



From local to national:

Supporting local government action in climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development planning

ACCRA BRIEFS

This ACCRA brief summarises learning from the research and capacity-building activities conducted by the Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA) in three sites in Ethiopia in 2010-11. This research was conducted by Haramaya University and Federal officials from Ministry of Agriculture, and the Environmental Protection Authority took part in validation, alongside colleagues from various Wereda and Regional bureaus in Oromiya, Afar and Amhara Regional States. The brief explains why adaptation planning matters; why community participation is vital; examines key areas where planning and decision-making could be improved. Based on these findings, the brief makes priority recommendations for action.

Why does Climate Change Adaptation planning matter?

Farmers and pastoralists in Ethiopia have already been hit hard by climate variability, losing harvests and livestock to drought,

watching floods destroy vital infrastructure, and struggling to grow staple crops amid changing rainfall patterns¹. The impacts of climate hazards and change occur alongside other trends, for example, population growth, land degradation or increased opportunities for commercialisation. This means that efforts to tackle climate hazards, variability and change in Ethiopia must be aligned with development plans².

Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) have complementary goals, and as explained above, should coordinate with sectoral development interventions³. Given the fact that climate finance is already beginning to flow to Ethiopia – mechanisms to improve coordination in planning, implementing and monitoring adaptation, risk reduction and development activities are urgently needed. This will ensure both the sustainability of development progress in spite of a changing climate and that adaptation to climate change is possible for the most vulnerable communities.

This is one in a series of ACCRA briefs developed as an output of ACCRA's research and capacity-building work conducted in 2010-11, in three sites in Ethiopia, and in Uganda and Mozambique, where World Vision International is also a consortium member. See <http://community.eldis.org/accra/> to find out more about ACCRA and to subscribe to our monthly update.



Global climate change is becoming better understood, but climate models do not yet generate the kind of localised predictions that planners would like to have. This demands an approach to CCA planning, policy and action that manages uncertainty and fosters adaptive capacity.

CCA requires efforts both to prepare for specific hazards, such as flooding, and for known changes, such as increasing temperatures, as well as steps to tackle the underlying drivers of poverty and vulnerability, such as pressure on degraded land. CCA is, therefore, a cross-sectoral process that not only requires coordination from climate-change focal bodies, but that can draw on lessons from DRM practitioners and key development sectors. Given uncertainty regarding the exact parameters of future climate changes, ensuring communities and the systems that support them are able to adapt will be as important as any specific intervention. This is the essence of adaptive capacity.

Adaptive capacity The property of a system to adjust its characteristics or behaviour, in order to expand its coping range under existing climate variability or future climate conditions. (UNDP, 2005)

What key challenges prevent local government from delivering CCA and risk reduction in Ethiopia?

1. Creating appropriate policy instruments and improving technical knowledge of government staff

ACCRA's capacity-building activities pilot approaches to mainstreaming DRM and CCA into local development planning. In January 2011, a capacity-gap analysis highlighted the need for

strong and effective institutional, policy and legal instruments to enable local governments to introduce DRM and CCA to their work. Whilst the Environmental Policy of Ethiopia and the draft National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management provide for this, there are challenges around implementation. A key challenge mentioned in the two Weredas surveyed was the fact that federal commitments to CCA and some aspects of DRM have not yet been adequately communicated to local levels. In addition, whilst local level coordination bodies exist for early warning and response as well as food security activities, there is no holistic coordination mechanisms for mainstreaming DRM and CCA into development planning. The study also highlighted that technical capacity in DRM and CCA needs to be improved at all levels – federal, regional and wereda.⁴

2. Turning commitment into action: involving local government and community in planning

Climate-change impacts, vulnerability and adaptive capacity are location-specific and will change over time, but the processes needed for adaptations that support the most vulnerable will remain the same. Strengthening national level capacity is important, and progress has already been made in Ethiopia in developing national adaptation and risk-management frameworks, and regional and sectoral adaptation plans. However, national frameworks are only one piece of the puzzle. Community involvement in the design and implementation of adaptation strategies, taking due account of local issues, is another. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) recognises that wereda bureaus have a key role to play in ensuring community engagement, but acknowledges that efforts to realise this have not yet been adequately resourced. Wereda bureaus must be empowered to play a more active role in planning, and linking the bottom-up and top-down processes.



Training on climate change with Wereda officials in Chifra wereda

3. Ensuring real participation

The merits of participatory process in ensuring appropriate and sustainable development are widely accepted and the Government of Ethiopia is committed to a decentralised bottom-up approach. In addition, both EPA and Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS) acknowledge that community participation in DRM and CCA planning is vital for its success. However, to date, implementation of participatory approaches are limited, primarily due to a lack of skills and resources for facilitating participatory processes in communities.

To avoid this challenge limiting participation in DRM and CCA planning, it is vital that successful approaches are mainstreamed beyond donor-funded initiatives, such as the MERET and NGO programmes⁵. Identifying the capacity-building aspects of programmes that can help to achieve real participation and can be scaled-up cost-effectively should be a priority in order to enable more effective adaptation and risk-reduction planning.

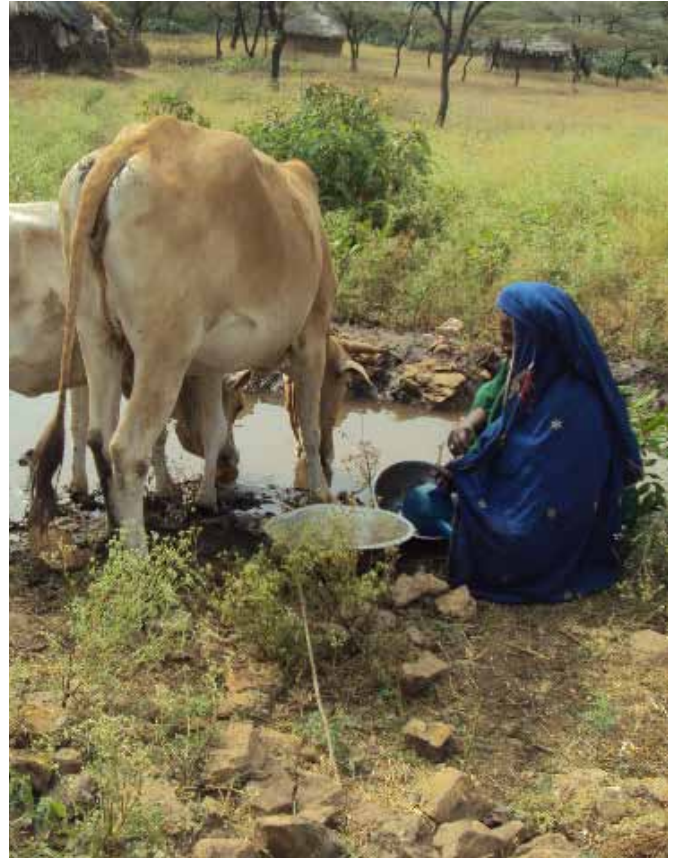
Government experiences with participatory development planning in Ethiopia – the Local Level Participatory Planning Approach (LLPPA). The World Food Programme (WFP) promoted the LLPPA for use in soil and water conservation planning activities in the 1990s and it has since been adopted by the government's Integrated Watershed Management approach. This achieved significant results in WFP-supported wereda,⁶ but was not adequately resourced or fully implemented in other locations.

Decentralised planning and participation

Ethiopia's 2002 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) emphasised the need for decentralised planning and the Government remains committed to this approach today. In the ACCRA research sites, there were concerns that skills, time and resources available to Government staff limited the extent of genuine participation. This resulted in 'participation' being used to extract information from the community, rather than to involve its members in decision-making. In addition, limited feedback mechanisms between community and wereda officials constrained community ownership of, and involvement in, the implementation of plans.

4. Recognising the role of women

Evidence from the MERET programme shows that women's representation on planning teams translates into activities more likely to address women's concerns, notably the labour and time burdens related to water and firewood collection. They are also more likely to promote and create women's economic empowerment groups. CARE⁷ and Oxfam Canada⁸ indicate that the creation of women's savings groups can help to support households in the event of shocks and provide income to invest in innovation or livelihood-diversification activities.



Women struggled to access irrigation water in Kase-hija but could have been supported to tackle unfair institutional arrangements. Photo: Haramaya University

5. Allowing flexibility to respond to shocks within the framework of longer-term plans

The development of contingency plans and more flexible finance is essential in reducing the impact of shocks and has been practiced in several NGO-implemented pastoralist programmes,⁹ as well as the government's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). The PSNP's Contingency and Risk Financing mechanisms currently focus only on food and cash responses, but there is evidence from elsewhere that such contingency funds can effectively deliver disaster prevention and mitigation, response and recovery activities, as well as link to longer-term plans for tackling the root causes of vulnerability. While some examples exist of where this is possible, more resources are needed to scale up these approaches. For example, Save the Children US was able to use its knowledge of community re-stocking practices in Borena to promote recovery from drought, while simultaneously engaging in long-term, rangeland management to improve fodder availability.¹⁰

Recommendations for action

Strengthen capacity for DRM and CCA planning and cross-sectoral coordination at local level

Donors, the EPA, the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Bureaus must invest in local government to strengthen its capacity to understand the impact of climate change and disaster risk on planning through the Land and Environment Bureau, Early Warning Bureau and community-based Development Agents. They must also learn how to make robust and sustainable decisions in a changing climate. Whilst both MoA and EPA

have devolved the responsibility for DRM and CCA to Regional bureaus, the roles and responsibilities of focal institutions at wereda level are not yet clear. These institutions must then be supported to lead risk reduction and adaptation planning which can use available analysis and bring together sectoral bureaus contributing to CCA and DRM (for example, agriculture, early warning and food security, water, health and education) in order to ensure that plans use appropriate information and analysis, limit duplication and promote joint work where appropriate.

Identify a clear methodology for implementing participatory DRM and CCA planning at wereda level. The EPA and the Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS), with support from development partners, must agree on a methodology for cross-sectoral risk reduction and adaptation planning which uses appropriate information and analysis and builds community ownership. This approach should also help streamline monitoring and reporting against development, risk management and adaptation targets to ensure that both development and climate finance can be effectively used.

Ensure women and marginalised groups are involved in planning

Local government officials must ensure that participatory planning processes pay specific attention to women and the representatives of marginalised groups. One example, could be that equal numbers of men and women are required to participate in local planning teams and committees. Another might be, where government enables landless people to have a greater role in managing, and benefitting from, communal resources. This could build on the current efforts to do this through the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). For example in Kase-hija kebele, the ACCRA research found that the PSNP team had worked closely with the kebele administration and community to give a group of landless people the responsibility of managing an enclosed area as well as the right to benefit from grass sales.

Use climate finance to develop longer-term, decentralised funding mechanisms that ensure communities and wereda develop and own the implementation of long-term adaptation plans.

Donors, development partners, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Regional bureaus, the EPA and DRMFSS must identify how climate finance can reach to the local level and be directed towards long-term adaptation plans developed by local communities and wereda experts. Local government officials should work to ensure that communities have the technical, social and economic capacity to take forward their own action plans and to work across sectors.¹¹ Local and national governments must work to create stronger, local-level accountability mechanisms that give regular opportunities for community perspectives to be accommodated within central targets. For example, publically displaying community development plans that clearly identify government and community contributions and holding regular community-level meetings to review progress can help both communities and local

officials hold each other to account. The Government has already committed to do this but research from the three sites found that its implementation needs to be further strengthened.

Ensure contingency finance can be used to link to all aspects of the disaster cycle

Donors and DRMFSS need to develop and manage an enhanced contingency fund and capacity-building programme that will enable wereda officials to respond to a range of hazards and prioritise their activities at different stages of the disaster cycle (particularly early responses to protect livelihoods and ensure people can rebuild after the shock). Current efforts to provide risk financing through the Productive Safety Net Programme are a good start, but the longer-term goal outlined in the Government's DRM Strategic Programme and Investment Framework recommends investment in improving multi-hazard community plans, with more locally determined triggers as well as strengthening Government's capacity at all levels to deliver non-food responses and early recovery activities. For example, pest prevention, de-stocking or emergency seed supply.

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Cover: Pressure on land in Wokin leads to small farm sizes and degraded communal grazing land, ultimately making communities more vulnerable.
Photo: Haramaya University