

SAFE-World Project/Initiative Summary

Country: Mali

Project/Initiative Title: Menaka Oasis, World Vision

Nos. farmers: 50

Hectares: 300

Agro-Ecological Zone: II

Improvement types

1x	2	3	4	5x	6x	7	8	9
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A. Key Impacts

A1 – Productivity

	Before/Without	After/With	% change
Sorghum		1700 kg/ha	New crop

A2 – Impacts on natural capital

Rise of water table

A3 – Impacts on local community (social capital)

?? Reversed migration

?? Young men working in groups

A5 – Key changes in farm / regional system

New crop on re-habilitated land

D. Contact Point for Project/Initiative

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E. Project Narrative

The Menaka Oasis Project, Mali

World Vision of Mali has worked with pastoral communities in the Menaka district of northeast Mali, where rainfall is now only some 200 mm per year, compared with 300mm between 1940-1965. In the past, the district's abundant grasslands and forests made Menaka

the centre of a thriving pastoral economy. But recent droughts, including the catastrophe of 1984 in which half of the region's livestock perished, have led to increased land degradation, loss of forest cover and falling water tables.

Following an approach from the community, and after a series of discussions and community studies, WV began to work in the community of Intadeny on a land regeneration scheme to increase land productivity and recharge the water table. The watershed was characterised by severely eroded rainfall-collector valleys and plains feeding into lower run-off receiving areas. The first phase of the work was the construction of contour earthen dikes on a 40 ha plain near the village. The site was chosen for easy access, moderate slope, and for the existing vegetation that could be regenerated. The project began by training several members of the community in water tube level use and the laying out of contours. One month after construction, the rains came and it soon became clear that these initial technologies would have to be adapted by the farmers, as breaches occurred in all dikes. Repairs were made, and the number of spillways doubled, and a protective dike uphill constructed. But as too little water then entered the cropped area, a further two passages were opened up.

As not everyone had animals in the community, the project encouraged the cultivation of sorghum, which had not been grown there before. Nonetheless, it yielded 250 kg/ha in the first year. The next year, a gabion wall was built in the wadi to improve water harvesting. Again, adaptations were made to the technologies, but at the end of the rainy season, the water levels in the wells were 2m higher than the year before. New attitudes began to take shape, and *"people began to realise they could stop the degradation they previously thought was beyond their control"*. This success began to draw interest from neighbouring communities, and so the project trained 8 paraprofessionals from Intadeny to help them develop their own technologies.

New technologies, such as rock bunds and filter dikes, were introduced from Burkina Faso. After three years, several hundred hectares have been protected, with sorghum yields reaching 1.7 t/ha. The wider benefits include the reversal of migration trends, as people have been encouraged back to their village, and the rise of the water table by two metres. Now the Intadeny paraprofessionals have formally organised as an NGO, using a locally produced slide show with before and after photographs, folk theatre and flannel graphs as part of the participatory process. They are organised in the construction of shallow wells and induced recharge of shallow aquifers as well as soil and water conservation.

Sources: Rands, 1989; 1992

Data for this project is in hard copy format and is not currently available electronically. If you would like further information please contact Rachel Hine.