Women cooperatives of Ireli fight desertification in Mali

**Description of the project:** This project, initiated in Mali by ADESAF and co-constructed with the local population, contributes to the fight against the silting up of arable land in an area threatened by desertification. This initiative guarantees access to land for 276 women farmers who have received arable land plots, and been trained in agro-ecological techniques. It has contributed to the creation of cooperatives that generate new income, while ensuring greater food security and climate resilience for the 4,280 inhabitants of Ireli village. The cooperatives and all project activities improve women’s participation in local, resilient development through capacity building and empowerment.

**Gender impact:** The 276 women farmers have formed 8 groups that benefit from arable plots and training in arboriculture and agro-ecological gardening, as well as marketing, accounting skills and cooperative management. A part of the sales of the cooperative’s production is reinvested, while the rest improves the farmers’ incomes. Training courses strengthen women’s participation and role in decision-making instances. They elect their own presidents and managers independently. Their legitimacy is recognized by all villagers.

**Scalability / replicability:** The collaboration with a local association and the support of the Sangha Town Hall ensure a good territorial anchoring. An appropriate economic model and good governance strengthens the autonomy of the inhabitants in managing the actions. Capitalization work was carried out through interviews and studies. The women also benefited from the experience of Tireli’s women farmers, who conducted a similar program. The community intends to scale-up by involving unemployed youth in Sangha and improving the incomes of cooperatives.

**Climate impact:** Ireli is located more than 100 km from the Niger River, in an arid area. The Village Development Committee succeeded in setting 10 hectares of dunes by forming specialized teams of women and men. 80 people were trained in planting and conserving local plants fixing the dune, and 276 in agroecology, preserving water and the ecosystem, to maximize nature’s regenerative capacities. 2 hectares of vegetable plots are cultivated according to these methods, ensuring the population’s resilience to climate impacts.

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Rural woman in Yucatan committed to healthy harvests and smoke-free cooking

**Description of the project:** In rural areas of Yucatan, the main economic activity is agriculture, a sector where women account for 70% of the workforce. They perform their daily work without any basic training, technology, financing and without rights over the land they cultivate. Climate change has made this problem even worse, making it more difficult to break the cycle of poverty. The goal of this project is to empower women by giving them access to natural resources in their homes through biodigesters, developing skills that improve their farming practices and reduce the risks of respiratory diseases and the time needed for gathering firewood, protecting the forests and stopping the use of chemical fertilizers. For this, 599 biodigesters have been installed in Yucatan’s indigenous communities.

**Gender impact:** Biogas producers, mainly managed by women, provide home-made inputs that improve harvests and nutrition, breaking the cycle of extreme poverty and malnutrition in a period of climate change. Women participated in trainings and their voices were integrated into the generation of knowledge on climate change, rights and the use of clean energy. The adopted systems reduce women’s health risks and their financial stress. They ensure energy and food safety, as well as the diversification of productive farming activities.

**Scalability / replicability:** The biodigesters can be replicated and are designed for small producers. They are mainly supplied with animal waste and require very little maintenance, helping the women and girls to save time to engage in other activities. The first storage and treatment centre, called U’Ka Muuk’ Lu’um, has been established in 2017 and aims to enable knowledge replication. The consolidation of the centre will help small farmers find the tools and knowledge to disseminate sustainable cultural practices.

**Climate impact:** In 5 years, 432,897 m3 of biogas have been produced, reducing the use of firewood by 88%. Experience showed that manure transformed into energy eliminates a significant amount of CO2. The biodigesters have reduced 7,892 tons of animal waste that would have ended up in the aquifer. They produce 37 million litres of biofertilizer a year, for a fertilization potential of approximately 567 ha/year, the equivalent of replacing 170,000 kg of synthetic fertilizers a year. This figure implies that the use of biofertilizer replaces the use of chemical fertilizers, as well as pesticides.

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