

# **Report on field visit of SLM project by Central Africa focal countries and experts**

**By Dr. Athanase Mukuralinda**

**ICRAF Rwanda Country Representative**

**World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)**

The field visit on Sustainable Land Use Management project (SLM) was organized by Rwanda Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), NAFA and ICRAF.

The participants from Burundi, Cameroun, Gabon, Sao Tome Principe, Thad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville, La Republique Centrafricaine et les experts de FAO, COMIFAC, Mechanism Mondial CEEAC, CBLT and PNUD, GIZ, ECO SECURITIES. The visited sites are Rwaza in district of Musanze, North Province and Mukamira in district Nyabihu Western Province. In both sites, ICRAF and Rwanda Agricultural Research Institute (ISAR) established pilot sites (Field school). Various options were used for control erosion. In Rwaza site, the pilot site is radical terraces (Bench terraces) stabilized by agroforestry species (*Calliandra calothyrsus* and *Alnus acuminata*) where erosion is stopped immediately and at Mukamira the progressive terraces was promoted with *Alnus acuminata* on contour lines. Below, background, Objectives of the project and achievements are described

## **Background of the project**

Rwanda is a small mountainous country with the highest rural population density in Africa, largely on steep mountainous terrain on old leached infertile soils. This has led to declining agricultural yields and increasing levels of land degradation as rural farmers cultivate ever more marginal lands. An initial scoping exercise showed that the key issue within the land degradation scenario was poor cultivation practice leading to increasing and severe erosion of soil and consequent sedimentation of watercourses, loss of soil fertility and overall loss of ecosystem productivity and health.

Sustainable Land Management project (SLM) was initiated in 2005 with the financial support of UNDP/GEF and the GOR to address issues related to land degradation and management in a sustainable manner. This project has been jointly implemented by ISAR and ICRAF since 2008 under the coordination of RADA. The project was designed to contribute towards improvement of SLM by increasing the levels of successful soil and water conservation interventions in mountain regions namely, in Burera, Musanze districts in the Northern Province and in Nyabihu and Ngororero districts in the Western Province.

## OBJECTIVES

The project's objective is capacity developed for sustainable land management in central and local government, government agencies (RADA), and farmers; and sustainable land management principles mainstreamed into national policies, plans and processes.

The project has four main outcomes linked to the LDC – SIDS Portfolio Sustainable Land Management Programme namely,

- **Outcome 1: Institutional and individual capacity for SLM developed** – this entails analysis and preparation of an acceptable set of intervention techniques, which are turned into field training modules, for new extension agents, with-in participatory demonstration training programmes.
- **Outcome 2: - Government of Rwanda uses capacity to develop a long-term SLM programme to ensure coordination, best practice and mainstream SLM principles into national development** – this outcome addresses the institutional need for Government to monitor Land Degradation and device best practices from a set of existing SLM initiatives in country.
- **Outcome 3 – NAP Supported by a credible IFS and broader CSIF process linked to TerrAfrica** - address broader picture of National Action Plan (NAP) elaboration through co-finance; developing an Integrated Finance Strategy and starting the Country Framework for TerrAfrica.
- **Outcome 4 – Project Managed Adaptively** - focuses on managing the project efficiently and cost effectively with an adaptive M&E process.

## PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

Since its initiation SLM Project has registered a number of achievements towards meeting its objectives and these include:

- Significant investment has been made in building the capacity of farmers and extension officers, thereby empowering them to provide better extension services particular in the demonstration sites.
- Collaboration and cross sectoral planning has been enhanced at district and sector levels where the project has demonstration sites.

- Through training of trainers and the introduction of innovative techniques the project has been successful in demonstrating SLM practices and departing knowledge of land management in 4 pilot sites in the Northern and Western regions of Rwanda.
- Establishment of farmer's cooperatives in tree nursery management, tree planting and management.
- Tremendous improvement of soil quality and crop yield on newly developed terraces.
- Assessment of biomass increasing as an option towards climate change mitigation
- Improving decision making and social learning on SLM investments through a comprehensive Cost Benefit Analysis
- Development of more impact oriented extension approaches and methods using a SLM communication strategy tools and web based knowledge system.
- Establishment of monitoring system of soil nutrient balance and current quality status using the land degradation of African Soil Information System (AfSIS) and the Monitoring for Quality Improvement Tool (MonQI).
- Women were empowered through active participation in cooperative, planning and implementation, monitoring activities since they could independently meet their financial needs through trading in some of their excess yields and benefits through off farm employment opportunities provided by the nurseries and the construction of bench terraces.
- Finalization of the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation