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### About Joto Afrika

*Joto Afrika* is a series of printed briefings and online resources about adapting to climate change in sub-Saharan Africa. The series will help people understand the issues, constraints and opportunities that poor people face in adapting to climate change and escaping poverty.

*Joto Afrika* is Swahili; it can be loosely translated to mean 'Africa is feeling the heat'. Please tell us what you think about this special issue of *Joto Afrika* and what you would like to read about in future issues – contact details are on **page 8**.



Young pastoralist woman in Niger on the move to green pastures at Lake Chad ©IIED/Marie Monimart, 2008

## Why mainstreaming gender into community-based climate change adaptation is a priority

### Editorial

**The need to mainstream gender in response to the impacts of climate change is recognised globally. This is usually linked to differential vulnerability to climate change. Mainstreaming also needs to include how climate change impacts on gender relations, which in turn can determine the success of a household's or community's adaptation responses.**

Poor women and girls tend to be more vulnerable to climate change than their male counterparts due in part to their greater dependence on natural resources, which are affected by floods, drought and other impacts of climate change. The distribution and use of rights, resources and power, which dictates the conditions and quality of the livelihoods in all societies, is rarely equitable and often strongly influenced by gender relations. To achieve gender equality, we should not only understand and respond to women's, men's, boys' and girls' different vulnerabilities but also recognise that *all* are important actors, with knowledge and capacity for ensuring effective responses to climate change. Their roles, rights, capacities, aspirations, needs and motivation to adapt, as well as the relationships, structures and dynamics between them all contribute to determining what communities can do to adapt to climate change.

As climate change impacts are felt, vulnerable communities are forced to cope and adapt. In turn, men and women are required to take on new roles and responsibilities, and work together to manage the increasing uncertainties of seasonal weather patterns and diversify their livelihoods.

Changing roles may be positive, such as enabling women to be more economically productive, or negative, such as withdrawing children, especially girls, from school to help with increasing workloads or because the family can no longer afford school fees. To take these changing dynamics into account we need to identify and work with the underlying drivers of change, identifying the risks and opportunities involved. Gender is a critical factor reaching from the household -community level to national and global institutions.

Community based adaptation (CBA) is increasingly recognised as part of an efficient, sustainable and effective response to climate change. A range of policy papers, guidelines and methodologies have been developed for CBA in the development and disaster

risk reduction sectors which also incorporate gender. In their community work however, CBA practitioners have been struggling to integrate both gender and adaptation as a means to achieving positive development results and poverty reduction.

**This special edition of Joto Afrika provides insights and learning from the 'Gender and Community-based Adaptation Learning Workshop', held in Ghana in August 2011, which brought together 42 gender and community-based adaptation practitioners from 12 government, UN and civil society organisations in Ghana, Niger, Morocco, Kenya and Mozambique, as well as resource people from CARE International and IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development). Participants shared and discussed their knowledge and experience in gender and adaptation to climate change around two themes:**

- 1. Recognizing and promoting the existing capacities and power of women and men in adapting to climate change and reducing vulnerability**
- 2. Generating good practice principles and methods for integrating gender equality into CBA processes in Africa**

Discussion revolved around how best to learn about the shifting gender and climate dynamics in any local context, and how to use this knowledge to support gender and power analysis as part of vulnerability analysis, facilitate gender sensitive community adaptation action planning, assess capacity and capacity gaps and identify community institutions to represent the concerns of the most vulnerable.

Key messages from the participants are found in the article 'Dynamic interactions between gender and climate change'. Other articles elaborate a framework for community based adaptation and how gender and CBA are linked, share experiences from a community visited and present participants' comments on their learning from the workshop.

### Fiona Percy; Regional ALP Program Coordinator

CARE International, Box 2039 - 00202, KNH, Nairobi  
Tel +254 20 2807000 / 4348347, ext 141  
[fiona@careclimatechange.org](mailto:fiona@careclimatechange.org)

### Agnes Otzelberger, Africa Adaptation and Global Gender Advisor

CARE International – Poverty, Environment and Climate Change Network (PECCN), UK  
Tel: +44 207091 6000  
[aotzelberger@careclimatechange.org](mailto:aotzelberger@careclimatechange.org)



Women are resourceful agents of climate change ©CARE/Nana Kofi Acquah, 2011

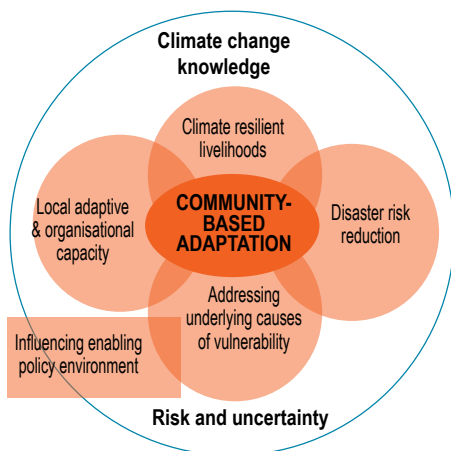
# What is Community Based Adaptation?

**Increasing the capacity of vulnerable people in Sub-Saharan Africa, and women in particular, to adapt to climate variability and change is essential to sustainable development and future economic growth in Africa. Vulnerable communities also have knowledge, capacity and assets, which they are already using to spontaneously adapt. Poor rural women in particular, are often the most vulnerable and invisible yet their voices and their different knowledge and capacity are vital to effective adaptation.**

Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) provides a holistic and participatory approach for communities and local governments to plan adaptation actions and advocate for favourable policies, which are informed by an analysis of local vulnerability and capacity.

CARE International's framework for CBA recognizes that four key elements are required for successful adaptation at community level, each of which is informed by climate analysis (climate science, uncertainty and local observation of climate change) and the national policy context.

## Community Based Adaptation Framework



### Four elements of CBA:

- 1) Climate-resilient livelihoods strategies such as diversification of land use and income sources, and agriculture.
- 2) Disaster risk reduction strategies to reduce impacts of increasing climate-related natural disasters on vulnerable households.

- 3) Strengthening community adaptive capacity such as access to climate information, innovation and managing risk and uncertainty; and capacity of local civil society and governmental institutions to better support communities in adaptation and risk management.
- 4) Local and national level empowerment, advocacy and social mobilization; to address the underlying causes of vulnerability, such as poor governance, gender-based inequality over resource use, or limited access to basic services, and to influence the policy and enabling environment.

### Key characteristics of CBA.

- Builds community adaptive capacity, reducing their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and promoting community-owned and gender-sensitive adaptation.
- Accesses, combines, uses and disseminates scientific climate information and local/traditional climate knowledge and risk screening, linking communities to climate information and services
- A holistic and gender-responsive analysis of people's differential vulnerability and capacity to address climate change.
- Is grounded in good development practices, including participation of stakeholders, action research, support to people's rights to information, resources, participation, reflective practice and promotion of local ownership and sustainability.
- Involves an integrated and cross-sectoral approach, integrating community plans with local development plans and fostering partnerships among development and disaster risk reduction practitioners, research and meteorological institutions, local governments and civil society.
- Contributes to and integrates 'triple-win' concepts of adaptation, sustainable development with food security and mitigation through ensuring a focus on governance and institutional structures, replicability, integration of disaster risk management, economic viability and environmental protection and management. Sustainable agriculture and agro forestry for example demonstrate these links.

- Adopts a long-term vision by planning and implementing interventions that enhance resilience to current climate variability, while preparing for anticipated longer-term climatic changes.
- Incorporates flexibility to manage dynamic contexts, needs and priorities. Focuses on the most vulnerable but acts at all levels from supporting community action to local government planning and capacity building to using evidence to influence national adaptation policy and enabling environment.

CARE has compiled a variety of methods and tools for projects to use when designing and facilitating CBA in a CBA toolkit (<http://bit.ly/vqC0ao>). It includes the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CVCA) handbook and CBA Project Standards to guide project teams with key criteria that must be achieved for high quality analysis, design, implementation and information & knowledge management of CBA projects.

Successful adaptation results in a sustained, positive and climate-resilient development path for vulnerable communities and countries that are experiencing the effects of climate change. African nations may only meet the challenge of responding to climate change when all those affected are able to access the information and resources they need to plan and act in response to climate change.

**Fiona Percy**; Regional ALP Program Coordinator  
 CARE International, Box 2039 - 00202, KNH, Nairobi  
 Tel+254 20 2807000 or 4348347, ext 141.  
[fiona@careclimatechange.org](mailto:fiona@careclimatechange.org)

**Adaptation** refers to: An adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities  
 -IPCC, 2007



# Dynamic interactions between gender and climate change

CARE team visits Zambulgu Northern Ghana for a community based event ©CARE/Nana Kofi Acquah, 2011

**The Gender and CBA Learning event generated new insights on the existing capacities and power of women and men in adapting to climate change, and on good practice principles and methods for integrating gender equality into CBA processes in Africa.**

## 1. Understanding gender and adaptation is about understanding the past, transformation and change in the face of rapid and unpredictable external change

- Gender equality and adaptation to climate change entail processes of profound transformation driven by internal and external forces, which require looking across and mediating between generations. This often puts into question our learned behaviours and beliefs.
- The place of women and men in society is culturally determined. Societal expectations and gender relations are changing: Women's growing responsibilities in providing for the family's food security and income needs are becoming recognized. For example in Northern Ghana they are leasing land to grow maize, millet and other food crops, young men are now helping their mothers to fetch water, husbands are preparing evening meals, women are the main recipients and managers of micro-finance and are starting small business activities to earn a living, school children, both boys and girls are respected in the community for their ability to use modern technology to support the household – such as mobile phones to access market prices.
- Entrenched inequalities, such as unequal access to land or control over household resources, can be addressed only when this is based on a full understanding of gender and power relations and the existing community system.

## 2. Gender is multi-dimensional

- Climate change impacts, and continually changing political, economic and socio-cultural contexts, are causes for new changes and shifts in gender roles and power relations to emerge. They may further exacerbate differences in climate vulnerabilities between women, men, girls and boys – often to the detriment of women and children.
- Gendered roles and expectations, along with gender-specific skills and knowledge, often reflect intergenerational power relations. For example older women or men remain the decision makers on gender roles, as seen for example in many women's continued oppression over their daughters in law. CBA initiatives seeking to empower individuals to face adversity and an uncertain future need to take these power dynamics into account and highlight the benefits of collaboration between women and men of different generations to fully tap into their community's knowledge and potential. Often, existing community structures provide the best platform for such dialogue, and for ensuring lasting and community-owned change.

## 3. Women's empowerment is a vital component of CBA

- Valuing and strengthening women's knowledge, capacities, organization, participation and voice require specific action in all the phases of a CBA initiative (from assessment to implementation, monitoring and evaluation). This will enhance vulnerable women's responsibility, rights, leadership and self-confidence. This, in turn, directly contributes to their families' adaptive capacity, their communities' development and the overall effectiveness of local adaptation planning.

## Recommendations for good practice

The effective integration of gender into CBA processes calls for awareness and action on our organizations' and networks very own knowledge, attitudes and practices related to gender issues. CBA projects should:

- Develop capacity building programmes, which emphasise the vision, value and importance of gender-responsive CBA and climate change
- Recognise that gender is not an 'add-on', but a requirement for adaptation planning
- Conduct gender and power analysis prior to adaptation planning to ensure knowledge of the existing power dynamics and capacities among and between men and women and the drivers of why and how power relationships, behaviours and norms change in the communities they work with.
- Understand the drivers of change in gender roles and relations and examine how power dynamics are shifting due to the pressures and stresses of climate change.
- Tailor Community-based adaptation methods and tools based on knowledge of the local context as well as climate information, to ensure they respond to gender dynamics, realities of change, risk and uncertainty.

**Ruth Mitei**, Learning, Gender and Governance Advisor;

**Fiona Percy**, Regional ALP Coordinator  
Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa;  
CARE International, Box 2039 - 00202,  
KNH, Nairobi

Tel+254 20 2807000 / 4348347;  
rmitei@careclimatechange.org;  
fiona@careclimatechange.org



## See also

Gender in Adaptation Learning Programme (ALP) for Africa

[http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP\\_Gender\\_2011.pdf](http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP_Gender_2011.pdf)



# Women taking the lead in tackling climate change

Women and men watering camels in Niger © Marie Monimart, March 2010

**Climate change is a global challenge with intense local impacts especially on women. At Saamini community in Northern Ghana women are demonstrating their capacity to contribute to local leadership that enhances adaptation strategies.**

Saamini is located in East Mamprusi district of Northern Ghana, with over 500 households. East Mamprusi has a multi-ethnic population with close to 80 percent of people involved in agricultural production. The Saamini community mainly engages in rain-fed agriculture and the community struggles with annual droughts and, more recently, floods which destroy their crops.

Although household headship and ownership of productive resources at Saamini are male dominated, both men and women are involved in agriculture for food and income. Other livelihood activities include livestock rearing, petty trading, picking and, groundnut oil extraction, sale of food, grain banking among others.

Men are responsible for providing food for the family, but what they grow is not enough for food and for income generation. This necessitates the women to grow additional food – some to sell so as to earn money to educate their children. But farming is not always easy for women in Saamini; they face a number of constraints. Over time the land's fertility has been declining, with men retaining the most fertile portions. When women did find ways to improve the fertility of the land, men often reclaimed it for their own farming. Further, women in Saamini support the men in growing their crops but men do not do the same for them, except for those who have been hired to provide labour.

## Adaptation strategies

The Adaptation and Learning Programme for Africa (ALP) in collaboration with Partners in Rural Empowerment and Development (PARED) is supporting the Saamini community to enhance agricultural livelihoods through the following;

- Community mobilization e.g. organizing women into groups and working with both women and men.

- Conducting Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) to identify areas of vulnerability and priority adaptation activities, based on climate information and community knowledge and capacities.
- Training of groups like Tisungtaaba women on good farming practices such as the use of new and drought resistant crop varieties, conservation agriculture and rainfall data collection and monitoring to inform on crop choices and timing for planting.

## Challenges

Major challenges include;

- Late planting due to lack of funds for ploughing and poor soil fertility.
- Gender inequity in allocation of community land as a factor limiting women's potential.
- Insecurity about investing in accessible land since the allocation is not permanent.
- The land is not fenced so crops are often destroyed by domestic animals.
- Lack of protective clothing for soap making and shea butter processing, capital for expansion is inadequate

## Women's role

Women in Saamini community are actively involved in community leadership. Saamini is one of the two communities in the district headed by a "Queen mother", a traditional leader known in local parlance as "Poa Naa". She has a council of elders who assist her in the day-to-day administration of the village. In the modern political system, the community has also witnessed the emergence of ambitious young women leaders like Alimatu Sandobila elected to represent the community at the local assembly for a three year period. She successfully advocated for construction of a bridge, among other achievements.

With food shortages, women's workload has increased tremendously due to their involvement in agriculture and other activities such as petty trade, picking shea nuts, producing shea butter and charcoal for sale. They work harder than men and provide food for their families even though cultural barriers limit women's access to productive resources.

Men are however taking up new roles such as participation in child care and food preparation. In addition, girls and boys are increasingly moving to town for casual labour as a coping mechanism which increases their vulnerability and adds to the breakdown of the family.

ALP and PARED are encouraging the participation of both women and men in programme activities and in leadership roles that support community development through putting in place systems and programme activities that encourage discussion on how gender affects family decision making, livelihoods and women's empowerment. They will develop appropriate methods and tools, strategies and messages for promoting changes in attitudes so as to increase women's ownership and control of productive resources in the long-term and capacity building in advocacy and lobbying skills for male and female gender champions to promote gender equality and equity.

## A. Wairimu Ngugi

P.O. Box 12737 – 00400, Nairobi

Tel + 254 720172917

wairimu.ngugi@gmail.com

**Gender equality** or equality between women and men, refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male  
-CARE Gender Policy

**Women's empowerment** involves awareness-raising, building of self confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. Empowerment comes from within; women empower themselves  
-CARE Gender Policy

# Peer learning in climate change adaptation

Marie Monimart ©ORG/Peter Awin, 2011

**Marie Monimart, International Fellow, International Institute for Environment and Development was a resource person at the recent workshop on Gender and Climate Change Adaptation. She has worked for more than 25 years in sub-Saharan Africa - especially in the West African Sahel countries. Marie shares some of her experiences and views on climate change adaptation with Joto Afrika readers ...**

## **Marie, how did your career as a gender expert evolve?**

I studied in France and Canada (Québec). I worked as a French literature teacher for 20 years. Then I met a Geographer and Sahel development expert. We started a professional relationship which blossomed into a personal story. I came to Africa and in 1987 -1989 participated in production of a book on positive experiences in combating desertification in the Sahel. I worked with women and learned what they were doing to control desertification. The final product was a landmark publication known as *Femmes du Sahel*, French for *Women of the Sahel: living with desertification* (Karthala, 1989). This experience marked the beginning of my career as a gender expert in the Sahelian countries.

## **Which agencies have you worked for?**

I have worked with various organisations, for example the United Nations Development Programme, European Union, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), CARE International in Niger among others. I went back to France and was requested to be an International Fellow with IIED.

## **This workshop has focused on gender and women's empowerment in climate change adaptation. Can you comment on this approach?**

Gender is a critical issue for development since nothing sustainable can be achieved without equity. The Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa is especially well oriented and endowed with opportunities for addressing gender issues in climate change adaptation. This workshop has highlighted many issues, including the role of women as agents of change rather than as victims.

ALP is intervening in four different countries and this is an excellent opportunity to document the gender issues, including equity, access and support to resilience in four different contexts in Africa.

## **What are some of the lessons emerging from this workshop?**

The workshop is both a continuation and a new beginning for our work in gender. It demonstrates that we need to work with both women and men from different generations. We need to spend more time in the villages talking to different community members, for example women, male and female heads of households, elderly men and the youth. We need to use strategies such as separate interviews for men and women to understand their different concerns. A refined gender analysis requires time but we have a choice of different methodologies and tools. If you train people properly you can have this kind of refined analysis and evidence to support interventions. The best gender experts I ever met are African villagers.

## **What are some of the challenges likely to affect integration of gender issues in climate change adaptation?**

Our endeavours to address gender issues must avoid creating conflict among men and women, among the elderly and the young. A key question in this area is how to promote change in behaviour and perceptions about gender so that society appreciates the complimentary roles of women and men and the value of gender equity. Community Based Adaptation is for the present and future generations, so another key question is how to change attitudes towards youth so that the society does not merely see them as boys or girls but as a new generation with new values. I think we could have an entry point among the young married people especially among the pastoralists, for example herders.

## **What advice can you give to development practitioners that are keen to promote gender in climate change adaptation?**

We must consistently promote gender equality and equity, and also demonstrate its value by producing evidence. We need

to convince critics of the gender approach through our methodologies and actions. We can also help both mature and young people to work together in exploring their unique needs as women and men and in building joint decision making processes that favour both of them. We can support community based adaptation initiatives by providing information and training. By listening and "giving a voice" rather than extracting information from people we can learn more and help to promote positive change.

## **Wairimu Ngugi**

P.O. Box 12737 – 00400, Nairobi  
Tel + 254 720172917  
[wairimu.ngugi@gmail.com](mailto:wairimu.ngugi@gmail.com)

## See also

*Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa Community stories – (EN-FR)*  
<http://www.careclimatechange.org/personal-stories>

## Useful Information

CARE CC website <http://www.careclimatechange.org/>



ALP web page <http://www.careclimatechange.org/adaptation-initiatives/alp>



# To build gendered adaptive capacity – or not?

Women in Mali selling potatoes©Marie Monimart, 2011

**The debate on the interaction between climate change and gender is gaining momentum. Scholars and practitioners make the argument that building adaptive capacity is about recognising differential vulnerabilities in different social groups. Through existing power relations between social groups, climate change tends to push weaker groups at the very edge of the development 'abyss'.**

Scientists and practitioners alike need to deepen their knowledge and understanding on risks. Women and men experience vulnerability differently and have different strategies to adapt to environmental stress. Asymmetrical relationships within the household unit play out in the control, use, and distribution of environmental resources. As environmental resources become scarce and workloads increase, what capacities do women, men and social groups enjoy in insulating themselves or recovering from climate shocks, surprises and extreme weather perturbation? What roles do institutions play?

Social actors living at the margins of development, as a result of gender, class, knowledge, and power, will suffer disproportionately because of their inability to turn challenges into opportunities. One can understand vulnerability to climate change in the context of new or other vectors of instability and uncertainty that impact on communities with existing low resilience. It is clear that the current climate events, shocks and stresses have noticeable impacts on the vulnerability of the poor. Women's capacity to recover from extreme events and external shocks is often circumscribed. They have limited opportunities for participating in practical adaptation due to socially ascribed roles. For instance, Omolo (2010) argues that in the Northern western Kenya, in pastoralist societies of Turkana, in spite of increasing numbers of women headed households, participation of women in key decisions such as investment, resource allocation, and planning on where to move or settle in the aftermath of drought and floods is still quite low. Power determines entitlements within the general social strata. Women's social status is generally defined in relation

to men. Hence, degrading environmental conditions, changes in precipitation, water stress, and reduced access to forest resources will affect women's ability to take advantage of opportunities in agriculture and other sectors of growth.

To be able to build one's adaptive capacity will mean enjoying a few resources - wealth, technology, information, skills, infrastructure, and strong institutions. Autonomous adaptation is largely contingent on putting in place anticipatory measures and planning well in advance vis-à-vis adaptation strategies. Yet, women are often overlooked in critical planning activities (Gender and Development, Oxfam 1997).

Poor information will limit choices with respect to diversification of economic activities, and further reduce women's capacity to adapt. Women have mastered innovative techniques in soil conservation practices and natural resource management through various forms of indigenous knowledge. Associated actions on building adaptive capacity would include communicating climate information, raising awareness on the potential impacts of climate change. (Adger et al, 2004).

Vulnerability is reinforced by issues relating to access to critical information. Poor access to critical information on adaptation will create winners and losers amongst vulnerable social groups. Both hierarchical structures and vertical linkages will exacerbate gender lines and cause further marginalisation.

It is evident that adverse impacts of climate change will affect agricultural access and productivity, with implications for economic livelihoods as well as human security. Climatic and degrading environmental conditions will compromise women's role in ensuring the nutritional security of the family. The challenge is to understand the cumulative impacts of biophysical and social related vulnerabilities. The social and institutional processes that perpetuate many gender inequities in environmental governance do so not at the peril of poor women and men, but development in general.

## Fatima Denton

International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Climate Change Adaptation in Africa Programme (CCAA), Dakar, Peytavin, Senegal  
Tel +221 33859 7722  
fdenton@idrc.ca

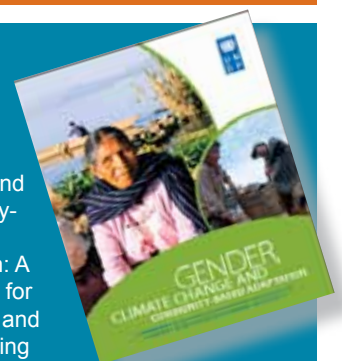
## Useful links

Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA) Local Adaptive Capacity Framework–(EN)  
[http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ACCRA%20Local\\_Adaptive%20Policy.pdf](http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ACCRA%20Local_Adaptive%20Policy.pdf)

Kenya Community-Led Videos – Kenya  
<http://www.careclimatechange.org/videos/africaalp>

CARE International Climate Change Brief: Adaptation, gender and women's empowerment  
[http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP\\_Gender\\_2011.pdf](http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/adaptation/ALP_Gender_2011.pdf)

Gender, Climate Change, and Community-Based Adaptation: A guidebook for Designing and implementing Gender-Sensitive Community-Based Adaptation Programmes and Projects  
[http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/climate\\_change/gender/gender-climate-change-and-community-based-adaptation-guidebook-.html](http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/climate_change/gender/gender-climate-change-and-community-based-adaptation-guidebook-.html)



# Participants' quotes

Participants at the ALP Gender and CBA Learning Workshop had this to say...



"In many ways, integrating gender concerns into adaptation to climate change is about 'good development practice'. What is new, however is building long-term adaptive capacity among men and women. New gender dynamics are emerging as we learn more about preparing for uncertainty, about two-way communication of knowledge and information, and about how the climate may change the environment and societies over the coming years and decades."

**Rolf Hernoe, Programme Coordinator - CARE Denmark**

"The exchange was very enriching as it opened a space for sharing of experiences, good practices on gender integration generally and in the context of implementing CBA. I hope all stakeholders interested in CBA will engage in such exchanges,"

**Awaiss Yahaya, Project Manager - ALP Niger**

"A key learning that struck me during discussions at the workshop in Bolgatanga is the seemingly thin line between normal development projects ie business as usual and those designed as Climate Change Adaptation projects. It is crucial to take into consideration key factors such as gender in climate change adaptation projects when designing projects meant to increase community resilience in a more sustainable manner.

This shift from a business as usual approach to development planning and implementation of projects may result in increased costs. What development planners will have to note however is that the increased costs should be viewed as investments and not as mere increased project costs or a waste of scarce resources."

**Edwin Batiir, Local Governance and Advocacy officer – ALP Ghana.**

"As a CBA practitioner, I am dealing with the challenge of gender inclusion and mainstreaming every day. The workshop discussions gave me new perspectives, new ideas on how to make it happen, through patient step-by-step efforts. It also made me realize how crucial women's participation for effective climate change adaptation."

**Anne-France Wittmann UNDP-GEF Community-Based Adaptation Programme Manager (UN Volunteer) Morocco**

"I appreciate the fact that CARE International has continuously recognized the capacities and capabilities of women in the adaptation to climate change and the passion to influence the future generations. This was clearly manifested in the recent gender and CBA workshop held in Ghana. The workshop was enriched and I admired the learning workshop organization and the content. We have started applying the lessons learnt in our organization, we are optimistic that we will make a difference that will lead to improved project outcomes."

**Cecilia Kibe Convener, CPC (Conservation Pastoralism Conflict) and Thematic Group of Kenya Climate Change Working Group**

"The thought provoking workshop helped to raise questions and encourage discussions on the gender and adaptation nexus, it set up a starting point that other practitioners can build on."

**Emma Bowa Country Project and Advocacy Manager, ALP Kenya**

The workshop in Bolgatanga gave me the opportunity to interact with other CBA practitioners while at the same time educating me about gender and adaptation.

**Abdou Gaidama, UNDP / UNV Niger**

Please send us your feedback on this special issue of *Joto Afrika* using the contact details on page 8. Include your full contact address or email. A selection of letters will be printed in the next issue. *Joto Afrika* is available on the ALIN website. You can also subscribe by sending an email to [jotoafrica@alin.net](mailto:jotoafrica@alin.net).

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# Gender equality and adaptation: Practitioners' perspectives

Men and women farming together in Upper East Ghana © CARE/Nana Kofi Acquah, 2011

**Gender equality is key in achieving equitable development where benefits are accessible to all and social justice is upheld. Disproportionately affecting those who have contributed least to its causes, climate change is yet another factor driving social inequalities, including those between women, men, boys and girls. Our responses to climate change, however, provide new opportunities to narrow these gaps.**

Inequalities in the distribution of rights, resources and power at all levels undermine the capacity of communities, households and individuals to adapt. Depending on how well practitioners and communities understand and tackle them in their approaches to community-based adaptation (CBA), these inequalities can be exacerbated, perpetuated, challenged, or transformed. In CBA, local and national governments, civil society and the private sector have vital roles to play in reducing inequalities, providing services, creating an enabling environment and building capacity, all of which require gender-equitable attitudes and approaches.

## Understanding the context: Gender as a key factor shaping vulnerability

The better we understand how gender dynamics shape and distribute vulnerability to climate change in the community, region or other social entity, the more we can reach out to the appropriate target groups, identifying those processes and actions that will lead to positive change and attracting the funding to do so.

Gender analyses in CBA have often been more descriptive than analytical – they have often viewed the vulnerabilities of women, men, girls and boys in isolation from the power relations and processes that shape them. As we are learning, however, climate change is one of the drivers of shifts in gender and other power relations. These, in turn, are co-responsible for changes and differences in vulnerability and adaptive capacity.

Therefore, there is need to put explicit focus on understanding power and change, to involve the often different but complementary voices of women, men, girls and boys, and to move beyond the vulnerability-focused discourse on gender dimensions of climate change.

## Putting our understanding into practice.

Both in the field of CBA and gender, research and practitioners are busy generating and testing new tools and methods. However only a few tools and methods are available that specifically support integrating gender into CBA in practice. Guidance often remains theoretical and provides little instruction for CBA practitioners who are yet to learn how to view adaptation through a gender lens. Consequently, few initiatives have gone beyond counting women amongst beneficiaries and decision-makers. As a step forward, the UNDP CBA project recently issued a guidebook on 'Gender, Climate Change and Community-based Adaptation.' The Adaptation Learning Programme is developing a set of 'gender

guidance notes' complementing CARE's existing tools for CBA programming, to support practitioners in acquiring in-depth knowledge on the issues, analyzing and responding to gender dynamics in CBA settings.

Experience from various sectors, however, has shown that the best tools and methods for gender integration are of no value without the political and organizational will to challenge, and eventually transform, gender relations and attitudes. It takes strong, committed leadership and adequate resources to create such an enabling environment in a setting where many stakeholders still struggle to see entry points for gender equality and women empowerment.

Community-based adaptation brings about both the opportunities to renew this effort and to reach a better understanding of the dynamics of power, change and uncertainty at the interface between gender inequality and climate change as two of the greatest challenges for development.

## Agnes Otzelberger

CARE International – Poverty, Environment and Climate Change Network (PECCN)  
CARE International UK, London, United Kingdom

Tel+44 207091 6000

[aotzelberger@careclimatechange.org](mailto:aotzelberger@careclimatechange.org)

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## Guest Editor

**Fiona Percy**; Regional ALP Program Coordinator  
CARE International, Box 2039 - 00202, KNH, Nairobi  
Tel +254 20 2807000 / 4348347, ext 141  
Email [fiona@careclimatechange.org](mailto:fiona@careclimatechange.org)

## Editorial Team

Esther Lungahi-Chief Editor-ALIN  
Anthony Mugo-ALIN  
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Agnes Otzelberger-CARE International  
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Adaptation Learning Programme  
CARE International,  
Box 2039 - 00202, KNH, Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel+254 20 2807000 or 4348347, ext 181  
Email [alp@careclimatechange.org](mailto:alp@careclimatechange.org)  
Website <http://www.careclimatechange.org/adaptation-initiatives/alp>

*Joto Afrika*  
Arid Lands Information Network  
P.O. BOX 10098-00100 G.P.O.  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel +254 20 2731557  
Fax +254 20 2737813  
SMS +254 717032322  
Email [jotoafrica@alin.net](mailto:jotoafrica@alin.net)  
Website [www.alin.net](http://www.alin.net)

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