

Kenya

Impacts of Climate Change

Drought is a normal hazard of life in arid and semi-arid regions, but Kenya has recently experienced its worst drought for 20 years, leaving 11 million in need of food and water.

In some areas, such as Magadi, there has been no rain for 3 years so people's livestock died and crops did not survive. Climate change is intensifying these threats as droughts are becoming more frequent and severe. In the future the following are predicted:

- Extreme fluctuations in rainfall (drought followed by flood)
- Glacier retreat on Mt Kenya and Kilimanjaro
- More frequent droughts
- Reduced rainfall will affect the use of hydro power for rural electricity
- Shortfalls in food supply
- Migration of wildlife
- Sea level rise affecting coastal infrastructure and tourism



Practical Action projects

The extreme fluctuation in rainfall means people can't grow or purchase enough food for their needs. Practical Action has helped communities to build sand dams to retain water for their crops, their animals and themselves. If communities preserve a nucleus of livestock (as in Noah's Ark) which they focus on keeping alive, these livestock can then be used as breeding stock to ensure a future for their livelihoods.



Seed Fairs

In order to survive periods of extreme rainfall and temperature fluctuation, only the hardiest and resistant crops can survive. Seed fairs allow farmers to meet up and swap varieties and knowledge of the most suitable crops, which allows them to reduce their overall risk in farming.

The seed fair provides a suitable place for farmers to share information, exchange seeds within their localities while at the same time exposing them to a wide range of seed varieties from outside the region. There are also experienced community seed specialists giving sound advice about indigenous crop diversity.

As well as the event being very useful and resourceful for the local farmers it is also a social occasion. There are usually cultural shows where farmers display their seeds, indigenous foods and farming implements as well as traditional songs and dances promoting seed security and crop diversity.

Personal Story – Jane Karimbia

Before the seed shows Jane only had the tools, knowledge and seeds left to her from her parents. At first Jane was not very interested in farming. She said,

‘There was a lot of uncertainty about our food and I had little cash to buy food in the market.’

‘I’m now able to provide food for my three children all the time, and sometimes we even have some extra money from selling my crops.’



Since the seed shows started 5 years ago Jane has been able to learn more about her crops. When the rains don’t come she is able to use her drip bucket, a prize she won at a previous show to keep her crops alive. Jane has been taught how to store her seeds so she should never have a problem in the future. Jane has had access to a larger range of seed varieties. She is now enthusiastic about her farming and looks forward to the show each year.