



Activity brief (December 2014)

West Africa Water Management: Capacity Building for Improved Water Management in Rain-fed Agriculture

June 2012 – April 2014



Background: Following a request for agricultural water management assistance from Mali and Senegal, the AAPF held a two-day video conference in September 2011 on best practices in water harvesting and conservation technologies in rain-fed agriculture. Representatives from Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal attended. At the conclusion of the conference it was agreed that future support should focus on achieving sustained adoption of best-practice water harvesting and conservation in the region's agricultural sector. The Facility proposed follow-up activities for improved water management in the Sahel region – specifically Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The project began in February 2013.

Objective: The purpose of the activity was to contribute to the sustainable adoption of water harvesting and conservation technologies to make rain-fed farming more reliable and resilient to the adverse affects of climate change.

Activity description: The project took place in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal. Senegal withdrew from the activity in the final phase of the activity. The activity focused on capacity building in the agriculture supply chain to ensure targeted farmers, extension staff, researchers and policymakers were more knowledgeable about practical water management options for increased agricultural productivity under rain-fed conditions. The main beneficiaries were small-scale farmers in each of the participating countries.

The program included a combination of training courses, activities and workshops:

- train-the-trainer courses conducted by government researchers for government extension staff and representatives of farmers' organisations;
- training courses for farmers;
- on-farm demonstrations;
- field days;

- exposure visits (national, regional and Australian);
- documentation of practical knowledge;
- creation of a knowledge exchange platform between the four countries; and
- facilitation of partnerships with Australian institutions.

Sector: Agriculture and food security

Outcomes:

- An improved capacity and knowledge in the agriculture supply chain of water management options in rain-fed conditions.
- The adoption of improved technologies to enhance rainwater harvesting and conservation in farmers' fields.
- The strengthening of other land, soil and water management programs in each country, as a direct result of the activity.
- More productive and profitable rain-fed farming.

An independent review of the activity found that project activities in Burkina Faso and Niger had successfully demonstrated improved methods of water management.

The Review also reported that: 'Yields achieved in the demonstration trials, using improved water management techniques, were 40 – 70 percent higher compared with the farmers normal methods of cropping. The differences were accentuated in the drier/shorter 2013 rainy season with extended dry spells when conventionally grown crops adjoining the demonstration plots produced very low or no yields.'

The activity established and developed a direct, practical relationship between Australia and the West African countries involved, including effective partnerships with Australian specialists involved in seminars and advisory support. Additionally, in accordance with the Facility's development goals, increased productivity in rain-fed agriculture contributed to increased food security at the household level.

Participating countries: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

Date approved:	16/09/2011
Implementation partner:	Africare
Total cost:	AUD 1 500 322