

# 06 Kenyan Droughts: A Community Based Approach

## BACKGROUND

Kenya suffers from regular extreme weather events, which exacerbate rural poverty, with devastating impact on pastoralists and subsistence farmers in the arid and semi arid regions of the country. In the last decade alone, drought periods in 91/92, 95/96, and 98/2000, and devastating floods in 1997/98 and again in 2002 in different parts of the country have been recorded. These phenomena have had the cumulative effect of reducing household food availability, purchasing power, and coping capacity, impoverishing the rural population.

In the year 2000 Kenya suffered its worst drought in 37 years. By June, an estimated 1.7 million people were in need of food assistance. By December 2000 this figure reached 4 million and the Government of Kenya launched an urgent food appeal to feed 4 million Kenyans affected by famine. The Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) participated actively in the response to the famine in 2000 and the authorities appointed the KRCS as lead agency in Machakos district to distribute relief food on behalf of the GOK and the WFP, in partnership with the International Federation. The relief operation lasted for nine months with 260,497 beneficiaries and gave the KRCS Machakos branch the opportunity to work closely with rural communities of Machakos. The KRCS Machakos Branch, together with the International Federation undertook an assessment at the end of the operation in order to review whether there was a need to continue the operation, as well as the underlying causes of the food crisis.

Machakos district has an estimated population of 906,644 people and the majority of the population (85 per cent) derive their livelihood through farming. More than 50 per cent of these people are categorized as the absolute poor (i.e. those who cannot afford to meet the basic minimum food requirement even after spending all their total incomes on food only).

## OBJECTIVES

The objective is to build assets to be able to cope with regular droughts, rather than only acting when the emergency has already struck. The project is structured into four major focal sectors, that incorporate different activities, and a cross-cutting issue that embraces different capacity building activities, advocacy and awareness campaigns that are directly or indirectly linked to drought consequences

(Hygiene and Nutrition, HIV/AIDS and First Aid). The focal sectors are intended to encompass different types of actions related to drought, namely preventive (prior to drought), coping (during drought) and recovery (basically post-drought rehabilitation).

## ACTIVITIES

In 2001 the Spanish Red Cross (SRC) initiated a bilateral cooperation with the KRCS on a long-term basis. After the first consultations, the Kenya Red Cross Society showed interest in implementing a Drought Preparedness programme in Machakos District. This program focuses on developing branch capacities through training to enable the Machakos branch to mobilize volunteers, and through training to work closely with and "from within" rural communities. The three-year project, implemented by the KRCS-Machakos branch with technical support from the SRC, aims at strengthening the local and district capacities, through local and innovative mechanisms, to predict, cope with and recover from recurrent drought impacts (there is a drought episode every three-four years).

Beneficiaries were selected amongst the poorest sectors of the poorest divisions in the district. Masinga and Katangi divisions harbour a great percentage of food aid beneficiaries from the former food relief operation (2000-2001).

The project concentrates the efforts on the most vulnerable women in rural communities, supporting local associations and giving priority to women-headed households with children. A second target group is the whole population, with the aim to promote, at communal level, simple water storing and irrigation systems, drought resistant crop farming and grain storage. Health education focusing on the most common diseases, normally related with safe water and environmental sanitation, and HIV/AIDS is also a component of the program.

A participatory approach, based on



Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) methodology, was used to identify the perceived needs of each community on health, water and sanitation. This mobilized the community to:

- take part in the solution of their problems through setting up steering committees;

- work through local associations to share the responsibility between individuals, and strengthen the social tissue and the associative structures

- mobilize and train volunteers at community level to take part and responsibility in the implementation of the project;

- involve the local authorities in the project implementation, getting their support from the technical point of view, and their involvement on the management structures at the lowest possible level

The activities were funded through a revolving fund to create ownership and solidarity between all the vulnerable women and included:

- selection and training of Red Cross field officers at district level. Train them on the aims of the project and PHAST methodology, as well as revolving funds.

- identify in each community the health, water and sanitation status, needs and perception, through a methodology based on PHAST;

- put in place in each location a focal point for the development of the community based organization with 30 members elected through baraza system;

- setting up of Red Cross sub-branches or reorganizing the existing ones;

- mobilization of local communities, together with water department officials, to work on the construction of small-scale water systems with the participation of the community.

- setting up of and training for water committees in order to ensure the management of the water systems.

- community health education and sensitization on basic environmental health, sanitation and HIV/AIDS through public sessions conducted by Red Cross volunteers;

- specific intervention in HIV/AIDS prevention, focused on training for youth in community-based first aid, training in counseling for peer educators and support to the establishment of Red Cross youth clubs;

- malaria prevention activities in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, mainly related with the utilization of mosquito nets.

- agriculture components with the aim of promoting the farming of drought resistant crops and advocacy in storing as well as setting up seed banks at communal level

- provide local associations with funds and technical training to promote off-farm economic activities through revolving funds

Specific training and support to Kenya Red Cross Society at district level and local level in order to improve their capacity to manage and monitor

the activities and to ensure their future sustainability.



## LESSONS

The "food gap" in the district, that affects the majority of the population every year, forces them to look for other sources of income to buy 1/3 of their food needs from the market.

- Promoting economic activities among the most vulnerable women helped them to "fill the gap"

- Promoting micro irrigation schemes will help the small farmers to grow more food, and with an increased security and independence from climatic variability.

- Increasing access to water sources accompanied with health education and community first aid training have a direct impact in the health status of the population at large, preventing common diseases, such as diarrhea and malaria making their life more productive.

- Finally, there is a poor knowledge of the HIV/AIDS impact in rural areas of Kenya, and information is the best way of preventing the spread of the pandemic.

- Working with communities is the key to success in this type of programme.



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# 07 Empowering Communities To Monitor Vulnerability Via Communal Information Systems (CIS)

## BACKGROUND

Madagascar is home to an annual onslaught of shocks ranging from cyclones, floods, drought, and locusts to cattle theft, economic instability, and epidemics, and many others in between. On one of the poorest and most malnourished countries in the world, such pressure results in chronic vulnerability and in volatile high-risk livelihoods. The only sustainable way of reducing risk in Madagascar is by building awareness among communities, and helping them to monitor and manage the evolving livelihood conditions using simple low technology tools.

A knowledge management system was conceived by CARE International that was adapted to a commune's capacity to monitor vulnerability. This system is simple, user-friendly and inexpensive, it demands little effort by, and is of proven utility for the community. The system has been implemented around the nation during the past 4 years of project implementation.

## OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project is to reduce risks to livelihood security. The objective is to enable communities to take the monitoring of vulnerability into their own hands by transferring capacity to set up a Communal Information System (CIS) and to monitor very simple indicators linked to mitigation actions.

## ACTIVITIES

*What is a CIS?: the most sustainable tool to monitor vulnerability in a commune. An information system is proposed in high-risk communes in order to equip decision makers with adequate skills to monitor vulnerability. This system is simple, inexpensive, demands little effort, is user friendly and of great utility as it must be implemented by the community and for the community.*

*The perfect marriage of needs, resources and commune capacity To manage the commune, the decision makers need regular information regarding the well-being of their populations.*

*They are conscious that resources and the capacities at their disposal are neither generous nor omnipresent.*

■ *A revolutionary way to apply minimum statistical rigor to concepts difficult to harness and express.*

■ *The adequate monitoring of vulnerability in the simplest possible form but which lends itself to concrete and fast mitigation action.*

The CIS project has been successfully implemented to date in six high risk zones: Mahanoro, Morondava, Toliara, Mananjary, Fenerive and Soanierana Ivongo Districts (3-4 communes within each). A CIS is developed by the community and for the community.

■ **By the community:** participative workshops on the selection of the indicators are organized in each CIS District. They aim:

- To systematically familiarize all participants to the local notions of hazard, vulnerability, and risk.

- To identify the indicators that make it possible for local authorities to monitor vulnerability.

- To support a commune as it sets up a sustainable CIS and develops appropriate mitigation action plans linked directly to CIS results.

CISs are not imposed on the communes, but are proposed and molded with the communes. CARE staffs are used as technical support in the communes during the implementation phase of CIS, they do not aspire to a permanent presence which will endanger the sustainability of the CIS.

■ **For the community:** A CIS conceived with the commune, must initially be used by the commune. A CIS respects the unique profile of each commune and offers autonomy for decision-making. A CIS reinforces national structures and ensures sustainability by helping the communes take their development in their own hands. To achieve this objective, the CIS agents train local authorities to take responsibility for information collection, to follow the evolution of the data and the indicators, and to inform and to catalyze mitigation action in the event that the data show negative trends.

■ **For the nation:** Once a commune takes full charge of its personalized CIS, the commune is equipped to rapidly report a disaster that exceeds their management capacity. The

mandate of CNS (the National Risk and Disaster Management Council) is to monitor the vulnerability of high-risk zones throughout the nation. CNS is designing a National Early Warning System (SNAP) which will capitalize on CIS information emanating from the communes. CIS information will feed into the periodic vulnerability bulletins produced by future SNAP agents. The CIS will be used as CNS antennas to monitor vulnerability and to sound alarms for imminent disaster.

**An example:** *the manioc in commune X is a substitute product – not a product of choice. When rice is in short supply, and/or its price exceeds the purchasing power of the population, the sale of the manioc increases at the market. Once the manioc is sold the salesmen leave the market. When the number of salesmen between 11h and noon falls, the vulnerability of the zone is heightened.*

*The monitoring of this indicator requires the tax collector (that passes in the market everyday) 3 more minutes to note the number of salesmen on a simple card. Little effort in time and resources, a figure with a trend that is simple to monitor, to use, and to understand. When this figure remains below a threshold for a predetermined period, the decision maker consults his action plan and catalyzes the Mini Mitigation Action to avoid a catastrophe.*

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The first 10 CIS communes identified a total of 27 indicators, (1-4 per commune). Here are some examples

- The number of manioc salesmen
- The quantity of drinks consumed in the local bars
- The number of school children who miss class during the school year

These indicators and the 24 others were the subject of lengthy and animated discussions before being retained. Each represents one reflection of vulnerability specific to the commune that proposed it.

Once the chosen indicators are validated and reinforced, large public signs are produced to record and display the monthly values. This public display brings attention to the periodic evolution of the set of indicators and encourages discussion and use of the monitoring. Thresholds are set for the set of indicators and when a certain number of the indicators simultaneously take a turn for the worse, an alarm is sounded –catalyzing a Mini-

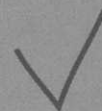
Mitigation Action (MMA). MMAs draw on predefined local resources (private, NGO or government) to implement a small scale mitigation activity that serves as a revenue-buffer for the neediest households at a critical time while reducing risk to a pertinent hazard (example dredging a canal to avoid flooding)

## LESSONS

The wide recognition of the CIS as a tool for the general management of the commune has demonstrated that the inclusion of the CIS in the Plan Communal de Development (PDC) will ascertain that a certain level of monitoring will continue long after the CIS project ends. The project has also learned that promoting knowledge management systems without having MMA resources propositioned to allow authorities to act on the information is setting oneself up for defeat.

## FUTURE

The main suggestions would be to integrate CIS to mitigation resources in a more systematic way among the same communities and to replicate the CIS in different settings.



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