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Local NGO Assists Peasants to Alleviate Poverty

An international NGO, Oxfam (Ireland), has hailed the local NGO known as Traditional Irrigation and Environmental Development Project (TIP) for assisting small scale farmers to attain the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in her areas of intervention. The Oxfam Ireland's Overseas Programme Manager, Dennis Bailey, made the observation here last week during a two-day familiarization tour.

The envoy was impressed by the way TIP's package succeeded in contributing to a durable, gender balanced, improvement of the living standards of the peasants in traditionally irrigated areas through sustainable development of water catchments, natural resources management, soil and water conservation, afforestation, land use planning and organizational development.

"Having seen the reality in the field, I can dare to say TIP is seriously focusing on the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that address the problem of poverty, hunger, discrimination against women, environmental degradation, diseases and illiteracy," Bailey commented.

He further said that since Oxfam Ireland was dedicated to campaigning for the UN Millennium Development Goals in developing countries, TIP would enjoy her financial support, which, he added, would in turn improve food security and poverty alleviation among the rural folks. On his side, the country's Oxfam Ireland programme coordinator, John Plastow, showed his interest in supporting TIP in her market access and agro-enterprises development component so as to enable small-scale farmers to improve their incomes.

The chairman of Kwa Mlombola water users group, Emmanuel Joel, said that since TIP's intervention during the last two crop seasons, the production of strawberries, bananas, cabbages, green peppers, African egg plants, beans, onions, yams, maize and apples was relatively high and stable throughout the year without depending on rainfall. According to him, the irrigation programme targets groups of small-scale farmers living in the catchment areas of traditional irrigation systems.

Their typical characteristic is that they have been constructed by farmers themselves and are farmer managed. "Farmers have to conserve the soil before any assistance is provided by TIP to improve their irrigation systems" said Joel, adding: "Farmers are assisted in constructing terraces and improving water harvesting techniques and drainage". He further revealed that TIP also trained

people in the management of homesteads, tree nurseries, and mobilized them to plant trees in the catchment areas.

According to TIP's director, Dr. Ibrahim Kawa, the Traditional Irrigation and Environmental Development Project (TIP) was established in 1988 as a result of research conducted by the irrigation department of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1987/88 under the "Freedom from Hunger Campaign" assisted by Dutch Aid (SNV).

Established as a pilot project in Arumeru, Lushoto, Mwanga, and Same in the northern zone and later extended to Kilosa, Iringa and Mpwapwa Districts, TIP has its headquarters in Moshi, Kilimanjaro region.