

Strengthening Rural Institutions in East Africa

Countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda

Locations: Embu and Bungoma Districts (Kenya); Pemba and Lushoto Districts (Tanzania); and Masindi and Kapchorwa Districts (Uganda)

Geographic coverage: East Africa

Contact: Mieke Bourne; m.bourne@cgiar.org and May Muthuri; m.muthuri@cgiar.org

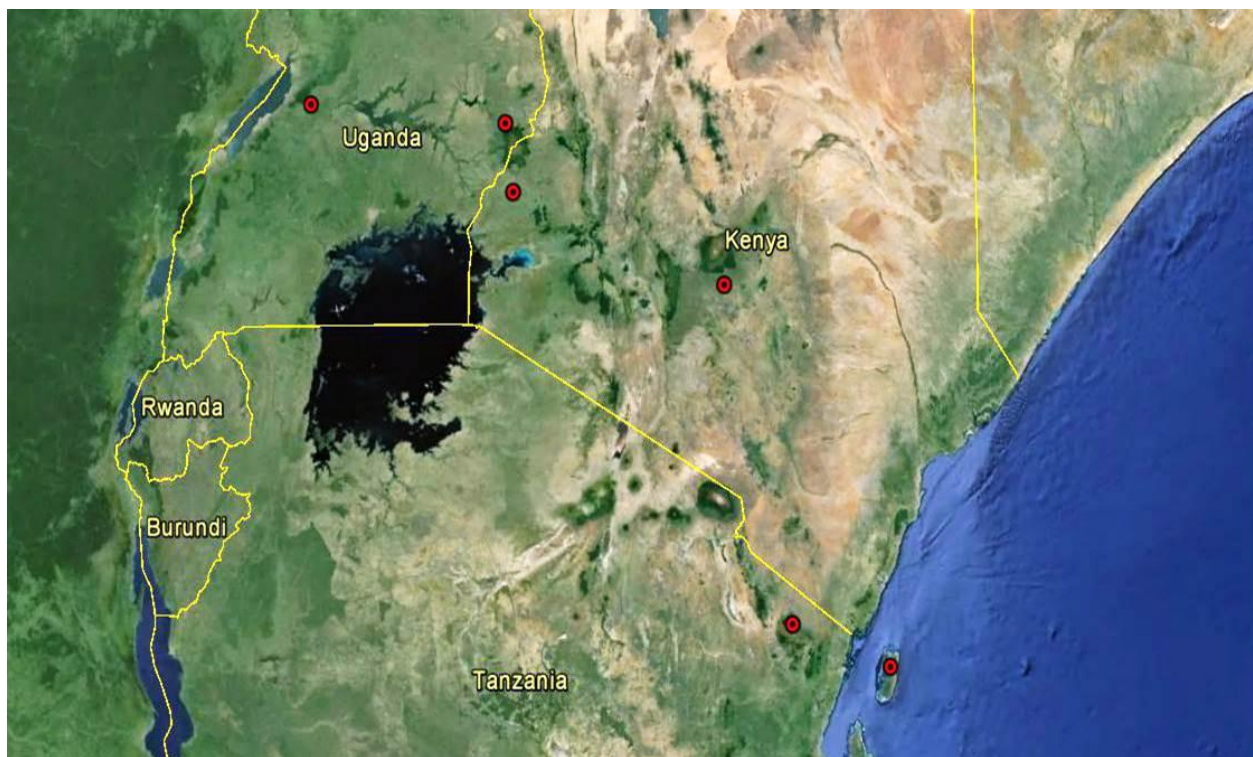


Figure 1: Map outlining project sites across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

Introduction:

Collective action in natural resource management is a key feature of smallholder farmer systems. However, most studies on technology adoption for the smallholder farmers are more inclined to use the household as a unit in their research. In reality, problems faced by smallholder farmers are crosscutting in scope, and require the cooperation of various stakeholders.

Weak rural grassroots institutions have low capacity; they do not exploit collective capital and have limited knowledge sharing abilities. This situation hampers the adoption of sustainable land management practices, technologies and ultimately, the achievement of food security in the East African region.

Available literature has shown that putting people together in well-organized groups (rural grassroots institutions), consulting and incorporating their knowledge during the planning and implementation stage of projects inculcates a sense of ownership and participation. This in turn leads to improved sustainability of the development projects. Therefore, strengthening rural grassroots organisations is critical to enhance their capacity to adopt sustainable technologies and practices, undertake innovations and influence policies that can positively benefit both their livelihoods and the environment.

Description of the project:

The Eastern Africa regional office of the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), through an action research process to strengthen rural grassroots organizations in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, is undertaking a project: 'Enabling rural transformation and grassroots institutional building for sustainable land management and increased income and food security'.

The research is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and implemented by the **Strengthening Rural Institutions (SRI)** project, which draws on principles of institutional and organizational analysis to strengthen and improve institutional capacity building in future development projects.

The project sample includes 583 rural grassroots organizations drawn from eight different projects. Six out of the eight projects are funded by IFAD, one each by the Landcare East Africa network and the African Highland Initiative (AHI). The project operates on three main objectives:

- To enhance capacity of variants of grassroots institutions and provide support to harness broader collective action for rural service delivery
- To improve enterprise development within the context of conservation, and community level asset accumulation
- To build a regional institutional platform for knowledge sharing, scaling up, and participation in sustainable land management policy making and development processes in East Africa

SRI uses an action research approach to simultaneously produce impacts in the selected sites and expand scientific knowledge on grassroots institutional strengthening and analysis. The key impact goal is to strengthening policy engagement by policy makers and citizens, and enabling grassroots institutions to reach economies of scale, access services including rural finance, extension and legal aid, and weaken obstacles of change for improved production and incomes, and poverty



reduction in East Africa. The main purpose of the project is to develop a model for strengthening grassroots institutions for effective engagement in policy processes that enable poor rural households to aggregate, mobilize, and access rural services.

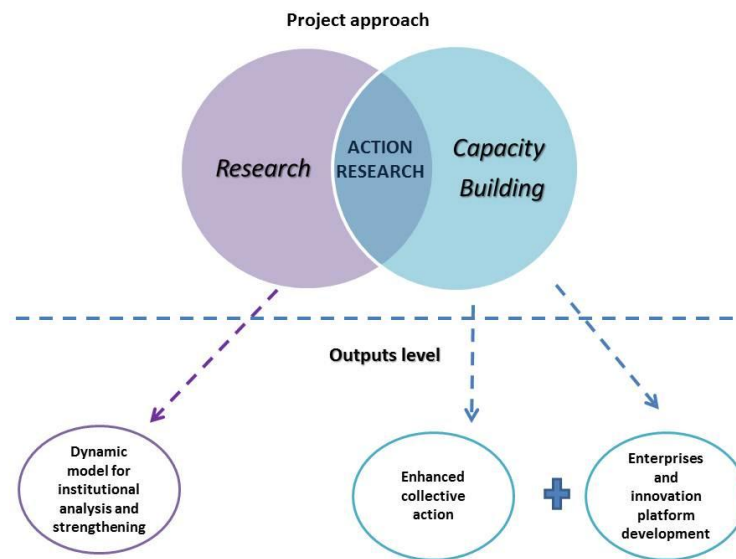


Figure 2: Simplified project approach and main outputs diagram

Related links

<http://worldagroforestry.org/regions/eastern-africa/our-projects/strengthening-rural-institutions>

Applied good practices principles

1- Knowledge building

The SRI project is a participatory action research that has involved knowledge and capacity building of the farmer organisations / rural grassroot institutions, partners and the project team at each step of the process.

A model for strengthening rural grassroots institutions is the main output from the project and is currently in a developed stage. It is intended to support the initiation, design, and planning the process of grassroots institutional and organizational analysis and strengthening during project design and implementation. This model will be used by development and other practitioners and is accompanied by a range of products such as manuals, how-to-do notes and a maturity software tool.

Two manuals are being finalized for use by facilitators. One will serve as a guide to facilitators when carrying out workshops with grassroots institutions to develop visions and work plans, as

part of a process of grassroots institutional development. The second is aimed at helping facilitators build soft skills in the grassroots rural institutions.

A maturity software tool has been developed to help practitioners determine the structural maturity of the rural grassroots organisations they are working with, determine gaps and monitor strengthening.

The project funder, IFAD, in collaboration with the SRI project has re-packaged the model into a series of how-to-do notes for use in their organisation.

2- Community participation and inclusiveness

Community participation and inclusivity is experienced and enhanced through various farmer learning processes and dissemination methods such as agricultural extension approaches, farmer to farmer learning's, oral discussions, farmer field schools, exchange visits, field days and group demonstrations/ exhibitions and printed materials provided by the project. The same is achieved through spillover effects of the strengthened institutions, increased coverage and membership, thus ensuring sustainability outside target areas.

Within the SRI project and model the involved institutions develop their own work plans based on their vision and objectives and are then supported by the project to fill knowledge and capacity gaps in this way the target community are empowered and participate fully.

3- Political ownership, collaboration and approval

A stakeholder identification and analysis was conducted during the capacity needs assessment workshop where the farmer representatives assessed the operating environment of the groups, listing the current stakeholders and the influence each has on the group.

Furthermore, steering committees comprised of both local government and civil society representatives were formed at each project site in consultation with local partners, and appropriate policy/ governance processes were evaluated to enable effective integration at the district and national levels. The regional level provides an avenue for lesson learning and leveraging ongoing processes.

4- Financial sustainability

An asset identification session was conducted during the capacity needs assessment workshop facilitating farmers in categorizing their human, social, natural, physical and financial assets. Membership in strengthened institutions by smallholder farmers provides them with opportunities to air their views on prices for their goods; access credit based on their improved incomes and management structures that promote buy-in and ownership by local stakeholders.

An enterprise development phase, which the project has ventured into seeks to optimize household level incomes through improved productivity, savings, investments and asset accumulation. The household level productivity is then linked to fostered local collective action achieving economies of scale. The farmers can also access budgetary resources that can support innovation platforms, which



present funding opportunities, made possible by the platform development phase being carried out by the project.

5- Achieving co-benefits and balancing trade-off

The project partners with a number of organizations to attain its objectives as well as strengthen grassroots institutions at local, districts, regional, national and county levels. Some of the partners include: regional steering committee's with focal point persons; Selian Agricultural Research Institute (SARI), Tanzania; International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) country offices; Mount Kenya East Pilot Project (MKEPP) now part of a larger UTaNRM project; Smallholder Dairy Commercialization Programme (SDCP); Smallholder Horticulture Marketing Programme (SHOMAP); District Livelihoods Support Programme (DLSP); Kapchorwa District Landcare Chapter (KADLACC); Agricultural Service Support Programme (ASSP); Agricultural Sector Development Programme- Livestock (ASDP-L); African highlands Initiative (AHI); farmer groups (65 directly and 519 indirectly), just to name a few. Through quarterly site level meetings and annual regional meetings objectives can be aligned to improve the achievement of benefits for all partners and discuss trade-offs.

6- Building local capacity



A capacity needs assessment workshop was undertaken in each site through a four-day participatory workshop. The workshop was designed to explore the groups' knowledge, skills, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, assets and externalities affecting its operation. Data collected during the workshop was analyzed at group and site levels, with specific reference to the technical and functional capacities of each group. Various recommendations have

been highlighted in relation to specific training, platform and enterprise development, and any enabling environmental factors that would inhibit a group's achievement of the objectives.

The project's main focus is the strengthening of the rural grassroots institutions through local capacity building both technical and capacity.

7- Transferable

The model for strengthening rural grassroots institutions and its accompanying products will be directly transferable to other activities in East and southern Africa and large components are transferrable internationally. IFAD is re-packaging the learning's from the project so they can be used widely within their projects.

8- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

The M&E strategy for the project takes a two-track basis- project level and intervention level to consider the project processes and project impacts. At the project level, monitoring will track project activities and outcomes, inform adjustments as required to project strategies, reporting to the donor, and to ensure the achievement of the project objectives and goals. At the intervention level, the M&E component will assess the effectiveness of the intervention methods

proposed, develop a sense of ownership of the capacity development process amongst the partners and help refine strategies that contribute towards the achievement of the higher level objectives. Furthermore, M&E activities at the intervention level will also attempt to assess the impacts on group achievements and changes in rural institutional strength as a result of the interventions applied.

References

Borgia F, 2013. How to do note on Grassroots Institutional and Organisational Analysis for Capacity Development Planning in Project Design and Implementation. Draft. Nairobi: World Agroforestry Centre, 35p.

Bourne M, Muller C, Muller A, Borgia F, 2013. Strengthening Grassroots Institutions in Smallholder Farming Systems: An Emerging Model. Draft. Nairobi: World Agroforestry Centre, 55p.

Muller C, Bwire D, Tanui J, Vishwanathan S, Bourne M, Muller A, Muthuri M, Mowo J, 2013. Assessing Capacity Needs and Strategy Development for Grassroots Rural Institutions: A guide for facilitators. Technical Manual. Nairobi: World Agroforestry Centre, 72p.

Muthuri M, Muller C, Kamugisha R, 2013. Strengthening Rural Institutions Project Summary. Brochure. Nairobi: World Agroforestry Centre, 4p. Available at <http://worldagroforestry.org/regions/eastern-africa/our-projects/strengthening-rural-institutions>.

Tanui J, Anyonge T, Mowo J, 2010. Enabling Rural Transformation and Grassroots Institutional Building for Sustainable Land Management and Increased Incomes and Food Security. Concept Note. Nairobi: World Agroforestry Centre, 37p.

Tanui J, Bourne M, Borgia F, Muller M, Muller A, Vishwanathan S, Otiende V, Kimaiyo J, Bwire D, Oketch G, Mwangi G, Muthuri M, 2012. Enabling Rural Transformation and Grassroots Institutional Building for Sustainable Land Management and Increased Incomes and Food Security. Annual Report. Nairobi: World Agroforestry Centre, 14p.