



Strengthening Rural Institutions and Evergreen Agriculture IFAD review mission

By Francesca R.Borgia ,May Muthuri and Lydia Wafula

The Strengthening Rural Institutions (SRI) and Evergreen Agriculture (EGA) projects, hosted Dr. Tom Anyonge and Mr. Norman Messer from the IFAD Policy and Technical Advisory Division in Rome, 24th to the 28th of June 2013. The review mission commenced with field visits to Embu (24th and 25th June) and Machakos (26th June), and culminated with a two-day workshop in Nairobi. In Embu, where both IFAD and the SRI have been working with grassroots institutions, Dr. Anyonge and a small delegation from ICRAF East Africa Regional Office met the IFAD Upper Tana Catchment Natural Resource Management Project (UTaNRM) project manager and officers and the appointed SRI Focal Point Person, some executives of the Kapingazi River Water Users Association (KaWRUA), and two local groups which have been assisted both by the IFAD and ICRAF through SRI. The field visit provided an opportunity to assess the benefits brought by the SRI project to the groups, assisting them in the journey of enhancing their internal bonding, helping them to sharpen their vision and prepare them for graduation to a higher level of maturity. In the words of Mr. Anyonge ‘institutional building is a lengthy, difficult process, but these groups are on the right path’.

In Machakos, Dr. Anyonge was with ICRAF staff and partners working in the EGA project. As part of the itinerary, the team visited a private nursery operator, one women group in Machakos and one youth group in Mwala, a satellite nursery that is managed by Uvaini primary school and the Rural Resource Centre (RRC) at the Agricultural Training Centre that serves as a hub for the supply of quality tree planting material and for knowledge exchange among farmers and other stakeholders, and linking smallholder farmers to technology, information, inputs and service providers.

Upon return to Nairobi, IFAD staff from Rome participated to a joint SRI-EGA stakeholders’ workshop at Lord Erroll Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya on 27th and 28th June 2013. In attendance were representatives from IFAD country offices and field operations from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, KENFAP, Ministry of Water and Irrigation officer from Embu County, KADLACC, SNV, NALEP, PROLINNOVA Kenya, TechnoServe, Equity Bank, District Agricultural Officers from Machakos County, INADES, KENDAT, SRI Focal Point Persons and the ICRAF staff. The main objective of the workshop was to receive feedback from the stakeholders on the applicability and quality of the content in the knowledge products developed under the SRI project as well as present results achieved by the EGA project. Representatives from IFAD HQ in Rome were specifically interested in observing the reactions of stakeholders to the presented products to ensure that the two funded projects were on track towards success. The workshop was conducted in a participatory way, asking field partners to give presentations, facilitating open discussions, and leaving room for stories and experiences from each of the six sites included in the SRI project (Embu, Bungoma, Kapchorwa, Masindi, Lushoto and Pemba), use of pictures and ice breakers to liven the mood. Dr. Jeremias Mowo, EA Regional Coordinator, thanked IFAD for the continued support it had given to SRI and EGA. He acknowledged the excellent progress made by both projects and extended his gratitude to IFAD once again for supporting the second phase aimed at merging the SRI institutional building approach to Evergreen Agricultural technologies, in order to provide evidence-based clear economic rates of return of investment in strengthening grassroots rural institutions. Dr. Anyonge emphasized on the need to embed research in all projects undertaken by IFAD to increase effectiveness of development operations. He also addressed the need to adopt economically viable models to solve the problems faced by grassroots institutions and organizations and mentioned that Evergreen is currently considered by many governments the best bet solution for food security and climate change adaptation. The progress made thus far under both projects is a testament to the efforts of all the stakeholders involved, thus continued collaboration will warrant success in the set core objectives of both projects.