

WOMEN OF KANEM TAKING THE LEAD IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



WORKING FOR food security of women and children in Chad

WORKING TO improve women's access to land and quality agricultural inputs

WORKING WITH WFP and UNICEF

WORKING THANKS TO EU



The Kanem region has experienced extremely high rates of child malnutrition for a long time. Nutrition surveys carried out since the late 1990s showed global acute-malnutrition rates exceeding 20 percent among children under five, far surpassing the internationally recognized emergency threshold of 15 percent. At the same time, various studies have highlighted the potential of Kanem to increase agricultural production through the exploitation of unused land in the shallow fertile wadi. This would improve both food availability and the purchasing power of vulnerable households.

The idea for the project consisted primarily in strengthening vulnerable households in Kanem through four components to enhance food production and purchasing power: vegetable production in the wadi, goat rearing, income-generating activities and drip irrigation for vegetable production at the household level. These components were supplemented by a brief campaign on good nutrition.

In the western Chad region of Kanem, the majority of men from poor rural families have migrated to areas with better economic opportunities to ensure the survival of their families. Women are often left as head of household and assume particularly heavy tasks, including cultivating the land. Agricultural production has dropped and food insecurity has risen, resulting in higher rates of chronic malnutrition among women and children than in the rest of the country. FAO has been working with vulnerable populations in the region since 2010 to help reduce malnutrition. Because the poorest rural families have limited access to fertile irrigated land in the “*wadi*”, they cannot cultivate vegetables that are essential for a nutritious diet. To establish support for gardening activities, small irrigation projects and education on nutrition, FAO brought together landowners and farmers without access to irrigable land in the wadi. These efforts led to greater agricultural production, improved incomes and a dramatic decrease in malnutrition.

ARABLE-LAND LOANS AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT OFFER SOLUTIONS

Land-loan agreements, lasting five years, were signed between lenders

and the poorest user-groups. The project has enabled women's groups in the region, where women have rarely been able to access agricultural land, to use irrigable and



The project has enabled women's groups to access irrigable and fertile land and farm it in their own names.

fertile ground and farm it in their own names. Women have arable plots of land, and have also trained in good agricultural practices that guarantee sustainable agricultural development in Kanem. The gardening activities implemented in the wadi have significantly increased food production for household consumption.

Women are now able to carry out economically viable activities year-round. Access to arable land in the wadi not only allows households a more varied and balanced diet, but the work carried out also generates greater and steadier income.

As a result of FAO's activities, food production among beneficiary households increased, resulting in enhanced food security for the community and an increase of purchasing power for more than 50 percent of the beneficiary households. This additional income was used to improve

household nutrition, with dramatic results: child malnutrition dropped to 12.6 percent in beneficiary households, compared to 31.1 among non-beneficiaries.

ADDED REACH THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH WFP AND UNICEF

The FAO office in Mao (the capital of the Kanem region) was established within WFP offices, demonstrating the coordination and cooperation among the agencies. In partnership with WFP, FAO is implementing food-for-work programmes in response to the current food crisis in Kanem. FAO is also collaborating with UNICEF, implementing gardening programmes and providing education on nutrition.

As of early 2013, a total of 211 women's groups have benefited from the approach developed in FAO's initial project. This approach has been replicated many times, not only by FAO but also other

organizations in Chad such as Secours Islamique France, OXFAM, Action Contre la Faim and Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement, as well as by the Government of Chad's Programme National de Sécurité Alimentaire.

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