



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Stocking rain for dryer days

The Far North of Cameroon gets only a few months' rainfall every year and temperatures sometimes exceed 40^o Celsius. Records show that the region will continue to dry up and warm faster than other parts of the country.

The most visible impact of this climatic condition is on the region's water resources: rivers, streams and wells are dry for most of the year. This in turn has implications for agriculture and livestock production, the main occupation of inhabitants.

To ensure continuous water supply for a few more months a year, farmers and grazers rely on hand-dug ponds, creating hundreds of small reservoirs across the region. It is a climate change adaptive action that has proven to be effective.

The Weekly for Cameroon Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

Hand-dug ponds can help farmers overcome prolonged dryness

Agriculture and livestock production in Cameroon rely almost entirely on rain and wild pasture, two resources that are sensitive to temperature and the amount, intensity and duration of rainfall.

Records show temperatures have been rising while rainfall has been declining nationwide since the 1950s. This trend will continue and even worsen in the future.

People and wildlife (like elephants) are already migrating to wetter parts of the country because of water scarcity, creating conflicts between farmers, graziers and wild game in the process. At

the same time, agriculture and livestock production are declining and aggravating poverty.

One way of solving the problem is to ensure a steady supply of water for several more months during the year. Water harvesting – collecting and reserving rain water for dryer months – is a cost effective way of doing this.

In the Far North, farmers and graziers have been relying on small hand-dug ponds that serve as reservoirs for irrigation and drinking water for cattle. But not everyone has come on board, especially in places where water problems exist but have not become serious.

Activities for Journalists

Almost every part of Cameroon faces some water shortage, whether it is due to natural causes or poor infrastructure.

In the north, it is often a problem of prolonged dryness while in the south irregularly rainfall patterns are responsible for poor harvest.

Every region or agro-ecological zone experiences the problem and its impacts in a unique way but common solutions are possible.

One, which is already widely used in the north, is water harvesting. It is a simple and cheap process of collecting and stocking rain water for use during the dry season.

Water harvesting is an old practice across most of Cameroon. When it rains, people traditionally collect runoffs from roofs to avoid trekking long distances to the stream after the rains.

Many studies show that the practice can serve more than this routine purpose. Harvested water can meet needs such as irrigation, livestock production or whatever water is required for.

In the semi-arid Far North, communities have organised themselves to build hand-dug ponds to prolong the availability of water for a few more months. Farmers and graziers often collaborate in the process.

Story Ideas

Everyone is concerned about water availability because it affects a wide spectrum of aspects of daily life: agriculture, health, education, sanitation, security.

Water stories are stories of survival, conflicts, politics, poverty, but also of opportunity and ingenuity – water harvesting in the current case, for example.

The number of stories can be limitless. By

asking questions like these, you should be able to develop great story and program ideas.

- What water harvesting techniques are practiced in your area and by whom?
- How can water harvesting help farmers overcome dryness and irregular rains to improve farm yields?
- Can water harvesting be a solution to farmer and grazier conflicts? Are there any examples?
- What business and self-employment opportunities does water harvesting bring to communities?

One way of going about this is finding local NGOs promoting water harvesting or talking to farmers about how they are coping with rainfall scarcity and irregularity.

Bear in mind that while local communities could be practicing some form of rain capture and storage, they do not always refer to it as rain harvesting.

Useful Links

How farmers can catch more water in their fields:

<http://cameroon.thebeehive.org/en/content/35/2116>

Lessons from domestic water harvesting in Cameroon:

<http://www.gwp.org/ToolBox/CASE-STUDIES/Africa/Cameroon-Lessons-from-domestic-rain-water-harvesting-460/>

Water harvesting in Buea: <https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-btu/frontdoor/index/index/docId/2855>

The impact of climate change on crop farming in Cameroon: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/1813-9450-4364>

A possible source on water harvesting in the Far North region: Rene Haiwang, service head for water resources, delegation of water and energy resources, Far North, +237 663 267 624