

Addressing root causes of conflict through natural resource management

FAO launches revised natural resource management guidelines

9 May 2018, Juba, South Sudan – Over the years the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has highlighted the considerable role natural resource management plays in the economic and social recovery of populations affected by conflict. Access to, and control over, productive resources such as agricultural land, water, pasture and forests constitute the foundations of livelihoods that can withstand shocks in South Sudan.

To address the equitable management of these productive resources, FAO is presenting guidelines this week during a three day workshop in the capital, Juba. These guidelines are a tool to implement sustainable natural resource management practices and mitigate related conflict-drivers. This workshop brings together 30 natural resource management experts from across the country.

“With these guidelines updated to the current context, stakeholders can work more effectively to address conflict-drivers to create sustainable natural resource management practices in the field,” says Serge Tissot, FAO Representative.

Forming a solid foundation for programming

As stated in the guidelines, the methodology for effective natural resource management should be comprised of five steps. Firstly, mapping land coverage using geospatial technologies is beneficial to allow information about land use to be collected and feed strategic planning and activities at both macro and micro level. The first land mapping exercise was done by FAO in 2011 producing a Land Cover Atlas of South Sudan, which is currently being updated.

Following the information collected on land use, it is recommended that the community verifies the maps and validates them with the guidance of technicians as the second step. During this verification, the community will tackle issues related to land governance, explain land tenure systems in place, identifying boundaries used and more related issues.

Through this process of verification the establishment of natural resource committees should be encouraged, focusing on engaging key local authorities and community members, with special attention being paid to gender roles and building their capacity to gather and process strategic information relevant to natural resources and its related conflicts.

Fourthly, when the grass-root causes of natural resource-based conflict are established, the guidelines encourage the identification of strategic livelihood services that can be used to generate dialogue, positive interactions and stimulate trust in the communities. This livelihood service can serve to either prevent or mitigate tensions.



Participants working on natural resource mapping during the workshop

Also, the guideline encourages sustaining peace through the establishment of territorial agreements. Territorial agreements encompass formalization of the resolutions negotiated by the natural resource committees about the use of natural resources in the long-term, and are meant to abridge buy-in from all members of the community.

All natural resource management stakeholders are also encouraged to implement comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems with well-formulated indicators to follow-up on the effect of implementing these five steps, to measure the impact of the interventions.

Way forward

During the workshop, stakeholders not only received a briefing of the guidelines but also had the opportunity to provide feedback and share lessons learnt vital to effective programming. Following, FAO will incorporate this feedback, facilitating the drafting of a guideline that is representative and applicable to the South Sudan context.

“FAO is striving to create a comprehensive road map for the implementation of natural resource management activities at all levels, with a special emphasis on facilitating community engagement up to Boma level. From here, FAO will replicate such meetings at field level to ensure a comprehensive approach,” says Marco de Gaetano, FAO Natural Resource Management Specialist.

Since natural resource management is a cross-cutting issue, FAO is looking to engage with various sectors to increase effectiveness of natural resource management interventions and improve livelihoods by addressing root-causes of conflict.

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