

Activity Report Prolinnova–Mozambique for 2015

Introduction

In 2015, as in the previous 2–3 years, Prolinnova–Mozambique did not have many activities because of limited funds available to the regular network cooperation partners, including ADCR, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) that hosts the network. The most relevant activity in this year was the presentation of local innovations through exchange visits and experience sharing among farmers from different areas in Gaza and Maputo Provinces. The farmer associations that are part of the Prolinnova–Mozambique network are located mainly in these two regions.

As mentioned in earlier reports from Prolinnova–Mozambique, the Catalan NGO CIC-batá has been supporting the farmers in the southern provinces of Gaza and Maputo as part of their efforts to achieve long-term food security and sovereignty in this region. The NGO identified synergies in the activities of Prolinnova–Mozambique, which are centred in recognising and promoting local innovation. This served as an entry point for CIC-batá in its work towards sustainable development in the rural communities. As has been done in previous years, the Catalan NGO again decided to support some local NGOs, members of Prolinnova–Mozambique, through its programme: *“Contributing to achieve food security and sovereignty in the provinces of Maputo and Gaza in Mozambique”*. The support was in the form of funding for a variety of activities, among them the presentation of promising local innovations that the Prolinnova–Mozambique network has identified in the past years.

Priority was given to achieving increased agricultural production and productivity, environmental protection, soil conservation and pest control as well as post-harvest conservation of products. The innovators, members of the crop and livestock farmers association of Machila in Chigubo District in Gaza Province, were asked to visit the communities and associations of farmers within and outside their district or province. Agricultural advisors from Chigubo District accompanied the visiting farmer innovators. Among the hosts were local agricultural advisors.

The visits took place between 1 and 12 September 2015, just before the rainy season and the preparations for the agricultural season of 2015/16 began. A total of four visits were made in four communities: three in two districts of Gaza Province and one in a district of Maputo Province. Around 100 farmers participated in this exchange. Below are the more detailed reports on these visits, prepared by the agricultural advisors that took part.

Sharing of local innovations

1. In the communities of Chicome in Manjacaze District, Gaza Province

On 1 and 2 September 2015, eight innovators (2 men and 6 women) from the Machaila Association in Manjacaze District of Gaza Province shared their innovations with the communities of Chicome A and B. This exchange was hosted by 24 farmers (9 men and 15 women), all members of the Chicome A&B Farmers Association. Two main innovations were presented: containers made of woven grass for plant nurseries and bio-pesticide plants for pest control.

The agricultural advisor in Chicome introduced the main objectives of the exchange and the advantages of using the containers and bio-pesticides. Then the farmers visiting the communities showed how to weave the grass using *tambeira* twines. Visitors and hosts joined for the weaving example. In the next step, the visiting farmers spoke about the importance of the *margoseira* plant (*Melia azedarach*), used for pest control in the farms as well as in storage. The uses of other plants, such as moringa (*Moringa oleifera*) against some human diseases, were also discussed. The presentation and discussion closed with a round of questions, all in a participative format.

The host farmers were very satisfied with this type of low-cost containers and expressed interest in using them and sharing the idea with other farmers.

The only constraint in this visit was the short time available for the deepening of this activity. Another whole day should have been taken for it. It is recommended that there is more presentation of local innovations in various communities, so that the solutions can better assist crop production and post-harvest conservation.

2. Visit to the Guemulene Association, Chibuto District, Gaza Province

On 3 and 4 September, innovators from Chigubo Associations went with an ADCR agricultural advisor to Guemulene, Chigubo District. Two local innovations were presented: woven-grass containers and bio-pesticides. A total of 21 farmers (16 women and 5 men) – including visitors and hosts – participated in this exchange meeting.

First, the ADCR agricultural advisor explained the objectives of the visit and the advantages of the containers for plant nurseries and for the recovery of impoverished soils, and of baskets for storing vegetables. Then the farmer innovators explained and demonstrated the innovations. The weaving of the grass was shown using *tambeira* twines, and the host farmers tried it out based on the example.

The Guemulene Association also shared with the visitors some of its own innovations: a bio-pesticide liquid made from *mafureira* (*Trichilia emetica*) leaves, eucalyptus and *margoseira*. Another bio-pesticide highlighted in Guemulene was the plant locally known as *chiba vanga*, used with success to conserve cereals and beans.

The previous day was a field-day, when the visitors saw *in situ* the *chiba vanga* plant and collected some of it to experiment with it in Chigubo. Also during this visit, the uses of moringa as a food supplement and against a variety of infections were discussed.

At the end, the participants of both sides agreed to share these innovations also with other communities. In Guemulene, for example, the farmers intend to present these practices in the local primary school, where they aim to teach the students about the making and uses of the containers woven out of natural materials.

The time available for the presentation of innovations was the main limiting factor, since the participants would have liked to have the whole day for practising.

3. Visit to Alto-Changane, Chibuto District, Gaza Province

On 8 September 2015 in Alto-Changane, farmers from the community of Machaila in Chigubo District presented their local innovations to members of the farmer association “7th of April”. The objective of this activity was to share information about the making of woven-grass containers and about uses of bio-pesticides and bio-fertilisers to increase crop production and productivity.

Twenty farmers – 12 (1 man and 11 women) from Alto-Changane and eight (2 men and 6 women) from Machaila – were involved in this exchange. It started with a general presentation, introducing the importance of the woven-grass containers and the repellent plants for the control of pests and their economic value and contribution to environmental protection. Local knowledge on grasses for making containers and on plants for pest control was explored.

After this exercise, the host farmers presented bio-pesticide plants that were new for the Chigubo farmers (e.g. *mafureira* leaves, eucalyptus and *seringa* as well as *margoseira* seeds). The farmers explained how much material to use (1 kg leaves per 10 litres water) to produce the bio-pesticide liquid and the maturing time of the solution for it to have the required properties. A session of questions and clarifications took place in a participative format.

There were no constraints because of the light rain that fell during the presentation of innovations. At the end, the participants recommended that there be more exchanges among farmers to assist them in increasing farm production.

4. Visit to farmer associations of Marracuene, Maputo Province

On 11 and 12 September 2015, representatives from farmer associations in Chigubo visited the associations “Alfredo Namitete” and “Telmina Pereira” in Marracuene District, Maputo Province. The objective was to present their local innovations. The eight participants were members of the associations “Abaixo a Fome” (Stop Hunger), “Carpinteiros de Mangual” (Mangual Carpenters), “4x4”, “Agro-pecuarios” (Agro-pastoralists) and “Kindlimuka”. Members of the “União dos Produtores de Marracuene” (Union of Marracuene Farmers) and the ADCR President also took part.

Day 1: Presentation of innovations by the visiting farmers

On the first day, a representative from UCAM (União dos Camponeses de Marracuene – Farmers Union of Marracuene) and the ADCR president introduced themselves and the objectives of their institutions. Both work in rural community development through farmer associations. The farmers from Chigubo contextualised their innovations by explaining the critical problem of water scarcity in their area of origin. A farmer from Marracuene commented that, in Maputo, one person might use 20 litres of water for a shower, while there are places like Chigubo where there is water scarcity.

Three members from the associations in Chigubo (Mrs Flora Baloi, Mr Salva Matuassa and Mr Tomás Utsulo) showed how to make nursery-plant containers and grain stores (*dulo*) out of woven grass. They explained that the advantage of the innovation is the environmental protection it provides, the low costs of the materials and the retention of soil moisture. UCAM members were looking forward to learn about this innovation and also tried to weave their own objects. All in all, it was a very good day, with many questions and answers regarding the lives of the farmers from both sides.

Day 2: Field visits to the members of the associations “Alfredo Namitete” and “Telmina Pereira”

In the early hours of the day, the fields of the association “Alfredo Namitete” were visited. The president of the association “7 de Abril” – who is at the same time the general coordinator of all associations in Marracuene – presented the visitors from Chigubo and the objective of the visit. A representative from “Alfredo Namitete” presented the association itself and how it works in terms of planning activities and so on.

The collective farm areas were visited as well as some of the individual ones. All were cultivated with a variety of crops: okra, carrots, cabbages, eggplants and beans. Many questions were asked about the management of the collective farm and the participation of members in group activities.

Poor management of the association’s land was observed, since there were many weeds and the trenches were dirty. The visitors from Chigubo lamented this situation since, in Marracuene, there are good conditions (e.g. water) so there need not be hunger. An example of organic composting was

also visited, where it was explained how compost works and its importance. The advantages of bio-pesticide were also indicated, and the farmers explained that it is very much used by the association.

Many questions were posed about the compost and bio-pesticide, more concretely, about how long it takes to make them and whether this type of pesticide is harmful to the farmers' health and if it can be used against all types of pests.

At UCAM headquarters, small demonstration plots were visited. A variety of production techniques were shown, where each farmer has a portion of land to produce potatoes, onions, lettuce and cabbage. We were very pleased with the experience.

The representative from the "Associação dos Carpinteiros de Mangual" also visited the association of Marracuene sculptors in order to learn about making various types of wooden objects. On the way back to Chigubo, he visited a producer of cartwheels, who is also an innovator and is based in Chókhwè District. Interest was raised to construct similar carts in Chigubo.

In sum, the visitors learnt much from these exchange visits. What was most remarkable was the possibility to produce in the sandy soils, using manure and bio-pesticides, as the farmers in Marracuene are doing.

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