

Namibian President visits Siya Community Based Adaptation Group



President Hifikepunye Pohamba (in hat, center) hoeing with the Siya CBA Self Help Group in Kavango, Namibia. (NAMPA/Joseph Nekaya, 2011)

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Kavango, Namibia: On 5 February 2011 His Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, paid a two-hour visit to the Siya Community Based Adaptation (CBA) Self Help Group in the Kavango Region.

The CBA programme is working towards increasing the resilience of the communities to the effects of climate change. This CBA is supported by UNV as well as by UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP) Strategic Priority on Adaptation (SPA) like other programmes in nine other pilot countries around the world.

In Namibia, the CBA programme is implemented by the Namibian NGO Creative Entrepreneurs Solutions.

The Siya group, which is based in one of the Namibia's driest areas, Kavango, is among more than ten CBA-funded groups in Namibia. It became part of the CBA pilot programme in 2009.

The group consists of 32 women and one man. Two thirds are from female headed households. Household food security in the area is next to zero after September when households have consumed the small yields of crop.

President Pohamba was introduced to the CBA pilot project members by representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Kavango Regional Council – close partners in the CBA programme. The Siya group is also supported with land preparation services and training by the Conservation Tillage Project (CONTILL) run by the Namibia Agronomic Board. The CONTILL project, together with small farmers, has been developing suitable conservation agriculture methods for the Namibian specific conditions.

During the visit, Mr Richard Shikongo, Chief Clerk for the Kavango Regional Council, explained conservation tillage to President Pohamba. Mr Johannes Mbangera, a member of the Siya group, spoke about the adaptive conservation agriculture and micro drip irrigation activities they are engaged in, including their use of diversification of crops, and the resulting increased food security, sales of surplus and savings.

For example, the first harvest for pearl millet, in June 2010, increased from an average of 70kg per hectare to 570kg. Because pearl millet is the staple food in Namibia the group decided to consume it themselves, along with oil extracted from the sunflower harvest. The group did generate cash incomes from the sale of fresh and dried maize, a high yielding crop when using conservation agricultural methods.

In addition, the project has increased volunteerism and solidarity amongst the group members. All of the group members volunteer time to the project, with each member contributing 18 hours a week.

President Pohamba praised the group members for their activities and results and said they are heading one of the most promising agriculture/adaptation projects in the country. He extended his wishes for them to carry on their hard work and encouraged them to expand it and continue to inspire others to take up similar activities.

Volunteerism has not only allowed the group members to create their own food security and incomes, but has provided an opportunity for them to gain skills that they can share with the community. Siya group recently began training and supervising a nearby community group on conservation agriculture.

President Pohamba donated N\$5,000 (approx US\$725) for the Siya group to finance weeding services. Up to now, the group has been hand-weeding 11.5 hectares of land.

This page can found at: <http://www.unv.org/nc/en/news-resources/news/doc/namibian-president-visits-siya.html>