

How carbon compensation is changing lives in Dire Dawa

Thanks to the support of Comic Relief and members of the public donating to SMCF's carbon compensation programme, activities for the climate change and Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction programme began in Dire Dawa in September 2008.

An experienced manager has been recruited and is now working from the offices of the Addis Alem Community Association and is in day to day contact with community members.

The first Disaster Risk Reduction committees were formed in four villages. Each of the four committees is made up of 80 persons. The number of committee members was decided by the community. Member of the committee were selected in such a way as to ensure that every corner of the villages is represented. Communication channels were developed between the different committees for exchange of information and experiences. Of particular importance was the link developed between upstream communities and those further downstream in order to improve future flood warnings.

The groups conducted an assessment of the most pressing dangers facing their community. Members of the community agreed the most vulnerable areas in the locality and identified the major threats. A total of 965 men and 985 women from the community came together in groups and participated in these discussions. They contributed their local knowledge; their past experience of the dangers and impact of disasters, how the community managed the disaster, what worked / what didn't. They looked at trends in order to build up a picture of the likelihood of these disasters reoccurring. From this consultation maps were produced detailing the hazards and incorporating the measures needed to effectively counteract these threats.

One of the key areas highlighted by the community was the importance of developing sustainable means of livelihood. They looked at the current situation of the community at large and the effect that disasters can have on people's livelihood. The discussions highlighted the importance of the community having strong and diversified livelihoods in order to strengthen the community's ability to be resilient in the face of disaster. It was agreed that developing sustainable livelihoods was key to any future adaptation strategy.



Periods of drought threatens the ability of poor families to generate income,



digging wells such as this is a critical part of creating sustainable livelihoods,



water from the well enables poor people to grow fruit and vegetables on a sustainable basis



Practical work was also undertaken during the two months including the following activities;

- the construction of 16.2 kms of stone bunds to prevent soil erosion: This activity was undertaken on two hills located behind the two project locations. This development will contribute to the reduction of floodwater from the hill down to the villages and will play an important role in the eventual rehabilitation of the hills.

- the construction of a 296m³ check dam: (check-dams are small barriers built across the direction of water flow on shallow rivers and streams for the purpose of water harvesting. The small dams retain excess water flow during monsoon rains in a small catchment area behind the structure.) A check dam was constructed on the top of one of the hills in Dire Dawa to collect and retain rain water on the hill. This activity is expected to contribute to the reduction of water runoff from the hill and to recharge the ground water both on the hill and at its foot (in the village) which will lead to refilling of water wells..

It has been an excellent start and thanks to the involvement of the community a solid foundation has been developed to build on in the months ahead.