

# Concept Note

2<sup>nd</sup> CCAA Learning Forum, 25-29 October 2010, Dakar, Senegal

## Evaluating the contribution of climate change adaptation to poverty reduction

### 1. Background

African countries are in a process of development which can be metaphorically compared to a journey with many obstacles. One of these obstacles is climate change, which is accelerated by an anthropogenic increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Significant increases in global average temperatures have heightened the intensity and frequency of extreme events such as droughts, hurricanes and cyclones, as well as intense rains causing floods. These extreme events produce shocks that negatively impact the activities and the environment of human beings. Global climate warming is also leading to gradual changes such as increase in sea level, changes in rainfall patterns, and, in much of Africa, a decrease in overall rainfall both in terms of quantity and quality. The impacts of climate change and increased climate variability on human society are varied, but include increased stresses on food production systems, water supplies, ecosystems and human health.

The international response to these threats has focused on two strategies; mitigation, reducing emissions of greenhouse gases that cause global climate change, and adaptation, defined as “initiatives and measures to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects” (IPCC, 2007)<sup>1</sup>. It is now accepted that adaptation to a changing climate will be necessary, because some impacts of climate change appear to be observed already, and because modifications that have already occurred in the atmosphere’s composition are continuing to warm the global climate. The stakeholders who support adaptation initiatives are interested in knowing if these initiatives are really working, if they are producing the expected benefits. Those who are adapting, with or without external support, need to know if they are going in the right direction. For the poor and marginalised Africans, the burning issue is whether they are on the path to a better life for themselves and their children, and if the proper support mechanisms are being put into place to help them face climate-related hazards that are now part of their reality.

There is presently a series of reflections in the community of scientists and organisations working on climate change adaptation about how to evaluate adaptation. However, adaptation is not an end in itself. Is adaptation taking society to where it wants to be in the future? If not planned holistically, adaptations in one economic sector can be detrimental to other sectors. Some adaptations, if they do not take into account the needs of the poor and marginalised, can even worsen the situation for these people. The poor are often more vulnerable to climate related hazards because they do not have the skills, relationships, rights or access to the resources needed to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Many of the improvements needed to increase their adaptive capacity and reduce their vulnerability are necessary regardless of climate change and are therefore in the realm of development

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC (2007) Glossary of working group 3, Assessment report 4. <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/glossary/ar4-wg3.pdf>

and poverty-reduction initiatives. Adaptation is an additional opportunity to tackle existing development problems. In some cases, successful adaptation processes could even produce development benefits that surpass the losses caused by climate change. On the other hand, it is important to avoid conducting development activities that do not take into account climate change and which could undermine adaptive capacity. For all these reasons, many donors have been mainstreaming climate change adaptation into their development programs. National governments are also being encouraged to do the same in their poverty reduction strategies. This further justifies the need to reflect on the contribution of adaptation to development and poverty reduction.

## **2. How CCAA projects can contribute to this debate?**

The CCAA program has supported some 46 research and capacity development projects in Africa. The majority of these projects have used a participatory action research (PAR) approach, in which monitoring and evaluation holds an important place. Most of CCAA projects have conducted, in the first stages of their project, an analysis of factors influencing vulnerability, adaptive capacity, resilience, coping capacity, or of a combination of some of these. More mature projects have tested adaptation options and/or adaptation support mechanisms and have observed how these have reduced vulnerability. Diverse approaches have been used by teams for their evaluations. Although the focus of CCAA projects is not on poverty reduction per se, the program has had a pro-poor approach. Projects have been working at contributing to the adaptive capacity of vulnerable groups, which are in many cases poor or at great risk of becoming so. Various projects have studied the actual or potential impact of climate change on diverse aspects of the livelihoods of vulnerable people and have put forward actions to reduce these impacts. Some of CCAA research projects have actually assessed some aspects of poverty using either basic needs or livelihoods approaches. Projects will be able to share the challenges that they have experienced in evaluating adaptation and how they have overcome them. They will also shed light on the mechanisms through which adaptation measures can contribute to improving the lives of the poor.

## **3. Rationale for the learning forum and its focus on poverty reduction**

This Learning Forum is one in a series of reflection and learning workshops through which a core group of CCAA partners bring their field experiences to bear on critical climate change adaptation themes and synthesize key lessons.

The CCAA program wishes to contribute to the overall debate on how adaptation contributes to development. Nonetheless, a focus on poverty reduction was chosen for this particular learning forum. The program is meant to benefit the poorest and most vulnerable people of Africa. Focusing on poverty reduction can allow the workshop to define vulnerability in terms of the susceptibility to become poor or poorer as a result of climate change. Without a specific framing of vulnerability, the people identified as most vulnerable will vary in function of the angle of analysis. This opens another set of questions about how to evaluate poverty. Different donors, countries, communities will have their own definitions and criteria to define poverty. Many prefer to speak of well-being, human development or capacities rather than speaking of poverty. The main question that this learning forum will address is how to evaluate if adaptation strategies or initiatives are (or will be) contributing to reducing poverty as perceived by those who are implementing them. Other questions stem from this one, include “How can we tell that adaptation is taking place and that it is benefiting the poor?”

CCAA projects are all contributing to the scientific and technical communities of climate change adaptation through their own publications as well as through their participation in conferences and

other events. However, there is a need to allow them to contribute to the international reflections on how adaptation can be evaluated and how its contribution to development and poverty reduction can be documented. By bringing together team members of projects working on similar topics, it is expected that they will be able to find common threads along which to develop their thoughts. By sharing their experiences, they will be able to see tangible ways in which adaptation options and action can be measured and commensurate indicators used to evaluate impacts on vulnerable groups. By facilitating the discussions and involving scientific editors as well as discussants from outside the program, we ensure that this knowledge will be challenged and shared.

#### **4. Forum Objectives**

This learning forum has the general aim of allowing CCAA projects who have worked with poor and marginalised groups to contribute to the wider debate on the contributions of adaptation to development and poverty reduction.

Specifically, it will

- Enable selected CCAA project teams to reflect, through discussions about their own experiences, on the contributions of adaptation measures to improving the lives of the poor
- Provide concrete examples showing the mechanisms through which adaptation measures or initiatives can contribute to improving the lives of the poor
- Formulate recommendations on how to best document and evaluate these contributions

#### **5. Methodology**

The CCAA program team will be working with a team of three facilitators and two scientific editors. Participants from a total of 13 CCAA projects as well as some discussants from outside the program are being invited to contribute to this exercise. Projects were selected to represent a range of livelihoods (agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, urban) and a balance between sub-regions on the continent. Selected projects have the common characteristic of working on the ground with poor and vulnerable groups in search for strategies to adapt to climate change.

The learning forum will start with short (10 minute) presentations from the participating research teams. It will then proceed through plenary and break-out groups as appropriately designed by the facilitators. The sessions will be guided by questions including:

- What dimensions of poverty or well-being appear most critical for the stakeholders in your projects?
- Along these dimensions, how is climate change impacting (or is likely to impact) the lives of the poor and marginalised groups you are working with?
- What kind of adaptation measures can be taken by them or by other actors? Through which “pathways” can these actions benefit the lives of the poor?
- What are the mechanisms and constraints that affect the effectiveness of these measures?
- How can we tell that adaptation is taking place and that it is benefiting the poor?
- Which indicators will be most pertinent in informing us on the positive or negative implications of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of the poor?
- Can vulnerability assessment be a useful tool to track the adaptation process *vis-a-vis* poverty reduction?

Breakout groups will be carried out around specific themes identified during plenary. It is expected that a first series of group discussions will divide along specific contribution mechanisms identified by

participants. During breakout sessions, participants will provide specific examples from their projects. A second series of discussions will be held specifically around evaluation methodologies used by teams or that could be used to deepen the analysis for questions identified earlier in the discussions. Nonetheless, the facilitation model and agenda will remain flexible and adapted to themes that emerge during the event.

The editors will collate a collective synthesis paper from the contributions made by participants during and following the workshop. They will circulate it to all participants and will integrate the comments and edits of the authors. In addition to this, up to four scientific articles to be written by groups of participants on themes emerging from the workshop will be identified and initiated during the final portion of the workshop.

## **6. Forum Outputs**

The intended audiences for this learning forum's outputs are NGOs who are working with at-risk groups, adaptation project teams, adaptation program managers, development assistance donors as well as managers of national poverty reduction strategies who are mainstreaming climate change adaptation. Policy-makers, including national governments and municipalities, could also make use of the recommendations made in their own adaptation initiatives.

The outputs of the forum will be the following:

- One synthesis paper for rapid publication
- Up to four scientific articles
- A workshop report prepared by the facilitators

Language editors and translators will be involved in the final production of all of the outputs.

The synthesis paper and scientific articles will be peer-reviewed by technical experts to ensure that publications are externally validated, and that findings are providing new insights rather than reiterating previous knowledge.

In addition to this, but through other CCAA activities, project teams who would like to prepare their own articles on the subject can receive guidance and support from the program. The program can support editorial and translation costs for of individual papers in cases where project budgets are constrained. The program also intends to support costs related to a small number of focused studies where two or more research teams collaborate on a publication. The learning forum will undoubtedly contribute to the content of these publications.