

Labor Sharing Approach

Best Practice in Sustainable Land Management (SLM)

May, 2013

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Table of contents

1 General	1
2 Detailed description	1
2.1 Definition	1
2.2 Summery description	1
2.2.1 Criteria for selection	1
2.2.2 Problem addressed	1
2.2.3 Purpose and detail description	1
2.3 Adaptation to different agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions	2
3 Benefits and costs	2
3.1 Benefits	3
3.2 Costs	3
4 Success and challenges	3
4.1 Success	3
4.2 Challenges	3
5 Sustainability and chances for scaling up	3
6 Conclusion and recommendation	4
7 Reference	4

1 General

Name of Approach: Social labor sharing

2 Detailed description

2.1 Definition

One of the important traditional associations still common in the Ethiopian highlands is called **Debo Wonfela** in some areas. Debo Wonfela is a labor assistance provided to a land user by his fellow land users. It is a socio-cultural tradition of co-operation where land users support each other by working in groups. It requires the organization of land users in social groups so that they can assist each other to get laborious activities done which cannot be performed by a single land user alone.

2.2 Summery description

2.2.1 Criteria for selection

Social labor sharing 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 practices example

Criteria	Points	Comments
Acceptance	3	Fundamental, at least 2 point
Effectiveness	2	Fundamental at least 2 points
Efficiency	2	Fundamental
Relevancy	2	
Sustainability	2	Fundamental
Replicability	3	
Total point	14	
Average rate	2.33	

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

Farmers mostly prefer to work with their relatives and neighbors to assist each other. This alleviates the labor demand of each activity which cannot be performed by a single farmer alone. In addition, it is also very costly to employ external daily laborers for such work.

2.2.3 Purpose and detail description

Debo explains mutual voluntary labor assistance provided by land users to a single land user who is a member of the community and who needs labor support from neighbors or relatives to get farming activities done on time. A land user who seeks Debo assistance has to provide food and beverages for those who assist him in providing their labor. Everyone in the

community participates, as the Amharic saying 'Nege-leine' ('tomorrow could be my turn'). The farmers support each other in house construction, plowing land, construction of physical structures, weeding, harvesting amongst other activities. It is also an opportunity to share information. The land user 'sends a word' around the community and the day will be fixed for the work to be done. Those who will support the land user, friends, neighbors and relatives come and assist him on that day.

Wonfela is a form of labor-share among members of a group to work together where each member gets equal opportunities to get the work done by the help of the other members. The approach has been in existence as a tradition in Ethiopia since centuries.

Figure 1: Wonfel for construction of terrace on farm land



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

The labor sharing approach is suitable for all agro-ecological zones. The labor sharing is carried out commonly on individual land and has benefitted most of the members of a community. What makes this approach superior to others is that the approach creates a shared understanding on the 'future of our land' and strong coherence among the community members. People are proud of what they can reach within a short time by working together e.g. for reducing soil erosion.

3 Benefits and costs

There are regulations for land use and land administration within the provisions of SLM procedures, that states that land users are requested to protect their land from further degradation, e.g. erosion. The regulations ensure the rights and obligations for proper land use and state also 'penalties' for no proper use and management of the land. Land users may lose the right to make use of land, when they fail to manage the land to be productive.

Farmers are therefore encouraged to get organized in labor sharing practices for necessary SLM activities and measures on their land, while the government's role is to provide all necessary technical support to the land users and to enable the local communities to take part in all stages of planning, implementing, and monitoring & evaluation of SLM activities

3.1 Benefits

Working in labor sharing has several benefits. It leads to the necessary changes in individual attitudes amongst the members of the groups when being guided towards the required development goals. The social group members will share their resources (tools & equipments) and share their individual experiences with each other. Members with poor resources and disabled individuals receive assistance from the other members, also women headed households and households who face labor constraints highly benefit from this approach. Each land user has his turn to be assisted by other land users to get the farm activities done. In the long term, this will contribute to the achievement of sustainable land use, which is the base for agricultural development and livelihood improvement.

3.2 Costs

Basically labor sharing (SLM) activities do not require any extra costs. In most cases, the people come together to work with each other turn by turn on their individual land in a collective manner through voluntarily provided labor. They usually come with their own tools and planting materials (seeds and seedlings) and perform the daily assigned tasks. The owner of the land may only have to provide food and local drinks ('tella') to the laborers.

4 Success and challenges

4.1 Success

The decisions and choices on the application of SLM practices & methods are made by the land users themselves. No technical staff or other decision makers are involved in the choices of the applied technical assistance. Technical staff provides the needed technical support and advises on the implementation of the activities. All groups in the community have the right to decide over their land and how to make best use of it.

A high number of individual land users have used the approach. Women headed households and households who face labor constraints benefit most from the approach, to receive support from other members of the community. The 'better off' land users, who have the financial means, may hire daily laborers. The average land user, however, benefits highly from the Wonfel, because he gets the necessary farm work done on time, which he could not have done on his own and with his own resources alone. A land user or a group of land users can initiate the establishment of a Wonfel and other interested land users can join the group at any time. Each land user will have his turn to be assisted by the other land users, to get his farm activities done on time. The attitude of the majority of land users towards the approach is therefore positive.

4.2 Challenges

Challenges observed are the lack of capital for the very poor households to provide even food and beverages, the lack of legislation of user groups associations and the shortage of land for some farmers.

5 Sustainability and chances for scaling up

The government encourages land users to practice land management measures on their land and provides technical support to the farmers. To implement SLM activities, community members are organized in groups and participate in all stages of planning, implementing, monitoring & evaluation. This improved situation of disadvantaged groups by this approach is the best example for the success of shared mutual help within the community. People in remote areas depend highly on each other for their survival in times of emergency. Mutual help is more necessary in those areas than in areas where life is easier. People regard it as their responsibility to help others and to serve the community in order to improve the living conditions for all members in the community. They invest time and energy for low or no

payment in construction work, in maintenance, managing and organizing land use activities. Likewise, the technical staff consists of local people who are prepared to live and work within the communities under the same difficult conditions. Going from 'hamlet to hamlet' by foot is a sign for that commitment often seen and observed. They are motivated by more than just receiving their salaries. All this together contributes to the sustainability of the technical measures and to the improvement of the land.

6 Conclusion and recommendation

The community members are empowered to take development into their own hands. The deterioration of investments made in watersheds is reduced. It enhances local leadership and empowerment, also and particularly of women in the rural areas. It is a great opportunity for watershed users to analyze the reality of their situation and to plan for options of making use of local resources for implementing sustainable land use management and development activities.

7 Reference

ILEISA Newsletter for low external input and sustainable agriculture, *July 1997, Volume 13*. The Netherlands.

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

GIZ-SLM (not yet published); Experiences of GIZ in Sustainable Land Management in Ethiopia.