WORKSHOP REPORT ON COMMUNITY BASED ADAPTATION IN ZINDER, NIGER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change is an important area for the planning, implementation and sustainability of water supply, sanitation and hygiene interventions. On August 25-29, 2013, the USAID West Africa Water Supply Sanitation and Hygiene (USAID WA-WASH) Program, through one of its implementing partners (CARE Niger) organized a four-day training on community based adaptation (CBA) to climate change, for its partners, community members and stakeholders to strengthen their capacity to integrate climate change vulnerability and adaptation in development planning at the community level. There were 31 participants drawn from the Program beneficiary communities, local NGOS, Winrock Niger and CARE Niger.

The objective of the training was to equip the participants with the skills in designing CBA strategies and plans. The training provided the participants with a framework to understand the causes and consequences of climate change, the basic concepts and approaches for understanding the CBA concept through the vulnerability assessment tools and integration of the concept in local planning. Two vulnerability assessment tools were used: (1) the climate vulnerability and capacity analysis (CVCA) matrix to assess the capacity and vulnerability of the communities; and (2) the community based risk screening tool for adaptation and livelihoods (CRiSTAL) for identifying the risks related to climate change at the community level, adaptation, and livelihood strategies. The data collected using the CVCA and the CRiSTAL tools informed the development of the CBA action plans.

Human activities and natural occurrences contribute to climate change. Climate change is indicated by increased greenhouse gases and their contribution to increased global temperatures. In the Sahel region, it is estimated that the average temperature would increase by 3-4 degrees Celsius between 1980/99 and 2080/99, or about 1.5 times more than the global average. Some of the consequences of climate change are decreased amounts in annual rainfall, short duration of the rainy season and increasing frequency of droughts and floods. Similarly the water resources in watersheds have decreased by 20 to 40% since the 1970s, the quality of surface water has deteriorated, and the groundwater levels have been reduced.

The concepts of climate change and community-based adaptation were also covered in the workshop. The different concepts included climate risks, hazards, vulnerability and exposure to vulnerability, sensitivity to vulnerability, adaptation capacity, risk assessment, risk management, the difference between coping and adaptation strategies, resilience and its characteristics, and disaster risk reduction. The definitions of these concepts were presented in relation to household livelihood strategies. This allowed the participants to have a good understanding of the impact of climate risks on the livelihoods of an individual, household and community, and the interactions between the different stakeholders. The concepts were translated into local languages to facilitate understanding by the participants.

Community based adaptation initiatives are interventions to improve the capacity of local communities to adapt to climate change. Effective CBA requires an integrated approach that combines traditional knowledge with innovative strategies that address current vulnerabilities and build the resilience of people to face new and dynamic challenges. It also aims to protect and sustain the ecosystems that people depend on for their livelihoods.

Effective CBAs are based on four principles of adaptation namely: (1) building adaptive and resilient livelihoods; (2) disaster risk management; (3) building local adaptive organizational capacity; and (4) addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability such as bad governance, poor health, and poor access to information and illiteracy. In addition, gender integration, enabling policy environment, and evaluation of coping strategies contribute to an effective CBA strategy.

The CVCA tool is useful in gathering information, enables local actors to understand the implications of climate change on livelihoods and facilitates dialogue within communities and between communities and local institutions on issues of vulnerability to climate change. Different tools within the CVCA framework were presented such as the hazard map, the vulnerability matrix, the seasonal calendar, the timeline, and the Venn diagram. Other analysis tools were presented as well, including the summary sheet for all information from the discussions in focus groups, the feasibility matrix for detailed discussions with communities on the feasibility and effectiveness of each strategy, the gender analysis matrix that assesses the impact of proposed adaptation strategies on men and women and at the household and community levels, and the community based adaptation action plan.

Participants were divided into three groups for field practice and data collection using the CVCA tools in the village of Garin Bawa which is located about 75 km from Zinder. The three groups of participants gathered data from the community members including the men, women, and the youth. Each group was assigned a lead facilitator to lead the focus group discussions, an assistant facilitator, and a rapporteur to take notes of the results of the discussions. This was followed by practical tips for facilitating the administration of tools during the discussions in the village. The tips focused on the need for good preparation of the field mission, group facilitation techniques, use of local language terminologies and attention in taking notes. The CVCA tools applied included the hazard map, the vulnerability matrix, and the summary sheet. The CVCA tools were used to gather data for the development of the community based adaptation action plan.

The major resources in the village of Garin Bawa were identified as farmlands, water ponds, and livestock. The disaster risks were related primarily to floods, drought, high winds, locust infestation, and silting of water ponds. The information gathered was used to fill the summary sheet and conduct a feasibility analysis of the strategies identified. In addition, the data collected was integrated into the CRiSTAL tool to analyze the risks of climate change in the village. Based on this data, the community based adaptation action plan for the village of Garin Bawa was developed.

The workshop enabled the various participants to understand vulnerability to climate change in the community. The group discussions, plenary presentations and field testing of vulnerability assessment tools strengthened the participants' knowledge for community planning taking into account climate change. The participants including both the communities and local NGOs were challenged to apply the knowledge by first developing community based adaptation action plans in their respective villages and second, by sharing the knowledge about the tools and training others.

The full report is available (in French) upon request via our website. For more details about our program activities and other reports please visit http://wawash.fiu.edu/.

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