

## **Community Mobilization Approach**

### **Best Practice in Sustainable Land Management (SLM)**

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## 1 General

Name of Approach: Community mobilization.

## 2 Detailed description

### 2.1 Definition

Community mobilization is an approach pursued to mobilize the population and all the members of a household in the communities for the implementation of SLM technologies across the micro / macro watershed areas without providing any incentives.

### 2.2 Summary description

#### 2.2.1 Criteria for selection

Community mobilization approach was selected as a best practice example based on the criteria stated in the SLM Best Practices Concept & Manual by the consultant (it needs to be confirmed by the Task Force).

**Table 1: Criteria for the assessment of SLM best practice example**

Criteria	Points	Comments
Acceptance	3	Fundamental, at least 2 points
Effectiveness	3	Fundamental at least 2 points
Efficiency	3	Fundamental
Relevancy	2	
Sustainability	2	Fundamental
Replicability	3	
Total point	16	
Average rate	2.66	

**NB**

- the criteria is at high degree (3)
- the criteria is at medium degree (2)
- the criteria is at low degree (1)

The cumulative average rate should be at least 2,0 points to qualify for best practice.

#### 2.2.2 Problem addressed

The main problem addressed is that village communities are not aware of land management problems in their areas. Therefore, they are reluctant to work and provide labor to the measures taken related to soil erosion and land degradation.

Community mobilization is used to mobilize the village community for SLM activities to address problems like

- soil erosion, deforestation;
- declining productivity of land;
- low fertility of soil. and
- low level of participation in community based SLM activities.

The specific objectives of community mobilization are

- to increase the awareness of land users on land degradation problems, and
- to demonstrate the importance of SLM measures to protect cultivated lands from erosion and degradation.

### 2.2.3 Purpose and detailed description

Community mobilization involves all land users in the community (men, women and youth) who are able to participate in SLM activities. Land users participating in community mobilization are required to form SLM groups. A plan for SLM is prepared at the woreda level and then distributed to all kebeles for implementation. In most cases, Kebele members are required to identify and prioritize SLM related problems. Since 2009, each member is expected to contribute labor of 40 days every year to undertake land management activities. The campaign is expected to be done during the dry season.

The objective is to involve land users in the management of land through the implementation of SLM technologies. A 'development team' group comprises 20-30 members and a 'work team' group is composed of 10-15 members. Women and men participate equally in the two groups and in the leadership of the teams. 80% of the activities to be undertaken by community mobilization are expected to be done on cultivated lands. Every day the working teams evaluate their performance. They also participate in the discussions of the work plans. There is a leader for each team and a production cadre for each group at Kushet level (the lower administrative unit) who supervise the activities done by the groups.

All land users in the community are expected to participate in the implementation of the activities through the community mobilization approach. The area for community mobilization is defined by the administrative and the watershed boundaries. The kebele and woreda administrators, woreda specialists and development agents coordinate the planning and the implementation of the SLM activities.

Figure 1: Picture on community mobilized to construct physical structures on communal land



## 2.3 Adaptation to different agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions

The community mobilization approach is suitable for all agro-ecological regions where visible land degradation problems exist.

If community mobilization is carried out on individual land, the mobilization plan has to make sure that all participants benefit from the measures (e.g. mobilization takes place on the land of all land users during different mobilization rounds).

The community mobilization approach creates a common vision on the 'future of our land' and strong coherence among the community members. People are proud of what they can achieve within a short period of time. The motivation for further community work is then high.

## 3 Benefits and costs

### 3.1 Benefits

#### **Benefits on household level**

Benefits on household level are high when the community mobilization is carried out on individual agricultural land. Even after one year, already the reduction of runoff water is visible and crop yields have increased.

#### **Benefits on community level**

Benefits on community land are visible in the medium term by reduced runoff water and by increased water retention of the soil.

#### **Benefits for the environment**

If community mobilization in combination with SLM measures is carried out on a wider scale (e.g. large areas of a watershed), the medium and long term effects on the environment are increased water retention, less flooding, less soil erosion and increased land productivity.

The community mobilization approach helps to carry out SLM activities in considerably large areas in a short period of time. It emphasizes on the awareness creation and understanding of land degradation problems and encourages communities to get engaged in SLM activities. Land users provide their labor to the implementation of SLM measures and gain knowledge, as well as encouragement to carry out SLM measures on their own plots. Land, forests and woodlands are also addressed by this approach and a considerably large area of plantation is undertaken during community mobilization campaigns.

### 3.2 Costs

Community mobilization is the best approach when implementing huge activities within a short period of time and with low costs.

## **4 Success and challenges**

### **4.1 Success**

The government of Ethiopia uses the approach and accomplishes tremendous activities. Community mobilization will guide the community members to work together to implement SLM activities by using community resources. In addition, community mobilization creates local ownership and helps local communities to understand SLM activities as development measures for their own local area.

There is a policy provision that encourages farmers to practice conservation activities on their land. The regional governments provide technical and material support to land users willing to conserve their lands. Over the last few years, the implementation has steadily increased and land users attitudes and working spirit has changed positively. The approach has helped to strengthen and to encourage the formation and functioning of local institutions such as kebele associations, community conservation groups and other activity groups.

The regional government of Tigray has recently issued the 'Land Use and Administration Proclamation' that describes responsibilities and obligations of the community to manage their land. The proclamation enforces the rights for proper use and penalties for not executing the legislation. A land user will lose the right to use the land if s/he fails to apply conservation measures on the land or allow the land to be degraded.

### **4.2 Challenges**

Communities (in Tigray) have accepted community labor as a necessary instrument for their long term survival but expect to receive more support (technical advice and tools) from the Woreda experts and Development agents. Shortage of tools is an obstacle and people are reluctant to take the financial burden to buy tools in addition to their labor contribution.

In addition, many holidays (cultural and religious) are celebrated, and land users do not work on those days. This limits the availability of labor force for community work. Also, some community members are not willing to contribute free labor for SLM activities, but currently more and more land users are convinced of the benefits of community mobilization.

It is mainly the SLM specialists in consultation with the community leaders that make decisions on the methods and approaches for the implementation of the SLM measures.

The most important condition of the success is that the villagers are clearly aware of the short-, medium- and long term benefits of community mobilization. Failure to realize the short term benefits of community mobilization will automatically lead to poor participation of local communities in community mobilization campaigns.

## **5 Sustainability and chances for scaling up**

Chances for scaling up the community mobilization approach are high, especially if government policy (40 person-days per adult per year) is supported by sensitizing measures through the Woredas experts and Development agents. At the beginning, there might be reluctance, particularly from the poorer sections of the communities, but after people recognize and realize the potential of the direct benefits and the long term benefits on household, community and environmental level, they usually are willing to contribute. The community mobilization approach can be replicated wherever land degradation has visibly caused degraded land and decreased land productivity.

## **6 Conclusions and recommendations**

Community mobilization is a government policy to implement SLM activities. Over the last few years the implementation progress has increased. Similarly, land users attitudes and working spirit has changed positively and more land users are convinced of the advantages and take part in the activities.

The community mobilization approach is suitable for all agro-ecological regions where serious and degradation is visible. There are no specific conditions under which the approach could work or not work. The most important condition is that the villagers are clearly made aware of the short-, medium- and long term benefits of community mobilization.

## **7 Reference**

MoA; Sustainable Land Management Technologies and Approaches in Ethiopia, 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.