Strongem Woka Lon Communiti Kakai (SWoCK) Project

Enhancing resilience of communities in Solomon Islands to the adverse effects of climate change in agriculture and food security

SWoCK - ISABEL PROVINCE INITIAL CONSULTATION TOUR REPORT

INITIAL WORK ON MARINGE PROJECT SITE

9th – 14th August 2011

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INTRODUCTION

The newly introduced Adaptation Fund Project under the local name Strongem Woka long Comuniti Kakai (SWoCK) has carried-out an initial phase of consultation with the Isabel Provincial Government and other potential partner implementers to create and strengthen the understanding and build relationships with regard to SWoCK project activities which will be carried out in Maringe site project areas. It is one of the piloted regions in the country where the project will be implemented.

OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIAL CONSULTATION TRIP.

The main objective of the trip is as follows:

1. Introduce the Project to the Provincial Government, other potential responsible partner implementers and women’s group to determine partnership with communities in the implementation of the project.
2. Affirm potential partnership with Isabel Provincial Government
3. Formulate a Provincial Based Steering Committee (PBSC) that will link with communities
4. Make general observations on comments and views about the project
2.0 INTRODUCING THE PROJECT TO STAKEHOLDERS

One of the key objectives of the trip was to introduce the project to stakeholders in the province to make them aware of what the project is all about and is expected to achieve during the project life. Explanations were done on the project concept and components, its aims and purpose, its activities, expected outputs and outcomes, and how Maringe was chosen as one of the project sites based on climate and environmental effects on food and land-use issues. Four meetings were held with three possible Provincial Partner Implementers on the 10th to 13th August 2011.

2.1 Isabel Provincial Government Representatives and Senior Officers
(10th and 12th August 2011)

The following are highlights discussed during the first session with the Deputy Premier and the Deputy Provincial Secretary.

- Isabel Province is privileged to be one of the provinces selected for the implementation of the project. They believe the project will benefit them in terms of solving issues relating to food security and climate change impacts in the pilot community sites.
- Project failure and sustainability problem are prominent through past experiences with any form of donor funded projects. One of the major contributing factors to this problem is lack of provincial linked committee that will push and co-host the implementation with communities.
- The idea of forming a Provincial Steering Committee to assist in the project community consultation, community identification and project implementation with communities was discussed and seems to be a good idea.
- There are existence of working groups in communities of Isabel dealing with disaster issues and food security. As such, these communities set the basis for strong community linkages and partnership to implement the project activities in strong collegial and team efforts.
- There is one Agriculture Technician in each ward to directly involve with the implementation of the project and assist communities to fully participate in the planning, decision-making, and implementation. With financial difficulties the province is experiencing, this project will assist the AT’s to carrying-out project tasks and at the same time meeting the objectives of the province in terms of food security.
On the second consultation (12th August 2011), representatives from various Divisions of the Province attended the presentation and discussion. Apart from the Deputy Premier and Deputy Provincial Secretary, officers from various divisions that attended the meeting were:

- Womens Development Officer - Womens Affairs
- Finance and Accounts - Seconded Officer
- Community Development Officer
- Provincial Lands Officer
- Chief Education Officer
- Transport and Logistics Officer

A Steering Committee was formed and agreed upon; however, names are yet to be put forward and endorsed by the province.

There were questions asked relating to the project during the meeting. Questions and comments were made that are linked to:

- Access to funds and its requirements, however it was made clear that there are regulations and relevant structures that are set in place to guide fund disbursements and it will be made available to those who are responsible to execute the activities.
- Money perception of people. People should not look at the project for money benefit but work on the project for future benefits of sustainability of food security and resilience to climate change
- The support from the project to Buala Market is envisaged, and Officers working in the provincial capital can be able to buy food in the market (from villages around).
- The project will empower women involvement and to participate actively
- Strengthening the activities of the AT's
- At the national level, proper planning will be prospective
- Dissemination of information in Isabel will not be a problem
- Supply and demand for food is not consistent at Buala. This is experienced in situations when food supply is high but no customers or vise-a-versa.
- In accordance to the project implementation, AT's involvement needs a clear ToR from the project so that their involvements are clear and can be monitored also by the Steering Committee.
2.2 Isabel MAL Officers and Isabel Agriculture Technicians

(11th August 2011)

A presentation was made for the Agriculture Extension Officers in Buala. The presentation was made in arrangement with Rural Development Programme (RDP) workshop with agriculture officers. The purpose of the presentation was to inform officers (both MAL & Provincial) about the project aims, its components, and expected activities. It is envisaged that these officers will be part of the implementation team that carry-out activities on the ground.

After the presentation, there are positive feedbacks and comments made regarding the project, and officers are looking forward to assist in any way possible to ensure that the works are properly done. The project will assist their various sections in implementing their agricultural activities.

A question raised regarding the Land-Use Policy which falls under component two of the project was on the issue of increasing population versus development plans. Suggestion was that it is important to have policies that are effective and laws that can interpret the development of certain lands that must only be used for farming and other agricultural activities within the given sites. Land-Use on arable land must also be preserved for the purpose of food security for communities rather than been used for agriculture development activities on commercial operation.

It was made clear that this is an initial awareness programme to introduce the project and its existence through its implementing agents who will consider addressing the issues of Agriculture and Food Security in terms of Climate Change. These policy issues will also be extracted for final land-use policies from participating communities.
It was also emphasized that there should not be any false hopes given out to the people on the benefits of the project but let them think within the parameters of the Project and its nature of operation that through collaboration and working together, outcomes from the project will be beneficial to all.

2.3 Isabel Province Mothers Union Representatives

(13th August 2011)

Again, the purpose of the presentation was to introduce the project content, its scope and activities to women leaders of Isabel Province. It was seen that women as food gatherers and food providers at all time must participate in this important undertaking. As we all know, women play a significant role in the Province of Isabel. Most of the roles echoed were centered on Traditional Land-Use Planning, Systems and Techniques, Agriculture Systems and Practice, of which agriculture plays major role with significance to it.

Discussions and dialogue were centered on their active participation and involvement within their regions and communities. Most of these women were engaging in activities of life-skills and agriculture.

There are important views from the Mothers Union representatives that this project will benefit them in terms of active participation in the planned activities, information sharing, as well, been the recipients of the project.

Women’s networking in Isabel Province is a powerful tool in the sight of Mother’s Union and their representatives are a portal into the communities. They have already carrying-out awareness programmes even though information about food security and climate change was limited. They already played an active role in ensuring that traditional food crops as a means of food security needs to be embraced and revived. Indigenous knowledge of food preservation, traditional farming techniques and pest controls must be revived.
The following are the activities that these women had already been engaging in, yet their only lack is resources and funds to be set in place to carry out their work effectively:

- Organising a trade-show
- Organising workshops
- Site Visits
- Sharing of root-crops
- Sharing of traditional farming strategies, approaches and methods
- Food preservation and Food Banks

Their Challenge

- Lack of relevant agricultural and weather information/ they know the traditional knowledge of adapting to climate knowledge but it needs to be integrated with modern knowledge and information.
- Support from Agriculture Division in the province from the province was not enough to bring about impacts to their on-going work.
- Lack of funds to effectively carry-out their out-reach programmes.

3.0 PROJECT IMPLEMENTING PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ISABEL PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

With the two important meetings and discussions with the Provincial Executives and Heads of Divisions, the province has confidence on the project that they will achieve what the project intends to do. As such, the Isabel Provincial Government had assured the AF project team that the project will go ahead to implement its activities in the province and acceptance of the project was granted.
4.0 FORMULATION OF A PROVINCIAL BASED STEERING COMMITTEE (PBSC)

The importance of a steering committee was to carry-on the future sustainability of the project and assist in planning and implementation of the project in the province to the right communities and people. The Provincial Based Steering Committee will not dictate the implementation of the project but assist in community formulation based groups and leaders to ensure people fully benefit from the expected outcomes of the project and carry-on the good work in the future.

To be part of the consultation:

- How will the province benefit?
- Who will be members of the committee?
- Existing working groups in communities can be used in the implementation of activities at the project sites
- Work has already put in place to set-up the committees in communities

Steering Committee:

Guideline to the steering committee selection: Members of the committee shall consist of officers from the following areas.

- Agriculture (MAL Staff & ATs)
- Environment
- Women
- Youth
- National Disaster
- Land-use
- Chief

5.0 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Premiers meeting in Gizo (Environment Meeting). Suggestions were made if other relevant officers should also attend the meeting with the premier, most possibly, a Technical Officer or the Secretary. This is important to capture important technical issues that are going to be highlighted in the meeting and actions can be taken upon return.

Isabel been a little different from other provinces in the country has 16 Agriculture Technicians (AT). There is one AT per Ward and as such, there is
already any officer in-place for the project to carry-out the implementation of the project activities in the communities of Maringe, Isabel.

With heavy involvement of women and Mothers Union in the province, there is a need to involve the organization in assisting the project partner teams with consultations, planning and implementation.

Climate issues and problems has been experienced but little knowledge was known, whereby, Vigorous work needs to be done in the next consultations through workshops and PRA’s.

Pest problems are becoming increasingly problematic to women in Isabel to deal with. Pest occurrences on crops are affecting food production in Isabel and so there is urgent need to solve their problem which will require attention from right authorities.

6.0 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions and recommendations are some of the way forward to the next consultation;

- Link and consultations must be done to the Provincial Steering Committee before undertakings on the ground can start
- Further planning for implementation must be done in consultation with the Steering Committee
- Women’s representatives, Mothers Union as a vibrant authority in Isabel must be consulted to ensure women are fully participated in the project
- A clear guideline must be in place to ensure no confusion exists between PMU, Project responsible Partners and Provincial Steering Committee
- Next activities to the piloted project sites on fact findings and community consultations can now take place

7.0 CONCLUSION

The tour was successful in achieving the major objectives. The trip had set the bench-mark and the way forward for the project to start with further consultations with communities, and start with implementation. The project has been assured by the province to go ahead and was granted acceptance for implementation.