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“Exploring opportunities ...
for managing natural resources and a better life for all”

Assessment of cooperatives’ capacity gaps in forest management and capacity building activities to improve performances

KEBEDE CHAKA¹, MITIKU AGENE²

¹*Oda-Shenen Charity and Development Org, Programme Management, Ethiopia*

²*SWER Bureau of Agriculture, Natural Sources and Food Security, Ethiopia*

Abstract

Ethiopia is gifted with abundant natural resources of adequate landmass, fertile soil, favourable climate, water, wildlife, and others. Many of its resources are not properly identified, well managed, and fully utilised. The community-based approaches to Natural Resources Management (NRM) in general, and Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in particular, have been evolving after recognising that the top-down approach impedes conserving natural resources effectively, and accessing the to be generated goods and services. That means local communities have been involved in participatory natural resources management arrangements for better conservation of natural resources. However, the achievements in improving natural resources management outcomes have been mixed, while some are successful, others are not. The main purpose of the current study is to assess capacity gaps of cooperatives in forest management and prioritize capacity building activities to improve livelihoods of farmers in a sustainable basis. The study was conducted in two regions, six zones and six woredas: three woredas (Gumay, Beddelle Zuria and Mattu) from three zones (Jimma, Buno Beddelle and I/B/A/Bor) of Oromia region; and three woredas (Gimbo, Amaya Zuria, and Kachi) from three zones (Kaffa, Konta and Dawuro) of south west Ethiopia region (SWEPR). And six farmers’ cooperative unions, nine kebele administrations, and eleven primary farmers’ cooperatives were targeted for the assessment. According to the study results, the visited primary cooperatives and cooperative unions have their own specific (internal) capacity gaps (human, material and systemic), and external systemic/institutional challenges to properly function and market their products (timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) like forest coffee, honey, spices, fruits and bamboo). The existing capacity gaps of the primary coops and coop unions vary from zone to zone and from woreda to woreda whereby specific and appropriate intervention activities are needed. Consequently, the study set capacity gaps filling intervention activities on which the up-coming project would focus and work. Thus, special attention has to be given to forest cooperatives’ capacity gaps filling to properly manage the natural resources and ecosystems; so that, it can continue to provide the goods and services the population need in general and improve livelihoods of the farmers in particular.

Keywords: Cooperatives, forest, livelihoods, natural resources management, non-timber forest products, participatory forest management, sustainable basis