



WAJIR's TREES OF HOPE

CHEPS recognizes the important role the environment plays in alleviating poverty and that deforestation is one of the pressing issues in the fight against climate change is caused largely by emission of green house gases (GHGs) released from burning fossil fuels and from land use change, particularly the removal of forests.

As the industrialized countries continue emitting more GHGs, it is the developing countries and particularly the rural of communities like those in Wajir that are hardest hit.

It is with this in mind that CHEP's had to respond to the degradation in Wajir by ways of reducing the effects of climate change. The response being urging every shallow well beneficiary to plant at least five trees and more so getting the community involved in this venture through education and conservation efforts so that these trees would in future remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and provide natural buffer against desertification and drought.

CHEPS partnered with families and communities to combat the double effects of poor land use and climate change by creating a tree nursery project by introducing indigenous trees.

For a dry place like Wajir, it is very rare to find non-thorny tree especially those that are not drought resistant and this is not solely because of lack of water but also the type of soil.

The most common tree found in this place is the Prosopis commonly known as 'mathenge'. It is so dominant and easily kills other plants around because of its ecological supremacy and survival nature hence growing anywhere and has viable seeds that are easily propagated. The menace occasioned by the prosopis is mainly from its strong thorn brick that causes the dature foot which if not treated early may lead to amputation.

CHEP's in consultation with the local people found out that the neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*) does really well in this dry region because of its ability to withstand lack of water.

However, the neem while still young needs a lot of water until it is fairly mature when it can survive on its own. The challenge for the people here was where to get water for these trees.

This is where CHEP's come in to solve the problem of water by digging shallow wells for the locals. With water available now, it is encouraging to see that already some homes have trees growing that will provide them the much needed shade.

The project began with 225 trees planted in people's home and the goal is that by 2013 over 1000 tree seedlings of different species will be planted to cover Wajir.

CHEP's scale up goals is to continue to expand its successful community tree planting and environmental education project to reach schools, mosques and public areas.

Though a lot more needs to be done, planting of this neem tree in Wajir is so far a success story that still has to realize its full potential by spreading to the entire county so that eventually the climate in this area may be modified. This may take years and hard work but if this initiative is executed effectively, it will be achieved.

Basically, a massive tree planting campaign and a collective goodwill towards this is a success in waiting for Wajir's abused environment.