

FEBRUARY, 2008

**BDS ZAMBIA: HIGHLIGHTING THE INCOME AND JOB CREATION
POTENTIAL OF AGRICULTURAL SUB-SECTORS IN ZAMBIA.**

Business Development Services (BDS) Zambia project, an experimental and learning project of the ILO to support SMEs in Zambia, is working towards raising awareness on the status and job creation potential of the Jatropha and Small-scale Dairy Sub-sectors in Zambia. This is being done through the engagement of the media in its field missions to various parts of the country. This follows up the earlier work done by the BDS Zambia project in creating awareness of the impact of HIV and AIDS on MSEs in Zambia.

The BDS Zambia project facilitated a familiarization tour for journalists to the Southern Province of Zambia. This was in response to a recommendation made by many of the journalists during a workshop held in Lusaka. The recommendation showed that there was need for the journalists to acquire first-hand information and insight on the status of these farmers, as well as their problems and their potentialities.

The media contingent consisted of BDS Zambia staff, as well as journalists from six media institutions namely; Radio Phoenix, The Post Newspapers, Times of Zambia, Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation (ZNBC), Mobi TV, and the Zambia Daily Mail.

The mission, which lasted a total of seven days (10th to 16th February), saw the contingent visit a number of places in the province including the Magoye Milk Collection Center, and the Magoye flood victims. In Choma, the contingent visited a Jatropha Farmer trained in making soap and lotion from Jatropha. Other places visited were the Batoka Livestock Development Trust, Kazungula flood areas and the Jatropha farmers in that location operating under the D1 Oils (a company investing in bio-oils) out-grower scheme, as well as some fish farmers.

This year's rainy season was characterized with heavy floods which left many families homeless, with fears of hunger looming. Southern Province has been the hardest hit in the country. It is for this reason that the contingent took advantage of the presence of the UN Heads of Agencies who were having their annual retreat in Livingstone, Southern Province, and availed of their presence to ask them about their responses to the disaster in the province. The mission met and interviewed the ILO Country Director, Gerry Finnegan, to get clarification on some issues that were raised during the media's mission with regard to ILO's role in supporting these sub-sectors.

Some of the major issues that emerged included the outbreak of livestock diseases in the province that has led to loss in investments by different partners in a number of restocking projects, and that animals are dying on a daily basis. This has had a negative impact on the dairy sector. The milk collection centers have taken to diversification as a way of ensuring sustainability. It was also noted that that the milk collection centers have

not given much attention to or mainstreamed HIV and AIDS into their initiatives, despite having the advantage of being important contact points for the farmers.

The contingent noted that many of the farmers have had little or no exposure to other uses of *Jatropha*, other than as a bio-fuel. The journalists have seen that the plant can also be used to make soap or lotion.

Ignorance was discovered to be another hindrance to the development of the farmers engaged in the *Jatropha* sub-sector. The media contingent discovered that some of the farmers are being enticed into joining out-grower schemes, with promises of reaping huge profits five years from the day they plant the seedlings. It was noted that some farmers are signing contracts written in English, without them actually fully understanding the implications of signing such contracts.

Southern Province was the first step in the ILO-led missions of this nature to support the key role that journalists can play in local economic development, as well as disseminating information on the prevention of HIV and AIDS. The BDS Zambia project is undertaking further field missions to Eastern, Copperbelt and Northwestern Provinces of Zambia.

The media personnel expressed gratitude to the ILO for the opportunities they have been granted in being part of such a mission. The journalists said they now have more insights on various aspects of job creation and the potential of agricultural sub-sectors of the Zambian economy.

After the Southern Province mission, the journalists produced a number of interesting and insightful stories and articles that were published in both print and electronic media.