Report from the Happy strategy game in Mekelle

Practitioners training organized by Meta Meta

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July 2012

Introduction

The happy strategy game has been in Mekelle with a diverse group of water practitioners. The one week training was organized by Meta Meta (http://www.metameta.nl/), and the happy strategy game took a full afternoon.

Landscapes

Because the participants had very different backgrounds, and some know some locations well and others don't, we decided to create two virtual landscapes based on two areas where the participants come from. We took the FAO 6th level watershed of Addis Ababa (wet landscape) and Mieso (dry landscape) but did not communicate the location to the participants who were given the following maps, deliberately without scale, so that they could imagine the scale that suits them best.

Wet landscape (top) legends:

- town
- road
  - all weather road
  - seasonal road

elevation
- 1,592 - 2,174
- 2,175 - 2,551
- 2,552 - 3,385

slope
- 0 - 2
- 3 - 5
- 6 - 9
- 10 - 16
- 17 - 34

land use
- Cultivation
- Forest
- Grassland
- Shrubland
- State farms
- Swamps
- Water bodies
- Woodland

major soil
- Cambisol
- Nitisol
- Arenosol
- Vertisol
- Water
- Xerosol

Dry landscape (bottom) legends:

- town
- road
  - all weather road
  - seasonal road

elevation
- 563 - 1,052
- 1,052.000001 - 1,616
- 1,616.000001 - 2,781

slope
- 0 - 2
- 3 - 5
- 6 - 9
- 10 - 16
- 17 - 31

land use
- Barren lands
- Bushland
- Cultivation
- Grassland
- Shrubland
- Swamps
- Woodland

soil
- Cambisol
- Lithosol
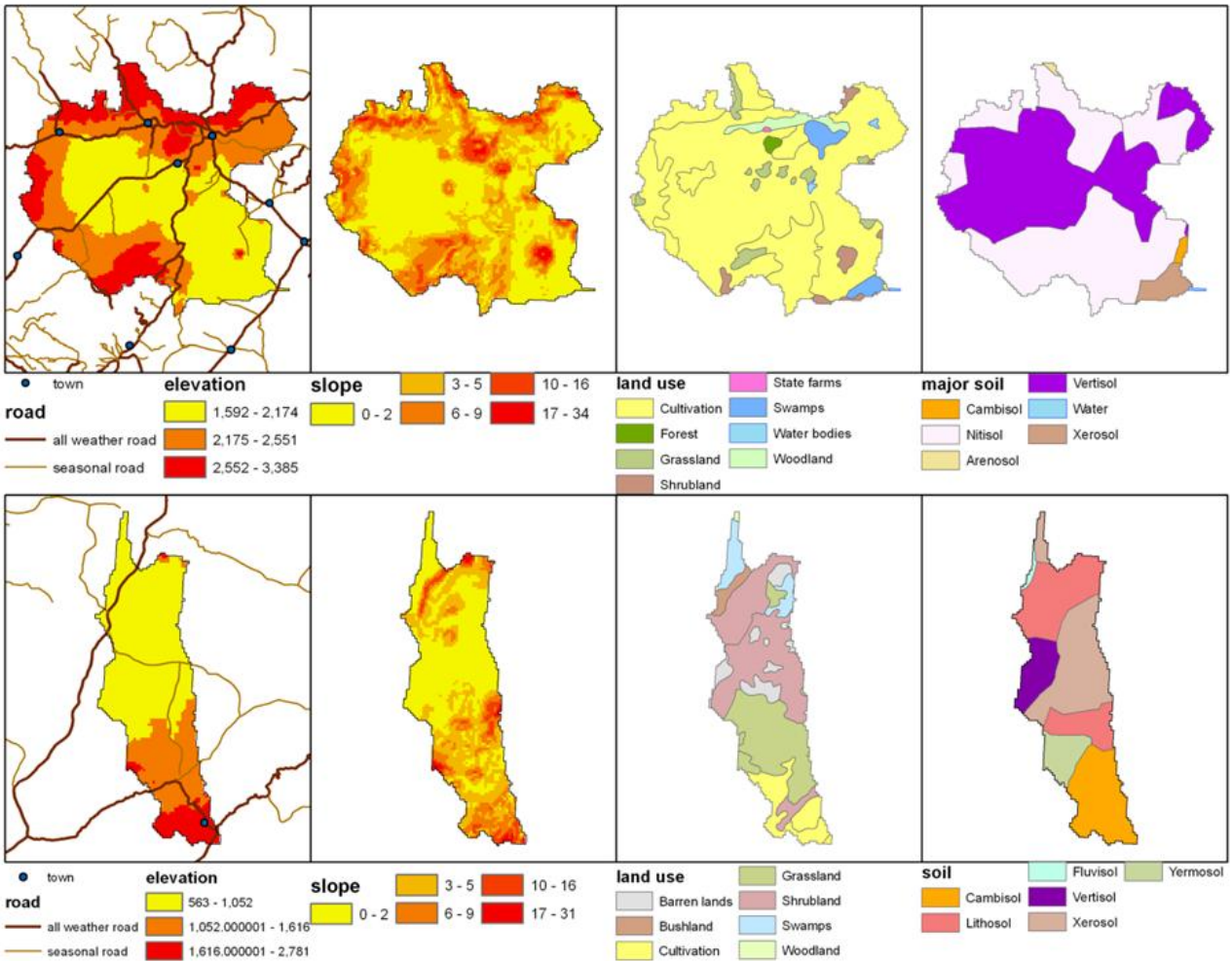- Fluvisol
- Vertisol
- Xerosol
- Yermosol

Figure 1 : maps from the wet landscape (top) and the dry landscape (bottom landscape)

The full description of the landscapes and the cards can be found on the wiki
http://nilebdc.wikispaces.com/happy+strategy+game.

Rules played

We made four groups, two per landscape. Participants were asked to choose a card and join a landscape, where facilitators were ready to help with coming up with a rainwater management strategy. Exchanges were possible at the "practice bank" if at least 2 other landscape has refused the card.

Also all facilitator have been ask to enforce the rules in the beginning only, and relax the rules based on good arguments.

Results

Wet landscape 1

In the wet landscape 1, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

Location	Practices	Intervention	Explanation
Upslope	Woodlot	nursery	
	Area enclosure		
midslope	Cut-off drain	Layout and material	
	terraces		
	apple	Apple processing factory Better market linkage	For keeping value added in the area
	Beekeeping	Better market linkage	
	Improved breeds	Better market linkage Artificial insemination	
	Improved cereals	Better market linkage	
lowslope	Improved vertisol management		
	Tree nursery		

New cards

Innovations

- Beekeeping
- Improved cereals

Interventions

- Artificial insemination, to increase milk production
- Nursery establishment
- Apple seedlings
- Providing nursery material (different type of seeds, polyethane tubes, hand tool, house and storage room, manpower, vehicle). The objective to make biological material available to all
- Apple processing factory, to keep the value added of apple in the region and increase price to farmers
- Market linkages to sell apple other fruits and forage, provide animals and seedlings
- Provide layout material for cut-off drain
- Concrete material like cement and stone for terraces

The discussion turned around fertility management which has not been mentioned by the group. The strategy lacks in improving soil structure with technologies like compost. It seems that it has been discussed but not captured with the cards.

Find the video under : http://youtu.be/Co5_uRE07-g

Wet landscape 2

In the wet landscape 2, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

Location	Practices	Intervention	Explanation
Upslope	Area enclosure		
	Terraces		
	woodlots		
	Multipurpose trees		
	Bee keeping		
midslope	Check dam		
	Grass strip		
	Micro dam		
	Treadle pump		
	Wind mill		
	apple		
lowslope	Roof water harvesting		
	Improved livestock breeds		
	diversion		

New cards

Bee keeping is suggested as it will help to have a better vegetation cover and give some additional income. It suits to mid and highland, on not degraded land, needs low land input, medium labor, low investment, high market access, low cooperation. It produces additional fodder.

Multipurpose trees were suggested, namely sesbania, lukina and fruit trees.

The discussion focused on the feasibility of afforestation in the high land due to high population pressure. It was also suggested to have a tree nursery.

This group did not come up with interventions.

Find the video under : http://youtu.be/wNZB8swrDe4

Dry landscape 1

In the dry landscape 1, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

Location	Practices	Intervention	Explanation
Upslope	Roof water harvesting		Settlements are only in the upslope
	Area enclosure	Needs capacity building and awareness	
midslope	Pits and trenches		
	wells		
	Ponds		
	Sesame		Low water requirement, allows vegetative cover and increases income
	Multi-purpose tree		Was added during the discussion
lowslope	Sand dam		
	Underground cistern		
	Treadle pump		
	Spate irrigation		
	Drip irrigation		
	mango		

New cards

They came up with the sesame innovation. The purpose is ground vegetation cover as well as income generation. It needs rainfall < 900 mm fits Xerosol, not degraded land, low labor, low investment, high market access and medium level of cooperation. It does not produce additional fodder.

They came up with one intervention card on "awareness and capacity building". "As the technology is new, one needs to capacitate the community; one could make visits to other area and purchase industrial material." Why is it needed? "the resource person does not have enough skill and knowledge, there is missing logistics, the community cannot afford the construction costs.

The discussion after the presentation turned around how to increase groundwater. Wells in the midslope should be seen as water harvesting technology. It is a livestock based livelihood, and the livestock can access drinking water at the sand dams but there is clarity where the fodder comes from.

Find the video under: http://youtu.be/HadexXiX6KQ

Dry Landscape 2

In the dry landscape 2, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

Location	Practices	Intervention	Explanation
Upslope	Roof water harvesting		Settlement only in the upland
	Area enclosure		
	Spate irrigation		Settlement only in the upland
	mango		
	Beekeeping		
	Chicken farm		
midslope	Micro-basins		
	Trench		
	woodlot		
	terraces		
	eyebrow		
	Charcoal		From prosopis
lowslope	Underground cistern		
	Drip irrigation		Also by taking water from the swamp
	Sand dam		
	Rice		Added during the discussion planted on the swamp
	Camel and goat		Added during the discussion

New cards

Innovations were beekeeping and chicken farm around settlements as well as charcoal made from prosopis (an invading species).

In the discussion it turned out that the group wanted to pump water from the swamp to grow crops. Other participants suggested to drain the swamp and plant rice. Finally a debate on the role of swamp in the ecosystem was discussed. There was a debate on the trade-off between feeding a hungry population and ecosystem services as well as if planting crop is really a good strategy in a pastoralist area.

Find the video under: http://youtu.be/sfnDMlzxibs

Lessons learnt

All support persons, namely facilitators and banker were given the task to enforce rules only in the beginning and to relax the rule as the game goes on based on good argumentation. The banker after a certain time annoyed that dry land practices were not selected decided to become an NGO and went promoting some dry land practice he know to the dry landscape. This started a very interesting dynamic and discussion. Also towards the end of the game participants could take any additional card without exchange so that they could come up with their best bet strategy. It gave very complete strategies with detailed explanations

The game went very well. The level of sound in the room was very high. Lots of people moved across landscape with really identifying with one card. This allowed everyone to learn from both landscapes. Especially the dry land landscape started huge discussion about trade-off between feeding your population and ecosystem services as well as the trade-off crops versus livestock in pastoralist zone. Feedback from the participants was extremely positive. Initial concerns that people would not know about the practices was not relevant. Together the whole group new a lot and individuals could learn a lot from each other.