
Burkina Faso: Progress in spite of drought and floods

August 2010 update

With the help of churches such as yours, our partners ODE and Reseau Marp are improving the availability and quality of food for thousands of people in Northern Burkina Faso recently affected by both too little and too much rain.

Project 1: Passore Province (North Region) – partnering with ODE and benefiting 88,000 people

Key to the success of this project is the development and successful management of market gardens in which local people can grow a variety of crops – like the tomatoes shown right - both for their own use and for sale in the market.

So far, 13 market garden management groups have been developed and nearly 900 people trained in how to get the best out of their gardens. Equipment and seeds have been provided and all the gardens are starting to function successfully. Two of the gardens have an experimental irrigation system which, if successful, will be introduced elsewhere.



But growing the crops is only part of the challenge. The others are storing the produce and getting a good price at market. Most of those involved in the market garden project have now been trained in how to store their crops after harvest and over 80 per cent of last year's harvest has now been sold, providing much needed income for families.

Along with the agricultural training, nearly 200 people, mostly women, recently completed adult literacy classes.

Project 2: Zondoma Province (North Region) – partnering with Reseau Marp and benefiting 22,000 people

Micro-credit – small loans offered on favourable terms by a locally managed institution - is an important ingredient in many projects of this kind. Credit enables poor people who would otherwise be living hand-to-mouth to buy the vital equipment, livestock or seeds that can make a real difference to their quality of life.

In recent months, over 700 people in Zondoma Province, mostly women, have been taught how to access micro-credit for themselves and are starting to benefit. Over fifty of them have already bought equipment for use on their market gardens.

At the same time, nearly 150 families have benefited by joining work parties to dig wells as part of a cash-for-work scheme.

Project 3: Oudalan and Seno Provinces (Sahel Region) – partnering with ODE and benefiting 970,000 people

Locally selected food management committees have a vital role in ensuring that the very poorest members of the community benefit from a project. Helping the community choose a well-balanced, representative committee is therefore vital. A ‘social motivator’ visits the community to help in this process and ensure that different groups, particularly women, can participate (see below).

Among other things, the committee is responsible for the distribution of emergency food aid to vulnerable families and for overseeing the storage and sale of crops.

Meanwhile, in order to increase the variety of food available to local families, nearly 1,000 people have been trained in poultry rearing – including how to build a simple coop - and each given a rooster and nine hens.



Progress is also being made in ‘fixing’ sand dunes to prevent the encroachment of the desert, with over 60 hectares already fixed with local varieties of plants on them.

The picture shows members of the Bidi community with plants ready to fix dunes in their area.

‘We can do it together’

Aminata and Awa are two young women from the Touareg community of Gorom-Gorom, the capital of the Province of Oudalan, in Northern Burkina Faso. As with many rural communities, especially Muslim communities, the involvement of women in a development project is a contentious issue.

Awa explains: “When the social motivator said during the community workshop that there must be some women on the Food Management Committee, everybody was surprised because this hadn’t happened before. Finally, it was agreed to give us two positions on the committee.”

Aminata continues: “Because we can read and write in our language, we were chosen as treasurer (me) and secretary (Awa). We are grateful to this project initiated by Christian Aid and we hope it will give us opportunities to participate in the development of our community”.



On the question of whether they can face the challenge of fulfilling these positions on the committee, they both have the same answer: “Together we can”.

The picture shows the Gorom-Gorom Food Management Committee, with Awa and Aminata on the left of the front row.

Drought in Burkina Faso makes food scarce

A survey of communities in Northern Burkina Faso in May revealed that, due to prolonged drought which has affected much of West Africa, many families were being forced to sell their livestock to buy desperately needed food. Severe malnutrition among children under five had doubled.

Together with local partners and other NGOs Christian Aid has put together an emergency programme for Burkina Faso and neighbouring countries which includes provision of food and medical aid, setting up cereal banks and starting cash-for-work programmes to enable families to buy cereal and grains in the markets.

See <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies/current/west-africa-food-crisis/index.aspx> for the latest on the West Africa Food Crisis.

Drought turns to floods in North

In July torrential rain hit many parts of Burkina Faso, with 237 mm of rainfall recorded at Boulsa, the capital of Centre-North Region and 120 mm at Deou in the Sahel Region. This unusually heavy downpour caused a great deal of damage, particularly in Eastern Region, Centre-North Region and Sahel Region.

Across these three regions homes, bridges, roads and dams were destroyed and many lost their animals and stores of food. More than 10,000 households were directly affected by flooding and about 60,000 people were made homeless. According to a local newspaper, two people died and 11 others are missing.

The floods hit already vulnerable populations who are facing serious food shortages due to drought. Apart from the immediate implications, there will be longer term consequences in terms of food availability: not only were food reserves swept away but standing grain awaiting harvest in October was also destroyed.

The website

Don't forget to visit the Partnership web pages at www.christian-aid.org/churchpartnerships, and the 'hidden' page which can only be accessed by churches and others who are giving to the partnership scheme: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/fundraise/church-partnerships/resources/updates.aspx>. Here you can find PDFs of all the materials you have been sent plus past and current updates. You will also be able to read about the other projects that the Partnership scheme supports.

Organising a talk

If your church or group would like someone from Christian Aid to come and give a talk, please contact your local area office (www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/contact).

If your group has any other queries, then please contact the Partnership team by email: partnershipscheme@christian-aid.org or by phoning Max Khanna on: 020 8123 7523

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