

Building women's resilience to climate shocks

The world's poorest people are bearing the brunt of climate change, including more erratic weather, unpredictable rainfall patterns and frequent severe events such as floods and droughts. Adapting to climate change is about reducing people's vulnerability and strengthening their capacity to anticipate and cope. As women are central to the food and livelihood security of their families, building women's resilience is a crucial step towards an effective response to climate variability. CARE's programme in the most vulnerable regions of Cameroon aims to strengthen the capacity of local communities to prepare for and respond to future crises, promoting gender-sensitive adaptation strategies to reduce food insecurity and fostering women's economic independence.

DURATION: 2013-2017

CHALLENGE: Women's Social and Economic Development, Natural Resources Management

COUNTRY: Cameroon

PARTNER: CARE



CONTEXT

Poor families in the Sahel Region are increasingly impacted by climate variability and change. They are confronted with unpredictable rainfall patterns that cause water shortages, reduce harvests and exacerbate hunger. More severe and frequent floods or droughts kill their livestock, threaten their crops and put pressure on household food security and local knowledge. Adapting to climate change is about reducing people's vulnerability and strengthening their capacity to anticipate and cope. Climate change is particularly impacting women and girls, who are central to the food and livelihood security of their families.

High rates of food insecurity and malnutrition characterize the Northern regions of Cameroon, with 1.7 million people at risk of food insecurity, 54,000 children affected by severe

malnutrition, 6 million people at risk of epidemics, and 10,000 people affected by floods (OCHA 2013-2014).

ACTION

We support CARE's programme which aims to build the capacity of 3 municipalities to prepare for and respond to future crises, strengthening local knowledge on climate uncertainties and promoting gender-sensitive adaptation strategies to reduce food insecurity and build women's economic independence. 356,000 people, including 179,000 women, will directly benefit from the activities planned.

Activities include:

- Setting up three community-based early-warning systems in 3 municipalities in the northern regions of the country through participatory trainings and assessments.
- Developing three community-owned adaptation plans (that could include access to climate information to identify good crop choices and timing for planting, as well as innovative agricultural techniques, composting toilets and improved access to irrigation).
- Implementing and training village savings and loan associations (VSLA) to prevent and mitigate climate change impacts.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- The targeted communities are better prepared to anticipate future crises and to tackle chronic food shortages. They are able to make informed and flexible decisions that reduce their vulnerability.
- Families and women in particular are aware of food security risks and climate variability and are able to plan adaptation actions, for instance differentiating their income sources, making informed choices regarding crop planting and other agro-economic activities, and improving the storage of agricultural inputs and harvests.
- Newly-created village savings and loan associations strengthen the economic autonomy of 240 women, so they can prepare for climate-related impacts by financing prevention and adaptation activities.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY

CARE's programme is linked to the National Plan for Adaptation (PNACC) officially launched by the Cameroon Ministry of the Environment, Natural Protection and Sustainable Development in 2012. The plan aims to ensure that the country has the institutional, individual and systemic capacity to address climate change risks and opportunities through a comprehensive national approach. Community mobilisation and involvement in setting up early warning systems and savings and loan associations will strengthen women's resilience and ensure economic sustainability, building the capacities of the most vulnerable families to cope with climate shocks.