

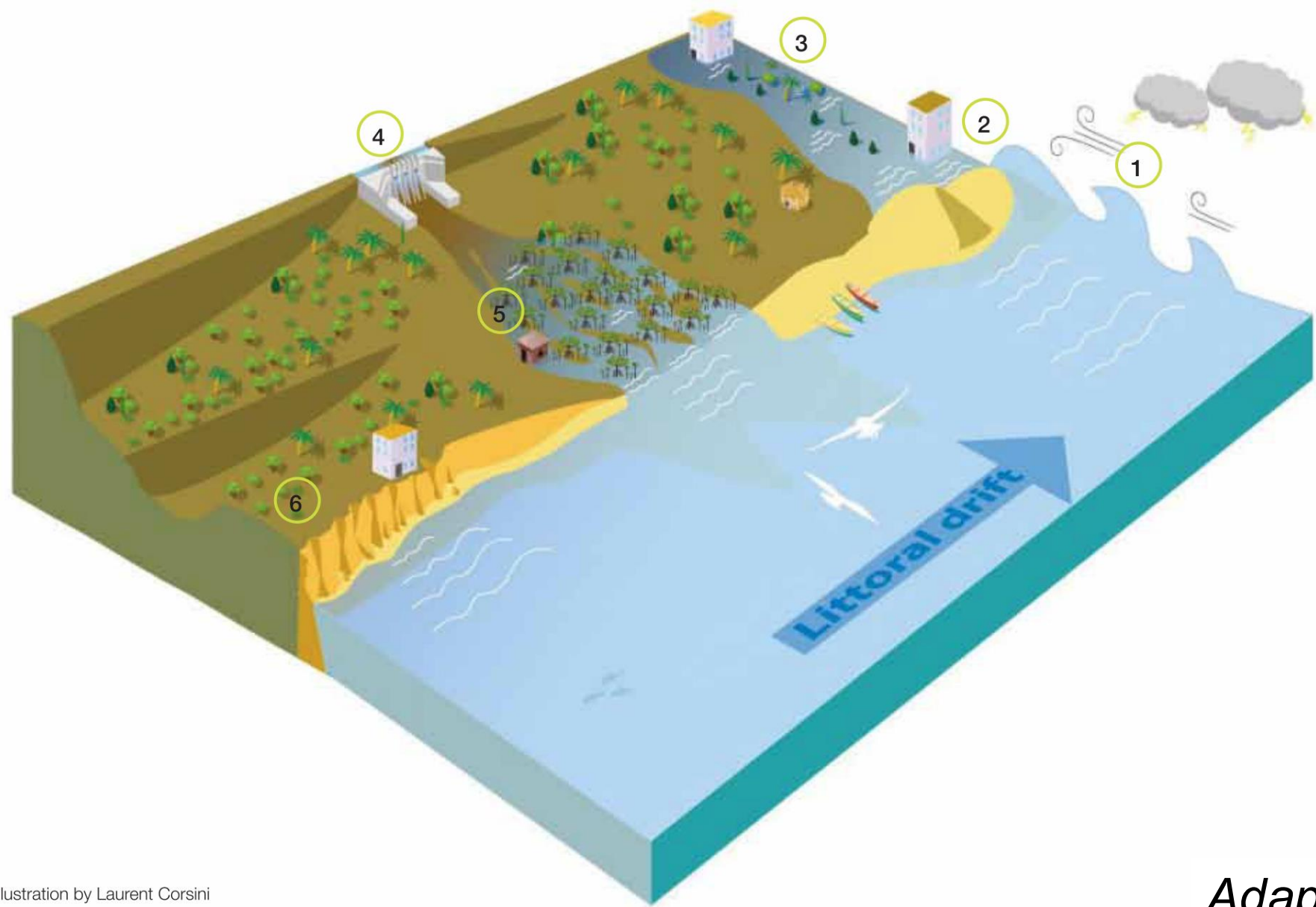
The Uneven Burden: How Climate Adaptation Affects Men and Women in West Africa's Coastal Areas

Valentina Nyame and E. Lisa F. Schipper

Department of Geography, University of Bonn, Germany | Correspondence: nyame.valentina@uni-bonn.de

Introduction

- With over half of West Africa's GDP generated in coastal areas, climate risks severely threaten smallholder livelihoods (Alves et al., 2022)
- Deep-rooted socio-economic factors including power asymmetries and gender norms, amplify the impacts of climate hazards.



1. Rising Sea level and Storms
2. Beach and Dune overtopping
3. Flooding
4. Large dam causing river flooding
5. Flooding intensified by river flooding and rising sea level
6. Coastal erosion and coastline retreat

Adapted from Alves et al. (2022)

- Adaptation efforts often prioritise women due to their disproportionate climate vulnerability and lower adaptive capacity (Alston, 2020)

Objective

To highlights how women-centred adaptation projects can reproduce structural inequalities

Methodology



- Multiple Case study
 - ✓ Keta
 - ✓ Grand Popo
- Fieldwork:
 - October 2024–February 2025



Results

1. Precarious Livelihood



References

Alston, M. (2020). Gendered vulnerabilities and adaptation to climate change. In *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Agriculture* (pp. 137-148). Routledge

Alves, R. B., Bapentire, A. D., Almar, R., Louarn, A., Rossi, P. L., Corsini, L., & Morand, P. (2022). Compendium: Coastal management practices in West Africa: existing and potential solutions to control coastal erosion, prevent flooding and mitigate damage to society. *The World Bank*

Results

2. Gender Burden of Adaptation

Disproportionate physical, financial and social burden

- Women absorbing financial risk through pre-financing men's fishing expeditions while eroding traditional credit mechanism

"The Premix is very expensive... we go into agreement with fish processors [women] to pre-finance..." (Keta)

- Some fishermen are reluctant to transition to farm labour while women more likely to work as farmer labour for household survival

"I [fisherman] do not own land or know anything about farming, why should I move from being a boss of my canoe to someone's labour?" (Grand Popo)

- Gendered roles increase production cost for women

"...operating the motor pump, it is very difficult. For these men tasks, we women have to pay... production costs are higher for us" (Grand Popo)

"...to avoid disagreement with my husband, I employ wage labour so that I can do my domestic jobs" (Grand Popo)

- Men migrate during climate shocks leaving women with household burdens:

"Fishermen migrate to Accra or Côte d'Ivoire... some don't return." (Keta)

3. Negative Perceptions of Women-Centred Adaptation Efforts

Centring adaptation strategies primarily on women sometimes fuels gender stereotyping

- Some men express misogynistic views about women beneficiaries and actors

"The implementors who always pick them [women], we see them. They are men....only interested in what is between the woman's legs" (Grand Popo)

- Some women view men as "disruptive actors"

"They [projects] want to work with hardworking women only... a co-operative without men"

"Men are troublemakers... they take money to court other women. That's why we gather without a single man"

4. Men Evolving into "Invisible but Powerful Actors"

Men leverage social networks with women to influence women-centred initiatives often reinforcing vulnerabilities.

- Women are sometimes used instrumentally to secure access to adaptation projects

"Most of the projects target women in co-operatives so we [male farmers] prefer mixed gender co-operative instead of male-only to benefit" (Grand Popo)

- Men often dominate decision making in mixed groups

"The leadership has more men... we need educated people. There were no educated women"

- Women depend on men's asset ownership to sometimes meet project conditions

"I do not own land, the land I work on is for my husband. Other women get some from their relatives if not you rent" (Grand Popo)

- Men depend on women's financial networks to retain asset ownership

"My husband provides my monetary contribution to access cooperative loans and from micro finance programs.....when interests and loans are redistributed I give it to him"

Conclusion

- Reducing gender gaps in climate adaptation is crucial but but women-centred programs often overlook deep-rooted patriarchal power structures
- Men often remain invisible beneficiaries and gatekeepers
- In turn, this reproduces social vulnerabilities and undermines the gender equity goals that the adaptation strategies aim to achieve.