

Flushing salty soil

In Vietnam, typhoons will become stronger as an effect of climate change. This, in turn, will increase flooding of coastal areas which make fields and water saline. Flushing the salty soil is a way of recovering land after the disaster.

The fields of three villages in Da Loc commune were completely flooded by the Damarey typhoon in 2005. The fields became too saline for cultivation of rice, so the villages asked the Community Based Mangrove Management Board and CARE for help. The board decided to construct the Van Thang canal in the three villages so that the production of rice could be improved.

“The problem was that the water for our irrigation system ran through fields closer to the river first. When the water arrived in our village, it was very saline,” explains Mr. Nguyen Van Nu, village leader in My Dien village. The villagers held a community meeting with representatives from all households to decide on the construction of the canal.

They started preparing the foundation of 320 meters of canal in February 2008. Two months later the canal was already finished. Thanks to the efficient construction, the villagers were able to flush their fields before the new planting season for rice started.



“Before the construction of the canal the yield was 3 to 6 tons/ha. After the new canal we have harvested up to 7 tons/ha,” Mr. Nguyen Van Nu explains and continues: “Now we are more independent in the three villages in terms of water supply and the quality is better. We have better control of how much water we want on the fields. We can also time irrigation for the whole season better. Finally, we no longer need to pay for electricity for the pumping station anymore, so we save money.”

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Nhung from Van Thang village adds that the women helped to prepare the canal foundation and reinforce the canal with soil. It was quite a challenge. They carried the soil in big baskets on their backs from the fields around the canal.

“In this project we have learned a new working procedure. Before each activity everybody came together to discuss what was best for the whole community. Before the canal construction we met several times to decide on where and how to construct the canal and who had the responsibility for what. We worked together with people from all three





villages,” Mrs. Nguyen Thi Nhung explains.

Thanks to the canal and the higher yield of rice, they produce more than the family consumes. That means the families can raise more livestock like chickens, ducks, pigs, cows or a buffalo, because they have more fodder for the animals. Especially, having a buffalo in the family is important because they can use it for ploughing the fields instead of renting a machine (Is there really only one

buffalo?). This way the family can become more independent and save money.

“Some people in the village have made an aquaculture system combining rice, fish and ducks. They allocate a part of the rice field for ducks and fish. After the harvest they open the field so that the fish and ducks have more space. The ducks like snails, insects and herbs that are bad for the rice. The fish feed on the faeces from the ducks and the rice is fertilised by the fish. The system has improved with better control of the water flow,” explains the village leader.

FACT: 3000 people benefit from the new canal in the three villages of Van Thang, Ninh Phu and My Dien in Da Loc commune. The canal helps to flush and irrigate 135 ha of rice fields that were flooded by the typhoon Damarey in 2005.