How the People of Otjomuise Stopped the Erosion Together

by Nicole Labbe, Nicholas McBride, and Ethan Ray

The Better Life Programme

NHAG
Namibia Housing Action Group

SDFN
Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia
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In Namibia, it rained very hard in the summer. The rain washed away the soil. There were rivers and holes everywhere.

The people thought the rivers and the holes were dangerous. It was hard to walk home with all the holes.
The people of Otjomuise were not happy. The people did not want the rain to make any more problems. They wanted to solve the problems.

Otjomuise had a meeting. The saving groups named Ehirorujano and Dantago came. The Better Life Programme came too.
Together, the people discussed what the rain problems were. The people talked about what caused the problems and how to fix the problems. They had many ideas.

The people used a map to draw where the problems were as a group. Everyone could see where the problems were in their community.
At the meeting, the saving groups decided to work together. This way they could learn together. There would be more people to do work also.

At the house of Meme Kandanga, water came down a hill and into her house through the floor. She needed help. The people of Otjomuise decided to work at Meme Kandanga’s house.
One person had an idea about how to help Meme Kandanga:

- They could build a wall of tyres next to the house.

- The tyres would block the water from going into the house.

- The water would go around the wall instead.
The people gathered a lot of tyres. They got old tyres from tyre shops. They used the lorry from the Shack Dwellers Federation to collect them. They gathered stones too.

The community dug a deep trench next to the house. The trench went to the bottom of the foundation. The trench was deep enough to put a tyre in.
The community put the tyres in the trench. The people made sure the tyres had no spaces between them. The tyres were pushed up against the house.

Then, the people filled the tyres with stones and soil. They filled the sides of the tyres too. There were no empty spaces in the tyres. Now the tyres would not move.
The people filled the trench with soil. You could only see the tops of the tyres. The people placed another row of tyres on top.

They filled the new row of tyres with rocks and soil too. They put plastic in the tyres so the soil did not fall through the holes. Soon a wall was made.
Both saving groups helped with the work so the job was quickly done. Everyone learned how to build tyre walls. Everyone was happy because Meme Kandanga’s house was dry.

Meme Helena learned how to build the tyre wall at the house of Meme Kandanga. Meme Helena also wanted a tyre wall to protect her garden. The community helped her build a tyre wall too.
Meme Helena’s garden was good. The plants held the soil in place with the roots. The water could not wash it away. She had vegetables to eat too.

Many other people saw how the plants stopped the rain from washing away the soil. They started planting around their houses.
The community liked the tyre walls and plants. They wanted to solve other problems from the rain also.

At some houses, the rain came off the roofs and made holes in the yards. The people thought the holes did not look nice.
One woman had an idea:

- The people could dig a deep trench.

- Then they could fill the trench with rocks and tyres that were cut in half.

- This would stop the rain from making more holes.
The people from Ehiorujiwo and Dantago dug a trench next to the house. It was deep enough so half of a tyre could stand up in it.

Both groups helped put the tyres in the trench. The tyres were spaced out nicely.
The groups filled the trench with stones and soil. You could only see the tops of the tyres. They put small rocks around the tyres to make it look nice.

Now there were no more holes next to the houses. The yards were safe and looked nice. Everyone was happy.
A woman named Edlagh had another idea:

- They could attach a gutter to the roof to catch the rain.

- The gutter could be made by cutting a PVC pipe in half.

- The rainwater would be collected in the pipe.

- An old barrel could collect water from the gutter.

- The collected water could be used for washing and planting.
The community had so many good ideas because people discussed the issues as a group. They also talked about trying to change the surface of the land to stop the water from washing away the good soil.

The people saw how the water flowed fast when it went down a hill. The water moved slow when the ground was flat. The water made big holes when it flowed fast and no holes when it flowed slow.
A man had an idea to stop the water from going fast:

- The people of Otjomuise could make steps to slow down the water.

- The rainwater would go into the soil instead of running down the hills.

- No more holes would be made.
The groups had to save to buy a lot of soil. They needed to fill the sloped areas to make them flat. They made the steps sturdy with tyre walls.

They worked together to grow plants on the flat parts. Then there was a nice area for the children to play. Now they have a community area to share.
The people of Otjomuise had another idea to change the land:

- They could make ditches.

- Ditches would hold all the water in one area.

- Then the people could control where the water went.
Water was running between some houses and into one man’s house. The people wanted the water to go around the house instead.

The entire community dug a ditch between the houses. The ditch went around the man’s house. The ditch was wide and deep enough to hold all the water.
The people wanted the ditch to be strong. The people put flat rocks along the sides of the walls. The water could not dig through the rocks.

When the rains came, the water went around the man’s house. Now his house was dry. His family was very happy.
In Otjomuise, the rain does not bring many problems now. The people of Otjomuise are proud of their hard work. The ground is less dangerous and looks nice.

Now the people of Otjomuise teach each other how to solve the rain problems. They help other communities too. The people of Otjomuise were happy to help their community.