

CEDRA Case study: Storing rainwater – Discipleship Centre, India

Rajasthan state in India is suffering from worsening droughts and local communities struggle to cope because people generally have few reserves. The situation was very difficult but Discipleship Centre, a Tearfund partner, developed opportunities for people to respond positively to their situation and in ways that encouraged adaptive resilient development. This has led to some unexpected benefits – in terms of local women being empowered and mobilising the community in responses which are ongoing.

Staff from Discipleship Centre (DC) decided to help vulnerable communities adapt to their changing climate and started by leading them through a participatory assessment of disaster risk.

Together, they considered likely impacts (such as drought or cyclones), and assessed who and what would be affected. Then, they planned how to adapt to these impacts, building on skills and resources communities already had. As part of the process, DC encouraged local people to form Village Development Committees. These committees provided the first opportunity for men and women of different castes to meet and make decisions together.

One such committee decided to build rainwater cisterns about three to four metres wide and four metres deep. During the rainy season, rainwater is now collected through channels into the cisterns, which each store up to 40,000 litres. A full cistern can provide drinking water for several families all year round.

DC provided training and materials to help build one cistern using cement. One cistern was not, however, enough to meet village needs. So, motivated by their new awareness and understanding, the village committee decided to take their cause to the local government. DC helped the committee make a formal application and provided advice on how to present their case. As a result, the government has built another ten cisterns for the village.



A child collects water from a rainwater tank.
Part of a project by a Tearfund partner
Photo: Richard Hanson / Tearfund

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