

News Stories

For immediate release

Home gardens going green in South coast villages as UNDP partners with village women

29 November 2010, Lotopue — Home gardens in the tsunami-struck villages on the southeast coast of Samoa are going green. Women’s Committee members in tsunami-affected areas have received organic compost training as a part of the Tsunami Early Recovery Project working in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/ Government of Samoa-led Community Centered Sustainable Development Program (CCSDP) efforts. UNDP has endeavored to assist tsunami-affected communities to ‘build back better’ and ‘greener’ in order to promote and foster an environmentally responsible development.

The compost training is part of the livelihoods and disaster risk reduction initiatives under the ERP aimed to restore and adapt sources of livelihoods to become more climate-resilient and sustainable.

“We were so happy to learn that we can make fertilizers out of tree leaves, food and animal waste to grow fruits and vegetables” said Lili Lautala while clearing the garden for the village compost to mature. “We hope not only will this produce enough to feed our family but, if we are lucky, we can even sell to the market to help our family and village economy” she added.

Together with representatives from other three villages, Lili Lautala received a one day-long training from compost expert, Matafeo Fou, from the Ministry of Agriculture’s Crops Division, on how to make compost and to farm in a more productive and sustainable way. At the end of the training, the villagers received over \$400 SAT of gardening equipment and seeds. In a total of five weeks, trainees can unfold their compost and start using their very own organic fertilizer. Once vegetables have matured they will harvest seeds from their own crops to distribute to other villagers.

As part of the Early Recovery Project, fishing kits have also been provided to the local Women’s Committee in Viloa and Lotopue in order to stimulate economic development in the community. By renting the fishing gear to local fisherman, the Women’s Committee can expect to garner at least \$300-400 SAT per month in profit.



Figure 1 – Lili Lautala (left) and other village women guarding their village compost before it will be ready for use as fertilizers in two weeks time. The compost, made of leaves, food and animal waste, is a critical component in organic farming.



Figure 2 – Village women are eager to put their newly acquired agricultural skills into practice

The livelihoods for the majority of some 700 households affected by last year's tsunami include subsistence agriculture, livestock and fisheries. "The tsunami took away from many of these households their livelihoods assets and crops in their home gardens. These crops including taro, banana, cassava and other root crops are the base of a nutritionally balanced family diet for many villagers. Restoring livelihoods and ensuring family food security have been our priority concern and areas of UNDP support", said Nileem Noble, UNDP Resident Representative.

The need for agricultural training was one of the major components in the Lotopue's Village Sustainable Development Plan. The Project facilitated the process which involved all groups. For many in the village, it was the first time they were given a voice. The Plan is aimed at meeting the recovery and long-term development priorities of the community. The agricultural training has been a popular item among tsunami-struck villages.

To date, 22 out of the 23 tsunami-affected communities assessed have completed similar Village Sustainable Development Plans. The Government of Samoa (GoS) and UNDP are helping to meet the priorities identified by the communities. Livelihoods inputs such as fishing and agricultural tools will be distributed to all villages.

Led by the Ministry for Women, Community and Social Development, the Early Recovery Project also focuses on supporting communities to restore and expand their livelihoods in the mainstay fishing and tourism sectors. Work is also now underway to take this planning process to the remaining tsunami-affected villages, with the aim of matching recovery and long-term development support directly to communities' priorities now and for the future.



Figure 3 – Village Lotopue also received four community-managing fishing kits.

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