

The Panel of Experts on Resettlement, Compensation and Environment (POE) advises Lesotho Highland Development Authority on managing programmes

The POE comprises Drs. John Ledger, Mike Mentis, Professor Bob Hitchcock and Amusaa Inambao. They undertook a supervision Mission from 4 -12 April, 2005. The purpose of the mission was to help develop and implement critical LHDA programmes.

An excerpt of their findings are as follows:

Residual resettlement:

155 household were identified as losing some or all of their land to the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP). Of these, 65 households stood to lose 50% or more of their land and are therefore considered 'potential high risk cases'. The socio-economic situations of the 65 household vary considerably. Some of them are not self-sustaining and will require minimum threshold payments. The land remaining in the Mohale basin needs to be reallocated to residual resettlement households.

The POE are advising LHDA to intensify development program in these areas that are losing more than 59% of their land; that are highly stressed; who want to resettle and whose livelihoods would be maintained or improved if they moved.

Vulnerable households)

The POE contends that the strategy for vulnerable households in the LHWP needs to be refined, and greater efforts need to be made to identify activities that would help maintain or enhance the living standards of the households. The decision by the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC, the to assist those households caring for the HIV/AIDS orphans, is perceived to be good. The assistance will include providing funds for school fees, subsistence and clothing. The Panel however suggested that a monitoring program for the vulnerable households be put in place and that if targeted interventions be quickly made should problems arise.

Minimum Threshold

The LHDA Compensation Policy: Minimum Threshold Assessment Study (LHDA Contract 1238) was carried out in October, 2004 by the Agriculture and Environment Statistics Division of the Bureau of Statistics (BOS). On the basis of the findings, 94 households were paid minimum threshold for 2004/05. At least 19 households were removed from the pay rolls as they are above the M7,000 minimum threshold level.

The POE advised that in order for regular accurate data collection to be done in the future, the study questionnaire needs to be refined, field tested and modified in the light of the problems identified. They add that the study needs to be done earlier in the year so minimum threshold payments can be done by October.

Furthermore, stakeholders will need to be informed on the purposes and objectives of the studies and efforts should be made to obtain corroborating data on such issues as livestock holdings, agricultural activities and employment.

Ombudsman

The complaints resolution mechanism of LHDA has improved over time in response to the Ombudsman's interventions. Compensation, Resettlement and Field Operations Branch personnel are in the process of verifying new complaints, paying –off those that are owed and updating the modified compensation register.

Community Lump Sum payments

Communal assets compensation has been provided to cooperatives formed in the Phase IA Katse-Lejone and Matsoku (KLM) area, and in Phase IB to communities in the foothills such as Ha Ratau

and to downstream proximal reach communities that have formed local legal entities (LLEs). The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives and the LHDA have collaborated with communities, in respect of cooperative training and advising on potential investments to be undertaken.

The mission observed that the progress of getting projects on the ground has been relatively slow and needs to be expedited/intensified. They also advise that the LHDA must work more closely with the Ministry as well as the local authority structures on conflict resolution and management in some of the cooperatives.

Household lump sum payments

More households are taking up lump sum compensation option. Some of them are putting their funds in unit trusts and money markets in Lesotho's financial institutions. A number of households are investing their cash in agricultural inputs and implements, wagons and poultry farming.

The LHDA has been advised to work hand-in-hand with the Ministry on information dissemination, training and evaluation of business plans and investment opportunities.

Sustainability of Development programs

The agricultural projects exit strategy is going forward with the assistance of the Project Coordination Unit (PCU). Agricultural activities include the extension advice to farmers in areas such as field crops, vegetable and seed potato production, asparagus, garlic, range and livestock management. Sustainability of these projects will depend in part, on farmers' abilities to obtain seeds, tools, agricultural inputs and their competitiveness in both the local and regional markets.

The POE advise that the LHDA must come to some agreements with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Self-sufficiency that 1) assistance will continue to be provided to highlands farmers, 2) budget lines will be set aside for projects in the LHWP areas, and 3) relevant field personnel will be maintained in project areas and not transferred to other parts of the Lesotho.

Integrated Catchment Management (ICM)

Deliverables for the ICM study have added onto improving the sustainability of land-use and lowering reservoir sedimentation to facilitating and empowering collaborative sustainable development and economic growth by engaging Government of Lesotho's (GoL's) Ministries and local communities.

The POE perceives the addition as a potential win-win for all stakeholders, Government Ministries and Department, local communities, LHDA) and the environment. They advise that high-level leadership and supervision is warranted.

Comments by Panel of Experts at the Lesotho Highlands Water Project on the effects of reduced river flows on woody vegetation

Report by Drs Mike Mentis – Environbiz Africa and J.A. Ledger- SADC Environmental Solutions both in the Republic of South Africa.

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