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Working with Women to Lead Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Initiatives in the Niger Delta Communities: The Case of CPED Project in Delta state

By

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PROJECT PROFILE

Project Title: "Empowering women as key leaders in promoting community-based climate change adaptation and disaster risks reduction initiatives in Niger Delta region"

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PREFACE

This policy brief is the first in the series of communication to policy and decision makers on the on-going research project of the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* titled "Empowering women as key leaders in promoting community-based climate change adaptation and disaster risks reduction initiatives in Niger delta region" funded by the *International Development Research Centre (IDRC)* under its climate change program.

CPED's policy brief series is designed to draw attention to key findings and their policy implications as projects are being executed. This edition which explores working with women to lead climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives is based on the analysis of the research reports and intervention activities in ten target Local Government Areas where the climate change research project is being implemented in Delta state.

We are very grateful to IDRC for the support to implement this project. We are particularly grateful to the Programme Officer in charge of our project, Dr. Melanie Robertson, for her support to CPED which has enabled the Centre to continue implementation of the research project and the publication of this policy brief. We also appreciate the cooperation of leaders of various groups and community-based organisations in the target communities for their collaboration with CPED in the on-going implementation of the project.

INTRODUCTION

Typical of most communities in Nigeria, people living in rural communities of the Niger Delta rely heavily on their environment as well as the natural resource base for their livelihood. The uncertain effects of the changing climate on these invaluable resources appear to be a malignant problem facing the region over the past decades. Low household and community resilience, poor adaptive responses to shift in rainfall pattern, temperature, sea level rise and incessant flooding in most part of the Niger Delta region have led to unprecedented economic deprivation, hunger, sickness, and violent conflict. These problems are further compounded by a lack of legislative and institutional capacity for effective management of natural resources and stability of the ecosystem; leading to reduced farm productivity and increased work load for women and girls who are in the frontline. If this narrative must change, there is, therefore, the need to build the capacity of rural community stakeholders to play key roles in climate change adaptation and risk reduction in the Niger Delta region. Mainstreaming Climate change adaptation into development plans is an important strategic action at this stage of our development because emergency preparedness guarantees effective contingency plans to protect citizens, property and the environment. Hence, with support from *International Development Research Centre (IDRC)*, Canada, the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* in collaboration with *Intervention Council for Women in Africa (ICWA)* and *Delta State Government through the Ministry of Environment (DMoE)* embarked on a three year project to build the capacity of women as key leaders in promoting community-based climate change adaptation and risk reduction initiatives in Niger Delta.

Establishment of Community Project Implementation Committee(CPIC)

In order to effectively engage the local stakeholders, particularly women and girls in the implementation of the project, existing social groups in the communities were mobilized and the leadership of the various groups were brought together to form a coalition for social change referred to in this project as Community Project Implementation Committee (CPIC). About 2-3 members who are leaders of the functional social groups were nominated to form the CPICs. The CPIC consist of 25 members for each of the 10 intervention communities. In all, 250 leaders of social groups were mobilized to form members of the CPICs in the 10 pilot communities. During the establishment of the CPIC, effort was made to ensure that 65% to 70% of the members of the CPIC were women and girls and that the group was led by women.

The CPIC became the structure through which the capacity of the local groups was built to respond to climate change adaptation and risk reduction efforts. Several meetings were held with the various CPICs to establish a roadmap for effective participation and implementation of the project.

The project team in collaboration with the established CPICs in each pilot community also worked jointly with the leadership of the women groups and other community-based groups to identify relevant climate change adaptation approaches which are appropriate to the prevailing circumstances in their various communities. These are shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Identified Climate Change Impact Occurring in Rural Communities of Delta state and CCA and DRR Initiative Being Implements by Community members who are mainly women and girls

Name of Community/LGA	Identified Climate Change Impact Occurring in Rural Communities of Delta state	Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Initiatives by community women and girls
Aboh/ Ndokwa East	- Excessive flooding due to river overflow; - Pest invasion; - Intrusion of salt water into fresh water resulting to loss of fishes.	- Early planting and harvesting; - Keeping crop produce in the barn for preservation; - Packing out refuse from water channels; - Diversification from farm to non-farm activities; - Early and frequent weeding; - Use of fertilizer.
Onicha-Ugbo/ Aniocha North	- Deceased crops resulting to poor yield; - Excessive heat leading to loss of livestock; - Conflict between herders and farmers due to scarcity of land for grazing and farming.	- Creating awareness campaign on the bad effects of burning bushes; -Planting of early maturing crops; -Planting early; -Harvesting early before the flood set in; -Planting of trees to serve as wind breakers -Clearing of blocked drainages, -Mulching.

Otorho-Agbon/ Ethiope East	-Invasion of crops by unknown insect pest; -Forest fire destroying farmland and Animal species; -Flash flood removing top soil.	-Early planting of crops, -Use of fertilizer to improve soil fertility, -Clearing of drainages to allow for free flow of flood water, -Group harvesting to hasten the pace before onset of rain, -Campaign against bush burning, -Manual Irrigation.
Alifekede/ Ika South	-Crop spoilage due to increased amount of sunshine and excessive heat; -Invasion of crop by pest; -Conflict between herders and farmers due to scarcity of land for grazing and farming.	-Use of Sand bagging to prevent erosion, -Early planting of crop, -Construction of gutters in the farm to divert flood waters, -Tree planting to prevent damage by excessive wind, -Digging of pit for water harvesting, -Use of Ridging method in crop production to avoid damage by erosion.
Uzere/ Isoko South	-Heavy flooding resulting to poor yield of farm produce; - Water pollution due to oil spillage destroying aquatic lives; - Conflict due to scarcity of land.	-Early harvesting to avoid damage by flood, opening of drainages, -Early planting, -Use of Ridge planting system, advocating against deforestation, -Irrigation, -Building of barns in the bush to protect cassava stems.

Amajomata/ Sapele	-Soil erosion ravaging community and farmlands; -Invasion of crop by pest/disease; - Conflict between herders and farmers due to scarcity of land for grazing and farming.	- Early planting and harvesting of crop; - Use of pesticide; - Digging of gutters to direct flood water from destroying crops; - Mulching to avoid damage by excessive sunshine; - Use of ashes from burnt wood to prevent pest from eating the crops. etc
Ekamkpamre/ Ughelli South	-Increased flooding in farmlands and in the community; - Conflict between herders and farmers due to scarcity of land for grazing and farming; -Excessive heat affecting livestock growth.	- Planting flood resistant crops; -Planting of cover crops and varieties of crops - Mulching; - Use of cow dung as manure to grow their crops which is not sustainable; -Diversification from farm to non-farm activities.
Agoloma/ Patani	-Pest/diseases affecting crops; -Excessive flooding; -Increase in new species of weeds.	- Build cemented embankment; - Digging of gutters to direct flood water from destroying community and farmlands; - Diversification from farm to non-farm activities.

Ayakoromo/ Burutu	- Increased flooding in the community due to ocean surge; -Pollution of rivers and sea water destroying aquatic lives; -Declining fish population and increase in disease in fishery.	- Community members build platforms above the water level in their living room and bedrooms in order to be able to move around; - Relocation of family members to safer grounds - The community people engage in sand bagging of the affected area etc.
Igbudu/ Warri South	-Disappearance of some forest species; -Excessive flooding and destruction of houses; - Conflict due to scarcity of land leading to loss of lives.	- Nets are used as barrier to prevent fishes from running into the rivers; - Digging of gutters to direct flood water from destroying crops; Planting flood resistant crops; -Diversification from farm to non-farm activities.

Training on Various Climate Change Adaptation Initiatives

To achieve the needed impact, a guide for the training of CPIC to assist the farming population to practice climate smart agriculture was developed and distributed during training. The training guide was divided into flexible modules that allow participants to review the concepts of climate change, climate change adaptation and disaster risks reduction as well as gender. A combination of traditional learning methods such as presentations and discussions, along with more participatory and experiential learning approaches such as group work, role play, and reflections on personal experience were used to improve the individual-level knowledge, skills and behaviours needed of local women and men based in these communities to foster gender responsive agriculture adaptation activities during the training of CPICs in the various communities. The training also Promoted critical reflection through interactive group and individual discussions in meetings and specific activities in the target communities designed to encourage men and women to reflect critically on the ways in which inequitable gender norms and roles impact on women and girls decision making capability and its negative impact on activities such as responding to climate change adaptation and disaster risks

reduction activities by women. Some of the climate change adaptation approaches discussed during the training period included:

- Establishing a framework for accessing critical climate information
- The use of water cans for irrigation;
- Fencing of ponds
- Planting of cover crops to protect the land from direct rays of the sun and erosion;
- Tree planting
- Use of sand bags as barriers,
- Improved seeds to boost crop yield
- Early warning information on climate information and how to respond
- Training on how to respond to climate events;
- Crop rotation
- Planting on mounds and ridges

Others include: Dry season farming/irrigation, Use of fertilizer, Agricultural diversification Economic diversification, Drought resistant crops Bush fallowing

- Netting of Fish ponds

Since members were drawn from different social groups in the community, the CPIC members have further step down the training and skills acquired to other members of the social groups who did not have the opportunity to be selected as members of the CPICs.

Key Results of Working with Women and Girls

Niger Delta women now adopt different strategies to mitigate the effect of climate change such as planting of cover crops and varieties of crops, planting of flood resistant crops, planting of early maturing crops and early harvesting as various adaptation measures to reduce the effect of climate change on agriculture in their communities. The use of various modern irrigation methods to boost agricultural production was very low among the farming population in the intervention communities.

Establishment of Women Network in Niger Delta Region

A key achievement in the implementation of the climate change project in Delta state was the establishment of coalition of women to lead advocacy on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction called Coalition of Niger Delta Women on Climate Change Adaptation (CONDWOCCA). The network was formed by selecting two women from each of the 10 project communities as well as one policy actor (a female) from each target local Governments area. The network members meet bi-monthly to discuss and share ideas on climate change adaptation measures and gender transformative activities that are working in their various communities. Members of this network also work with Policy/decision makers to support formulation and implementation of policies on climate change adaptation.

Key Lessons and Actionable Recommendations

The establishment of the women networks on climate change Adaptation initiatives, have:

- Created a voice for women in their various communities, as they engage community leaders, elders and local authority advocating for women inclusion in matters concerning climate change issues as well as improving the exchange of information among women on adaptation and quickening the pace which they learn from each other.
- Among other things, has promoted peer-learning among members of the network; for example, during such meetings members of the network have shared examples of planting early maturing crops that have become effective climate change adaptation strategies for those in flood-prone areas;
- Created opportunities for individual reflections on progress of CCA and how well such measures worked; it has also enabled members to collectively explore how to localize climate change adaptation measures in their respective communities, for example, members belonging to the network give feedback of meetings held to other members of the CPIC who are not part of the network. The CPIC members in turn share these ideas to other members of their community at religious gatherings, community meetings and through other avenue.

It can be clearly stated that when women and girls are empowered, they can play very crucial roles in their respective communities. We therefore recommend that Delta state government through the ministry of environment should work with this established coalition of women to learn community strategies that are working in adapting to climate change in the Niger Delta region and scale up these initiatives to other communities.

Other women in the Niger Delta communities are also encouraged to join this emerging groups in order to learn new strategies to help them practice climate change adaptation in their various communities.