

CEDRA case study: Farmer Field Schools, Africa Inland Church, Tanzania

The two-year severe drought in the Northern Mara region of Tanzania has caused acute food shortages and malnutrition, especially among women and children. After very poor rainy seasons in 2009, when food and cash crop production plummeted by 50 to 70 per cent, the annual long rains in 2010 faltered across much of the country. About 85 per cent of maize, millet, sorghum and cassava crops were affected. There were also serious water shortages, lack of pasture and massive loss of livestock. Children stopped going to school and families sold whatever they had to buy food. Some young girls were being forced to marry into wealthy households so that their families could buy food with their dowries, while others were turning to prostitution. People were eating seeds intended for planting then travelling to other areas to look for work.

Tearfund's partner, Africa Inland Church (AIC), is helping communities to establish their own sustainable food security solutions through the use of Farmer Field Schools (FFS). Communities have already adopted improved farming methods on a wide scale, including soil conservation, improved fertility and planting techniques, and the use of drought-resistant seeds. Each village-based FFS of ten to 20 small-scale farmers is trained in demonstrating improved farming methods to the whole community. This includes land preparation techniques, boosting fertility, crop spacing, planting calendars and rainwater harvesting. Communities are learning to network and establish partnerships with other stakeholders, such as the government and other NGOs. This has empowered them. In Kabasa, for example, the community asked the local government to ensure middlemen adopted the government-instituted price increment, which they did.

Source: <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Topics/Food+Security/Case+Studies/>