

Field Trip Report to Metu with PHE Members & partners

18-20 November 2010

Introduction

PHE Ethiopia Consortium strives for a balanced and healthy ecosystem to the wellbeing of people at all level by enhancing and promoting a holistic and integrated development approach on population, health and environment to complement the national effort of GTP and MD goals to ensure sustainable development.

As part of materializing the objective of PHE, the consortium organized an experience sharing field visit to Ethio Wetlands Natural Rehabilitation Association (EWNRA), one of PHE's members operating, in Metu Woreda, Illuababora Zone, Oromia Regional State.

Participants in the experience sharing visit are comprised of twenty-seven head of organizations, mid-career professionals and experts from seventeen member organizations, partners and others. Out of the total participants, 23% were women.

This practical field visit is a continuation made to other PHE integration sites with concerned stakeholders.



Members after briefing in the office and during field trip

Photo: PHE Ethiopia Consortium

Objective of the field trip

The trip was organized with the intention of creating awareness and shading light on the practical clarity of PHE's integrated approach to member organizations, partners and staff members.

- Stretching webs of connectivity among participants in order to put down prolific ground and strong partnership as well as introduce PHE integration approach.
- Creating gainful setting to take up the best practices of PHE member organizations to be replicated in members respective operational areas with similar settings.
- Popularization of peculiarities of members for a better integration approach by networking among participant organizations.

Presentation

EWNRA is operating in Metu Woreda, Illuababora Zone of Oromia Regional State since its scale up and expansion program in 2004.

Before undertaking the experience field visit, EWNRA staffs have elaborated the overall activities and the achieved results so far to the participants. The integrated approach embraces various components such as natural resource management which include physical and biological soil & water conservation, distribution of fruits and tree seedlings, compost making; community empowerment through capacity building; livelihood diversification focused on non-timber activities like fruit, coffee and spice production, beekeeping; Construction and installation of safe water; mainstreaming health and population activities such as personal hygiene and environmental sanitation, Reproductive health and family planning, HIV/AIDS and health education. The environmental impacts achieved in the project area are

- Loss of soil in cultivated land is reduced by 75%.
- Problem of siltation on wetlands and valley-bottom grazing land is decreased.
- Charcoal production and fire wood encroachment is minimized by 95%.
- Degraded wetlands are starting to rehabilitate.
- A total of 10,676 ha of land is treated with biological and physical structures and more than 1.7 M forest seedlings were planted. As a result of these activities, 22164 ha of land are covered with soil and water conservations and 6013 households are benefiting.

Field Visit

Tulube, 12 km North of Metu town, is one of the Kebele Associations where EWNRA implement its integrated development activities. The group travelled to this site right after having a brief explanation about the project.



Members heading to farmers plot of land, discussing about vetiver grass hedges in Tulube

Photo: PHE Ethiopia Consortuim

a) Vetiver grass (*Vetiveria zezanoids*)

The group has visited a maize field with an area of six hectares that is treated with an imported vetiver grass and planting following the contour of the landscape of the farm. It is explained that vetiver grass has been used as multipurpose grass with tremendous benefits to the community. Apart from preventing soil erosion and conserving rain water, it causes the water to infiltrate to the lower soil horizon so that the valley-bottom wetlands may recharge in a short period of time. The beneficial grass has been well accepted by the local community whereby they been able to maintain soil nutrient and soil moisture of their plots of land. The grass also used as a means of generating income, as medicinal plant, as means of controlling stock borers, ants, flea and bugs.

During the field visit, it is justified that a farmer who used vetiver grass as a hedge in his terrace - harvested 70Qts of yields from a hectare of land and earned 26,000 birr in a season. In the expansion process of the grass, the local government in collaboration with EWNRA is promoting vetiver grass nurseries in private farmers plot.

b) Wetlands

Wetlands are the most productive areas and are often inaccessible resources where it is perceived as a wasteland. The woreda is endowed with tremendous wetlands, but the resources were threatened for long time. After the upper catchment has been treated with vetiver and other soil and water conservation structures it was possible to cause the water to percolate down to the lower soil profile so that it follows the course to be concentrated in the meadows. Eventually the dried wetland with an area of 364.5ha has regenerated completely. The sustainable use and conservation of the wetlands has been administered by the local institution, Iddir, of the area by developing their own by-laws. Such an exemplary practice has resulted four dried wetlands to rejuvenate again and exist as its previous state which shed light on the recovery of the ecosystem. The rural community has developed confidence and belongingness towards the wetland resources. The picture below is one of the wetlands regenerated as a result of the treatment made on the upper catchment.



Members discussing with local farmers about the recovered wetlands in Tulube

Photo: PHE Ethiopia Consortium

c) PHE integrated activities (family planning, Health and income generation activities)

A single development intervention executed by solitary organization would not achieve a comprehensive result unless and otherwise the core issues of development challenges are treated in an integrated manner. With this understanding, EWNRA has been injecting the integration activities of PHE to maintain the balanced interdependence of population, health and environment into their development activities. Nowadays, the interdependent and inseparable attributes between environment, health and society has brought the attention of many scholars into bountiful discourse for the realization of balanced intervention

as a pillar for sustained ecosystems in an area. The absence or low level consideration of one of the three will bring disturbance into the ecosystem.

EWNRA has been mainstreaming the integration activities into their interventions. To this effect, 32 PHE providers who work with 64 PHE peer educators have been serving the community by providing condoms and pills to them that have less access to any health institutions. These providers and peer educators assist their communities on voluntary basis.



One of the PHE providers with box of condoms & pills in his house

Photo: PHE Ethiopia Consortium

PHE Ethiopia Consortium has been exerting tremendous efforts to popularize the expansion of vetiver grass, wetlands management, Family Planning together with EWNRA.

Along with this, the members have visited and made a discussion with a “saving and credit” group of women in Tulube kebele. This group has saved a total of 288,000 ETH Birr. They also undertake beekeeping and compost preparation for their own benefit. The women group has briefed the members concerning the utilization of condoms and pills in family planning. The chair of the women disclosed that members of the saving and credit groups have improved family planning methods. Their husbands also understand the burden of women and they encourage them to use family planning.



Women group explaining about FP, saving & credit, and IG Activity

Photo: PHE Ethiopia Consortium

d) Nursery multiplication site

EWNRA has three different nursery sites for the purpose of multiplying vetiver. Each of the nurseries has an area of 0.5ha. The group has visited one of these multiplication nursery sites, which has the capacity of producing more than 38,000 clumps (78,000 slips) of vetiver, which will cover 7.8Km strips of land. The planting material will be nurtured for about 5-10 months in the nursery site before it is distributed to the beneficiaries. The visitors held on-site discussion with EWNRA staff concerning the management aspect of the grass and they grasped tremendous experiences to establish their own multiplication in their respective project areas. To maintain the sustainability of multiplication EWNRA and the local BoA have started providing technical assistance to farmers in order to establish private nurseries.



Members on-site discussion on vetiver grass multiplication site

Photo:PHE Ethiopia Consortium

e) Plantation of vetiver grass on highway road side

The multipurpose grass has been found to be effective in stabilizing the heaps of soil along the highway road from being eroded by erosion and from landslide. The initiation to challenge the road authorities has been carried out by joint effort of the Vetiver Grass Network, where, SLUF and PHE. As a result of the integration attempt, the road authority has adopted the grass technology in their construction plans and reached at a consensus to source out sufficient planting material when needed.

f) Discussion with Administrators (Zone & Woreda) and Head of sector offices

PHE has taken the lead to moderate the discussion among local leaders concerning the overall joint effort in executing development activities. Ato Tamene Balcha, head of Woreda BoA, has explicitly explained the joint implementation of activities, the challenges and the gaps in the Woreda. The participants shared their typical experiences with the Zone & Woreda leaders. In the discussion, the main gap in the zone/woreda is identified to be capacity to utilize human resources in order to mobilize community participation. However, PHE Ethiopia Consortium has planned to fill the gap by mobilizing stakeholders in the area.



Ato Tamene, head of BoA briefing the group with PHE

Photo:PHE Ethiopia Consortium

g) Yayu UNESCO Forest Biosphere Reserve

The experience sharing group has visited ‘Yayu Forest Biosphere Reserve’ which is one of the limited reserves that is registered by UNESCO. Yayu is one of the 180 woredas in the Oromia Region, Illubabor Zone, Region, which covers 28,000 hectare of natural forest. This forest embraces various biodiversities since time immemorial. Eventhough the reserve is registered by UNESCO, its existence is under threat because of little attention. The group had discussions with local leaders and project worker about the management of the reserve, the benefit of the community from the reserve and the challenges encountered.

To this end, PHE Ethiopia Consortium has taken the mission to mobilize Media people, concerned governmental and private bodies to publicize and disperse information for public awareness.



Yayu Biosphere Reserve registered by UNESCO

Photo:PHE Ethiopia Consortium

Reflections/ Summary of participants from the experience sharing visit

Beza Vision Ethiopia (BVE)

As a result of the successful experience sharing visit to PHE member organization, Beza Vision Ethiopia would bestow its utmost contribution to government and stakeholder’s leadership of Metu Woreda, Illuababora zone, by providing capacity building training in essential thematic area of conflict management and resolution, social mobilization and advocacy strategies on environment.

To materialize this outcome of the experience sharing visit, the coordinator of the visit, PHE Ethiopia Consortium, EWNRA, and the Zone are expected to prepare and submit proposal to the committed member organization.

REST

The field visit to Metu was an exemplary opportunity to share integrated experiences of PHE member organizations and stakeholders that enable us to retain an immense remembrance to the concerted efforts of PHE, EWNRA and local governments.

To achieve the intended goal of sustainable development through harmonizing population and environment linkages, specializing merely in one development intervention would not take the concerted efforts farther than the its present situation. It certainly demands an integrated approach of population-health-environment linkage. Without the realization of the hub of these core development issues, result based achievement is unthinkable.

So as to hit the long journey of this development, existence of hand-to-hand collaboration, realization and inventory among local stakeholders is paramount. To this end, resource mapping and inventory of active development practitioners in the area need to be identified with their potentials. If these resourceful stakeholders are not identified and organized in a way that contributes its part, the acceleration of losing the rich natural resources would be as fastest as the Northern Ethiopia faced the problem.

EWNHS

The experience sharing visit was full of lesson event and brought behavioral change to the members. The adoption of the multipurpose grass is one of the major practical lessons I have to take it to my working place. The grass has well accepted in this area, why not we take it to the degraded areas of the North as a means of regenerating the soil and the water.

MoFA

Apart from compiling new insights about vetiver, we have many ideas to be adopted to many NGOs, for instance, working in an integration with other NGOs for a common goal is one important lesson that should be learnt. The joint collaboration and relationship of GO-NGO is a

good example for other areas for a better integration to bring a comprehensive change in the country. As pressing issues, the representative of MoFA would sensitize its field experience sharing knowledge to our office.

The Yayu Biospher Forest Reserve registered by UNESCO is one hot issue that should be given special consideration by the government. Therefore, we will present the case, especially the issuance of registration certification, to our office in order to facilitate the international diplomatic relationship with UNESCO. We also collected ideas as an input in the process of Nile Basin negotiation.

Eshet

It was appreciable and practical experience sharing visit yielded tremendous behavioral changes. I have never thought of vetiver grass to be as such useful grass for various purposes to many sectors of the development. I am changed because of what I observed. For our development program, we can use vetiver as a means of income generating device for unemployed youths in addition to its conservation benefit.

ODA

My organization has been working in the area of FP. I came to realize that we need to integrate other development interventions such as natural resource with FP program to achieve long term results. Vetiver can also be used as one income generating activity to youth programs.

Ethio-channel

Apart from personal encounter with the new technique of working in integration, we have big assignment to transfer the gained knowledge to the public. We also need to mobilize other Medias to participate in such mind changing experience sharing program if change is expected for our society.

I would strongly suggest that the PHE integration activities should be administered among school children as well as in health centers for quick results and positive changes. The integration of FP and environment issues has to be disseminated in a youth friendly manner in schools & in health centers.

PADET

Shortly after this field visit, PADET would open its new development program in Gambela. We hope to establish an integration approach in our program. Introduction of vetiver grass in the project site would be one of the needs.

HOA/REC

Currently we are communicating PHE for partnership. I hope we will continue signing the MOU so that we will collaborate with such an integration approach.

YWCA

My organization has been sponsoring 1500 children through Rotary Club. One good experience would be adopting vetiver grass as generating income for youths to sustain the sponsorship program. We commit our organization to be member of PHE for an excellent integration approach.

SLUF

This experience sharing program is planned to impact behavioral change among members of PHE Ethiopia Consortium and to networking among different actors of developmental institutions. In real sense, this program has contributed behavioral changes in the minds of participants.

This experience sharing visit provided us an opportunity to know our resources and to feel a sense of accountability to our resources at hand. Let us turn the gained knowledge into practice. Sharing by itself would not bring result unless we act on what we gained.

Why cultivating vetiver grass is limited to the south western part alone? Why not we take it to the north where degradation problem is severe? Why not we adopt it to other regions? We really need our personal commitment to act on the gained knowledge to bring change in the lives of our society and community.

Conclusion

The reflection was winded up on the remark of PHE Ethiopia Consortium that the 5th General Assembly meeting will be conducted from 10-12 March 2011, each member of PHE and other partners would be expected to share their experiences based on their specialty and preparation is expected from member organizations.