



# **Livelihood Strategies among Poor Rural Households to Cope with Droughts in Northern Nigeria.**

UNFCCC Expert Workshop on Local Coping strategies and Technologies for Adaptation. Delhi, India. 12-13 November 2001

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## **Introduction**

- Drought is a recurring and a permanent feature of the West African Sahel.
- The almost inexhaustible literature on drought in the mostly francophone countries of West Africa contrast sharply with the near absence of works treating drought-hit Nigeria as a whole.
- The population at risk in the drought zone of Nigeria equals or exceeds the total population of the member countries of the CILSS.

## Rainfall anomalies in Northern Nigeria



- The key source of drought in the region is the seasonal rainfall
- Studies have reported a trend towards drier conditions since the last seven decades.
- Decadal results of Cramer's test show that:
  - the 1930s appeared wetter than normal
  - 1940 – 1949 had below average rainfall
  - The trend continues with 1970 – 1980 being the driest

## Historical Perspectives of Droughts in Northern Nigeria



- From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the following drought events have been recorded in Northern Nigeria:

• 1904-1912	Malali
• 1914 – 1930	Shude Mu Gaisa
• 1942	Waade Maasu
• 1950-1952	Kwajaja
• 1966 – 1968	Mai Dan Buhu
• 1969 – 1974	Kakuduba
• 1983 – 1984	"The year we ate flowers"
• 1987	

## Summary of Losses from Selected Droughts



- 1968 – 1974
  - About 300,000 animals (13% of livestock population in North Eastern Nigeria) perished
  - Agricultural yields fell to about 40% of normal yields
  - Population at risk were about 7.5 million
- 1982 – 1986
  - About 5 million metric tonnes of grains lost
  - About 120,000 Animals
  - Other losses resulting from conflicts, severe constraints on biological productivity, and forced migrations.

## Livelihood strategies to cope with droughts (1)



- Farming System
  - Farming techniques
    - Early planting
    - Mixed cropping
    - Wetland farming
    - Early maturing/drought resistant crops
    - Increased spacing of crops
    - Change in farm locations
  - Technology
    - Farm implements
    - Water exploitation methods
    - Water storage methods
    - Food storage methods



## Livelihood strategies to cope with droughts (2)



- Pastoralists
  - Movement, usually southwards in search of pasture
  - Herds diversification
  - Herd splitting
  - Re-stocking
  - Exchange of animal dung for crop residues
  - Sedentarization



## Livelihood strategies to cope with droughts (3)



- General
  - Livelihood diversification
  - Reduction in consumption
  - Sale of assets
  - Exploitation of resources not normally exploited
  - Migration



## What needs to be done

- Enhance adaptive capacities
- Early warning systems and drought information systems
- Design acceptable and sustainable adaptation strategies and programs

