



# Food Security in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Newsletter for DIPECHO / ECHO DRR Food Security Partners

## CARE: Rethinking and Reorganising the Agricultural Calendar in Madagascar

CARE's understanding of community needs and the disadvantageous conditions faced by communities in northeast and eastern areas of Madagascar comes from a decade of work in these cyclone-prone areas.

Already stressed agricultural conditions and low crop yields push households' food security limits and survival – even when cyclones do not occur. In addition to the coping strategies communities develop themselves, CARE has conducted applied research to identify alternative innovative solutions that are accessible to and viable for local people. The ECHO FS/DRR project has set out to test these alternatives.

In this project, CARE is testing the reorganization of the agricultural calendar, which involved diversifying crops to include yams (see next month's newsletter for a feature on this activity) and making short cycle variety rice seed available to beneficiaries in partnership with FAO. This concept was conceived when CARE noted that the traditional six-month rice production calendar exposes farmers to crop losses in both the counter season (July-December) and the *grande saison* (December to May/June).

Because the short cycle variety matures within an average of 90 instead of 120 days, this allows the *grande saison* to begin end February rather than in December. The benefits of this delay in the *grande saison* planting are twofold:

first, it reduces the overlap between the main season and the peak cyclone season (February to March) when rice is traditionally at a very vulnerable developmental phase (flowering, heading). Second, it allows beneficiaries to recover from any serious damages to the fields as a result of cyclones during the counter season. The reorganization of the calendar allows beneficiaries' crops to avoid these critical risk periods.

However, for the adjustment of the crop calendar, CARE was required to implement prerequisite activities. First was the rehabilitation of the rice fields and the agricultural water networks. Without adequate infrastructure (dams, canals, drainage) only the plots with sufficient water are developed—normally low-lying plots, which are also vulnerable to flooding. Well placed dams, irrigation canals and drainage combined with a good water management network allows beneficiaries to use parcels at a higher elevation, which are less vulnerable to flooding, and to capitalize on water available in the counter season.

From September 2010, plots were rehabilitated for the counter season and were less exposed to rainy season flooding (starting December). Thus farming households' probability of obtaining a harvest is increased.

In order to ensure the protection of seed pro-



Dam construction for water management © CARE

duced, community granaries have also been introduced as part of CARE's present activities. CARE has also conducted extensive sensitisation about the potential benefits of the above-described project activities and how they can increase beneficiaries' resilience to the effects of cyclones.

The results observed by farmers will likely also factor into their adoption of these innovative practices. Estimates from local crop assessments in Antalaha report a doubling of the rice yield, which increased from 0.9-1.0 t/ha to more than 2 T/ha using the improved rice production systems, practiced in rehabilitated rice fields.

CARE's partnerships with FAO, the SOC's Regional Directorate for Rural Development (in the SAVA region); the Agricultural Services Centre (in the Analanjirofo region) contribute to the technical support provided to beneficiaries.

For the full article highlighting CARE's activities, visit:

[www.disasterriskreduction.net\\_southern\\_africa](http://www.disasterriskreduction.net_southern_africa)

## Seed Quality and Storage in Emergency Situations

Introducing quality short cycle variety seed is a common activity among the ECHO FS/DRR partners. The appropriate crops and varieties were identified by partners, FAO and beneficiaries according to the intervention area's climate and conditions. FAO's recent *Seeds in Emergencies: A Technical Handbook* (2010), available on [www.disasterriskreduction.net\\_southern\\_africa](http://www.disasterriskreduction.net_southern_africa), notes that in emergencies, delays in delivering seed have drastic negative impacts on the quality of the seeds quality. This is why the ECHO FS/DRR project is piloting the repositioning of strategic seed supplies within the hazard-prone communities. The *Handbook* highlights the importance of: sufficient drying of seed and appropriate treatment to prevent micro organism or pest growth; treatment of seed with a suitable traditional, biological or chemical pesticide before storing; seed should be stored in bags that are elevated on pallets or tree branches in a lattice formation to limit moisture, which can affect seed quality and germination rates. Once the seed is stored, vigilant monitoring of the storage unit must continue, through: identification of any drainage or erosion problems outside the building, inspection inside the building to detect moisture or leaks; rodent activity noted through feces or entry points in the walls or floors of the structure. The importance of immediate action if moisture or pests are detected in the storage unit is paramount to ensure that the seed maintains its inherent qualities and produces as well as possible for the victims of the hazard that has struck.

## Training on Cross Cutting Issues

Commitment among partners in the ECHO FS/DRR intervention to the important cross cutting regional issues is evident in their commitment to increasing their knowledge internally and the knowledge of FS and DRR stakeholders on these themes. Based on partners' expressed interest and assessed needs, training is being facilitated on food security and gender mainstreaming in Malawi.

Between July 20-22, food security training, targeting GOAL Malawi and Christian Aid/Evangelical Association of Malawi was done by the FAO REOSA Food Security officer. The training was tailored to partners' information needs and was contextualised to compliment partners' ongoing activities. The training consisted of three sessions:

- **What is food security?** The basics on the 4 pillars of food security what they are, how they relate to the Malawian context and partners' activities.
- **Concepts related to food security:** A discussion on what is vulnerability and poverty and how it relates to food security, the IPC and VACs.
- **Food security analysis and relating it to your work:** How partners understand the food security situation in their intervention areas, they key elements to observe in intervention areas and turning these into questions for interviews

Similarly, FAO REOSA will train interested Malawian partners on gender mainstreaming in early August. This training, the key components of which were identified during field missions, will help partners mainstream the core gender and HIV concepts in their present and future project activities. The focus of this training includes:

- **Basic concepts of the HIV and AIDS** and the impact of HIV vulnerability on food security and livelihoods.
- **Gender concepts and definitions**, sexual and gender division of labor, and the impact of gender inequality on food security and livelihoods.
- **Basic concepts of sexual exploitation** and abuse, and community responsibilities including protection, support and reporting procedures.
- **Application of an HIV and gender lens** in disaster risk reduction and food security interventions.
- **Leadership, negotiation and conflict resolution** skills, and community participatory decision making.

## Country Updates

In **Madagascar**, yams in the intervention areas are in the withering phase, indicating they are near maturity for harvest. Following the yam producers exchange in May-June, trainings on harvest techniques, preservation, transformation and culinary practices are on-going in the demonstration communities.

In **Malawi**, 31 participants from GOAL Malawi and the Ministry of Agriculture extension services were trained in conservation agriculture techniques. Using the training-of-trainers methodology and according to the workshop's way-forward workplan, this training will reach an estimated 200 farmers in the intervention areas.

**Mozambique:** On June 30, 2010 the Governor of Nampula Province chaired a meeting that presented all agricultural The project impact activities were presented including the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) approach and the effect of short cycle varieties promoted by the project on household food security. The project activities have been established as point of reference of good practices to improve household food security.

## Save this date!!

The second and final **Regional Workshop for DIPECHO and ECHO Food Security Partners and Stakeholders** is planned for **20-22 September 2011** in the bustling and energetic city of Johannesburg! It is jointly organized by CARE and FAO, the two regional coordinators. This will be an excellent opportunity to share experiences and demonstrate what worked and didn't in projects to save lives and livelihoods by reducing the risk of disaster caused by floods and cyclones. The information will be shared with implementing partners, governments, donors and other FS/DRR stakeholders.

## Upcoming Meetings

Country project partners hold regular coordination meetings. Contact the Country ECHO FS Project Coordinators (FAO) for dates and details:

### Madagascar (FAO)

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## About this Newsletter

*This monthly newsletter aims to share information on activities, lessons learnt and information of interest to ECHO/DIPHECO project partners and stakeholders.*

### FS/DRR Southern Africa Partners Website

*This newsletter can be accessed on the partners website as well as more information on the projects. Visit:*

[www.disasterriskreduction.net\\_southern\\_africa](http://www.disasterriskreduction.net_southern_africa)

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