

Highlights

CIAT in Africa

No. 19
December 2004

The Highlights series summarises research results and policy implications from the work of CIAT and its partners in Africa

Communities in Uganda develop bye-laws for natural resource management

Farmers in the highlands of southwest Uganda who live on sloping hillsides with poor soils face problems associated with soil erosion. Adoption of technical solutions such as drainage ditches, tree planting and contour band maintenance has been limited mainly due to inadequate labour, limited planting materials and information, weak collective action and non-enforcement of bye-laws.

With the help of the African Highlands Initiative (AHI), CIAT and partner organisations, certain local communities in Rubaya sub-county, Kabale district, have strengthened their capacities for developing and enforcing bye-laws for better natural resource management (NRM). This has improved their adoption of sustainable NRM practices in the area. The key components of this local policy initiative are: participatory community planning & visioning; participatory policy analysis & formulation; promoting policy dialogue; and supporting policy action.



Over the last 3 years, certain local communities in Rubaya sub-county, Kabale district, have strengthened their capacities for developing and enforcing bye-laws.

Participatory community planning & visioning

Formulation of an effective NRM bye-law requires a long-term vision of desired future conditions. Participatory tools for community visioning (such as resources/assets mapping, “river code”, and force-field analysis) helped farmers to take a long term, sustainable approach to local NRM issues, and to develop effective strategies for implementing their plans.

Participatory policy analysis & formulation

Using facilitation, farmer groups revised and reformulated existing bye-laws (soil and water conservation; food security; tree planting; bush burning; controlled grazing; and wetland reclamation) and the means to implement them. Analysis revealed areas that needed further discussion in order to avoid negative impacts. For example, it was discovered that some groups in the community (such as the poor and the old) might have difficulty in complying with certain bye-laws (soil & water conservation bye-law) and needed some assistance in terms of labour and tools in order to comply with the bye-law.

Promoting policy dialogue

To be effective, community initiatives such as these need support from local government and political leadership. This project facilitated policy dialogue through the formulation of local policy taskforces at Uganda’s three levels of

We are grateful to the participating farmers in Rubaya sub-county, Kabale, Uganda for their hard work and co-operation. Thanks also to the staff of Kabale District Local Government. We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

This study was jointly conducted by CIAT and AHI



“Muguri Turwaniise Obwooro” Farmers Group

This farmers group was formed by people who were concerned about the dangers of soil loss, reduced soil fertility and related reductions in income in their area. Their activities include tree planting for fruit and firewood production, cultivation by terracing on the hillsides and digging of trenches to control soil loss through runoff water. Regulations agreed by the group in carrying out their activities (and seen as required for retaining membership) were as follows: each member should plant Agroforestry trees species, & cultivate along terraces in their home gardens; and each member should contribute to the construction of horizontal trenches on the hillsides to control soil erosion. Compliance with the regulations by group members was enforced locally by a small monitoring committee. Non-members were forced to co-operate in the construction of trenches along the hillsides when Rubaya sub-county local council permitted the recognition of a regulation on the use of trenches for controlling soil erosion. Consequently the people of Muguri parish are now bound by the regulation and offenders can be administratively handled.

decentralisation (village, sub-county and district) to oversee compliance and address conflict issues. Each community group established a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to track the effects of bye-laws on NRM, and specified how each bye-law would be implemented (including the institutional mechanism, such as fines that help to put it into practice). The proposed bye-laws were debated in the sub-county and harmonised for their general application in other areas. Uniform bye-laws were presented to the local council for approval.

Supporting policy action

The CIAT/AHI project has worked with local farmer groups and policy taskforces to establish support at different levels for bye-law formulation and implementation. Some of the major activities were:

- Strengthening local social capital and group organisational development to create capacity so that local community groups can formulate, implement and monitor appropriate bye-laws.
- Organising policy-learning events (i.e. workshops & field visits) to provide forums for dialogue between the community and those who make, influence or implement policy in government circles.
- Identifying and supporting leaders who champion NRM initiatives.
- Identifying key leverage points with policy-makers at appropriate times (i.e. when there are changes in leadership).

Achievements and outcomes

- CIAT/AHI has strengthened local capacity to review, initiate, formulate and implement local

bye-laws. The farmer groups have also considered how these renewed bye-laws might affect different people in their group and have suggested ways of avoiding negative impacts.

- Successful bye-laws were usually linked to technologies (such as tree planting and drainage construction) that increased land productivity by reducing soil erosion.
- Strengthening of a community’s social capital has fostered collective action. For example, farmers from different groups worked together to dig hundreds of trenches for controlling soil erosion on the hillsides, (covering an area of approximately 60 hectares).
- Women’s participation in bye-law formulation has improved and in many cases women are taking on leadership roles.
- Sustainable institutional arrangements, such as policy taskforces and farmer groups, for facilitating bye-law formulation for better NRM are in place at different levels.

Opportunities for up-scaling

The bye-law formulation approach is being expanded to other villages, sub-counties and nearby districts in Uganda. Another 30 million people living under similar conditions in countries such as Rwanda, DRC, Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania, where the AHI consortium and CIAT currently work, could also benefit from formulating their own bye-laws. Research and development organisations have a vital role to play in supporting communities to formulate and implement effective bye-laws that are linked to improved NRM technologies. This will facilitate farmers living in the highlands of Africa to appropriately manage their natural resources.