



REPORT PERIOD: Jan 2012 –Mar 2012

MAJOR ACTIVITIES IN THIS PERIOD

Jan : COVAMS workshop, Gully control training

Feb : COVAMS Review meeting, 7th JCCM

Mar : Strengthening COVAMS Public relations

COVAMS Expansion

The approach COVAMS project has put in place has been getting a reputation as being effective. Upon facing the phase out of COVAMS project at the end of October 2012, expansion of COVAMS has become a hot issue. Actually, COVAMS phase 2 has been requested to JICA by the Department of Forestry. However, the framework of the phase 2 was not really clear yet. Therefore, the project thought that it would be necessary to mould a uniformed concept on the COVAMS phase 2 amongst the concerned departments.

In December 2011, sharing meeting of COVAMS achievement amongst the three concerned Departments was conducted in Lilongwe. Subsequently, COVAMS workshop was held on 26th and 27th of January 2012 in Blantyre combined with site visit. The intension of the workshop was to clarify the roles of COVAMS phase 2 in the COVAMS expansion.

During the workshop, expansion of COVAMS was defined as "Replication of COVAMS approach to other areas in order to expand areas and strengthen the existing activities of COVAMS phase 1". However, outline of the COVAMS phase 2 was not reached to consensus although there seemed to be a recognition that Malawi government still needs a technical cooperation for the implementation of expansion of COVAMS to other districts.



A scene of workshop

7th Joint Coordination Committee Meeting

On 22nd of February 2012, the 7th JCCM was held in Lilongwe. The main issue was again the COVAMS expansion focusing on COVAMS phase 2.

When we talk about COVAMS expansion, the bottle neck is how to procure necessary budget to implement COVAMS activity in all the concerned districts and areas. Blantyre DC suggested that each DC has development fund and it could be a source of the budget including the ORT budget of each department.

Upon agreeing with the idea, JCC planned to have another meeting for phase 2 planning with key stake holders like DCs of each concerned district after obtaining some necessary data like number of TAs and available extension officers in the area from the districts. In order to obtain such data, the COVAMS project conducted an explanation meeting of COVAMS achievement to the districts by inviting them to Blantyre in March 2012.

So far, Blantyre, Mwanza and Balaka district have submitted the data.

COVAMS annual review meeting

The Final COVAMS annual review meeting was held from 6th to 11th February 2012. During the meeting, the participants assessed the COVAMS approach and mainly planned post COVAMS activities.



CCO review meeting : Whole session



Group work

The COVAMS approach was assessed as an effective approach with a result of 30 to 40 % of practicing farmers of the learned technologies against the entire households in the target area. The recent modification in the way of conducting training which targets every clan and delivers training to each clan made a long stride on the increase of practicing farmers.

In tree growing, the introduction of direct sowing was very much welcomed by the farmers even though the trial of the direct sowing by the farmers was not really successful one because of erratic rains. But most of the CCOs reported that the farmers are willing to continue this direct sowing method next year, saying that this method can trim down farmers' committed time to nursery work. Besides, the large number of trials gave the project a hint that the timing of sowing should be after having adequate rainfalls, and hard compaction of the soil after sowing is not really necessary.

CCOs agreed on continuation of the activities to achieve the aim of COVAMS. However, just continuing the COVAMS approach may not work efficiently since the rate of practicing farmers has been stuck at around 40%. In order to break through the rate, the approach may need to change. So this year, CCOs are going to try several different approaches for the villages that have been weaned after more than 2 years of intervention. The approaches were grouped into three categories such as 1. Mutual help approach, 2. Problem identification approach and 3. Constitutional approach. No. 1 is basically, practicing farmers will encourage and help non practicing farmers while No.2 is CCO's initiative. No.3 requires communal agreement with some punishment.



UFO: This is a scene from the workshop to learn importance of communication. Group members used their one index finger to hold a paper dish and lift it down onto the floor without verbal communication.

Gully control training

Farmers are being trained to construct check dams using locally available materials found in their villages with the importance of decreasing soil erosion by reducing run off with the structures to be constructed.

"The villagers really practiced this technology and their gullies are filling up. Change is really there on both big and small gullies". The village headwoman Chinyama and her villagers said that both big gullies and small ones were filling up in her village.

In the 10 villages under Ms. Mwachumu's section, the villagers have realized rehabilitated road sides from gullies including in boundaries of gardens where the gullies were taking some parts of the gardens before check dams were constructed.

"Let's reclaim our land by the technologies for sustainability of fertile soil and soil moisture. To achieve optimal crop production and enough food that leads to enough money for economic growth."



By Ms. Mwachumu (CCO agriculture)

Strengthening of COVAMS' public relations

For the expansion of COVAMS to other districts, the project found it necessary to strengthen the public relations so that more recognition by the government of Malawi and the District assemblies and of course by farmers will be earned.

In order to strengthen it, the project requested a short term expert from Japan, and Ms. Saito was assigned to COVAMS project in March 2012.

She reviewed what COVAMS project has been doing for the public relations and gave the project very appropriate suggestions. The project is going to follow the suggestions as much as possible to improve publicity.



For further information and questions, please contact

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