

Reports of GGWSSI First National Stakeholders Workshop in Ethiopia

Axum Hotel, Addis Ababa

August 16, 2011.

The first national GGWSSI stakeholders' workshop in Ethiopia was held on the 16 August 2011. The workshop was attended by 63 participants that covered a wide range of stakeholders groups. The participants included heads of various regional offices, representatives of various federal ministries, academic, research and civil organizations. The program of the workshop (annex 1) had three main sessions: the opening session, . This report summarizes the events of the workshop as follows:

The opening session

This session was chaired by Dr. Girma Balcha, director of Ethiopian Climate Change Forum. Key note speeches were given by delegates from FAO (Mr. Hussien) and AU (Mr. Almami) followed by an opening speech delivered by HE Mr. Sileshi Getahun, State minister of the ministry of Agriculture, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. All the speeches acknowledged the high level of degradation that drylands of Africa in general and that of Ethiopia in particular are facing and the complex socio-economic challenges, particularly food insecurity, besetting them. They indicate that the continent as whole is hosting large dry land area, but land degradation coupled with climate change, poverty and loss of biodiversity are constraining food security and increase vulnerability of communities living in there. These problems are particularly high along the Sahel south of the Sahara. The delegates also stressed that as the problems facing the dry lands of Sub-Saharan Africa are cross-sectoral and multi-scale by nature it demands multi-level and multi-sector engagement by applying integrated development interventions that targets both ecological/environmental health as well as socio-economic wellbeing. Furthermore, HE Mr. Sileshi Getahun stressed that the government of Ethiopia as a party to the initiative is dedicated to work towards the fulfillment of the goals and objectives of initiatives.

The paper presentation session

In this session about five papers were presented. Two of these focused on GGWSSI and the rest focused on sharing experiences of integrated natural resources management in Ethiopia and the role of civil society organization. The first paper was presented by Mr. Melaku Tadesse, the country focal person for the GGWSSI within the MoA. Mr. Melaku's presentation provided an overview of the history of GGWSSI, goals and objective of the initiative, countries involved in the current phase of the initiative, progresses so far and Ethiopia's engagement. He emphasized that the initiative is not a stand alone but is complementary to several global and regional agenda such as UNCCD, MDG, UNFCCC and UNCBD. In terms of implementation modality, Mr. Melaku showed that the GGWSSI is a platform that attempts to bring together national and regional initiatives and integrate them in a complementary and mutually reinforcing mode for maximum impact. Hence, it will work with and on existing local/national initiatives and programs by enhancing existing knowledge, traditions and capacities. He also flashed the implementation modalities and approaches that the initiative is planning to follow. He finally showed foreseen implementation challenges, existing opportunities and the way forward.

The second paper was presented by Dr. Mulugeta Lemenih, the national consultant of FAO's TCP for GGWSSI. Dr. Mulugeta's presentation highlighted additional history, rationale and strategies of GGWSSI. He suggested participants to digest the GGWSSI pamphlet provided (Annex 2) for further insight into what GGWSSI is. In his presentation, Dr. Mulugeta further highlighted the extent of drylands in the continent, current challenges that dry lands are facing (deforestation, climate variability, desertification, etc) with focus on Ethiopia. Most importantly Dr. Mulugeta emphasized the resource potentials and opportunities that drylands of SSA can offer in terms addressing ecological and socio-economic problems by highlighting the options for commercial production of gum arabic, frankincense, myrrh, aloe and other plant and animal resources. He finally proposed potential sites for GGWSSI implementation by showing various areas within Ethiopia that more or less overlap with the geographic specification of the GGWSSI.

The third paper was on project experience of biodiversity conservation presented by Dr. Fassile Kebebew from Institute of Biodiversity Conservation. He presented experiences of three different projects they had over the last 5 to 10 years and the approaches they have been using to achieve their goals. In the first project 'farmers-Based On-Farm in situ conservation of Crop Diversity (12 sites)' the project involved 12 community gene banks and 12 community conservation areas. The main goal of the project was to link farm communities and their local cultivators (land races) with biodiversity conservation. Their aim was to enhance the promotion of production based conservation of genetic resources. They employed mainly two strategies to achieve their project goals. The first was training of farmers that comprised in total about 4000, and second by establishing revolving seed supply system from the community conservation area as well as gene bank. In conclusion, Dr Fassile indicated that the approach used proved successful in insuring seed supply security to farmers, the project was also able to conserve about 400 farmers varieties about 22 different crop types with the annual turnover of 138 tons of seeds. The second project he mentioned was about medicinal plants conservation project. In this project they established field gene banks, strengthened traditional healers by organizing and legalizing them, facilitating experience sharing visits to India and Sri-Lanka and through the development and implementation of ecosystem based development plans. For the third project experience they also employed various strategies that enhanced the adoption of eco-friendly production system by the community among which the projects are implemented. He finally remarked that these experiences including the strategies they employed could help as a learning platform for GGWSSI implementation process on the ground. Similar Mr. Tsegaye Tadesse from FARM Africa Bale Eco-Region Sustainable Development Program shared the experiences in participatory NRM that his and other similar NGOs have gained to assist sustainable management and use of forest and other important ecosystems in Ethiopia. He emphasized that involvement of stakeholders particularly the community is a necessity to achieve sustainable and ecosystem friendly livelihood development practices. Project and program implementation should be characterized by participatory planning, participatory decision making, considerate of traditional practices, gradual impregnation and blending of modern systems as well as improvement of legal frameworks and security of ownerships. The two other papers were experiences of civil society organization presented by representative from Forum for Environment- Ethiopia and the last by Mr. Sileshi Sima from Environmental Protection Authority. The two speakers also shared experiences of their respective institutions and strategies they employ to mobilize local community. Particularly Mr. Sileshi Sima captured existing

practices and experiences in Ethiopia with respect to combating desertification. He mentioned that traditional home garden agroforestry, traditional Konso land management (terraces and multiple cropping systems), the pastoral season patterns of grazing from among the traditional practices and several projects in the country. Mri Shimelis also indicated that works of some projects such as MERET and practices of organizations such as ORDA in Amhara Region and REST in Tigray Region are excellent examples for combating desertification in dry lands. He further indicated that Ethiopian government is developing agree economic development pathway in which GGWSSI can best fit.

The panel discussion session

After the presentations of all the papers, a panel discussion was opened and to assist the panel discussion Dr. Mulugeta Lemenih as proposed three discussion points to the audience. The three discussion points were:

- 1) Dryland issues across Ethiopia: what are the priority problems we should target?
- 2) What successful experiences have you known exist in the country or you have heard of in other countries that we can learn from and out/up scale?
- 3) What should we suggest to be emphasized/incorporated into the strategy under development for the GGWSSI? Including organizational structure for its effectiveness? And any other points you want to forward?

The panel discussion was chaired by Dr. Habtemariam Kassa from CIFOR-Ethiopia office. The following were major reflections from the panel discussion.

- It was stressed several times that the criteria for defining ecological range for GGWSSI, i.e. the isohyets of 100-400mm rainfall, should be revisited as this reflects little the actual situation in Ethiopia. Participants also recommended the initiative to encompass dry lands affected by degradation and threatened from desertification rather than limiting itself to rainfall ranges between 100-400 mm;
- The GGW strategy should also embrace treatment of other ecosystems that do not full fill the geographic delimitation of the initiative along its stretch to create a continuum of ecological band where NR are managed well and able to stop desert expansion;
- The initiative should build itself on existing resources of the dry lands such as native vegetation that have economic and ecological values mainly gum-resin bearing plants; aloes and others;
- It should also target generation of knowledge and skill on dry land forest management and tree development as this is critically weak regionally, globally as well as nationally
- Private sector engagement in the initiatives must be given due attention. These may facilitate very well the value chains and market infrastructure for products generated as an outcome of the initiative
- Create synergies with existing national and local initiatives. Capture best practices and lessons from the massive land rehabilitation activities across Ethiopia such as in Tigray and Amhara regional states. Also capture factors for successes and challenges in prior land management projects such as MERET, LLPPA, SLM and others that can help as a spring board for successful implementation of GGWSSI;
- Bring early on board existing development actors and civil society organizations;

- One of the major causes of land/vegetation degradation is heavy dependence on biomass fuel. Participants recommended the initiative to pay special attention in promoting energy projects such as alternative energy from solar and wind and efficient stoves that save biomass
- Invasive plant and bush encroachment should be treated with emphasis
- Range land rehabilitation and pastoral development through market information system, value chain development and forage development is recommended
- Participatory approach should be pursued
- Work harder on awareness creation, educating local people, institutional innovations and interventions rather than just focusing on technical strategies;
- Include promotion of market oriented production system to address poverty and enhance livelihoods. Also include stock management systems that fit to climatic patterns of the intervention areas;
- Cross cutting issues such as demographic issues (population growth, immigration) and gender aspects need to form core element of the initiatives
- Learn and capitalize on traditional knowledge and NRM systems;
- Support and promote research and education at all levels on dry lands

Media coverage

The workshop was broadcasted on Ethiopian National Television, Dutch Vole radio and also Sheger FM radio.

Annexes

Annex 1. Workshop Program
Date: 16 August 2011
Axum Hotel, Addis Ababa

NO.	Time	Activity	Responsible person	Chair person
1	8:30-9:00	Registration	Organizers	
Opening session				
2	9:00-9:15	Welcome and introduction	Mr. Melaku Tadesse	Dr. Girma Balcha, Director of Forum for Climate Change Ethiopia
4	9:30- 9:45	Key note address	FAO delegate (Mr. Hussein Ali)	
5	9:45-10:00	Key note address	AU delegate	
3	9:15-9:30	Opening speech	HE Mr. Sileshi Getahun: State Minister	
Introduction to GGWSSI and experiences from other projects				
6	10:00-10:30	Introduction to GGWSSI	Mulugeta Lemenih	Dr. Girma Balcha, Director of Forum for Climate Change Ethiopia
10:30-10:45		Tea break		
7	10:45-11:15	Experience of integrated NRM project: the case of Medicinal Plant project	Dr. Fassil Kebebe	
8	11:45-12:15	CSO in NRM: experiences, potentials and lessons	Mr. Nigussu/Delegate	
9	12:15-12:30	Discussions and morning session wrap up	Group	
	12:30-1:45	Lunch break		
10	1:45-2:15	EPA – Desertification control	Sileshi Sima	
plenary session				
11	2:15-3:45	Plenary discussion		Dr. Wubalem Tadesse Director of Forest Research Directorate, EIAR
3:45-10:00		Coffee break		
13	10:15	Closing		

Annex 2. Introductory leaflet to GGWSSI

Why GGWSSI?

The threat posed by desertification is particularly acute in Africa, and Ethiopia is no exception with this regard. The National Action Plan to combat desertification (NAP) indicates that about 65% of the country's landmass is already threatened by desertification. The extent of land degradation in the drylands of Ethiopia is exceptionally high making the country one of the most susceptible countries in Africa to the impacts of desertification. Coupled with climate change, the impacts from desertification is already catastrophic and will continue to be so. Livelihoods in the drylands of the country are heavily dependent on natural resources (soil, water and vegetation), which have become increasingly fragile due to the mounting pressure from the growing human population, lack of proper management and climate change. On top of the prevailing poverty, stresses from recurrent droughts, increasing inter-annual rainfall variability, decline in the total amount of rainfall received in most places and inefficient water and other ecosystem services utilization, the resilience of these ecosystems is severely declining. A number of developmental projects and programs have been implemented and a lot are also on-going by development actors be them GO and NGOs. Although efforts so far have achieved some level of successes in some aspects, there still remains a lot to be done to achieve an integrated and sustainable linked socio-economic and ecological solution in these environments. This is what the Great Green Wall for the Sahel and Sahara Initiative (GGWSSI) program intends to achieve.

What is GGWSSI?

The Great Green Wall Initiative was inception at the highest political level in Africa as a response to a major concern, namely the combined effects of the degradation of the natural rural environment and drought and the circum-sahara region In July 2005, under the Presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo, the African Union decided to adopt and support the project, which then was officially adopted in December 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria as one of the pillars of a rural strategy which reconciles development and environment.

A Pan-African Agency for the coordination of the implementation of the GGWSSI has been created and is domiciled in Ndjamena, Chad

GGWSS is a program developed by the African Union to fight desertification and poverty in South Sahara as well as to contribute to climate change adaptation and food security. The programme is intended to involve more than 20 countries in the Sahel-Sahara zone. However, current focus under the Pan African Agency is on 11 African countries, whose activities would consist to create a green belt, 15 km thick and 7,775 km long, from Senegal in the West to Djibouti in the East, cross Ethiopia and Eritrea. It aims at combating desertification, degradation of land and vegetation and reducing poverty. This initiative, which is linked to sustainable development, reflects a strong political will to conduct, in well delineated regions of the Sahelian and Saharan countries, a set of concerted and coherent interventions with the aim of achieving simultaneously the three following goals:

- natural resource conservation, development and management;
- strengthening infrastructure, and
- improving the living conditions of the resident communities.

What GGWSSI is not?

GGWSSI is not a wall of trees. Trees can be part of the integrated intervention and includes different interventions such as sustainable forest management and conservation, and/or forest restoration and /afforestation, integrated natural resource management (NRM) in which NRM and livelihoods are well integrated. Indeed, it encompasses agriculture (crop and/or livestock; rainfed and/or irrigation), NRM (soil, water, vegetation, wildlife, etc.), reforestation/afforestation of degraded lands, etc. as deemed necessary given the ecological and socio-economic context of the areas in perspective.

Geographic delimitation

The program is aimed to be open enough to adapt to specific national requirements in terms of space. As the term ‘wall’ might infer, the GGWSSI is not necessarily a continuous wall rather can be a mosaic of complementary land use areas targeting areas affected by high level of degradation and/ or desertification according to criteria to be developed by the respective implementing countries.

What is the target in the workshop?

The workshop intends to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Creating awareness about the GGWISSI – Ethiopia’s involvement
- 2) Sharing experiences among the stakeholders on issues related to institutional set-ups (arrangements), as well as technical areas as related to the implementation of the GGWSSI, including reflections on implementation modalities,
- 3) Preliminary brainstorming on potential sites (locations) for piloting implementation of GGWSSI within Ethiopia in priority orders
- 4) Proposal for key components/elements for the Ethiopian strategy and project for GGWSSI