

Solar Cooking Foundation the Netherlands

Partnership for Integrated and Sustainable Development Association (PISDA)

Final report fieldtrip April 22 – May 3/8, 2008

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Objectives of field visit

1. Review PISDA project development and implementation in relation to the contract SCN-PISDA and Wilde Geese and the approved project budget for 2008 (review of current project activities);
2. Review of PISDA proposal/application for project activities and related budget for 2009 (review project activities next year), and long-term policy with regard to the development of solar and integrated cooking in Ethiopia;
3. Networking: contacts with other NGOs (JeCCDO and Forum for Environment), contact with ICCO, contact with Netherlands Embassy, contact with GTZ (German development agency);
4. Planning and development of a production and promotion unit in Debre Zeit;
5. Capacity building: strengthening the PISDA organization.

1. Review project implementation 2008

Beneficiaries (540) in 4 project locations have been selected and informed about project background and procedures. Further implementation or continuation of planned project activities is seriously hampered by the fact that to date Bereket Solar failed to deliver the 540 Cookit sets, ordered by PISDA. The reason given by Mr. Bereket is that the factory that is producing the ordered pans was not able to deliver because of internal problems (recent privatization of the factory). The problems seem to be solved now and hopefully Mr. Bereket will be able to keep his promise and still deliver the Cookit sets this month (May 2008).

The 3 rolls of aluminium foil, ordered by PISDA and sent from the Netherlands by SCN, arrived in Addis Ababa and are stored in the PISDA office. Transportation costs (air freight) amounted to Euro 375. PISDA has bought 8,000 plastic bags in Addis Ababa, the heat resistance of the bags has been tested by PISDA (up till 135C). Experiments with the fuel efficient stove for cooking (the mirt, the lakech and the rocket stove) are still ongoing. SCN pointed out that the rocket stove, developed by GTZ (75% savings in firewood), is widely used in Uganda and it would be worthwhile to introduce this type of fuel efficient stove also in Ethiopia. GTZ Ethiopia is conducting some experiments and further developments will be followed closely.

Cost prices for cooking devices and Revolving loan fund

During several occasion PISDA policy with regard to the payment of the various cooking devices, like the Cookit set, the hay basket and the fuel efficient stove, by the beneficiaries has been discussed. SCN observed that the present policy, a cash payment of only 20% of the cost price of a new Cookit set and 70% of a replaced or damaged Cookit set and also the relatively low cash contributions from the beneficiaries for other cooking devices, would make it not easy to reach the ultimate aim of all future solar and integrated cooking operations: complete sustainability and financial independence after a period of say 3-5 years. A revision of the current policy was suggested in combination with the introduction of a micro credit scheme for the benefit of the poorest beneficiaries. In this respect it was agreed that PISDA would make a formal request to re-allocate the unused 2007 budget item for Experiments with a high temperature solar cooker (Birr 32,000 or approximately Euro 3,000) and use the amount for the creation of a new 2008 budget item Revolving loan fund.

Visit Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Gullilat gave a report about the successful visit of Mr. Beltman of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives of the Netherlands Embassy to Kajima. The guests were quite enthusiastic about what they saw and are now also convinced of the importance of a wider scale introduction of the solar and integrated cooking concept in Debre Zeit and other regions of Ethiopia. SCN recommended that PISDA would send an e-mail to Mr. Beltman, with a copy to Mrs. Janny Poley of the Netherlands Embassy and SCN, asking his comments after his visit to Kajima together with his recommendations for further action.

Visit Rabo Bank

Mr. Gullilat also gave a brief report of his meeting with Mr. Frank Bakx of the Rabobank Foundation. The meeting lasted only 20 minutes and the discussion was primarily focused on PISDA's experiences with savings and credit schemes. Some time ago such a scheme was set up by the Gerbicha village community and supervised by PISDA within the framework of the previous Donkey for Development project. The experience with the scheme was quite positive and it would perhaps be possible to revive the scheme for the solar and integrated cooking project and duplicate the scheme to other project locations.

Construction Production Unit 2008 (temporary)

Currently the most urgent and "immediate action required" item is without any doubt the need to establish a local (temporary) production unit in Debre Zeit where women can make a start with the production of Cookit sets. Recently 6 women were trained in the workshop of Bereket Solar in Addis Ababa and have acquired sufficient skills to produce a good quality Cookit. The required raw materials have been or will be purchased by PISDA. Finding a good location for the production unit, however, is still a problem. The piece of land in Debre Zeit, where now the small PISDA office is located, is, at least under the present circumstances, not very suitable for setting up a production unit. Several unused buildings at the JeCCDO site in Debre Zeit (see item 4.) are unfortunately at short notice not available for housing the temporary production facilities because JeCCDO will soon use these buildings for establishing a new training centre in Debre Zeit. The present best solution seems to be that, first of all, a serious effort will be made to improve the conditions at the present PISDA site: acquire a small piece of additional land bordering the main road, create a separate entrance that gives direct access to this piece of land, and, subsequently, try to separate the PISDA territory from the adjacent land on which several houses are located. It was agreed that, at the same time, PISDA will prepare a detailed budget for the establishment of temporary production facilities at the PISDA site and submit this budget and an action plan to SCN. Detailed guidelines for this unit were prepared by SCN and communicated with PISDA.

Production and Promotion Unit 2009-2010 (permanent)

The whole idea behind the construction of these temporary production facilities is to obtain at shortest notice a guaranteed and continued supply of good quality Cookit sets and to become independent from other, sometimes unreliable, suppliers like Bereket Solar. However, it should be emphasized that the planned facilities are temporary: the ultimate goal is to develop a permanent production and promotion unit in a prime location in Debre Zeit. This unit will be designed and constructed in such a way that it can also be used as a demonstration unit for other regions in Ethiopia. PISDA will investigate what the procedures are for finding a proper and representative location for this permanent unit and report their findings to SCN.

Monthly collective cooking programme

Regarding the monthly collective cooking sessions, a discussion was held about the desirability of working with smaller groups of about 20-25 beneficiaries. The present practice of PISDA is that all beneficiaries in one project location (in 2007 about 80 beneficiaries) come together once a month to exchange experiences and to receive further training from the animators and instructors. SCN considers this practice less effective, but PISDA pointed out that in Ethiopia, especially when poor

families are involved, certain cultural and economic barriers prevent them from organizing the collective cooking session differently.

Bio diesel for daily cooking.....

In the international media the criticism against the use of bio diesel is increasing. More and more crops that are grown for the production of bio diesel are competing with food crops. As a result food prices are increasing, together with the potential of an increasing social unrest in the world. Also the oil obtained from the jatropha nuts can be converted into bio diesel. Although jatropha is primarily meant to be planted in areas that are not suitable for food crops, the danger always exists that commercial interests will encourage farmers to grow jatropha as a cash crop on soil that can also be used for growing food crops. It was agreed to continue with the implementation of the jatropha programme as planned, but that PISDA will emphasize the future use of the jatropha oil for cooking purposes and/or as an energy source for the benefit of the local community and not for (commercial) bio diesel purposes.

2. Review proposed project activities in 2009

The proposed activities and proposed budget for 2009 were discussed thoroughly. Review of the main conclusions drawn during the discussions:

Cost prices for cooking devices and contribution of beneficiaries

When in the near future PISDA will start with production of complete Cookit sets, the cost price of one set will most probably be lower than the price indicated in the budget. Last mentioned price is based on the price quotations provided by Bereket Solar. Also the indicated prices of the other cooking devices, the hay basket, the water cans, the fuel efficient stove for injera and the fuel efficient stove for daily cooking, will have to be reviewed based on obtained new data and insights.

Budget 2009

The budget amount for 2009 requested by PISDA is Euro 50,650. SCN remarked that Euro 50,000 would be the absolute maximum amount that could be requested to SCN/Wild Geese for next year. A review of some of the budget items is therefore necessary. Also a provision for a revolving loan fund, enabling poor beneficiaries to pay their cash contributions in instalments, is missing in the budget. This will be corrected.

Sustainability in 3-5 years time.....

It has been agreed that reaching a state of complete sustainability and financial independence within a reasonable time frame (say 3-5 years) should be PISDA's ultimate aim. In this respect SCN recommended to increase the share to be paid by the beneficiaries in 2009 to 50% of the cost price of all cooking devices. The other 50% will be included in the 2009 budget as a subsidy from the donors. For subsequent years a plan should be drafted showing a gradual increase of the price to be paid by the beneficiaries, and, consequently, a gradual decrease of the subsidy amounts. Final target is that the beneficiaries pay the full price of all cooking devices plus a small margin to cover the overhead expenses of the production unit and the costs of the promotion unit. The plan should also include a micro credit scheme for the benefit of those beneficiaries who are unable to pay the full price of the cooking devices immediately after delivery of the products, but prefer to pay in instalments.

Target 2009

Target for 2009 are 1,000 new beneficiaries/FHHs. These beneficiaries will be selected in 6 new project locations: 3 new urban kebele's and 3 new rural peasant associations. Compared to the previous years this development is positive, but at the same time also quite ambitious. SCN remarked that the total group of beneficiaries would become very large in one location and therefore most probably difficult to handle by one animator and a few instructors. Despite the cultural and economic barriers, working with smaller groups of beneficiaries could perhaps still be considered as a possible solution to this problem and workable option.

General overhead costs PISDA

With reference to earlier remarks on this subject, SCN still considers a 15% margin for administration and general overhead expenses too high. PISDA's reaction was that this way of budget presentation is common practice in the NGO world in Ethiopia and, perhaps even more important, accepted and supported by PISDA's board of directors. SCN was willing to accept this explanation under the condition that PISDA would add a more detailed specification of the budget item 15% Administration Cost to their periodic justification of project expenses (financial reports) to SCN and the project donor agency Wild Geese .

3. Networking

Contacts were established and discussion were held with the following institutions and persons:

Jerusalem Children and Community Development Organization (JeCCDO)

JeCCDO is an independent NGO established in 1985 in response to the need of children who were left orphaned, displaced or lacked proper care due to civil war, drought and famine in the country. The organization offers a wide range of services to their target groups: children, youth and women. The following intervention areas and programmes are covered by JeCCDO: health, orphaned and vulnerable children, education, urban agriculture, livelihood and advocacy and networking. The head office of JeCCDO is in Addis Ababa, there are five regional offices elsewhere in Ethiopia. The Debre Zeit office of JeCCDO has an active community development programme which includes activities in the field of urban agriculture (vegetable gardening and small scale livestock husbandry).

During a meeting with the executive director of JeCCDO, Mr. Mulugeta Gebru, the possibility was discussed of the integration of a small pilot solar and integrated cooking project in the community and women development programme of JeCCDO. Suggested location is one or several kebeles (administrative sections of a city) in Debre Zeit town where an urban agricultural development programme is already ongoing. JeCCDO has a group of well trained and motivated community leaders in place that can be used to implement the planned pilot project activities. These community workers are used to work with groups of women.

JeCCDO was definitely interested to start a pilot project and asked SCN's assistance to prepare an application form for such a project together with the necessary technical key data based on SCN's and PISDA's experience with similar project activities in Ethiopia. The for the pilot project required technical know how, including the training of JeCCDO's animators, could be provided by the PISDA staff. Also the required materials, like Cookit sets, hay baskets and other cooking devices, can be delivered by PISDA.

The pilot for 80 families/beneficiaries, divided in 4 groups, will start in September 2008 and will last about 7 months. During the final stage of the pilot project implementation an evaluation will be made of the results and, if positive, preparations will be made for a larger scale solar and integrated cooking project for about 2,000 families/beneficiaries in the Debre Zeit region, if possible in conjunction and close cooperation with PISDA's activities in the same region.

The intention is that the pilot project will be jointly financed by SCN, the Inter-church Foundation Ethiopia-Eritrea from the Netherlands (ISEE), one of the principal donors of JeCCDO's community development programmes, and JeCCDO itself.

Forum for Environment (FfE)

FfE is a membership organization established in 1997 to serve as a platform for advocacy and communication among people and institutions concerned with the Ethiopian environment. FfE deals with environmental issues with a special focus on forests and protected areas, fresh water, flowers, (renewable) energy, pollution and climate change. They are active in awareness building, networking,

organizing public forums, conducting research, training and issuing publications about environmental issues.

During the discussion with Mr. Negusu Aklilu, the director of FfE, and Mr. Ayele Kebete, project manager, it became quite clear that FfE was highly interested in the activities undertaken by SCN and PISDA in the field of solar and integrated cooking. The concept that was being developed by SCN and PISDA was considered as an important tool for saving the environment in Ethiopia. FfE was quite willing to assist in the propagation of this concept to other parts of Ethiopia, using their vast network of independent partnership organizations and local environmental activist groups all over the country. Important was to have an established and workable model, clearly showing the advantages of the solar and integrated cooking concept, that could also be used in other parts of Ethiopia.

Considering the important work done by PISDA for the improvement of the environment in Ethiopia and their contribution for sustainable activities, Mr. Negusu suggested that the solar and integrated cooking project PISDA could be nominated for the Green Award Program. The program is an initiative of FfE and grants awards to individuals and institutions at regional and federal level for their environment friendly attitudes and actions. It was recommended that PISDA would send the evaluation report of their solar and integrated cooking project to FfE with a request to be nominated for the Green Award Program.

A discussion was held about bio-energy and the role that jatropha could play in this respect. The recent spectacular growth of bio-energy in the world, and bio-diesel in particular, is controversial (see before). Mr. Negusu announced that he, together with Mr. Bart Jan van Beuzekom of HOaREC-REN, would participate in a jatropha conference, to be held in Mali. In this country several large and small scale jatropha projects are executed by both NGOs and commercial entrepreneurs. After their visit to Mali Mr. Negusu and Mr. van Beuzekom will also visit several jatropha projects in Tanzania. Mr. Negusu promised to send a report of their visit to SCN and PISDA.

ICCO (Donor agency from the Netherlands)

ICCO is one of the major Dutch NGOs that is authorized to channel funds from the Netherlands Government to development projects, initiated by NGOs in developing countries. According to Ms. Eva Smulders, ICCO representative for Ethiopia, the policy of ICCO (and also of the other so called co-financing institutions in the Netherlands: Cordaid, Oxfam Novib and Hivos) is to gradually move away from funding non-sustainable elements in development projects, including the overhead expenses of the recipients of financial support. More and more one is looking for development initiatives that are sustainable and, at least within a relatively short timeframe, financially independent.

Ms. Smulders was highly interested in the solar and integrated cooking concept that was being developed by SCN and PISDA. She recommended to put the focus of attention within that concept on the development of a production and promotion unit, set up as a small business. This business, to be owned and operated by women, will produce the Cookit sets and other cooking devices and, at the same time, will be responsible for public promotion, conducting training sessions and doing the follow up and evaluation. A good business plan with sufficient details about the planned production and promotion facilities, the market for the various cooking devices, the management and organizational structure and financial projections, would be indispensable for such an operation.

Ms. Smulders realized that it would take some time, most probably several years, before such a state of complete sustainability and financial independence can be reached. Active involvement of a NGO like PISDA and occasional technical support of SCN will be needed to support the women in setting up and running their small business. The costs of such a well defined and detailed support programme could be shouldered by Impulsis, a donor agency that is closely linked to ICCO. Once the stage of sustainability has been reached and the plans for the production and promotion unit are realistic and well defined, a request for co-finance can be submitted to ICCO as well.

Netherlands Embassy

Present during the meeting at the Netherlands Embassy were Mrs. Janny Poley, first secretary for environmental affairs, Mr. Bart Jan van Beuzekom of HOaREC-REN and Mr. Sanne van Aarst of Meta Meta Management (attended as guest because he was not directly involved in the subject). Mrs. Poley referred to the visit of Mr. Beltman of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for International Cooperation, to the PISDA project in Kajima. She told that all the guests were quite impressed with what they had seen and heard about what has been accomplished by PISDA with regard to the introduction of solar and integrated cooking in Kajima and other project locations. For the first time they had seen that the combination of the most simple form of a solar cooking device, the Cookit, a hay basket and a cost effective fuel efficient stove really works and also has a highly positive impact, in terms of income generation and time saving, on the lives of the poorest segments of society.

At this stage it is important to work out a model for the introduction of the solar and integrated cooking concept on a larger scale in Ethiopia. The time is ripe because also large development agencies like the World bank now start realizing that, in order to save the environment, not only the supply side should be given attention (huge tree planting programmes all over the world), but that one should also work on the demand side, which means taking effective measures to prevent deforestation on a larger scale than is being done up till now. Efforts to introduce the solar and integrated cooking concept would very well fit into these new insights and strategies. In this respect the participation and active support of the Forum for Environment in Ethiopia is also considered of utmost importance.

Mrs. Poley again emphasized the importance of a close cooperation between all parties in Ethiopia that are involved in this important effort to reduce the amount of firewood that is daily used for cooking. In this respect the role Mrs. Poley has played by bringing SCN/PISDA into direct contact with the GTZ-SUN Energy Intervention programme (see next section) has already proven to be of enormous importance. Mr. van Beuzekom also strongly supported all initiatives in this direction and promised to bring other potentially interested NGOs in contact with PISDA and SCN.

GTZ (German Development Agency)

As follow up of the meeting at the Netherlands Embassy a second, a meeting was held with Ms. Hiwote Teshome, project manager of the SUN Energy Intervention programme, GTZ, and Mr. Dirk Van Eijk, Principal Policy Advisor, GTZ. Already during the meeting at the Netherlands Embassy it seemed to be an interesting idea to exchange both the visions and concepts of GTZ, the introduction of fuel saving stoves (Mirt), and of SCN/PISDA, the integrated introduction of solar Cookits, hay baskets and the Mirt. GTZ (Hiwote Teshome) gave 250 entrepreneurs a training course in entrepreneurship and the method of production and introduction of the Mirt. Target group for the introduction of the Mirt are middle class households in urban areas. The target group of PISDA are low income female heads of households.

GTZ and SCN exchanged their views on the importance of both solar and integrated cooking devices for middle class as well as low income households in both rural as well as urban locations. The other interesting point is the focus of GTZ on a commercial approach and on the training of small entrepreneurs. The focus of PISDA/SCN is on the introduction of solar and integrated cooking, including a 7 months collective cooking programme by locally selected and trained animators

Up till now solar cookers (the Cookits) have been produced by Bereket Solar in Addis Ababa. SCN informed GTZ about the plan for the development of a production unit of solar and fuel saving cooking devices in 2008. GTZ explained the concept plan of starting a pilot solar and integrated cooking (research project) for a still to be determined number of households in one of the kebelas of Addis Ababa.

4. Production and promotion unit for and by women in Debre Zeit

The perspective of sustainability: In previous sections the importance of a centrally located facility for the production and promotion of solar and other sustainable cooking devices has been repeatedly mentioned. The ultimate goal is that this independent and sustainable production and promotion unit in Debre Zeit will take over all solar and integrated cooking activities in the region. The unit will be owned, managed and operated by women.

A fair price: Self sufficiency and financial independence means that at a certain stage the users will have to pay the full and fair price of the produced cooking devices. A fair price means the cost price of the devices plus a reasonable margin to cover the overhead costs of the production unit and the expenses of the promotion unit. Micro finance facilities will be offered for those users who are unable to pay the full price of their cooking device immediately.

Selection criteria location: The location of the production and promotion unit is of crucial importance. The unit should be easy accessible for people who are interested to learn more about alternative cooking methods and how they can save time and money by adopting these methods. Also the unit will give a display of the positive impact of the alternative cooking methods on the environment in the region. There should be a water and electricity connection and vicinity to a main road would be an advantage.

Women are trained. Start now: Without any doubt it will take some time to find a good and appropriate location in Debre Zeit. On the other hand, as explained earlier, there is an urgent need to start with the production of Cookit sets in Debre Zeit as soon as possible. A group of women has already been trained to produce the sets, the materials for production are or can be made available at shortest notice and, perhaps most important, the motivation of the women to start their own production is high. What is still missing, however, are the actual production facilities. For practical reasons, and also in view of the urgency, it was decided not to wait till the more permanent location of the production and promotion unit was found and the permanent structure constructed. This will most probably take at least one more year.

170 m² temporary production unit: Instead it was decided that PISDA would start immediately with the construction of a temporary production facility on a piece of land in Debre Zeit, presently rented by PISDA from one of the kebele authorities in Debre Zeit. SCN has assisted PISDA in preparing a design of a 170 m² building divided in three spaces: space for production, space for storage and space for office and promotion room. Also a detailed list of all required materials, equipment and furniture for such a temporary production facility was described and thoroughly discussed. Deadline for the completion of this facility is September 1, 2008. The production of around 700 Cookit sets and hay basket should be completed by September.

5. Capacity building: strengthening the PISDA organization

A professional female district manager: The management of the PISDA project activities at district (Debre Zeit) level and the supervision of the motivated animators in the district is still a problem. A professional (female) district manager is urgently needed to manage and coordinate the increasing number of project activities in the region. It was agreed that an active search for a suitable person would start immediately. A detailed job description was prepared and required capabilities (English speaking and writing, management and organizational skills, ability to motivate other people, dedicated, experience with community development work and working with women) were formulated.

Project officer: Related to the management problems at district level is the discussion about the position and function of the project officer at the PISDA head office in Addis Ababa. Currently PISDA is responsible for the implementation of only one project: the ongoing solar and integrated

cooking project. This means that the project officer's main task and concern should be first and foremost a smooth implementation of that project. This also implicates a delegated responsibility in organizing all (raw) materials for cooking devices, and communicate with SCN about the transport of aluminium foil for production of Cookits. In addition the project officer has the task to represent the PISDA organization if and when the executive director is unable to attend meetings or other occasions where the presence of PISDA is required. It was decided that in this respect the job description of the project officer would be reviewed and, subsequently, adjusted.

Animators: Animators selected in the four villages/kebeles are key persons for the continuity and quality of project development. They have the complex function in teaching, promoting, monitoring all activities concerning solar and integrated cooking and last but not least a function in quality control of all cooking devices. SCN recommends the supervision of workshops and also courses such as English conversation, writing reports, using PC, etc. Concerning all these aspects a higher monthly salary should be seriously considered.

Instructresses: in each kebele 4 instructresses are selected. They assist the animators during the monthly meetings. The other main task is visiting the beneficiaries at home and discussing experiences in daily cooking, support in changing cooking habits, discuss technical problems, stimulate by explaining advantages such as saving money, reduction of smoke, etc.

Woman producers of cooking devices: Beneficiaries for the production of cooking devices are selected on the following main criteria: women with proven artisan skills for handcrafting the Cookits, WAPIs, insulation of baskets etc.

Eemnes / Blaricum
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