Community-Based Adaptation

Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change
Nairobi work programme (NWP) partners include non-governmental organizations, United Nations affiliated organizations, intergovernmental organizations, international networks, regional organizations and networks, national institutes, research organizations, universities, and private sector enterprises, which are committed to supporting the implementation of the NWP.

As part of their efforts towards the achievement of the objective of the NWP, an increasing number of partner organizations are undertaking actions that build the capacity of communities to take part in decision-making, planning and implementation of adaptive strategies. Benefits resulting from implemented projects and knowledge gained can have far-reaching impacts and catalyze further actions in other communities. NWP partners, in collaboration with national and community NGOs, are using both traditional methods and new technologies to disseminate valuable lessons learned from implementing community-based activities for the greater good.

Such community-based adaptation action aims to generate adaptive strategies through participatory processes, by building on communities’ existing knowledge and local capacities. A continuous participatory process, involving multiple stakeholders, capturing their ideas, knowledge and needs, and allowing for shared learning, understanding and assessment, is recognized as an essential basis for community-based adaptation approaches, and helps to create ownership.
Empowering Communities Through Sustainable Natural Resource Management

Ethiopia is one of the world’s least developed countries, with natural resource degradation constituting a serious barrier to building resilience against projected increases in the frequency and intensity of droughts and other extreme weather events. Since the early 1980s, the World Food Programme (WFP), in partnership with the Government of Ethiopia, has effectively engaged communities in Managing Environmental Resources to Enable Transitions to More Sustainable Livelihoods (MERET) in Ethiopia.

Adopting a participatory approach, project MERET currently operates in 300 communities and benefits 600,000 people each year by enhancing capacity to plan and manage development and adaptation activities. A key institutional arrangement in MERET is the community-based planning team, which develops five-year conservation plans subject to amendment, ratification and evaluation by the whole community. This process ensures accountability and that the community’s voice is heard. The project has resulted in a reduction by more than three months in the household food gap, a much-improved ability to cope with drought, which results in increased production and income, and it has enabled participants to invest more in education, health, shelter and clothing.
The Community-based Risk Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods (CRiSTAL) was developed by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and Intercooperation, to help project planners and managers integrate climate change adaptation and risk reduction into community-level projects.

The decision support tool helps project designers and managers understand the links between livelihoods and climate, assess a project’s impact on community-level adaptive capacity, and make necessary project adjustments. The tool has also been applied together with other vulnerability assessment tools, like the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CVCA) tool and the Climate Change and Environmental Degradation Risk and Adaptation Assessment (CEDRA) tool, and proved highly useful in identifying activities that can increase the adaptive capacity of communities, such as providing alternative sustainable water sources, or building knowledge to undertake alternative income generating activities.

The tool can also be tailored to meet the needs of different sectors and communities, and used as part of a suite of tools. It has been applied by users in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, and building on these experiences, is being continuously updated and improved.
Bringing Stakeholders Together at the International Conference on Community-Based Adaptation

Since 2005, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has been organizing international conferences on community-based adaptation (CBA) to climate change. The conference series has seen growing participation over the years with 80, 110, 140 and 180 participants, demonstrating the growing awareness and importance of CBA. In addition to field visits, participants have engaged in interactive plenary and technical sessions on important sectoral issues and a wide range of themes relevant to CBA, including: communication and knowledge; methods and tools in designing CBA; women, education and awareness for adaptation; mainstreaming and partnership for adaptation; building adaptive capacity; scaling up and replicating best practice; and ecosystem-based adaptation. Participants also established and agreed to further develop the Global Initiative on Community-Based Adaptation (GICBA), a network which seeks to support CBA-related activities by generating and sharing relevant knowledge.

Between 24 – 31 March 2011, the fifth International Conference on Community-Based Adaptation will take place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and is expected to bring approximately 250 stakeholders together to share the latest developments on CBA planning and practices. <www.iied.org>
Promoting Shared Learning Dialogues

In Nepal, India, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET) uses shared learning dialogues (SLDs) to integrate science, policy and implementation, and develop understanding of complex climate and natural resource issues among diverse actors and institutions. In Indore, India, ISET in collaboration with local partner TARU focuses on one of the city’s most pressing issues: water scarcity.

The rainfed Narmada river is the primary source of drinking water, which requires pumping over 70 km for distribution via an old, degraded pipe system that sits in close proximity to the sewer line. Water supply in some communities is limited to 30 minutes of flow with questionable quality every other day. Citizens of Indore are counting on the new Narmada project to alleviate water stress and provide sufficient and consistent drinking water. Iterative SLDs with communities, government, NGOs and other stakeholders have helped develop understanding that dependence on distant, energy-intensive and climate-dependent water sources increases city vulnerability and reduces climate resilience. Through the SLD process, assessments of the private water market’s response to water scarcity and pilot projects to demonstrate feasible models for cost effective, reliable, decentralized water management through community involvement were organically developed.
Building Adaptive Capacity for Rural Livelihoods

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has developed a modular e-learning tool on “planning for community-based adaptation to climate change” to enhance awareness and technical capacities for promoting community-based adaptation in agriculture. It consists of four interactive learning modules, structured in 24 sessions, linking research-based knowledge on climate change impacts with examples and experiences on community-based adaptation drawn from various FAO field projects, and a range of other country-specific case studies.

The first module aims to improve understanding of climate and climate change impacts in general. The second focuses on impacts on agriculture, introducing and linking the concepts of food security and adaptation using a livelihoods perspective. The other two modules, aimed particularly at field practitioners, outline concrete procedures and steps for planning and implementing community-based adaptation, highlighting the application of participatory approaches and institutional aspects, and reflecting adaptation as a continuous and socio-institutional learning process. Case studies, videos and animated exercises facilitate the learning process. While designed primarily for field technicians and extension staff in agriculture and other sectors, the tool is also helpful for governmental and non-governmental organizations working to build adaptive capacity of rural livelihoods in agriculture.

<http://www.webgeo.de/fao-webgeo-2>
Since 2008, Christian Aid has been supporting partners in seven countries across Africa through its Climate Change Innovation Fund. One pilot project in central Tanzania, with partner Inades Formation Tanzania, involved working with the local meteorology station and four farmer field schools to strengthen small-scale farmers' access to climate information. As part of the project, farmers designed low-cost rain gauges with technical support from meteorologists at Dodoma Meteorology Station. This not only enables farmers to use their local knowledge of weather and climate, which has accumulated over generations, but also to begin to scientifically and systematically record weather patterns, both of which will benefit them in their ongoing adaptation activities.

This combination of information is invaluable for the farmers’ own group activities, such as implementing on-farm trials in drought-resilient crop production. Since the data is submitted to the Tanzania Meteorology Agency, the link between the farmer stakeholder groups and providers of weather and climate data is also strengthened.
A Locally Driven Community Approach

Environment and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA TM) in Dakar, Senegal, supported by the Climate Change Capacity Development Initiative (C3D), has been working on a community-based adaptation project along the Upper Zambezi Bulozi floodplain in western Zambia. The project was spearheaded by a community-based organization with local legitimacy and respect, and with support from the local traditional authority and government.

A social and environmental history of the region was constructed, and the project was introduced at the ministerial, provincial and local level to inform as well as obtain permission and cooperation. Household and focus group investigations were carried out by local researchers to identify indigenous/local knowledge and coping strategies and a multi-stakeholder workshop was organized. On the basis of social learning during field investigations and at the workshop, prioritized adaptation strategies were identified. Significantly, many of the identified strategies involve a reform of current practices, or the reapplication of existing knowledge. Many local people felt that traditional ecosystem management practices, including local knowledge and ancient ways to manage the floodplain ecosystem, need to be rediscovered. A similar strategy has since been adopted in subsequent pilot actions planned for 2009 – 2011 in Gambia, Niger, Senegal and an additional project in Zambia.
Sharing Information and Knowledge Through Social Networks

Accurate and reliable information and knowledge on climate predictions, as well as techniques or technologies to minimize impacts, can save lives, livelihoods and assets. Practical Action’s work with paddy farmers in Sri Lanka who were suffering from failed crops demonstrates the value and effectiveness of social networks. Through facilitated communication with the Government Rice Research Institute, farmers were able to test suitable varieties rather than merely being the recipients of seeds. This resulted in the autonomous establishment of a farmer-to-farmer network to share experiences and lessons learned with neighbouring and distant villages, spreading the knowledge gained to farmers in areas far from where the project was originally implemented. A lesson learned from this work is the importance of analyzing the social context when establishing social networks to avoid replicating existing power relationships within a community, which often exclude women.
Community-Based Disaster Risk Management

A project undertaken by the International Environment and Disaster Management (IEDM) Laboratory of the Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies of Kyoto University and its partners, combined community inputs with scientific information for hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessments in Vietnam. The assessments identified hazards, vulnerability and capacity, through historic profiling, mapping, timeline, ranking, focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys. Training programmes were conducted for leaders of organizations, local and district government officers, and community members, resulting in two types of plans: a safer village plan, outlining measures to ensure the safety of the people and infrastructure of the community; and a safer production plan aimed at securing livelihoods.

Developed in close cooperation with local and district governments, these plans were approved, and selected sub-projects were subsequently implemented with co-financing from the project fund and funds from the local governments. Similar projects are being implemented in Ninh Thuan province in south-central Vietnam, Albay province in the Philippines, and Tamil Nadu in India.
Enabling Community Voices to be Heard

To ensure that national climate change strategies address the specific needs of vulnerable groups and communities, a bottom-up approach is needed. With the help of Christian Aid, the Youth Ecological Centre (YEC) in Tajikistan has initiated the Tajik Climate Network (TajCN). This is a coalition of NGOs working to raise community awareness of the threat of climate change, elaborate common positions on adaptation and sustainable development, and engage in the international climate change talks. The Network organised a series of national conferences in 2009 and 2010, attended by community and government representatives, and public and international organizations. This helped build greater consensus amongst participants around climate change issues and gave Tajik NGOs an opportunity to provide inputs into the elaboration of the national adaptation strategy. YEC has also piloted community-based adaptation work with six rural communities in Southern Tajikistan, combining capacity-building with livelihood resilience and diversification. Christian Aid has similar programmes in 18 countries in Africa, Central America, and South and Southeast Asia.
Knowledge gained at the community-level can often be exported or adapted to other regions in the world with the range of technologies now available to facilitate its dissemination. New technologies, including the Internet, mobile phones, “knowledge nodes”, MP3 players, multimedia formats combining participatory video, local language translations of text, and sound recordings can be used to overcome issues of regional dialects and illiteracy. Communicating knowledge in this manner is effective at linking experiences and expert information across diverse regions, which can be beyond the capacity of community-sharing networks.

The UNDP–GEF CBA project is developing innovative knowledge products, such as the participatory videos documenting community-level adaptation work in Samoa. Using international networks and knowledge platforms, such as UNDP’s Adaptation Learning Mechanism (ALM), the lessons captured through these products will be shared and disseminated to community members and also to relevant stakeholders, including other practitioners and policy makers.
Satkhira Unnayan Sangstha (SUS), an NGO working in south-west Bangladesh, is actively engaged in community-based activities. SUS has organized community meetings and learning sessions, workshops, in-house training and seminars, as well as cross-community visits for farmers. Following focus group discussions and community consultations with agriculture and fish farmers, community members, and local government representatives, community-based adaptation (CBA) measures were identified. Together with villagers, SUS has promoted dyke cropping, integrated rice-fish farming, mele (reed) cultivation, pond excavation for irrigation, commercial salt-tolerant grass cultivation, cultivation of local rice varieties instead of high yielding varieties (HYV), crab farming, establishment of rain-water harvesters, and flood-proof house preparation (raising the plinth of the house, and homestead ground raising). As a result, more than 4000 people (including rural farmers, adolescent girls, school teachers, journalists and local government representatives) have become aware of the risks of climate change impacts, the need for preparedness and possible adaptation interventions to reduce vulnerability and improve livelihoods.