

DJIBOUTI: Developing agro-pastoral shade gardens as an adaptation strategy for poor rural communities

Issues:

Djibouti has an arid and semi-desert climate, which makes it highly sensitive to drought and water scarcity. Unless adequate action is taken quickly to reduce Djibouti's vulnerability to increasing temperatures and decrease of rainfall, the country will fall victim to environmental socio-economic deterioration.

As a result of changing climate patterns, the local pastoral and farming communities are growing poorer with every season, being unable to water their crops, cattle and provide adequate drinking water for themselves and their families. Severe drought can result in families losing their entire herd or crop. As a result, they have no choice but to migrate to cities in search of new livelihoods.

All rural areas of Djibouti feel the severe impacts of climate change, but the two largest, flat and semi-desert plains of Petit Bara and Grand Bara are particularly exposed to the damages caused by drought. Since these are important cross-roads for transport and communication, the Government of Djibouti has deemed these as areas requiring urgent adaptation interventions to secure water resources and conserve soil to better assist the local communities who depend on these for their sustenance and livelihoods.



Pastoral community in the Petit Bara region

Project Summary

- Country: Djibouti
- Project Budget: USD 4,293,600
- Project Funding Source: Adaptation Fund
- Project Period: 2013-2018
- Implementing partner: Ministry of Habitat, Urbanism, and Environment
- Target Areas: Petit Bara and Grand Bara desert plains

Actions:

To address these pressing issues, Djibouti is now implementing a project to improve the resilience of rural communities to recurrent climate change induced droughts and help the communities of Grand and Petit Bara to develop their adaptive capacity and embark on climate resilient economic development.

This Adaptation Fund-financed project, under full implementation with support from UNDP, has established an office at the Ministry of Habitat, Urbanism and Environment. A successful inception meeting was held in Djibouti Ville on 13 March 2013, with participation from a broad range of stakeholders and development partners launching the project to deliver its objectives.



Inception Workshop in Djibouti Ville, 13 March 2013



Example of a successful community managed agro-pastoral shade garden in the Petit Bara region

The objective of the project is to diversify and promote climate resilient agro-pastoral practices in rural Djibouti. Over its 5-year span the project aims to support sustainable access to secured water resources; to develop shade gardens to support diversified and climate-resilient agro-pastoral production systems; and to provide access to secured finance to farming and pastoral communities to build climate resilient development.

Expected Impacts:

The main causes of climate change vulnerability in Petit Bara and Grand Bara are recurrent droughts, poor water conditions, high evapotranspiration rates, limited availability of water supply and unsustainable landscape and rangeland management. To best adapt to the inevitable climate changes the communities are working to develop alternative agro-pastoral practices that would alleviate the environmental pressures and help them preserve their land, and ensure and maximize on adequate water supplies.

Water availability is the main hindrance to agricultural productivity and livelihood security in Djibouti, as is improved and secured access to water is for developing agro-pastoral systems highly resilient to increasing climate and rainfall variability. This project will develop sustainable and climate resilient water management – combined with more efficient use of surface and ground water to support diversified and productive agro-pastoral systems. One of the project objectives is to provide local communities with the means to fulfill their drinking, livestock and cropping water needs and lay the foundation for the development of shade garden-based agro-pastoral systems. This will require water adaptation measures to better capture and manage erratic run-off water and resources from dry riverbeds (*wadis*) that contain water only during the short wet seasons, while improving the use of aquifers as natural water storage infrastructures to secure water supply during dry periods.



Example of a dam in a 'wadi' (dry river bed) in the Petit Bara region

The additional water produced will be used to improve access to drinking water, to alleviate pressures from degraded pasturelands through the rehabilitation/creation of remote watering points in order to increase accessibility to rangelands currently not being exploited, as well as to support multi-purpose crop and fodder production under new integrated farming and livestock management systems.

This project also supports the development of microfinance products for adaptation, including the creation of women cooperatives; an innovative and novel adaptation approach which will hopefully ensure medium- to long-term financial sustainability.

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