

Sustainable Land Management



Annual Report 2004

1. Introduction

The year 2004 is the second and last year of the intermediate Phase (2003-2004) of the SLM Programme; before Phase II is planned to start on January 1, 2005.

As a short reminder, the three main interlinked programme lines as formulated hereunder. This shall help the reader to relate the activities executed in 2004 with the objectives formulated for the programme.

Research:

To support agricultural and environmental research and outreach in order to promote sustainable land management, firstly, by strengthening agricultural production and productivity, with a focus on pearl millet breeding and pearl millet based farming systems; and tissue culture. Secondly, by safeguarding the natural production base of farming, in particular the soil and water resources, with a focus on soil and water conservation.

Education:

To support capacity building in all aspects relating to sustainable land management, including GIS/Earth observation, and other skills used in land management such as participatory assessments etc, including an understanding of the issues at stake. Institutionally, the focus is on the University of Asmara; other important partners are government authorities and NGOs.

Outreach:

To support local and regional development in order to improve rural livelihoods and food security. This includes defining agreed-upon agendas for development, supporting concrete development initiatives, and monitoring. The nationwide spatial database developed in Phase I of the Programme (1998-2002) will also be developed further mainly through funds secured from third parties.

The Programme is funded by SYNGENTA FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE (SFSA), and jointly coordinated by CDE, University of Berne, and SFSA. The main project partners are governmental organisations in Eritrea (MoA/NARI), the University of Asmara, and nongovernmental organisations in Eritrea, and Switzerland.

2. Key achievements in 2004

Education:

- The Geography Lab was completed and handed over to UoA in October 2004

- By now the Lab facilities are not only used for teaching of University students but as well for other partners (ministries and development programmes) with interest in GIS and Remote Sensing.
- A total of 4 courses given at the UoA/Department of Geography in GIS, Remote Sensing, Cartography, and Surveying, including field exposure of students; completion of 12 student theses (senior BA-essays) on various issues of sustainable land management; 18 new theses started. In all, this involved 24 Eritrean students and 6 foreign students (Swiss and Austrians).

Outreach:

- Back-to-village reporting done for livelihood study of Amadir and handing over of draft final report to local partners in October 2004; in-cash contribution to Amadir community in support of rural electrification scheme will be made in early 2005.
- Completion of water supply schemes in two of three villages in the Adi Behnuna area, Zuba Debub.
- Completion of design of Afdeyu dam by local engineer, and agreement for dam construction signed in September 2004, involving 6 partners including ministries, private sector enterprises, and SDC/SHA (Swiss Humanitarian Aid).
- Improvement of SLM's countrywide spatial database (roads, settlements, administrative boundaries); initiation of dam inventory for Eritrea. The spatial database remains an important asset of our programme, and demand for maps or database material remains high among authorities and donors.
- Support of Swiss Consortium activities: as in previous years, activities of members of Swiss agencies working in Eritrea in fields related to sustainable land management were supported. In 2004, this included, among others, a financial contribution towards the solar heater production training programme (at TESINMA). This project was initiated by SLM together with Oekozentrum Langenbruck, which has fully taken it over now and is funding it mainly from sources other than SLM

Coordination:

- Since September 2004 SLM-Eritrea has its own premises in a small office building in the centre of Asmara. The office is not only a working place for the office staff but turned out to be a meeting place and a small platform for our partners and interested people in the broad field of sustainable land management.
- In March 2004, Paul Roden was engaged as Programme Officer based in Asmara. Paul, who has an extensive background on Eritrean development issues and an extensive personal network, has since been in charge of Research and Outreach activities, mainly in millet breeding support, in soil and water conservation, and to some extent in local development. His engagement has relieved Robert Burtscher of his chronic work overload and strengthened the local SLM Office Asmara as an information and service platform.

A summary of activities in tabular short format is presented in Appendix 1 of this report. Appendix 2 (Report from the Coordination Office Asmara) presents these activities in a more extensive and narrative format.

3. Partners and linkages

The links to the main partners were formalised and strengthened. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the signatory parties NARI/Ministry of Agriculture, Vision Eritrea, CDE and SFSA was signed. This MoU is the formal legal base for running the SLM-Eritrea office and for the support of all the agricultural research activities with NARI, as well as for all outreach activities.

Important contacts and links established / strengthened in 2004:

- Our main partners: collaboration with our main partners was successful in most projects. Relating to NARI, this applies particularly to the millet breeding programme and also to the joint SWC field study Afdeyu. With the University of Asmara, working relations became more close as the GIS lab moved into its university premises from WRD. Our work expanded beyond the Geography Department to the College of Agriculture, thanks to plans for a new tissue culture lab for training and research to be established in this College. SLM was also involved in curricula development for Master studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences. In the NGO scene, Vision Eritrea, has become even more important as a key partner than in previous years, both relating to administration (office rent, employment of SLM staff, logistics including transport) and to specific thematic tasks (management of construction and refurbishment of Afdeyu Research Station, follow up of drip irrigation client farmers). SLM has deepened its partnership with HABEN, another local NGO (Amadir study and local development).
- ICRC: Besides the sharing of GIS and Remote Sensing data, ICRC was ready to fund Remote Sensing training for hydrogeological applications, building on the experience of SLM-Eritrea in that field and involving trainees previously trained by the programme.
- GTZ: has requested the assistance of CDE for an assessment of the IT and GIS infrastructure of WRD and possibilities of improvement; at assignment was carried out by a consultant from CDE.
- ICCO: Interchurch Cooperation of Development (a Dutch organization) has expressed its interest in funding the secondment of an expert in Soil and Water Conservation / Watershed Management in order to strengthen the capacities of NARI in research and outreach.
- Volunteer Service Overseas: Though SLM-Eritrea has no formal links with the VSO office in Asmara, through direct contacts with VSO staff, this UK-based organisation is willing to second an expert to the College of Agriculture to handle the Animal Science lab as well as the new Tissue Culture Lab to be installed in 2005.