



# Food Security in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Newsletter for DIPECHO / ECHO DRR Food Security Partners

## Reducing the risk of disaster in community based agriculture in Malawi

The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Food Security projects funded by ECHO, coordinated and supported by FAO and implemented by six NGOs in Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar, aim to test different models in food security DRR to come up with evidence on their potential to reduce people's risk to food insecurity and disaster caused by floods and cyclones. In this issue, we bring you the first of a series of snapshots into the work of each implementing NGO and its local partners.

**Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)** is working together with partners, MALEZA (a local NGO) and Salzburg University (Austria), to assist rural communities in Salima District, central Malawi to establish strategies to combat food insecurity. The aim is to gather evidence to demonstrate that community groups, when provided with appropriate tools and training can effectively support their own communities before, during, and after a disaster strikes.

The partners are working with Civil Protection Committees (CPC) and Community Based Organisations (CBO) that in turn work with approximately 2 000 beneficiaries from disaster-affected households and vulnerable groups to incorporate

disaster risk reduction elements into community agricultural and wildlife conservation activities.



Emergency garden, Salima Malawi, COOPI Jan. 2011

### Emergency Gardens

CPCs and CBOs want to be able to address short term food security needs of flood affected households by distributing maize seed or grain. To achieve this objective, COOPI and their partners have since last year been training and providing technical support to six community groups to establish irrigated gardens using short-cycle maize variety seeds and treadle pumps. (continued on page 2)

## Storms and flood alerts with local dry spell anomalies in some ECHO DRR/FS programme areas

**Mozambique** an alert was issued for the Limpopo Basin as the Chokwe Hydrometric station has exceeded the Alert level of 5 meters, however no flooding has been reported. The Incomati and Maputo basins are still below alert levels. In ECHO projects areas in the Zambezi basin dams have not reached Alert levels, but are increasing. Some of the project areas are however reporting an unusual dry spell. The latest SETSAN report issued in December 2010 estimates that 350,000 people face food insecurity, down from the 450,000 estimated in June.

**Madagascar** has had severe storms but no flooding has been reported yet. The situation is being closely monitored. A long dry spell was reported in November in the south east project areas that could have a negative impact on crop yields. FAO teams are looking to put into place mitigation measures to reduce the impact of this unusual event.

**Malawi** saw a good start to the rainy season in the project areas. Heavy rains and storms are reported to be causing some damage with increased concerns around flooding. The latest Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee report issued in November 2010 estimates that 508,088 persons are food insecure, down from 1.1 million estimated in June.

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These groups have started to reap the benefits with each group estimated to have harvested crops with profits of between US\$ 500 and 1,000. COOPI will work with these same community groups through a one year cycle of the agricultural calendar (two irrigated and one rain-fed season) to develop the emergency gardens.

### River Bank Stabilisation and Wildlife Management

This year COOPI and its partners have begun working on two innovative micro projects. Riverbank stabilisation using the cash and/or seed for work remunera-



Irrigating an emergency garden, Salima Malawi COOPI Jan. 2011

tion model is expected to address depleted household incomes during the hunger gap period and also reduce the areas that will be flooded in the 2012 season.

Community wildlife management activities will prepare households to protect themselves from the losses associated with elephants, baboons and/or birds destroying their crops. Wildlife crop invasions affect household food security and present a physical threat to the small holder farmer. COOPI with its partners are working with communities to plant chilli peppers as a barrier to elephants. This strategy is promoted by FAO as a form of protection from animals as well as a potential cash crop.



Women tending gardens, Salima Malawi , COOPI Jan. 2011

## Country Updates

The unusual drought experienced in November in the ECHO Food Security intervention areas in **Madagascar** has contributed to the rise of fungal diseases, blast and blight in rice fields and anthracnose in the yams fields. Preventive measures have been taken to prevent possible spread. In December, 17 new farmer's groups in the south east were trained on seed multiplication techniques and 24 lead farmers and 11 technicians were trained in harvesting technology and seed bank management



Effects of lack of rain on a rice field in the South East, Madagascar, FAO Jan. 2011

Planting of the cereals in **Malawi** was done in the second week of December. The delayed rains gave farmers an opportunity to concentrate on the field operations. Inputs including fertilizer, maize seed, groundnuts, sorghum, millet, vegetables, cassava and sweet potatoes have been distributed to the 8897 households in the three project districts.

FAO in **Mozambique** is supporting the provision of control mechanisms of rats that are threatening the seeds planted with the January rains. A training session on Participatory Technology Development through the Farmers Field School was conducted 19th - 23rd of December 2010, with the participation of OIKOS and Ministry of Agriculture extension officers. This also initiated the process of establishing Training and Demonstration Units with intercropping of cereals with legumes.

### Upcoming Meetings

Country project partners hold regular coordination meetings. For more information contact:

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Regional coordinators of ECHO & DIPECHO projects hold regular coordination meetings, (CARE Madagascar, COOPI Malawi, UN Habitat Mozambique and REOSA in Johannesburg). For more information contact:

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**Newsflash** Erin O'Brien is the new FAO REOSA Regional M & E Officer. Erin has experience in monitoring and evaluation of projects, public programmes, impact analysis and policy in the SADC region. Erin will support FAO country offices and NGO partners on M&E activities in the three countries. Her contact is: [Erin.O'Brien@fao.org](mailto:Erin.O'Brien@fao.org)

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