

Agricultural Productivity Programme for Southern Africa (APPSA) raises awareness on grievance redress mechanisms (GRM) to local authorities

As part of sensitization and stakeholder engagement efforts, the project team under APPSA Lesotho led by the safeguards held one-day workshops with the local authorities of Siloe and Machache on the 21st February 2023 and 01st March 2023 respectively. The objective was to inform the community councils and chiefs about preparations made towards the construction of infrastructure works on the research stations located under their jurisdiction. This is a deliberate intend from APPSA Lesotho to raise awareness on regulatory compliance issues inherent in the undertaking of such activities and to solicit inputs that will guide implementation, early identification, and management of risks, as well as formalize communication channels for dealing with grievances. The infrastructure in question includes the office building with apartments and a store at each research station. The proposed facilities will not only offer immediate response to the farming communities in close vicinity by decentralizing services of the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR), but will also enhance the project output of developing DAR into Regional Centre of Leadership in Horticulture (RCoL in Horticulture).



Figure 1 - Council Members & District Authorities

The workshops had an interesting turn up graced by prominent cadres from the offices of District Agricultural Offices (DAO), District Administrators (DA), DCSs and District Extension Offices (DEO) under the reception of Councilors and council members as hosts. In Siloe, 19 officials attended and Machache had 18 representatives from Ratau Council. The APPSA Lesotho Project Manager took to stage to narrate the APPSA regional background from past participating country

implementation in Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique. He further zoomed down to Lesotho context explaining the intentions of Lesotho to actualize as a Regional Center of Leadership (RCoL) in horticulture farming systems under the funding of the World Bank and scientific research coordination by CCARDESA. Furthermore, the implementation schedules were discussed to concert efforts in line with the critical phase of APPSA closure in January 2025. Hence it is deemed important to involve local authorities and communities in project affected areas to curb disruptions.



Figure 2 - APPSA Project Manager

Since the grievances are inevitable while dealing with communities, the Environment and Social Safeguards Specialist laid out the APPSA Lesotho approach to grievance redressal mechanisms, best practice, and the role of different actors across the chain of command in what she

summarized as “*from the cradle to the grave*”. Risks of malpractice on workforce hire were thrashed out and everyone agreed to handle such with transparency to empower local communities. Another burning issue was the scope of work of the contractor and the expected level of support from the authorities to avoid unnecessary exploitation of mineral resources and scope creep beyond contractual terms.



Figure 3 - Participants Reading GRM materials

Almost 40 brochures and 10 posters were distributed among those present to further explain the processes of administering grievances at project level through different authorities. Through the support of the APPSA Lesotho Information Communication and Knowledge Management (ICKM) unit, the information products are designed to raise awareness and visibility of project processes, achievements, and setbacks. ICKM dissemination office will be pivotal in the process of screening the grievances for action by designated offices.



Figure 4 - Environment & Social Safeguard Specialist

Considering the awareness raised through the engagements, council members requested the project team to consider attending the council meetings from time to time to educate and inform the council on the progress of the project. Everyone praised the GRM approach and some proposed that the suggestion boxes be placed at the chief's office where the community base is concentrated. Another piece of advice given was to hold a similar meeting for the community members to raise awareness about the processes of lodging complaints and utilizing the GRM process. In closing, the project was commended for its efforts to engage the local authorities and recognize their stake in community development, particularly in the early stages.