the federal republic of Ethiopia set natural resources management top on their development agenda. Capitalizing on the location specific NRM experiences from northern Ethiopia, the government has declared a national campaign in the early 2012, putting soil and water conservation structures all over the country through 40 days free labour contribution by communities throughout Ethiopia. One person is expected to dig at least 5 mt long ditch per day and in a group of five they are expected to deliver a 25 mt long conservation bund. About 5 million

people are expected to do the conservation work per day throughout the country. They are claiming to cover about 5.5 million ha of land under soil and water conservation structure.

The IDRC supported project in Ethiopia claimed to have influence the campaign but also benefited from the campaign in multiple ways:

- The local authorities used the project site to train their development agents from the wider districts on how best to design and implement conservation structures, capitalizing on the structures done in the AHI sites in the last years;
- They have used lead farmers to encourage neighboring communities to train and guide on how to organize themselves and implement the conservation bunds collectively;
- The communities in the projects sites were much easier to mobilize and implement wider SLM practices, more so than communities outside the project area. They were willing to try out technologies beyond the physical conservation measures;
- The district have used the project to develop seed multiplication sites and multiplying planting materials for wider distribution;
- The byelaws developed by the communities for SLM are now under discussion to be used by neighboring communities and beyond;

The devolution project in the respective districts of Uganda has capitalized on the good work done by the Land care projects, KADLAC that was facilitated by AHI and partners, since 2004. This project has now created opportunity to disseminate the experiences and models developed in Kapcherwa to the other two newly created districts. The idea is now spreading from few to hundreds of actively participating farmers and partly devolved the organizational structure and leadership role to local administration.

6.1.2.1 Relevance to NARO

The positive role the project has played was apparent as it created opportunities for NARO to link with the local administration and the communities in the respective districts.

Site coordination of the devolution project in Uganda is done by Buginyanya Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute located in Sironko District in Eastern Uganda. The Director of the research institute, Dr. William Waigore, is also the site coordinator of the devolution project. The major research areas of the institute used to be on improving the productivity of Coffee Arabica, on enhancing potato seed quality in the highlands, improving production technologies for crop and livestock and germplasm development of various crops. Despite the alarming natural resources degradation and landslides in their focal areas, sustainable land management was not the priority of their institute. The involvement of NARO through its director along with the PhD work has influenced the direction of the institute and helped them to appreciate the level of resources degradation in the region.

The ongoing studies on the effect of market access on adoption of SLM practices of MT Elgon farmers and the effect of erosion and runoff on distribution of late blight of potato, supported by the project, opened further opportunity for NARO research staff to develop skills integrated resources management and link what they are doing at plot and farm level to landscape challenges. Moreover, the project has created PhD and MSc opportunities through the AHI country office. The MSc thesis on ‘Catalysts for wider adoption of SLM technologies in MT Elgon slopes of Eastern Uganda’ and the PhD thesis on ‘Landcare byelaws and adoption of soil erosion control technologies in MT Elgon highlands in Eastern Uganda’ are two important components of the project that would help to identify key incentive mechanisms for adoption and promotion of SLM practices at wider scales.

6.1.3 Relevance to the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)

The AHI ‘going to scale project’ have significantly influenced the research centers in Ethiopia, particularly HRC, beyond the intended objectives of the project through multiple ways:

- These districts were under the direct mandate areas of Holetta Research centre, although they have rarely received attention and access to improved technologies and practices. Under the umbrella of the project, and the financial and organizational support of AHI, they were able to reach out to these neglected communities with their diverse technological options. In fact, other centers, including Debre Zeit research centre and Holleta Apiculture research centre also used the organizational structure to promote their poultry and honeybee technologies in these new communities.
- The availability of financial resources helped them to hire local facilitators on contractual basis from within the communities, who are providing regular feedback to the researchers, while facilitating action on the ground by assisting the respective communities.

6.1.4 Relevance to partners

Centres created strong linkages with local administrations which have opened better opportunities for wider dissemination. For instance the German International Cooperation agency (GiZ) has been closely working with the Ethiopian government for the last two decades on SLM issues. However, they were struggling with the challenge of scaling up of good NRM practices beyond the small experimental watersheds. The mission learned that the project was closely working with GiZ and were jointly promoting the concept of sustainable land management, at various scales. Their effort in scaling-up energy saving cooking stoves as a strategy to reduce deforestation and improve availability of biomass for productive uses has been rarely successful. They supported the project by connecting the project with a local community in Northern Ethiopia, known as ‘Awramba community’ to construct improved stoves in selected households in the two respective watershed and train local women to multiply and disseminate it further. We have witnessed during our field visit that there is wide recognition for this partnership, particularly by women, community leaders and district authorities. In turn, they have established strong linkage with research institutions and other partners through the facilitation of this project.

6.1.4 Relevance to IDRC

As a donor institution, which is keen to facilitate scaling-up and devolution of NRM into national systems, this project should be considered as a learning ground and an opportunity to develop functional

devolution models that works under various institutional arrangements and policies. The success of the project will open up an investment strategy for IDRC for further institutionalization of SLM sealing methodologies & interventions beyond the current targeted countries. The mission recognized the efforts made by IDRC to support the project. There is a need for further facilitation, documenting the lessons learned, validating the approach and influencing policy makers and major NRM investors to adopt these proven SLM approaches.

7. Effectiveness and efficiency

There was a substantial delay in starting up the project in Ethiopia for various reasons. The departure of the initial project coordinator Dr. Kindu Mekonnen from the centre was mentioned as major reason for the delays. It has also suffered from continual staff turnover at various scales. Moreover, the current PI wasn't part of the earlier phases of the African highlands initiative and she had limited association with the team of the Holleta Research Centre. However, thanks to the strong support from the Holleta Centre Managers, they made a considerable effort to compensate for the lost time and to facilitate commonly action on the ground. Moreover, the project leader has been supported by a small but devoted watershed team who were acting as technology suppliers, brokers and facilitators along with the PI. In general, the last one year was the most successful in helping communities to develop byelaws on technology sharing and management and in availing improved technologies and practices for improved watershed management.

Despite the staff turnovers, HRC has fully adapted the AHI watershed management approaches developed in phase ii and iii of the AHI programme, including participatory problem identification, setting priority of problems according to landscape positions, wealth ranking, gender and other social criteria. They went to detailed research protocols and replicated what used to be an approach development phase of AHI, which in turn consumed a bit of the project time without adding much value to the 'going to scale project'. In fact, this engagement created controversy among the community members as the outputs of these watershed baseline data was not properly used to identify clients and niches for technology dissemination. There was a general consensus among researchers that the poor and the venerable will not be able to avail the required inputs for the commodities and may not be also be able to transfer the technology to the next client. The target clients within the watershed were identified in two stages, first by asking the community to identify potential clients using the above stated criteria set by themselves and then using a lottery to identify few recipients of potential input intervention. The criteria include the knowledge base of the client to manage the technology and disseminate it further, the financial ability of the client to buy required inputs the social value of the client and the confidence of the community on the household in further transferring the technology and the overall perception of the community on the client.

However, the mission was concerned by this approach, which is putting the poor and women in disadvantage. The approach has also created a very strong protest by those community members and watershed committees who were supportive keen and instrumental to the launching of the project but they were unlucky to receive the highly valued commodities, of cross-breed cows. The mission has also noticed a gap in the byelaw in terms of ensuring continual the participation and engagement of those who

receive expensive interventions as incentives for wider influence. Some recipients have even abandoned the watershed work after receiving their cows.

Despite the good intention of ‘participatory planning’ this approach made the AHI project vulnerable to claims and created tension between those beneficiaries and the wider community, and between the relatively rich and poor households. However, given the high cost of the interventions (e.g. a dairy F1 cross breed could cost up to 1500 USD) and limited fund to avail them, the project tried to ensure that the different types of technologies are reaching different clients.

The experiences in the Ugandan sites are different. There was also a slow start of the project, particularly in the first year, for various reasons. NARO was assigned as responsible organization leading the Uganda sites, including creation of wider partnership, strong linkage with the local admiration, formation of district and watershed IPs and facilitation of project implementation by liaising with AHI. The limited capacity of the regional office of NARO and limited skills in facilitating the establishment and function of IPs took much longer than anticipated. There was an initial delay in setting up and running the project. This was complicated by the fact that the originally targeted district (Kapchorwa) was further divided in to three new districts (Kapcherwa, Kween and Bukwo), which created staff turnover, organizational change and put additional financial load and managerial demands on NARO. With support from AHI regional office, these challenges have been partly overcome the three districts have already established their respective IPs, though functioning with different levels of efficiency. Moreover, there is still a challenge to bring wider partners beyond the local district offices on board for various reasons, particularly related to financial resources and competing local powers.

Moreover, the parallel power struggle between elected district council and district government administration (the CAO and his associates) has been mentioned as one of the barriers for up-scaling SLM as they usually have different priorities and political agenda.

Although the major objective of the project was developing devolution strategies for scaling up SLM practices, the achievements of going to scale project to date is focused on disseminating SLM technologies in small watersheds within the district, without any credible evidence in institutional linkages and development of models. Moreover, although the attempts are encouraging there is limited effort to capture the lessons and synthesize them for developing scaling up approaches. In fact, the project should not be taken as another project to replicate AHI watershed experiences in a different watershed. It is rather a strategic investment to influence national institutions and their partners to devolve roles and responsibilities for scaling up proven SLM practices at wider and broader scales.

6. Contribution of the project for Improved Livelihoods, Institutions and Systems

The intention of the project was ‘going to scale’ in a wider and more progressive manner at district scales and creating impact at local and higher scales. There are early indication of impact of the project on food security and environmental sustainability in the landscapes particularly from the perspective of technology adopted & scaling out.

6.1 Contribution to NRM

The project used SLM interventions to solve the most pressing landscape problems. For instance The Dendi communities in Ethiopia had difficulty of moving livestock around due to the recently developed

large gullies created in the last few years. The project team have organized the community to build cross-over roads and initiated bye law, limiting farming 10 mt away from the gully edges. Farmers have appreciated the initiative and are planning to rehabilitate the gully further. They have also developed at least two nurseries per site to support the rehabilitation of landscapes through tree planting.

Soil and water conservation is an important component of SLM that is commonly used as an integrator of other NRM interventions. It commonly attracts the introduction of forage trees and grasses as bund stabilizers, as barriers of runoff reducing the washing away of fertilizers and seeds (improved soil fertility management) and as strategy to bring about collective action for wider landscape management. Similarly, the project was used as an incentive to rehabilitate uplands. For instance in Dendi, communities have collectively established nurseries (Fig 1) and constructed about 187 km long soil and water conservation bunds. Their site was also used as a training site for district development agents and wider government campaign group on sustainably employing SWC structures. One of the innovative parts of the project was introduction of energy saving stoves in the two project areas in collaboration with GiZ. The mission have witnessed that 11 households from each site have been trained to help other community members to build stoves from local materials. The training was given by the ‘Awramba community’ known for their poetry skills, and their involvement was facilitated by GiZ.

The byelaws currently adapted by the communities in Uganda, include protecting landscapes and minimizing destruction of newly built terraces and vegetation by curbing free movement of animals is an important contribution to sustainable land management. The byelaws are adapted by the local council regardless of the approval by the district administration.

Although the project didn’t yet facilitate the construction of terraces and bunds in Ugandan watersheds, there is a strong community group keen to employ SLM interventions in their farms and watersheds. They have local groups known among themselves as ‘Uniform wearers’. The local ‘Uniform’ that differentiates them from other community members is the construction of terraces in their farms and home gardens. For non-members to be part of the group they first need to show a well-established ‘uniform’ protecting the erosion prone farms and homesteads. The project is now asked for support of this initiative in the form of farm implements and planting materials for trees and forages to stabilize the bunds and to expand the interventions beyond their farms, which calls for a closer attention and support by the project team. The impact of this initiative will also be felt by downstream communities, who are becoming victims of the recurrent landslide.

6.2 Access for improved crop varieties and livestock breeds

In the Ethiopian sites, the communities have received improved crop and forage varieties from the project through HRC following seed revolving arrangement. Following the local byelaws farmers are expected to return to the watershed IP committee at least the same amount of seed after harvest avail seed to be transferred to another farmer for the following season. For instance, the teff variety ‘Kuncho‘ has been very well taken by farmers in both sites in Ethiopia for its high grain yield and highly demanded seed color. It has been under farmers’ production for the last two seasons. The mission has learned through community group discussions that dozens of farmers have benefited from the high yielding varieties in the respective watersheds. The researchers have also availed improved varieties of faba beans, potato,

wheat and forages with seed enough to plant 0.20 ha of farm lands. They have distributed forages mainly targeting farmers who have received improved breeds. They have also introduced apple seedlings for homestead development and *Sesbania sesban* for feed commonly grown around the homesteads, which was considered as part of the package of a cross-breed delivery.

There was appreciation from the communities because of the introduction of 16 improved cross-breed cows to the Dendi and Werejarso communities following the heifer international model. The model is about revolving heifer, with recipient farmers contributing less than 10% of the cost of the cow. Moreover, they have adopted the model to the cultural settings. For instance in WereJarso, Ethiopia the recipient not expected to transfer the calf if the cow delivers a male. On the other hand, in Dendi they are expected to transfer the first born calf to the next client regardless of sex.

It is important to note that the IDRC project didn't cover the costs of purchasing the cross-breed cows, which cost about 1500 USD each, but it was rather paid by Holleta Research Centre. The next recipient has been already identified and allowed monitoring the management of the cow and the heifer. In both districts, the next recipient should pay 500 and 600 birr for a male calf and heifer during transfer. In one of the sites the mission have seen elderly family hugely benefiting by selling up to 8 liters of milk per day to nearby milk collectors (Fig. 2). However, it has also created occasional disagreements within the communities in selecting the target households and the criteria around it. There is also an initiative to introduce poultry to at least 10 household per sites, with cost sharing arrangements but again hugely subsidized by the Debre Zeit research centre, a sister institution of HRC.



Fig. 1. A seed multiplication centre managed by the watershed innovation platforms in Dendi, Ethiopia

6.3 Impact on institutions and their performance

The project has been influencing the national research institutions (NARIs) in both countries in different ways. AHI has been a long standing partner of EIAR working on NRM issues along with the national partners. As one female senior researcher from HRC stated during the field visit of the mission stated that 'we consider AHI as a department within our institution. It is part of us'. The implication was that there is a strong rapport between AHI and NARIs, and initiatives led by AHI receive a particular attention.

The new project created an opportunity for NARI centers to reach out new communities with their improved technologies and practices. One of the most important inputs of the project was the conceptual framework for scaling SLM. The 'innovation platforms' concepts introduced by this project have been already replicated by HRC in seven other districts, using their own resources. It created unusual partnership between research and NGO, and district administration and within NGOs. The early success of the project was considered as an incentive for EIAR to co-finance this project and provide support to

achieve the intended objectives. This engagement also attracted the attention of regional governments, for instances in Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. HRC received awards and certificates from the regional government for their ‘outstanding contribution to agricultural development’.

In Uganda, NARO Eastern regional office is under staffed and under financed. The project has opened an opportunity to broaden their scope of work from the traditional crop research (coffee Arabica, wheat, maize, potato) to include sustainable land management into their research agenda. They have now assigned two NARO researchers working on the project and generated data to be used for their higher degrees (one MSc and one PhD student). The MSc student is working in the area of market access and NRM linkages while, the PhD student has been working on the interaction between erosion and crop pest management.

Similarly it has also been an incentive for creating unusual partnership between NARO and district councils. The local government in both countries has also been impacted by the project at different levels. In Ethiopia, the two project sites served as training centers for the local authorities, particularly for training lower level soil and water conservation experts. The development agents from these sites were also engaged in training others using the experiences obtained from the project. Moreover, the project also helped local agents receive recognition. For instance the WereJarso district has received third level award in 2011/12 for ‘over achieving the cottas’ expected by the regional government in soil and water conservation. Moreover, one of the new districts in Uganda, Budwoo, have received a presidential award along with 20 million Uganda shilling to capitalize on the ‘positive initiatives’. In general, the project was instrumental for improving the performance of local authorities and increased their visibility.

7 Performance of Project lead partners

7.1 AHI-ICRAF

AHI have had two major roles to play. It was responsible for the overall leadership of the project, providing guidance and directions to achieve the planned project objectives, including coordination, facilitation, communication and M&E. It has promised to facilitate cross-site learning and cross hybridization of lessons across sites by organizing of regional meetings and workshops. The project manager of AHI, who is based in Uganda have ably facilitated of the initial phase of the project by organizing inception workshops in the respective countries, assisted in formation of partnership with local governments and establishment of district level innovation platforms both in Ethiopia and Uganda. They have also organized cross-site visits for the Ethiopian team to Ugandan sites to interact with well-established innovation clusters in Kapcherwa. They have also assisted the respective teams in building functional teams that are required for facilitating the scaling project. The second responsibility of AHI was managing the knowledge management and communication component of



Fig. 2. An elderly woman in Werejarso, Ethiopia, who is taking care of her cross-breed cow received from the project.

the project. In managing the finances has depleted the AHI budget early on and deprived the PL from making frequent backstopping visits, facilitation of the site teams and promotion of joint reflection and learning. For the same reason, there were very limited forums for joint learning and update of progress. The project has planned to develop a functional communication strategy early on for timely sharing products and lessons to different stakeholders but also establish information centers and knowledge portals at district and regional levels. However, except for the plans for developing the strategy there is no evidence suggesting that these facilities were in place. In fact, the slow operationalization of the IPs and site teams may have been due to the poor communication mechanisms established to date and the lack of responsible body to respond to the growing demands. The mission also would like to note the under budgeting of knowledge management and communication right from the beginning of proposal development, whereby only 7,000 USD was allotted. While the devolution of roles and responsibilities require devolution on control of budgets and other resources, the direct transfer of funds from IDRC to the local partners have reduced the negotiation power of the AHI PL and the level of influence in promoting adaptive management. Therefore, site teams were more responsive to IDRC than to AHI as they had the leverage to directly submit their financial reports without the approval of the PL in terms of quality delivery of the agreed upon outputs. Moreover, the initial confusion of who manages the project within AHI and the multiple authorities Moreover, there was complaint from the Ethiopian team that AHI was giving more support to the Ugandan team compared to the Ethiopia team, which could be explained by distance effects but also shortage of travel funds.

In general, the contribution of AHI to the overall success of the project could have been enhanced through a) providing a clear authority to the PL by ICRAF, b) proactive role of the PL to support and facilitate site teams, c) increased allocation of resources for travel, M&E and overall coordination, and d) through an early evaluation of the project on resource allocation and establishing its implication on the performance of the project, including coordination and M&E funds.

7.2 PAAP

There was a wide range of recognition for the support that PAAP has provided to the national partners in terms of capacity building, facilitation of linkages with the local governments, development and approval of byelaws by local councils and in engaging site team producing valuable publications and presentations. PAAP have organized writeshops for the national partners, and the product has evolved to a book, with seven chapters, which is under review and processing. Despite the big distraction of PAAP by ASARECA-related institutional assignments, particularly the WB reviews, they have managed to review the policy documents in the respected countries, and capitalized on the experiences of others (e.g. Bennett's byelaw in Kapchorwa region) to reflect country specific issues. They have also played pivotal role in the approval of the byelaws by local councils. However, there is still a need for follow-up with district councils and administration to get a final approves and legalizes these byelaws. The higher level policy influence is also lagging behind because of the lack of policy forums organized by AHI and PAAP to date. On the other hand, there is an opportunity for the project to access high level policy makers through ASRECA, which has now set to have having ministers from the region at the higher side of the board. It may also create opportunity for these byelaws to be discussed at the higher levels and institutionalized.

7.3 EIAR

The Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) is responsible for leading the project in two districts in Ethiopia. They have established and facilitated district level and watershed level IPs, created local partnerships and introduced SLM interventions to farmers' fields. They were also responsible to create collective action at various scales and documenting research processes and its impact on local communities. However, their most successful engagement was in conducting action research with local communities on SLM interventions. The mission witnessed a strong institutional support from EIAR, particularly the management of Holleta research centre to the project, both in availing resources (e.g. cars and researchers) but also in backstopping the project implementation. They have created strong partnership with the district administrations of Dandy and Wera Jerso and facilitated joint meeting during the inceptions phase of the project. They have also done an impressive job in introducing various SLM interventions, including high value dairy cross-breeds without charging the IDRC supported project. They have employed local extensionists to support farmers and follow up on the management and performance of the technologies. However, the approach they are following is not necessarily reflecting the concept of devolution rather focused on the dissemination of technologies and practices using the AHI project as a gate way. In other words, they are scaling up what AHI has been doing earlier to new communities and sites, without giving due emphasis to the major objective of the project; 'devolution of power'. The consequence was that their facilitation role of district IPs was rudimentary and occasional, aggravated by lack of competency among the team in social sciences and facilitation skills. There is also very limited documentation of lessons and practices, and limited sharing to wider users. They need to reorient their good start towards empowering the local administration to take over the roles and the responsibilities that HRC has been undertaking to date.

7.4 NARO

Like that of EIAR, NARO was responsible for leading the project in Uganda. They were engaged in facilitating the district and watershed IPs, creating local partnerships and providing support to facilitate local action. Despite their slow start in facilitating the partnership and formation of IPs, they have managed to establish three district IPs, instead of one as originally perceived in the proposal. They have assigned a full time research officer to follow-up the formation and functionality of the community level 'innovation clusters' and have created strong relationship with the district focal personnel to assemble work plans and request for budgets. They have also done well in the devolution of resource management as the districts were getting their share of budgets as reflected in their work plans. However, there was a real gap in availing SLM technologies for communities and conducting action research for participatory choice of technologies. The facilitation of district IPs was also weak and scattered. The site coordinator has acknowledged the challenges and these are partly associated with the increasing demand created by the further division of Kapchorwa district into three independent districts and the attempt they were making to satisfy these emerging but unplanned financial and technical requests. However, NARO being responsible for a wide area in the Eastern Zone with limited staff and resources, it had very limited effect in terms of flow of technologies and practices to the AHI project sites. They have also limited capacity in terms of facilitation of action and formation of partnership, as it was revealed during the mission.

7.5 District Local Governments

The projects in the respective sites have identified focal district officers, commonly represented by the natural resources officer of the respective districts. Despite the visible interest of district officials in SLM, and appreciating the need for the local authorities to take charge in facilitating Scaling up of interventions, there is still very limited evidence that they have taken their responsibilities seriously. In Ethiopia, except for being engaged in inception workshops and occasional interaction with the PL, there was very limited forum for them to understand the principles of devolution and the need to link decision making with evidence emerging from watershed IPs. In Uganda, the district councilor (LC5) and the government wing Chief Administration Officer (CAO), are operating in parallel and have commonly conflicting interest. While the district council is very close to the people and is keen only on interventions that would enable him win elections, the CAO is keen to push development agenda and enforce government policies. This brings a challenge in the attempt to integrate SLM into the district planning processes, though the local council (LC1) was also keen to facilitate community action. Moreover, the availability of resource rich projects (e.g. KADLAC in Kapcherwa) and the higher financial expectations by the district officials while the budgets of was meager due to further reallocation to the new districts may have contributed to the declining interest of the district administration. There was limited diversity in terms of partners even within the district, and the project is predominantly linked to the natural resources offices. They have voiced that the limited diversity is due to the fact that there was limited forums for them to get together, update progress and to be able to learn together to date. NARO should embark on an improved communication and facilitation role to district councils and administrations if the intended objectives are to be achieved.

The district administration in the Ethiopian sites has already approved the byelaws while they are in waiting in Uganda. This could be partly because of the two parallel powers operating at district level in Uganda while the same party is operating in Ethiopia at the local council and administration levels, easing debates and obstructions.

8.0 Organization and performance of Innovation Platforms

An Innovation Platform (IP) should be a need-based network bringing together different stakeholders from within the locality and beyond for exchanging knowledge, generating innovation and developing joint action. Stakeholders are commonly drawn from different interest groups, disciplines, sectors and organizations and come together in platforms to share experience, develop joint agendas for change, and test new solutions to their common problems. Within the context of the devolution of AHI NRM research and management, platforms should aim to bring about collective action and facilitate change in livelihoods and natural resource management, as well as influence practices including planning, implementation and evaluation of NRM investments.

8.1 District Innovation Platforms in Ethiopia

The project proposal considered IP as a key strategy to facilitate dissemination of NR technologies and practices to wider communities at district and higher scales. The district IP was formed in close interaction with the district administration of the respective areas, whereby almost all district bureaus, namely desk of agriculture, desk of extension, desk of livestock, desk of water and sanitation, desk of

justice, desk of cooperatives, desk of women and social and other offices have participated during the establishment of the IP. Besides government offices, few NGOs engaged in the district have been also invited. Most of these government offices have participated during selection of the watersheds, establishment of project teams and development of byelaws for technology sharing and management. However, the IP membership was narrow and government focused and ended up to be a collation of district officers. There was a critical gap in the development and facilitation of IPs particularly from the research institutes perspective. It was partly due to the fact that the country teams neither have any prior experience in formation and facilitation of IPs nor received support from the regional AHI team. The effect was that the IPs failed to perform as an open forum willing to invite any interested internal and external partners in the watershed; it has also failed to continually meet, discuss and facilitate action in the selected landscapes. One of the key constraints identified by the mission for affecting active participation was the lack of incentives for the IP to continually meet, discuss and act at district scales. There was no project budget allocated for the IPs that could be easily accessed by IP members. Although the district offices have been informally contributing to the NRM agenda of the project, it was mainly performed due to the routine activities of the offices in the watershed instead of a coordinated effort to facilitate action and promote scaling-up approaches. In general, the IP didn't add value to the district activities and didn't seem to influence the day to day activities of targeted communities. Hence, there is a need to strengthen the district IPs by allocating resources, facilitating knowledge sharing and linking the district IP members with other key players. However, the project site was an important learning site for better performance of the district office at larger scales.

In general, the major reason behind the limited involvement of the district IPs in Ethiopia was because the devolution of concepts was not accompanied by local empowerment, including transfer of funds for the local administration. Hence meetings and discussion at the district level were done only when the site coordinator from Holleta visits the district offices and organize meetings.

8.2 District Innovation Platforms in Uganda

As it was the case in Ethiopia, the district IP was formed in close interaction between NARO and the district administration, They have invited various officers from the district administration and local councils during the inception workshop to present the project and its working approaches and have jointly agreed to development a joint action plan and establish IPs at r the district level. Despite the plan to broaden the diversity of IP members, the membership has remained narrow and government focused with collation if of district officers. However, the concept of IP in Ugandan sites was not new, thanks to the experiences of the Land care project of AHI, KADLAC. The issue was that the NARO team was not part of the KADLAC initiative and has very limited prior experience in facilitating devolution and scaling. The operationalization of IP in the three districts also hugely varies; there was more enthusiasm and energy in the newly established districts while the roles were dwindling in the older district, Kapchorwa. The focal personnel in the districts were also constrained in organizing regular events and facilitating the IP members at district and community levels due to the relatively high 'sitting costs' but also disagreement on who should be invited among the officers. In general, the enthusiasm created at the beginning of the project has encountered difficulties in the development and facilitation of IPs at the later stages. Besides the financial issues, the limited experience of NARO in

facilitating IPs and the weak facilitation support provided by AHI played a role in delaying deliveries and project outcomes.

Despite the enthusiasm among project teams in both countries, NARO and EIAR researchers didn't manage to establish a functional communication strategy to facilitate learning and collective action. Moreover, the district administration was designated as the chairman of the district IPs in both countries, but there was no evidence about their active engagements in supporting local IPs and institutionalizing the approaches. The site coordinators also failed to develop MoU or any terms of reference describing the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in achieving the intended outcomes of the project. Hence, the responsibilities and participation of partners was on goodwill bases, without any promised deliverables despite the investments made in forming and facilitating the partnership.

8.3 Watershed Innovation platforms in Ethiopia

The establishment of watershed IPs in Ethiopia was participatory, comprising community members selected by the communities themselves. The watershed IP was established to represent the community in testing innovations and displaying needs but also to liaise with the respective NARIs team and provide regular feedback about progresses made and mobilize wider involvement. However, there was no clear role and responsibility given to the selected IP members. Their major role was in helping the researchers to identify the next client for the various technologies and interventions coming from the various research centers. The structure and activities of the IPs was not also very different from watershed committees that AHI used to create in the older sites, which were meant to create collective action. Moreover, there was no evidence showing strong linkages between watershed IPs and district IPs. There seem to be a critical gap in facilitating the functionality of the watershed IP for the following reasons:

1. Lack of facilitation and social skills among the AHI team. Although there are few social scientist involved in the development of the byelaws, there was limited incentive for these senior researchers to conduct regular IP facilitation. The full time workers employed by the project at the site level are more of enumerators, collecting data and passing on information; but without social science skills. Similar to the district IP, the watershed IP has suffered from lack of close and intensive facilitation by the project team.
2. The Watershed IPs are isolated from the wider local community, partly due to the bias towards IP members that they may have been receiving beneficiaries at the expense of communities, in terms of perdiems, cross-site visits etc. For instance, the visit to Ankober, a successful watershed management site in Ethiopia and was mentioned as exemplenary site to create community awareness and promote action. However, those members who failed to join the visit have almost withdrawn from the watershed activity in the respective sites due to this jealousy feeling.
3. Some of the communities didn't have any prior contact with research, e.g. WereJarso in Ethiopia and it took a long time for researchers to convince farmers about the objective of the project and its mission to be beyond providing free handouts.
4. There are still free raiders within the community, knowingly or unknowingly complicate the engagement of communities in SLM, who needs to be followed up and be managed by the recently approved byelaws.

8.4 Watershed Innovation Platforms (Innovation clusters) in Uganda

Unlike the watershed IPs in Ethiopia, the innovation clusters in Uganda are well organized, have long years of experience in dealing with officials and researchers in managing linkages and are keen to bring about change in their landscapes (Fig. 3). Some of the clusters were established as early as 2004 through the Land Care KADLAC project that AHI was leading. The IP members have even coined a slogan for collective action, called Uniform, showing their collective spirit and desire to improve their degraded landscapes. They were demanding interventions and support, are well articulate, and have strong support from their local councils (LC1). However, they didn't receive the support they deserve in terms of technology options, farm tools for soil and water conservation or planting materials to rehabilitate their landscapes. It is only in Bukwoo district that the natural resources department has provided planting materials and established nurseries. NARO is also planning to provide disease free potato varieties in the coming season. In general, more technical and institutional support is required to respond to the demands of the IPs and facilitate the devolution of responsibilities.

9.0 Knowledge management for improved devolution

Devolution of responsibilities and governance in Scaling out SLM is a complex agenda, which demands identification of successful cases, documentation, distilling of key lessons, continual cross-institutional learning and communication of both processes and practices with the wider users. However, in this project knowledge management has suffered all along due to various institutional and financial reasons, which in turn affected the overall performance of the project. AHI initiated developing a communication strategy for the Ugandan site at the beginning of the project though it didn't move beyond developing a draft document. There was no evidence that the project has produced communication products except for the ones developed by the PAAP team. PAAP has produced byelaw manuals, MSc and PhD theses and are currently processing seven book chapters. On the other hand, though the project was going through difficult challenges right from the inception and made few adjustments, there were limited forums organized by AHI for sharing experiences and joint planning. The last forum, where partners came together to reflect and assess progress was in December 2009 at Kabira Club in Kampala. The challenge of knowledge sharing was also evident in EIAR and NARO. In both country teams, there are very limited outputs emerging from the project though there are many other players are there waiting for the experiences of this project. For instance, the districts IPs in Ethiopia have openly asked for communication products, in the form of technical reports, posters, briefs and guides on how to do it etc during this mission.

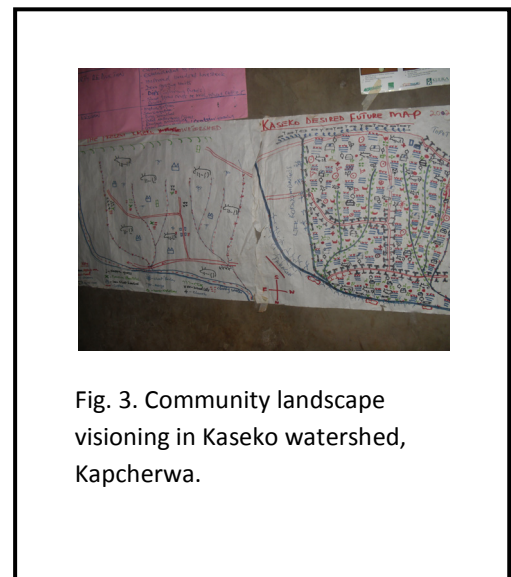


Fig. 3. Community landscape visioning in Kaseko watershed, Kapcherwa.

AHI was assumed to be the key player in facilitating knowledge management and communication of the project. The reason given by AHI was that the knowledge management budget was directly sent to the national partners and there was no resource left for them to facilitate cross-institutional learning and documentation. On the other hand, the documents from IDRC and face to face discussion with IDRC contact officer indicate that AHI had enough resources to facilitate communication and action. It was only the funds to buy the communication facilities (computers, printers, modems) that were sent to the country office and site coordinators while the remaining funds allotted for knowledge management was in the AHI budget.

In general, it seems there is yet no strategy from the AHI team to compensate for the lost opportunity and to revitalize the communication and sharing of lessons. There is still a critical need to organize regular forums for sharing, joint learning and making adjustments, document the process, filter key lessons and develop devolution models for wider influence as promised in the project document.

10.0 Policy influence

Despite the short duration of the project and the challenges it faced as described above, there are indications that the project has contributed to policy changes at district and NARI scales. For instance, Holleta RC has decided to use innovation platforms as a means to scale out their SLM interventions to wider communities. They have now established five additional platforms using their own resources. The WerJarso district in Ethiopia is now advocating using platforms for scaling up proven SLM interventions. The Badwo district in Uganda has already established seven additional community innovation clusters capitalizing on the two IPs supported by the project. Due to these achievements they have received additional grants of 20 million from the President of Uganda, HE Musovini, following his visits to the district. Assuming that the gaps are filled and corrected, the project should be able to further influence donors and development actors operating in the two countries to empower local institutions taking charge of scaling and dissemination responsibilities.

11. Project management

The project design for devolution and scaling up was comprehensive and forward looking, though the project leaders failed to pursue the critical components of the project, which is facilitation, coordination and communication. There was limited attempt to implement a functional M&E strategy that would help them to monitor progress and adjust the next steps. As the initiative is relatively new and complex, the project could have used adaptive management procedures that would allow adjustments of work plans and reorganization of funds and responsibilities.

IDRC was courageous to directly release funds to partners along with clear objectives and responsibilities. It was an incentive for national partners to self-manage funds and act as they see it important. Despite the evolution of power and resources, at least in Uganda, there was a real challenge for the lead institutions, in this case AHI, to effectively coordinate, manage the partnership and facilitate action on the ground. Their influence was partly compromised by the fact that they have no control over budgets to demand outputs and effectively guide project directions. This was further complicated by limited amount fund available for AHI to create forums and pursue regular site visits.

Moreover, the devolution process demands a truly active lead institute, which should be responsible for joined planning, frequent reflection and strong facilitation all along the life span of the project. It is fair to assume that the devolution process should start after an early push and facilitation by well experienced team, preferably from within the partnership.

12. Recommendations

- I. While IDRC took a courageous move to directly allocate resource to national partners, the move had reduced the authority and control of AHI to enforce agreed upon objectives, effectively coordinate the project and make an adaptive management decisions. The devolution process may need to get through various steps, initially by facilitating the institutional setup and early start through the Project leader, which could be slowly devolve both the resources and the responsibilities to the national partners. We suggest for a four year project to successfully operate the budgets and overall coordination should pass through the coordinating institution for the first 18 months or so. In this case, IDRC may put additional resources to fill the current gaps for facilitation and coordination.
- II. The mission learned that the major component of the project, which is overseen in the project document, is creating linkages across institutions and facilitation of action at various scales. The IPs at watershed and district scales are still disconnected. The project has also suffered from lack of cross-country and cross-institutional linkages, particularly in enabling IPs to create collective action and implement SLM interventions at watershed and district scales. This calls for an immediate intervention to assign short term facilitators at site and cross-country levels. The fund to cover this task should be available from the IDRC budget allotted to the national partners.
- III. Coordination: There is an apparent gap in coordinating the project and guiding the site teams. There was also limited cross-country interaction and flow of knowledge and practices among site teams. There is a need for empowering the PL, including through allocating enough funds for travel and facilitation.
- IV. The objective of the project, on devolution of scaling up strategies, considered communication and knowledge management s as its most important tool. This is unfortunately the weakest part of the programme. The project should start to organize regular forums for sharing lessons and communicate key insights within the team and with wider public. There is still a need to set various communication tools, including cross-country meetings, common wiki sites, websites, brochures, technical reports, air time and other and outside the team;
- V. There is a need to cross-fertilization of proven experiences between the two countries. In Uganda, the teams did very well in devolution of responsibilities, including allocating budgets to the local governments; while in Ethiopia the team did very well in introducing proven SLM technologies and practices to the respective communities. The objective of the project could be achieved only if both interventions are hybridized and made to function

- together. This calls again for cross team interaction and exchange of practices and approaches.
- VI. SLM at landscape scales and its scaling-up process call for a broader and functional partnership. Innovation platforms that are set to achieve these objectives should be broad-based and accommodate actors beyond the natural resources offices of the respective districts. Traders, input suppliers, local leaders, research institutions, NGOs and government institutions all should play a critical role in making IP work. Hence the need for a proactive facilitation of partners.
 - VII. One of the key constraints identified by the mission for affecting active participation of the local institutions was the lack of incentives for the IP to continually meet, discuss and act at district scales. Moreover, the IPs were isolated and rarely interact with the wider community, who also became suspicious about their motives. This calls for an active facilitation and sharing of responsibilities and benefits at IP, community and higher levels.
 - VIII. **Likelihood of success:** The project has been delayed substantially due to slow start-up and poor cross-country and cross-site facilitation. Although encouraging progresses has been made in the last year, the probability that the project will achieve the stated objectives in the remaining time period is low.
 - IX. **Research merit and effectiveness:** The research progress made in the two target countries differ both in its emphasis and depth. An effective facilitation to cross-fertilize the lessons emerging from the different sites could accelerate the innovation and learning process but could also provide robust methodology and framework within the time frame. However, it calls for an empowered coordination and facilitation team to effectively deliver the intended outputs and outcomes.
 - X. **Value for money:** The evaluation team is convinced that the action research implemented by the innovation platforms for influencing SLM policies and uptake of SLM technologies is worth the money invested, at least in the Ethiopian sites. The remaining questions is whether the site and regional coordination team would be in position to invest time and resources to capture these local lessons and convert them to usable tools and frameworks for devolution and up-scaling of SLM practices at higher levels.
 - XI. The mission is happy with the overall achievement of the project though there is a room for improvement. The gaps in terms of coordination, communication and facilitation should be filled as soon as possible. IDRC should encourage the institutions to validate the critical gaps identified by the mission and develop a strategy for remedy that would capitalize on the progresses made but also fill the gaps hindering progress to date. The mission is keen to advice that the project should be allowed to continue as far as the suggested remedies are put in place by AHI and the major partners.

Acknowledgements

The mission leader recognizes the site coordinators of the respective countries, Ms. Bezaye Gorfu and her team, Dr, William Wangore and his team for their valuable formal and informal discussions but also for facilitating the meetings and the field trips. Thanks to Dr. Joy Tukahirwa for her guidance and availing the available materials but also linkages created throughout the mission. Special thanks go to Dr. Pascal Sanginga for guiding the mission and creating space for the mission leader to learn the real challenges and opportunities in devolution of power and resources for scaling up SLM interventions. The honest feedback we have received from the communities in the respective countries was extremely educational. Thank you All!