



REPORT PERIOD: JUL 2011 – SEP 2011

MAJOR ACTIVITIES IN THIS PERIOD

Conduction of village training by LFs in Tree growing and Soil erosion control.

SPECIAL EDITION: FIELD REPORT by CCOs *

Tree Growing

In order to implement the program, a series of activities have been carried out by the CCOs through the LFs with full support from the management.

Firstly, all the CCOs were trained in tree growing management. For the old CCOs, they had brush up training and to the new CCOs, they had TOT. From there, all the LFs were also trained likewise, old ones had brush up sessions and the new ones had TOTs. Later the LFs were busy training their fellow farmers from introduction of tree growing up to nursery operations as well as management of natural regenerations through the new approach by grouping them into clans.

Reports from all the CCOs during fortnight meetings indicate that a total of 55% of the households have undergone these training. From this data, this year things show that there is a greater participation comparing to previous years as most of our villagers prefer handouts projects for developmental program.

Direct sowing method was introduced to the famers this year. This may have upper advantage than starting from nursery stage which is more involving, though more seeds are required per planting station. Only fast germinating or fast growing species are promoted for this method.

Currently only two species (*Albizia lebbeck* and *Senna Spectabilis*) have been distributed to each LF. Later those LFs will distribute the seeds to farmers when they demonstrate how to sow the seeds with this method. At the moment, the distribution of the seeds is undergoing despite current fuel shortage.

By Mphande (Forestry)

Soil Erosion Control

The month of August, September were busy with activities in COVAMS catchment area. Lead famers were training fellow famers after being brushed up themselves by CCO's. Brush up trainings for lead famers covered topics such as: slope assessment, contour marker ridge and box ridges construction and designing of swales. All these trainings were to better equip lead famers with skills to train fellow farmers.

This year COVAMS introduced a system where each village was allocated a number of trainings to be conducted. Training Participant Cards (TP Cards) were allocated to each house in accordance to earlier household survey conducted in each village with a view to have even distribution of trainings in the village. TP Cards have lifted up to their expectations as they have proven to be effective in two folds; the even distribution of trainings as trainings reached each and every corner of the village due to TP card allocation to each and every household. The other thing was about improvement in the number of participating farmers since they (farmers) felt recognized after receiving TP cards which acted like invitation cards for them to take part.

By Kasawe (Agriculture)



Gully control Training

Gully control training courses were conducted to equip both lead farmers and villagers with knowledge and skills on how to reclaim the land where soil was eroded developing gully and also to prevent the development of new gullies.

The training was facilitated by COVAMS project to villagers in the catchment area through lead farmers, who were elected by villagers during sensitization meetings, which were conducted by CCOs. The villagers were enlightened during these meetings of problems brought by gullies if not controlled, together with other two components which complement gully control.

Prevention measures are achieved by practicing soil conservation and tree growing, while countermeasures are construction of check dams which villagers practice after participation in the training. Check dams are very unique in a sense that materials used are locally available like stones and brush wood. The shape of the check dams are made in such a way that the water speed is reduced so that the accumulated soil and trash fill up the gully in a short time.

The response to the technology has been very good because the results are seen within a short period, and that the solution to their outstanding problem which has been there for years is within reach by having their own trainers.

Villagers on their own reclaim small and medium gullies, while big gullies are reclaimed with assistance from management using poles, wire, solignum and expertise on how to construct checks. Stones and labour are villagers' contribution. So far, the results are encouraging. All small gullies which were reclaimed have heeled and big ones are still healing.

By Chagoma (Community)



Bee keeping

Bee keeping is an interesting and money raising activity in COVAMS project area. The project is targeting areas of T/A Kapeni and T/A Kuntaja. The bee keeping practices started in 2009 through trainings to villagers. Below are the activities COVAMS project together with villagers have done to enable bee keeping practice expand in the past three months.

Firstly, COVAMS has been giving support in terms of materials to the villagers to get trained in beehive construction, beehive setting, bees and beehive management, honey harvesting, honey processing and honey packaging. To add more villagers have been selling the honey they harvested after trainings. The materials which COVAMS project has been supporting the villagers with include; plunks, carpentry tools and honey processing materials.

Secondly, with the money raised from honey sells, villagers have been buying plunks for further construction of hives on their own after they received training and the remaining amount was shared so that they can access the subsidized agriculture inputs.

One of the activities in the target area under COVAMS project is Afforestation which is aimed at reducing siltation in the Shire River. However, some villagers are receiving direct benefits from the trees they are planting and managing through bee keeping activities. For this reason Bee keeping has raised villagers interest in tree planting and management. Hence, number of villages interested with bee keeping is increasing. However, support is required from any resource providing organization for these interested villages to expand their activities as regards to income generating activities.

By Kalagho (Forestry)



World Bank Visitors

COVAMS project received visitors from World Bank on 7th Sept. 2011. The delegation was accompanied by other departmental heads from Lilongwe such as Mr. S. Kantukule (Water Dept.), Mr. S. Nkhoma (Disaster Dept.), Mrs. Gama (Forestry Dept.), and Mr. Tibu (Land Resources Conservation Dept.) Mr. George Ledek and Mr. Sheik Sanga were the main delegation from World Bank.

The delegates from World Bank were so impressed on how the project has changed the mind set or livelihood for the people living in Chiwalo village as one of the COVAMS village in the catchment area, after asking several questions to the villagers and their village head.

The Visitors visited two sites; Gully and Beehives. In the gully site, the visitors wanted to know from the village head on how she mobilizes people to work in controlling the big gullies without being paid. The village head's response; she said her people know the importance of gully control in her village. In past years, the people have been experiencing washing away of their crops during rainy season. Due to high speed of run-off, many gullies develop. A lot of soil is deposited into streams which raise the level of water and cause flooding that washes away crops. Also most of their lands have been experiencing washing away of top soils leaving degraded and unfertile land. After they started gully control erosion and water velocity were reduced which have resulted in yield improvement and stabilization of farm soil and land.

In addition, the villagers complemented that the constructed check dam acts as a bridge linking to neighbouring villages. In the past time, it was difficult.

The visitors were amazed seeing that dried grasses were still standing without being burnt. The village head told them that the people were sensitized on dangers of setting fire and also they came up with a rule which gives penalty to the person who put fire, e.g. pay a goat as a fine. However, they still have challenges on night fire.

Finally the visitors wanted to know on how the project has changed people's livelihood and also on the project's sustainability. They answered that the people have now got a step up in their livelihood. This has been brought due to improved yields and financially as they also engaged in beekeeping as an IGA. Furthermore on sustainability, the visitors had an ear pin bite that it will prevail since the project trained them in several technologies and have skills and knowledge of which they are equipped with to use even in the project's absence. Moreover, the resources they are to use are within the locality.

By Andiwochi (Forestry)



"From the editor"

Finally, LFs in all the subjects completed TOTs in September. It was tough time for the CCOs because they were too busy. The management set a deadline for conducting training as end of August, but many CCOs had forgotten to tell it to the LFs. So the deadline was extended up to end of September.

We discussed in a CCOs' meeting how we can avoid forgetting things that we agreed upon. The best way seems to be reviewing and reminding each other important matters in every CCOs' meeting.

* The title of Extension staff has been changed from Project Implementation Unit (PIU) to Conservation Coordinating Officer (CCO) since April 2011.



For further information and questions, please contact

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