

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Soil and Water Conservation falls under the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation, which was upgraded from a department in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in March 2003. The decision to establish this ministry was based on the fact that soil erosion and land degradation demanded a more focused and concerned approach as they were still on the increase.

The Office of the Auditor General undertook an audit in the Department of Soil and Water Conservation to examine why measures put in place to curb soil erosion and land degradation were ineffective, thereby come up with suggestions to remedy the problem.

The audit covered four financial years, 2003/04 to 2006/07

Data was collected by means of;

- Document review – to gather information about the activities that were being carried out.
- Interviews – officials from the audited department and various stakeholders were interviewed to substantiate information gathered from the documents.
- Physical observations – to see what activities were being carried out and how they were being carried out, site visits to on-going projects were made.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Soil surveys

Finding

The audit team found out that during the period under review soil surveys had not been carried out. As a result interpretation and preparation of land capability classifications for specific land use was not done.

Recommendation

The department should make communities aware of the importance of soil surveys and also that even individuals can approach the department for assistance in that regard.

Information dissemination

Finding

The audit team observed that information relating to conservation does not reach the target group because;

- The radio programme was scheduled when a majority of the target group had already left their homes
- Most areas do not have television reception.

Recommendation

The Information Division should schedule radio programmes in the evenings when the majority of the target group would be able to listen. Public gatherings should be held more often than the use of technical materials such as audio-visuals because public gatherings cover a large portion of the target group.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Finding

The audit team established that land users do not abide by the terms stipulated in the clearance certificates. This was because the National Steering Committee (NSC) was dysfunctional. There were no spot checks done on development projects and NSC did not respond to National Environment Secretariat's memoranda.

Recommendation

The department should play a leading role within the National Steering Committee to ensure that members attend all meetings and abide by the terms of the clearance certificates issued by the National Environment Secretariat.

Non-enforcement of appropriate laws

Finding

The team found out that people engaged in anti-conservation land use practices, because there are no clearly defined penalties for perpetrators though the Land Husbandry Act 1969 binds the Ministry with the responsibility to regulate the use of land.

Recommendation

The department should advise the Minister to make regulations for revision of the penalty clauses against perpetrators.

Incomplete projects

Finding

The audit however revealed that some conservation works were left incomplete; for instance, at Manganeng catchment, tree and grass

planting was not done in other areas because arrival of seeds was delayed until the financial year and the season were over.

Recommendation

As some of the conservation activities are seasonal and do not follow the financial year, the Department of Soil and water Conservation should plan to carry forward these seasonal activities to the following financial year.

CONCLUSION:

On the basis of the findings, the team concludes that soil erosion and land degradation are still on the increase because:

- The Department of Soil and Water conservation puts more focus on rehabilitation of degraded lands than prevention of soil erosion.
- There are inappropriate and insufficient methods of information dissemination and information does not reach the target group.