



Drylands Development Programme (DryDev)

About DryDev

As is so often the case—especially in Niger— women hold the answers on how to get better results faster, cheaper, and with more community buy-in is. The Drylands Development Programme (DryDev) puts farmers in charge of improving water management, food security, and rural economic development in the drylands of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Ethiopia, and Kenya. CARE runs the Niger component of the project, which works with 52, 336 people (50% of whom are women) in five communes.

OBJECTIVES

- Households transition from subsistence agriculture and emergency assistance to sustainable rural development
- Sustained improvement in food and water security, livelihoods, and resilience
- Empowerment of women and other disadvantaged or marginalized groups

STRATEGY

- **Put communities (especially women) in charge:** The project operates by putting women's Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) at the center of planning activities and mobilizing community support through Community Innovation Platforms.
- **Build on existing structures:** The VSLAs work with watershed committees, local governments, community groups, and local farmers to organize trainings, change behavior, and regenerate community natural resources through creating and supporting 33 watershed maintenance plans. Instead of a traditional cash-for-work program, DryDev provides specific support to innovation platforms to support the watershed maintenance plans.
- **Support the most vulnerable:** the community platforms provided interest free loans to 800 extremely vulnerable farmers, so they could get the inputs they needed to adopt new techniques and improve their production.

Program Name:

Drylands Development Programme (DryDev)

Program Country:

Niger

Timeframe:

Jan 2014-July 2019

Budget:

US\$ 5 million

Donors:

World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF):
Directorate General for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Beneficiaries:

- 52,336 people reached in 5 communes
- Interest free loans for 800 vulnerable farmers



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Project Impacts

Land is becoming fertile: More than 12,000 community volunteers to regenerate 1,209 hectares of land, planted 23,000 trees, and put 5,352 hectares of community land under sustainable NRM practices.

Increased water available: Communities report that the water levels in local wells have risen dramatically, and getting water is easier than before the program.

Impact is cheaper: All activities are accomplished for 19% of the cost of traditional cash-for-work programs.

Farmers are producing more food: Farmers are reporting higher yields on their crops, sometimes 3 times more than they were getting with the project started.

Women can access credit: 6,200 women and 2,118 men got access to a cumulative \$40,000 of credit through VSLAs, and 4,707 farmers were able to access formal credit.

Businesses are stronger: Local seed businesses growing improved and shorter-variety seeds have been able to produce 60 tons of improved seeds for farmers to source locally.

Farmers use better practices: more than 16,246 producers are using new rainfall harvesting and conservation agriculture techniques on their fields. 73% of these producers use at least 2 new practices. Yields have doubled or more for many farmers

- **Connect to businesses:** The innovation platforms mapped local input suppliers and made connections for communities, so they could get high quality inputs at reasonable prices. Sometimes, the innovation platforms even offered loans to input suppliers, so they could acquire higher-quality supplies and better meet producer's needs.
- **Monitor results:** Communities are also engaged in monitoring the program results. Forty-eight commune-level surveillance committees track results and ensure that plans are carried out. They sign agreements with local experts to provide services and report back to community stakeholders on progress toward goals.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Work with partners:** The delay by Microfinance Institutions (MFI) in the availability of credit compromises the success of this activity and requires the strengthening of MFIs to take into account demand and its integration into an agricultural entrepreneurship approach.
- **Help partners understand the unique components of a farmer-led approach:** It is crucial to implement this approach from the onset to ensure its sustainability and replicability.
- **Get the right people involved:** The involvement of local suppliers strengthens profitability and competitiveness of agro-dealers and bolsters their integration into value chains.
- **VSLAs facilitate women's financial empowerment:** This system is effective in meeting the financial needs of vulnerable groups safely while also strengthening a social bond.
- **Peer-to-peer training:** This type of training offers a powerful way to reach an important target at a lower cost, while valuing local talent, building trust and collaboration between the community and the project, and strengthen the capacity to ensure success post-project.
- **Improve communication among project team:** Creating open lines of communication through technological channels such as WhatsApp helps increase sharing and collaboration of project team improving the overall quality of work.



Learn More

Check out the final evaluation [here](#).

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