

A Youth Perspective on Climate Change Opportunities And Challenges For Climate Resilient DEVELOPMENT

YPARD Members at AfricaAdapt Symposium in Addis Ababa 9th to 12th March 2011



by
Shakespear Mudombi, Emmanuel Nzeyimana and Anke Weisheit

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1 Introduction

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges to sustainable development the world over and Africa in particular. In simpler terms, sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; it has two important dimensions, which are the inter- and intra-generational equity. The emergence or recognition of climate change as a serious threat to sustainable development has led to the drive towards climate resilient/compatible development. Climate Resilient Development is development that minimises harm triggered by climate change and exploits opportunities associated with low carbon emissions reduction (Dr Fatima Denton, in her presentation)

The youth fit into the climate change and development equation, both as victims and also as solution providers. The youth are victims to climate change because current effects of climate change are a result of current and past human activities. Though the youth from different parts of the world are affected differently depending on the severity of these effects and also the resilience of their communities there is one thing in common, they did not contribute to the current climate change. Arts (2009) noted that focusing on children (as well as their children) in relation to climate change is necessitated by the fact that it is them that will be most affected and in largest numbers by climate change in the future. The position that the youth have been or are being given, has been influenced by statements such as *“the youth are the leaders of tomorrow”* or *“the youth are the future leaders”*. Statements like these have been misused by many people, forgetting that real and meaningful leadership does not start tomorrow but it starts today. Past and current approaches merely treat/treated the youth as passive onlookers.

2 Some of the Key issues from Symposium

2.1 Various presentations at the Symposium

What came out of all the presentations at the Symposium is that climate change is real, everyone is seeing and experiencing its effects, and there is need for everyone to act. Dr Fatima Denton noted that one of the key challenges identified is the lack of resources to share knowledge and how to scale up some of the good work. She highlighted that agriculture remains a key growth and strategic sector, however, there remains some challenges which include: enhancing the adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers; improving soil fertility and productivity; weak institutions; diver-

sifying options; and working with demand groups. Adaptation management is essential to building socio-ecological resilience through: innovations; social learning; improved agricultural practises; understanding what works; and how farmers make decisions. She further highlighted that knowledge sharing is the foundation for building adaptive capacity. Dr. Sokona noted that current mitigation measures are slow and sparse, while adaptation has started, further adaptation is unavoidable. He further noted that at the global level significant financial resources are likely to be available but they have to benefit the local people who are affected by climate change rather than being spend on more meetings. Good development will bring better resilience to climate change, and more evidence of practical solutions and detailed knowledge is required (Gareth Martin, Department for International Development DFID).

The role of the media and intermediaries in translating, sharing and educating also featured prominently during the conference, with various presenters looking at the issue from different perspectives. Radio was noted as one of the important mass media tools in Africa with the widest reach and highest audiences (Blane Harvey). In the project Climate Airwaves in Ghana, Blane Harvey noted that community radio is essential as it treats communities not only as consumers of information but also as generators of the information. However, challenges to such initiatives include lack of local expertise and education; and the complexity and uncertainty of the problems remain hurdles. Charles Chikapa also presented on the importance of community radio in disseminating climate, environmental and agricultural information to farmers. One of the success stories was the dissemination of information on maize production, which resulted in adoption of improved maize varieties and a marked increase in output.

Edith Abilogo highlighted some of the initiatives they are undertaking at Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). These initiatives include training journalists on climate and environmental issues and capacity building of students through provision of scholarships. New technologies and applications can also be of importance even to the marginalised groups as shown by Juanita Schlaepfer-Miller and Eugenio Tisselli in their project in Bagamoyo district of Tanzania, in which they are using a special mobile phone application linked to the internet, which the farmers can use to exchange information. They also highlighted the importance of folksonomies* in information provision, which allows bottom-up categorisation; discovery of emergent topics; and can be a model of community's issues. Mr Patrick Luganda

A folksonomy is a system of classification derived from the practice and method of collaboratively creating and managing tags to annotate and categorize content;[1][2] this practice is also known as collaborative tagging[3], social classification, social indexing, and social tagging.[4] Folksonomy, a term coined by Thomas Vander Wal, is a portmanteau of folks and taxonomy. (source: 23.03.2011 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folksonomy>)

presented on the importance of the media in conveying the information. He highlighted that it is important to know what is important; what action is required; and how to create the message.

Claire Davis highlighted the importance of bridging the gap between producer and end-users of climate information. She noted that the question has shifted from 'Who will deal with climate change?' to 'How do we deal with climate change?' One of the key issues that came out of her presentation, is that in most cases producers of information such as scientists, do not have the ability to disseminate information in the right format for the end-users, hence the importance of working with professional science communicators. Jilian Dyszynski presented on scaling up of local knowledge using online tools, their project called *weADAPT* is a partnership between various organisations with the objective of availing easily accessible information to different user groups (see more at <http://www.weadapt.org>). Admire Mare in his presentation highlighted that issues dealing with the environment and climate are not given prominence in mainstream media such as newspapers; news editors and journalist want news that sell, and there is need to find ways of mainstreaming climate and environmental issues in the media.

The importance of local and indigenous knowledge in addressing climate change featured prominently during the symposium. Dr. Henry Mahoo in his keynote address highlighted the challenges faced by both indigenous knowledge weather forecasting and scientific forecasting. Some of the challenges for indigenous knowledge forecasting include: it is highly local specific; this indigenous knowledge is under threat from disappearing; lack of systematic documentation of the knowledge; limited ability to investigate accuracy and reliability; disappearing key indicators; and associated with mystical beliefs and therefore not taken seriously. He also noted that there is a gap in terms of the type of weather/ climate information required by farmers at the farm level versus what weather departments produce.

Of importance was also the recognition of linking both national and international policies to practice. Jose Levy presented on the key adaptation priorities from 20 African countries in the African Adaptation Programme. From the results, most countries preferred 'soft' adaptation interventions rather than 'hard' adaptation interventions. Masego Madzwamuse presented on some of their key findings on climate governance in Africa, and key findings include: the policy framework for climate change adaptation governance is inadequate; positioning of the climate change adaptation within the environment sector limits effective adaptation; macro-economic development frameworks undermine adaptive capacity; and gender is not mainstreamed into key adaptation response frameworks. Prof Imasiku Nyambe high-

lighted that in the drive towards climate resilient development there is need to have robust governance and relevant coherent institutions to manage various aspects of climate initiatives. He also noted that challenges include: the issue of wetlands; heat stress; soil degradation; soil moisture; river flow; unsustainable harvesting of natural resources; and poverty.

Dr Lindiwe Sibanda in her keynote address stressed the need to understand the local context. She highlighted that women are the backbone of the African economy but they face a number of challenges, and there is need to map their access to assets. Other challenges include: the policy environment is not conducive; lack of empirical data to validate assumptions; insufficient resources for continuous engagement; and disconnection between researchers and policy makers. She further highlighted that advocacy is important, and appropriate advocacy tools should be used e.g. oral culture and theatre at the community level and using wise elders (over 60 years) to influence policy as they have closer links with politicians and policy makers. Dr Lindiwe Sibanda stressed the importance of the agricultural sector to the African economy, and gave an overview of the “No Agriculture, No Deal” campaign they have held at various international forums. Leisa Perch in her presentation also highlighted that global terms of trade also limit the adaptive capacities of Africa countries.

We as YPARD as also recognise the importance of agriculture to the African economy and to the majority of people whose livelihoods are dependant on it. In Africa there are limited economic opportunities outside agriculture, especially in the short-term, hence getting things right in the agricultural sector will also improve the long-term adaptive capacity of many people. Some of the initiatives that require action, especially at international policy level is improving the global terms of trade for agricultural products, while nationally it is important to avail appropriate low carbon and environmental friendly technologies so as to ensure enhanced adaptive capacity of the majority which will ultimately lead to a climate resilient/compatible agricultural development.

One key aspect of the symposium was the inclusion of practical experiences from the field, whereby community representatives gave an overview of the activities they are undertaking in their communities. Community representatives Muluaem Birhane Lih and Wubalem Mengist Sewagne presented on their initiatives in restoring degraded forests and environments, and also on the use of improved, cleaner cooking and firewood saving technologies. What came up in their presentation is that climate and environmental improving initiatives at local level require support from the political leaders (for them the Ethiopian president has been very supportive), this not only

give the moral support to those undertaking the initiatives but also would ensure formulation and implementation of climate and environmental friendly policies. From their initiatives, of importance is not only the contribution of their initiatives to low carbon development, but from a youth perspective was the inclusion and training of the youth in good environmental practises and use of clean energy.

2.2 Presentations under the Special Panel on Gender and Youth

There were four presentations under this panel; they all dealt with the various aspects relating to the theme. Ryan Laddey discussed gender and climate change in relation to the Africa Adaptation Programme being implemented by the UNDP and funded by the Government of Japan. He highlighted the importance of enhancing adaptive capacity through evidence-based solutions and the importance of mainstreaming gender into climate change adaptation. Key challenges highlighted include: absence of women in climate change adaptation and decision making; women's needs not being addressed; limited access to resources and information; limited educational opportunities especially climate science; and limited financial and economic opportunities. However in the Africa Adaptation Programme they seek to overcome these challenges through technical support and commitment to addressing gender inequality. Some of the initiatives include: documenting and sharing women's knowledge; improving access to information and education; and providing financial and economic opportunities through budget allocation for gender, access to climate fund, and access to technology.

Nancy Omolo presented on the relationship between gender, food insecurity and climate change amongst pastoral communities in the Mandera and Turkana in Northern Kenya. She highlighted that climate change is having major impacts on people's livestock-dependant livelihoods, with marked changes in the type of food eaten. Men and women were having different roles and also these roles are changing as a result of climate change. One of her key findings was that coping strategies differed from area to area and also between men and women.

Philip Otieno presented on the linkages between population growth, reproductive health, gender and climate change. Philip Otieno conducted a desktop study reviewing various Kenyan government reports, plans and strategies. He highlighted that climate change is a multiplying factor to the challenges relating to population growth, reproductive health and gender. Women and men were being impacted differently

by climate change largely due to their gender roles. He highlighted that there is need to address high population growth in Kenya, through family planning. He concluded that there are lots of gaps in promoting gender equality and equity and there is need to promote gender equality at all levels from local, national to the international levels.

Fran Seballos presented on child rights and climate change adaptation, highlighting key issues from the *children in a changing climate research report* by the Institute of Development Studies and Plan International. This research project involved children, and it is the children who articulated the relationship between climate change and violations of their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Lack of access to water and irrigation infrastructure resulted in food shortages which undermined their right to survival and development; insecure livelihoods due to spending more time trying to meet basic survival needs and occurrences such as floods undermine their physical access to schools, which results in the denial of their right to education, and has implications on the rights to survival and development, to non-discrimination and to protection. Climate change might result in food shortages which might result in migration in search of opportunities, and this might result in insecurity associated with the risks of abuse, which undermines the right to protection. Also children lack the voice and power to stop further environmental degradation, which undermines their right to participate in environmental management and changing behaviour in the communities. The report highlights that it is important to embed child rights in national adaptation, of which child sensitive adaptation planning should include: climate vulnerability and capacity analysis disaggregated by age, gender, urban and rural; participatory spaces; child-centred resilience projects and programmes; and child rights-based indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

3 Challenges for the Youth

It is a big challenge for the African youth if the current leaders fail to formulate and implement policies that ensure sustainable development at both local and continental level through integration of a youth and gender perspective into policies. Arts (2009) noted that the most important global legal instruments that seek to address climate change (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol) do not provide for a procedure for people, children included, to seek redress for injury caused by climate change. Another challenge is the lack of finance for capacity building. The youth need training in various developmental activities, of which climate and environmental issues are central. Another challenge is how to integrate climate and environmental issues into the educa-

tional curriculum. Most of the educational content that students are learning today is no longer relevant to dealing with current developmental challenges.

Another challenge is to do with transfer of indigenous knowledge and integrating it with modern knowledge. As highlighted by Dr Henry Mohoo in his presentation (AfricaAdapt Symposium, Ethiopia 9th to 12th March 2011), that indigenous knowledge is under threat from disappearing and also key indicators for indigenous knowledge (e.g. plant and animal species) are under the risk of disappearing. These present challenges to the transfer of indigenous knowledge to the youth. Another challenge is low social capital, which will translate itself into low social capacity to participate actively in developmental projects. Social capital as has been noted is the glue that hold societies together, ensuring the strengthening of both bridging and bonding social capital will be of importance in sharing information and knowledge amongst the youth. Another challenge is to do with gender inequality. Gender inequality has been noted to be visible at all age groups, from the young up to the old between men and women. These differences in access to and use of resources and technologies, is a serious challenge to the achievement of a climate resilient development. Another challenge for the youth is poverty, which is further worsened by climate change. Because most households in Africa are dependant on agriculture, any unfavourable occurrences in this sector directly translates itself as more poverty, which would mean limited resources to meet basic needs. Also compounding this problem is the global recession and the emergence of climate change which has seen a reduction in the amount of resources allocated to the youth empowerment initiatives both at the national and international levels.

4 The youth are necessary for a climate resilient development

However, the youth run the risk of them also contributing to climate change and failing to mitigate it, just as past generations have been doing. In order for the youth to actively and meaningful participate and influence development into the direction of climate resilient development it is important that they understand these issues and the challenges to their achievement. Given this scenario, there is need to allow the youth to actively participate in addressing the climate change problems, not as victims but more importantly as solution providers. It is in this context that the African youth should be recognised (not only on paper) as an age group with a lot of potential in addressing the climate change problem which spans within and across generations. Climate change as has been stated before is one of the biggest development challenges, and as such sustainable and climate resilient development will not

be achieved unless proper climate change adaptation and mitigation is adopted.

Successful adaptation requires information and understanding of future change, knowledge around adaptation options, the ability to assess them, and the capacity to implement the most suitable interventions (ACCRA, 2010). Norgaard (2009) noted that even though knowledge has increased over time, existing work on knowledge and concern regarding climate change indicates that the public lack information and knowledge about climate change, and this lack of information and knowledge is a barrier to social action.

The Climate Change Conference held in Cancun, Mexico in 2010, had outcomes which included the “Cancun Agreements” that cover the main elements of the Bali Action Plan (BAP), namely: a shared vision for long-term cooperative action; adaptation; mitigation; finance; technology; and capacity building (Akanle, Appleton, Kulovesi, & Recio, 2010). These elements differ but are related as they require cooperation between countries (developed and developing; developing and developing; and developed and developed), they require action at international and local level, and efforts from all people (across age and gender). The successful implementation of all these elements, require everyone’ participation, which calls for the active participation of the youth; it is in the youth that today and tomorrow’s development foundation is anchored. Arts (2009) noted that while children are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, it is rare to hear their concerns, expressions and voices in relevant negotiations or decisions on legal and other arrangements made to address climate change.

Just like in athletics, in a relay race, if an athlete does not pass or passes the wrong baton or passes the right baton in a wrong way, that team will not win the race, this also applies to the climate resilient development scenario. In order for the world in general and Africa in particular to achieve climate resilient development, there is a need create an appropriate packages for climate change adaptation and mitigation for different groups and the youth in particular. If the youth are not actively involved in the current climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, they themselves when they pass the youth stage will keep on doing the same old ways which have been found to go against the objective of climate resilient development.

As YPARD representatives in climate change discussions we say **“Acclimatise them young, towards a climate resilient development.”** Besides the enormous challenges that the youth face, the youth can meaningfully contribute towards a climate resilient development, provided an enabling environment is created. There is

need for the following initiatives:

- Creating awareness amongst the youth about
 - What is climate change? What are the causes and effects? What are some of climate change adaptation options? How can the youth participate in climate change mitigation?
- Creating youth networks across Africa; so that they can be able to exchange information and ideas. What worked/ failed to work in one area can be useful in other areas.
- Encouraging behaviour change especially in consumption patterns and care for the environment and the climate.
- Youth participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.
- Capacity building in various developmental activities.
- Providing the youth with education that is relevant to current developmental challenges. They should be encouraged to learn and use Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to overcome some of the current developmental challenges.

5. Selected Links to Climate Adaption:

- AfricaAdapt network <http://www.africa-adapt.net>
- Africa Adaption Programme (UNDP) <http://www.undp-adaptation.org/>
- Climate Change Policy & Practice <http://climate-l.iisd.org/>
- Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA) research and capacity development program <http://www.idrc.ca/ccaa/>
- Climate Change and Development: A joint UNDP-UNEP programme <http://www.ccdare.org/>
- CommonClimate Initiative global YOUTH action for our climate and our future <http://youthclimate.org.uk/>
- Gateway to the UN System's Work on Climate Change <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/gateway>
- It's Getting Hot In Here Dispatches from the Youth Climate Movement <http://itsgettinghotinhere.org/>
- UN Training Service Platform on Climate Change <http://www.uncclearn.org/>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) <http://unfccc.int/>
- United Nations Environment Programme <http://www.unep.org/>
- Unite for Climate - youth powered solutions <http://unite4climate.org/>

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Contacts:

Shakespeare Mudombi mudombis@yahoo.com
Emmanuel Nzeyimana emmavlad@yahoo.fr
Anke Weisheit ankeweisheit@web.de



