Experiences of the MERET Project of the Ministry of Agriculture in Integrated Watershed Management in Ethiopia

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Overall Context

Land degradation is the major cause of low productivity, food insecurity & Poverty

- Deterioration of soil
- Degradation of water resources
- Loss of vegetation cover & biodiversity
- 2 to 3% of AGDP loss per yr
- ~US$ 1.0 billion/year
Recognizing Negative impacts of LD,

- GoE with support of dev’t partners launched large scale LR program in **1980s**.
- The 1st FFW supported SWC started in **1971** in Tigray in **1972** in Wollo with the U.S. food aid under the PL 480 project
- This was replaced by WFP funded projects in **1974**
- **1974-1980** small & fragmented SWC projects
The Beginning of MERET Project

- The WFP supported MERET (ETH-2488/FFW) project started in 1980s
- This marked the beginning of large scale LR & SWC in Ethiopia

- Before this project;
  - Little was known about IWSM, WH, SWC

So, MERET is a pioneer project marked the beginning of Large scale LR & NR mag’t (WH & SWC)
Main objectives

➢ To increase the ability of food insecure HHs to meet necessary food needs and improve livelihoods;

through

➢ Land rehabilitation, proper natural resources management, productivity enhancement, asset creation & diversification of livelihoods
Scope of the Project

MERET Operates in 5 Regions & One administrative council, in 72 woredas:

- Tigray (17)
- Amhara (23)
- Oromia (16)
- SNNP (12)
- Somali (3)
- Diredewa (1)

- In **500-600 sites (sub-watersheds)**
- No of annual beneficiaries is about **1.5 million (40% are women)**
Relevance & Applicability of MERET Experiences to Nile River basin

- Some woredas are located in Nile basin
  - e.g. 11 Woredas in Amhara & 2 Woredas in Oromya
- Most of the project operation areas have been confined to the highlands
- With similar bio-physical & socio-economic settings of the upper Nile River basin
- Thus, the experiences & best practices of MERET are very relevant and applicable
MERET adopted CBPWSM

Gender sensitive & women are empowered
Major activity Components

- Water Harvesting & SWC
- Reforestation
- Seedling production
- Multiplication of improved (MP) planting materials
- Community level access road development
Major Activity Components

- Enhancing productivity & Biomass Intensification (AF, Forage, MP spp,
- To meet fuel wood, timber & Livestock feed & SOMM
- Provide adequate ground cover
- Low cost SFM (SOMM) (e.g. Compost)
Major Activity Components

- IGAs-HSD (Packages):
  - Horticulture,
  - Beekeeping, poultry
  - Fattening, dairy, fish culture
- Small Scale Water Dev’t
- Capacity development & technical back ups
Achievements & Impacts of MERET

Many degraded lands, which were barren, devoid of any vegetation, rocky & gullied lands were converted into productive lands & Green Environment.
Impacts of MERET Project

Soil erosion control & reduction of its on-site and off-site impacts (from 11 watersheds)

- **Soil Depth increased**
- **Soil loss reduced**
Impacts of MERET Project

- **Construction of Farmland Terraces:**
  - Increased soil depths
  - Increased soil fertility
  - Increased WHC
  - Hence,
    - Increased Productivity &
    - Sustained Agric Production
    - Use of agric inputs became viable
Impacts of MERET Project

- Rehabilitation of degraded hillsides to productive woodlots
- Ground water recharged and base flow enhanced
Overall Impacts of MERET

✓ Restored the hydrological balance & availed water for SSI & domestic use
✓ Availed abundant fuel wood, construction materials & livestock feed
✓ Prevented flood damages to down stream farmlands, villages, properties & lives
✓ Prevented siltation of water bodies (dams, lakes, etc)
Overall impacts on HH incomes & livelihoods

- Increased overall income, savings & investment
- Improved housing Quality
- Improved access to education
- Reduced Out-migration
- Enhanced knowledge on WH & SWC
- Boosted Self confidence
Success Factors & Lessons from MERET

- Good organizational structure, staffing & strong linkages from top to the grass roots level
- Experience sharing visit system among regions, woredas and farmers
- Farmers’ Filed days
- Regular joint review programs among regions & woredas (to critically review and evaluate the performance of each region or woreda and to learn from one another)
Success Factors & Lessons

- Effectiveness of SWC structures (adoption of quality control system)
- Community empowerment for decision making
- Combination of right technologies (LR, & SWC should be integrated to IGAs)
- Technical capacity built at all levels
- Regular Technical back up (close supervision)
- Testing & Démonstration of the new technologies i.e. « seeing is believing »
Major Challenges

- Social & cultural barriers (e.g. Free grazing)
- Financial (resources) constraints to scale up best practices
- Inadequate impact studies & documentation of best practices, publishing and dissemination (e.g. Hydrology, biomass, OM accumulation, Soil moisture regime, Soil fertility/productivity, etc) vis-à-vis CC.
Opportunities

- Availability of conducive policies, strategies for promoting SLM practices
- The special attention given by GoE
- Availability of success stories *(proven technologies)* on the ground (seeing is believing)
- Good *expertise* and technical capacity for scaling up the same
- Good understanding about NRM by the community esp. in areas where successful results achieved.