



KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION FROM THE FRONTLINES OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Learning exchanges between community groups in Malawi and India



The impacts of climate change are evident across the country as communities' experience increasing temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, increased frequency of cyclones, flash floods, and drought. This scenario has adversely affected poor and marginalised farmers.

In 2016, the GAN launched a new initiative to connect practitioners working on adaptation with their counterparts in other places, to enable them to learn from the experience of others.

As individuals, civil society organizations and governments struggle to confront the reality of a changing climate and its impact on development, the opportunities to share and exchange knowledge on these difficult topics can be limited.

Eagles Relief and Development Programme of Malawi and EFICOR, based in India, were selected as the two organizations to participate in the first set of exchanges.

EFICOR, Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief, is a national relief and development organization involved in various relief and development work across India since 1967. EFICOR's core mission is to respond to disaster affected community by providing emergency relief, working towards sustainable development, and poverty reduction programmes working with India's most vulnerable communities. EFICOR primarily works with India's poor and marginal farming communities which are struggling with erratic weather condition due to the impacts of climate change.



Eagles Relief and Development Programme in Malawi is engaged in similar work with the goal of holistically transformed communities that are self-reliant, resilient, prosperous, and healthy. Eagles work focuses on four strategic areas: church and community mobilization, food security and livelihoods, climate change & disaster management, and community health. On climate change and disaster management the organization has the Enhancing Community Resilience Programme (ECRP), Water and Sanitation Project, and Enhancing Water Management in Rural Malawi Project.

In late September 2016, a delegation of three representatives from Eagles Relief and Development Programme travelled from Malawi to New Delhi for a week of field visits, discussions and learning with the EFICOR team. During the course of the visit, the team from Malawi visited projects in the slums of New Delhi which have a focus on vocational skills training and job placement, resource support for income generation and water and sanitation. Subsequently the group visited project sites in rural villages to see climate resilient farming practices including the use of organic manure, vermin compost, liquid pesticide and manure, mixed cropping, social forestry, nursery, and fish ponds.

Specifically, the representatives from Malawi learned a lot about community mobilization especially in urban setting, the benefits of monitoring and tracking of beneficiaries in contributing to the success of livelihood support. Low cost adaptation initiatives like watershed management using stones and sand sacks and community based adaptation strategies to address droughts were also important learning points for the Malawians.


In November 2016, Eagles Relief and Development were able to repay the hospitality of EFICOR and put their work on display to provide a learning opportunity for the Indian delegation when they traveled to Malawi. The visit in Malawi was focused on the climate change adaptation initiatives of Eagles Relief and Development Programme which are more focused on adaptation in rural areas, specifically on issues of agriculture, water, and forests.

The Indian delegation was very impressed with both the level of awareness and community involvement to address climate change was widespread and went beyond village elders and chiefs. To this end, the representatives from EFICOR reflected that the focus on working more with youth and children to raise awareness on environment issues and climate change is something that they could utilize in their programmes.



In addition to learning lessons about community mobilization, the Indian delegation identified more technical skills such as usage of vulnerability mapping and scorecards in projects, the All Year Tree Planting method and usage of crop residue for mulching, better land tilling methods, flood water control by diverting the water to the field for cultivation.

Many local communities and organizations have developed innovative and tenable programmes to address climate change, but frequently they are left to their own devices and not provided with opportunities to learn from similar organizations with familiar struggles and gains. Learning exchanges have real, tangible benefits for the organizations involved and the communities that they serve and the GAN was thrilled to be a part of this fruitful exchange between EFICOR and Eagles Relief and Development.



Trywell Khonje from Eagles Relief and Development programme said:
“The learning visit opened a door that I never expected to see.”



Jitu Kumar of EFICOR noted:
“The Village Saving and Loans concept is very impressive. This group has helped the individual to meet their personal need and business.”