

# A funding innovation: small grants to support local strategies for adaptation to climate change

*There is a lot of talk about the need to support adaptation to climate change, but what does this mean in practice? A new programme to support local level adaptation aims to answer this question.*

*by Cheikh Tidiane Sall*

ORGANISATIONS IN Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso can now apply to a new grants programme to strengthen their adaptation initiatives. Supporting Local Strategies for Adaptation<sup>1</sup> to climate change is a joint initiative of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada and the Department for International Development (DFID) in Britain. IED Afrique in Senegal coordinates the regional programme in West Africa.

Community-based organisations in Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal can access small grants to support existing activities in order to strengthen their capacity to adapt to climate change. The approach underlying the programme is that local people are best placed to identify and implement adaptation strategies and to manage resources allocated to support these initiatives.

In each country, an NGO representing small scale farmers coordinates programme activities: the Farmers Confederation in Burkina Faso, the National Body of Producer Organisations in Mali and the Federation of NGOs in Senegal. There are also national steering committees

in each country made up of representatives from a wide variety of stakeholders such as research institutes, NGOs, Ministries etc. The steering committees support these farmer organisations in the definition of their strategic direction, identifying projects for support and in monitoring and evaluating activities. IED Afrique provides regional coordination and is responsible for developing methodological tools and approaches in partnership with the farmer NGOs.

One project supported by this programme is the Jeka Baara Cooperative<sup>2</sup> in Mali.

## **Women and food sovereignty: Experiences of the Jeka Baara Cooperative**

Women have an important role in ensuring food sovereignty. They make a considerable contribution to agricultural production and transformation at local and national levels. Women's continued access to land, water, seeds and credit is crucial if they are to play their part in rural economies. But almost everywhere, women's rights to land are



Weighing dried mangoes

vulnerable and uncertain, especially when compared to those of men. In Mali, customary inheritance laws and, specifically the laws which govern the allocation of land favour men, despite women's important role in ensuring food sovereignty.

The Jeka Baara women's cooperative, works to address these challenges. The organisation has organised itself into three sectors: gathered products (néré pods, shea nuts and wild fruits), cereals and fruits/vegetables. In addition to subsistence farming, members of the cooperative gain an income by producing and adding value to agricultural products. This income is then divided into three. One part is used for the maintenance and purchase of equipment for the cooperative, a second part is used to top up the cooperative's savings and a third part is divided up amongst the members. The cooperative's savings are lent to members at low interest rates to support income generating activities, such as adding value to agricultural production or establishing small urban kitchen gardens.

Variability and changes in the climate can undermine food security, contributing to falling levels of agricultural production and to the degradation of natural resources; the foundation of food sovereignty. That is why the cooperative has decided to focus on

adaptation strategies in its work. One of these strategies is the manufacture and marketing of improved Nyeta stoves (which were introduced by EDF during a visit to Jeka Baara) and of cooking baskets. The stoves and baskets are designed to save energy thereby reducing the need for fuelwood. The Cooperative has received funds from the small grants programme to support the manufacture and marketing of these simple technologies. During the first phase, 25 cooking baskets and 62 improved stoves were made. These will be sold to members of the cooperative at a subsidised rate and to other buyers at the regular price.

It is through the multiplication and scaling up of small activities such as this that communities will adapt to the changing environmental context. To achieve this, local organisations' capacity to learn from each other, to develop appropriate strategies and to implement projects must be improved. This small grants programme, coordinated by IED Afrique, is experimenting with institutional and participatory methodological approaches to support communities to develop appropriate local responses to climate change.

1. FSSA in French (*Fonds de Soutien aux Stratégies locales d'Adaptation*)

2. Jeka Baara is located in the Sibiribougou, Municipality IV in Bamako, Mali [cooperabaara@yahoo.fr](mailto:cooperabaara@yahoo.fr)

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