



THE WOMEN OF KANEM

FAO SUPPORTS FOOD SECURITY IN AN EFFORT TO COMBAT MALNUTRITION IN CHAD

Kanem, a region in western Chad, has higher rates of chronic malnutrition than the rest of the country. Food insecurity, mainly affecting women and children, results from the low availability of food (low agricultural production owing to adverse weather conditions), decreased incomes that have limited access to food and mishandling of food.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been working with vulnerable populations in the region since 2010 to help reduce the prevalence of malnutrition. The poorest rural families that rely on agriculture have limited access to fertile irrigated land (in the “*ouaddis*”), and 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 *ouaddis*.



AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION: ARABLE LAND LOANS & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Land loan agreements, lasting five years, were signed between lenders and the poorest user groups identified.

The majority of men from poor rural families have migrated to areas with better economic opportunities to assure the survival



of their families. As a result, women are often left as the head of the household and assume particularly heavy tasks, as well as cultivating the land to benefit their families.

The project has enabled women's groups in the region, where women have rarely been able to access agricultural land, to access irrigable and fertile land and farm it in their own name.

Women have arable plots of land, and were also trained on good agricultural practices to guarantee sustainable agricultural development in Kanem. The gardening activities implemented in the *ouaddis* have significantly increased food production for household consumption.

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

WORKING HAND IN HAND WITH THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP) AND THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (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. FAO is also collaborating with UNICEF, notably regarding the gardening programmes and providing education on nutrition. FAO, in partnership with WFP, is implementing food-for-work programmes in response to the current food crisis in Kanem.



Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, on her recent visit to Mao, 20 January 2012, said, *“We work in Chad in collaboration with our partners such as FAO, WFP, UNICEF and Action Contre la Faim, as well as with local authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture, which makes me very confident in our ability to extend our work here. I have discovered a project in which the results are very encouraging. We support the most vulnerable families to produce food, boost their farming activities, work together, improve their diets and supply the markets. I am witness to the positive results of these small irrigation projects.”* The EU Ambassador in Chad mentioned, *“We believe this is a good basis for other future projects. Naturally, it will not be easy, but we can help these populations if we work together.”*

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