

From drought-ravaged to "gardens of eden"

Written by Administrator
Monday, 07 May 2012 08:56



A charity organisation is helping the local population produce crops in the African desert.

In the Horn of Africa, barren landscapes and dirt fields surround large riverbeds that are totally dry. Herds of goats and camels, tired and emaciated, walk through parched lands in search of food and water. It's the worst drought the region has seen in 60 years.

As ChildFund International, a charity organisation working for children globally, continues its drought emergency operations across this region, it also remains focused on long-term development projects aimed at minimizing food crises.

In Kenya's Turkana region, the Food for Assets program, operated by ChildFund International in conjunction with the U.N. World Food Program, is producing crops in a desert.

"In the vegetable gardens, women tend spinach, tomatoes, green peppers, okra, watermelons, kale, maize and cowpeas," said Anne Lynam Goddard, president and CEO of ChildFund. "It's amazing to see how smart farming practices have transformed this community. In the midst of drought, we've discovered the Garden of Eden - it's green everywhere!"

Six communities in the region are involved in the Food for Assets program, which sustains 3000 households by teaching pastoralist communities techniques for irrigation and farming. The program provides families with food and goods in exchange for their work to build irrigation systems and community gardens.

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Improved access to water for both humans and livestock increases crop production, reduces environmental degradation and improves pasture for livestock. In areas that lack access to permanent rivers, people are taught to use special pans to catch water that is used to grow crops like maize and sorghum.

Long reliant on food aid, people enrolled in the Food for Assets program receive their food rations for one year while they learn to utilise their new skills to provide food for themselves. Food aid is then reserved for the most vulnerable.

"Food for Assets is not an emergency relief effort," Goddard said. "It's a to long-term development intervention that helps reduce a community's vulnerability to future droughts. We're strengthening communities and giving people the resources and training they need to rely on themselves."

(Source: newsUSA)