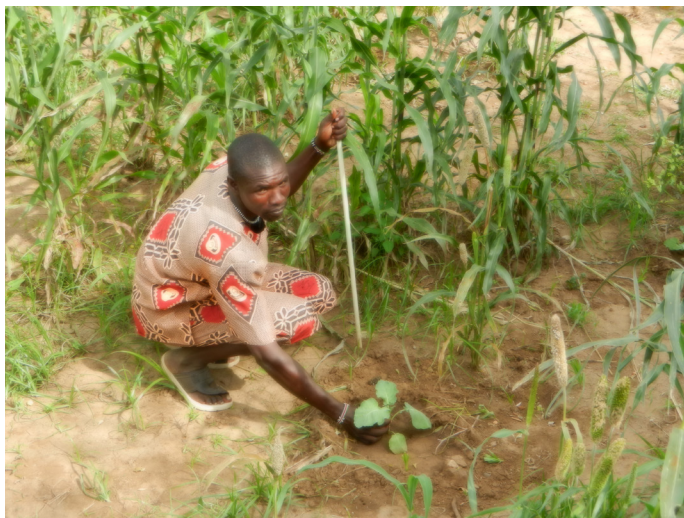


Building Community Assets and Capacities for Adaptive Management

Responding to the challenges of climate change – the World Food Program's evolving approach to relieving hunger and promoting food security

In pursuit of its mission to relieve hunger and promote food security where food insecurity and poverty prevail, the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) recognizes climate change as an increasingly important multiplier of food insecurity. As abrupt, persistent or unpredictable drought and flood events become more common in environments inhabited by vulnerable populations, WFP is embracing new challenges posed by climate change. Through its approach to transition from food aid to building sustainable livelihoods and food security – the organization is learning about ways to build climate adaptation and mitigation strategies from the community upwards. Investments in technical and organizational capacity development around climate resilience are yielding new community assets in the form of integrated water harvesting and plant production systems that enable farmers and herders to feed themselves year-round, while building ecological assets that sequester carbon, retain soil moisture and regenerate fertility thereby building resilience to future climate shocks.



*Traditional pastoralists in Ataekale Community, Turkana County, Kenya, grow drought resistant crops on trapezoidal bunds.
Photo credit: Courtney Wallace.*

Through assessing its growing experience with building community and ecological resilience to climate change, WFP in collaboration with EcoAgriculture Partners is learning about the climate-related impacts of its work and how it can invest more strategically. An important avenue of exploration involves developing capacities for community analysis of landscapes to optimize the spatial suitability of interventions and foster the collaborative management of assets they generate in the face of more unpredictable and severe weather.

Stimulating community innovation in water and food security

Members of the Ataekale community located in Kenya's arid Turkana County are experimenting with ground nuts, wild fruit trees and beans through WFP's Food for Assets (FFA) initiative that helped establish trapezoidal bunds for rainwater harvesting. The community has turned its land into a living laboratory for building water and food assets, standing to improve the productivity and resilience of the landscape while generating confidence in the abilities of farmers to adapt to erratic rainfall patterns linked with global climate change.

In southern Ethiopia, a joint venture between WFP and the government known as MERET (Managing Environmental Resources to Enable Transitions to More Sustainable Livelihoods) supports food insecure communities to practice sustainable land and water management. MERET has helped communities re-vegetate severely degraded landscapes, enabling dryland farmers to graduate from food relief and generate income and savings from complementary activities, while the landscape sequesters more carbon. Intensification and diversification of smallholder and communal farms builds ecological and economic resilience to shocks while also providing a center for learning and adaptive management. Residents of the Sabori sub-watershed in Oromia successfully nurture mango seedlings in a moisture-retaining ditch they created and relay their experience to ten mentees, while actively learning what others are doing in their home gardens.

MERET is already reaching 20 percent of communities in Ethiopia affected by land degradation. WFP's use of a landscape planning and management framework will help MERET, supported by the government through its Climate Resilient Green Economy program, to further scale up its work.

Co-benefits of investing in community and landscape climate resilience

WFP's work illustrates the potential benefits of designing climate mitigation investments to achieve adaptation and livelihood goals. Communities working with WFP in the Halaba region of southern Ethiopia created a valuable community asset by enclosing 105 hectares to regenerate vegetation and soils that sequester atmospheric carbon. Soil fertility, water retention and biomass production in the landscape were visibly enhanced. WFP distributed 291 fuel-saving stoves, reducing pressure to cut trees while benefiting the health and easing the workload of women. With money earned from selling sustainably harvested grasses from the enclosed area women's groups have invested in oxen fattening and beekeeping. To scale up these successes and realize the full spectrum of food security and climate resilience benefits funding from national climate change programs will be tapped to support landscape wide initiatives by multiple communities.

WFP's programmes in Kenya and Ethiopia demonstrate early success in building climate-resilient communities while remaining true to the organization's humanitarian mission. To establish an even more robust platform for community based climate resilience and the collaborative management of ecological assets at landscape scale WFP is exploring opportunities to:

- Form synergistic partnerships with UN-FAO, the World Bank, and IFAD as well as national programs and NGOs
- Build climate change indicators into its food security monitoring and reporting systems which it shares with governments and communities
- Expand internal capacity for guiding social innovation systems to support integrated landscape management
- Support communities in negotiating and scaling up water harvesting initiatives that can retain water throughout the year and ensure fair access
- Strengthen institutional support such as documenting community by-laws, implementing weather index insurance and improving market linkages for landscape products

- Help align policies around land tenure, land use, agriculture, water allocation and management and climate change
- Document the climate effects of its interventions through modeling of GHG sequestration and meaningful local measures of climate resilience including food and water security
- Analyze and disseminate lessons learned from its work linking hunger relief and food security with climate adaptation and mitigation.

WFP's support for capacity development and the reflective learning that leads to social innovation and adaptive management position the organization as a learning lab for transitioning to food-secure communities in climate friendly landscapes.



The community planning team in Oromia, Ethiopia exhibits the landscape management map they developed with WFP technical assistance. Photo credit: Courtney Wallace.

Prepared by Courtney Wallace and Louise Buck, EcoAgriculture Partners; Randall Purcell, World Food Programme

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