

INCEPTION WORKSHOP ON THE PROJECT:

“Empowering Women as key Leaders in Promoting Community-based Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risks Reduction Initiatives in Niger Delta Region”

Precious Palm Royal Hotel, Benin City, December 3-5, 2018



SUMMARY REPORT

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Introduction

One of the regions in Nigeria that is being negatively affected by climate change is the Niger Delta region. Over 90% of oil production activities in Nigeria take place in the region, which spans through the uplands to the deep sea. Oil explorations in the region has led to environmental degradation of monumental dimensions. Of serious concern is the enormous and consistent gas flaring which has been taking place in the Niger Delta region since the inception of oil production in Nigeria. Traditionally, agriculture (crop farming and livestock rearing) and fishing are the main sources of livelihood in the Niger Delta region. Both the uplands (dry land) as well as wetlands are cultivated. Farmers in the Niger Delta, particularly wetland farmers, operate between two extreme conditions- flooding and drought -which are associated with changes in climate. Delta state which is situated in the Niger Delta flood plain on the coast of Nigeria is particularly vulnerable to these impacts and has been experiencing the detrimental effects of climate change. A large number of the coastal towns in the state have already been displaced by flooding induced by rise sea level.

On the other hand, rural communities in this region have developed effective community-based risk reduction and adaptation strategies often initiated and led by women who play crucial roles in building the social infrastructures that make such adaptation possible. Women's individual and collective knowledge and experience in natural resource management at the household and community levels in this region equip them with distinctive skills in adaptation and disaster risks reduction efforts. Supporting and empowering women and girls to adopt and adapt climate change strategies in innovative ways based on current and future evidence will not only give them ownership but also the confidence to take leadership of the process. It is in this context that the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* in collaboration with *Intervention Council for Women in Africa (ICWA)* and the *Delta state Government through its Ministry of Environment (DMoE)* applied for and granted funding support from the *International Development Research Centre* to implement a project on empowering women and girls in the promotion of climate change adaption and risk reduction initiative in Delta state.

This report, therefore, captures the proceedings of a three-day inception workshop of the research project titled "*Empowering Women as Key Leaders in Promoting Community-based Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risks Reduction Initiatives in Niger Delta Region*". The forum which was organised by *CPED* in collaboration with *ICWA* and *DMoE* focused on building the capacity of the research team members and junior researchers on the strategies for implementation of the climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction project in Delta state.

The three-day capacity building workshop held in Precious Palm Royal Hotel, 3-4-5, December 2018, brought to bear timely, relevant and new knowledge among the project researchers and other key stakeholders in the implementation of the project with a view to increasing understanding of the varied impacts of, responses to, and adaptations to climate change in rural communities to enable identification of effective and affordable community-based approaches. It was organized to further identify and consolidate the reference points for tracking progress, validating targets and gathering more information that will inform implementation of the research project.

This report highlights some key messages and lessons from the different thematic discussions during the workshop.

Opening Plenary and Presentation of Project Proposal to Stakeholders

In his opening remarks, the session chairman **Prof. Akpochafo** emphasized the need to arm women with the right kind of knowledge to enable them play active roles in combating the environmental challenges faced by their respective communities. The need to integrate women in decision making especially on issues that bother around climate change was well stressed by the panelists. The keynote speaker **Prof. Omuta** made it clear that although climate change is gender neutral, the project team must recognize the power dynamics that exist in the region and therefore must make deliberate efforts to ensure that women **avail** themselves to be empowered by the project. In her opening remarks **Dr. Melanie Robertson**, spoke on the long standing relationship and collaboration between IDRC and CPED for the past decades on different projects, including peace building, global health and climate change. She enjoined the project team to think beyond just generating data but rather to seek to close the gap that still exist in influencing policy with research evidence.

During the project proposal presentation the principal investigator **Prof. Emeritus Onokerhoraye** gave insight into the objectives, focus and the methodology of the project. During his presentation the following points came out very strongly, which demonstrate the readiness of the project team and the collaborating partners to successfully implement the community-based action research project in Delta state:

- Women's unique capacities and contributions to adaptation have not been well recognized and documented in the Niger Delta region.
- Adequate capacity-building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness to respond to post-disaster situations in the Niger Delta region.
- The general objective of the project is to contribute to socially-equitable development in Niger Delta region by promoting women-led, community-based initiatives on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction
- The four key components of the action research project include: **Knowledge development, Pilot activities, Capacity building and Knowledge translation**
- Community members will be empowered to play key roles in the delivery of services in the communities on climate change adaptation.
- Considerable attention will be devoted to working with policy makers both at the local, state and national levels as a way of influencing the adoption of the recommendations emanating from the program
- The project recognises the dominant position of men in rural society due to the prevailing unequal norms, roles, and dynamics that hamper women and girls' participation in decision making. The project will examine men's multiple roles and how they can be part of the solutions to climate change adaptation so as to put the expected leadership role of women in proper perspective.
- The project is being implemented in 10 out of the 25 Local Government Areas of Delta state as follows: Warri South, Isoko South, Burutu, Patani, Ethiope East, Ughelli South, Sapele, Ika South, Aniocha North and Ndokwa East.
- A combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques will be employed to generate relevant knowledge on existing public response to climate change and identification of community-driven adaptation strategies and disaster risks reduction in the Niger Delta region.

- Appropriate and specific adaptation activities to be carried out in pilot intervention communities will be identified after the baseline research in each target LGA.
- The project will facilitate the establishment of sustainable platforms of interaction between policy makers, researchers, women leaders and other stakeholders through the establishment of Project Steering Committees and Project Management Committees both at the state and local levels.
- The project has been designed to promote social and gender equity in that the most vulnerable group (women and girls) are the key targets in project location. The project seeks to ensure participation of persons with disability in all activities – both as agents of change and beneficiaries.

Vulnerability and Adaptation - Session

This session was designed to elicit new knowledge and empirical observation on vulnerability to climate change especially with respect to the farming population and community-based adaptation approaches and risk reduction initiatives being deployed by the local community members over the years.

The first speaker in this session **Dr. Atedhor** stated that it was important to bear in mind socio-economic stressors such as access to weather forecasts, improved crop varieties, and credit facilities when considering vulnerability to climate change in addition to climatic stimuli such as heat waves, change in rainfall pattern, flooding and drought. He further stressed that Niger Delta region is Africa's largest wetland and the third largest in the world. He, however said that the region elevation is averagely lower than 100m above sea level which predisposed the people in the region to perennial flooding due to changing rainfall patterns and rise in sea level, thereby threatening livelihood of the people in the region. Although the region is rich in crude oil and natural gas reserve, a large proportion of the people are poor and depend on environment-based income activities such as farming, fishing and hunting. The second speaker **Prof. (Mrs.) Ikelegbe**, opined in her presentation that rural farmers in the communities of Niger Delta region are still finding ways to grapple with the changing climate. In her view most farmers in the region are yet to know, understand and adapt to the changing weather conditions. According to her, there is need to build their capacity to be able to respond to these needs, especially the women folks. **Prof. Odjugo** presentation captured various adaptation measures and risk reduction initiatives currently being adopted by rural communities in responding to climate change impact, to include both planned and autonomous techniques. According to him, the autonomous adaptation measures which are very visible varies from one locality to another.

Key Emerging Issues Highlighted

- Women and the girl children are vulnerable to water-borne diseases (e.g. Schistosomiasis or Bilharzias is) as they are more exposed to contaminated water in the rural areas.
- Delay in the onset of rains cause huge losses to the farmers, as crops planted are scorched by the sun. This lead to remarkable decline in total yield from farms.
- The decline in farm yields exacerbate the poverty challenges of the region as continued supplies of agricultural products from farms cannot be assured.

- Women are veritable agents for the promotion of climate change adaptation because of their active role and engagement in environment-based livelihood activities.

Some of the adaptation mechanisms identified for addressing hazards and mitigating climate change impact include:

- Early planting and early harvest using improved varieties
- Fast maturing species of crops such as cassava are now being planted in early January/February to mature before the peak of the rainy season
- Mixed cropping is now being practiced and should be encouraged
- Use of sandbags as embankment on the river banks
- Use of bamboo stakes to divert excess water/ runoff to prevent damage to crops.
- Use of mocking bridge (popularly known as Monkey Bridge)
- Digging and netting of earthen ponds to prevent fish escape
- Construction of shoreline protection and drainage systems
- Piling and construction of market stalls etc.
- Construction of coastal/shore protection and sand filling
- Construction of concrete flood barriers

Key Actionable Recommendations

- Women need to be equipped and given the right climate change information in order to enhance their adaptive capacity given the level of magnitude of climate change impact.
- The project should seek to influence policy/decision makers to revamp and strengthen agricultural extension services in order to bridge the gap that exist between research and the farming population especially at the rural levels.
- The project should consider sustainable climate change adaptation model that can be managed and deployed in the short term of the project period in order to create impact.

Women, Climate Change and Leadership - Session

Prof. (Mrs.) Okoro who chaired this session reiterates the session's objectives to include identifying women's potentials in responding to climate change adaptation strategies and the role women can play in reducing disasters and risks induced by changes in climatic conditions. The first speaker in this session, **Prof. (Mrs.) Nwoye** recognized women to be better managers of natural resources, caretakers of their communities and champions in the promotion of community-based initiatives, including working to reduce poverty and protecting the environment.

“Women shape behaviour and transmit culture and knowledge through social networks, which are critical to risk prevention and response efforts. If women of the Niger Delta region are empowered to play bigger roles in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction initiatives more people will benefit from improved livelihoods and disaster reduction preparedness”.....Prof. Nwoye

The second speaker in this session **Prof. (Mrs.) Ogisi** asserted that in the rural areas where occupations and sources of livelihoods are agriculture and agro related, women are the main players. Women and girls have the mind set and in line with expectation from society to ensure food is available for the family.

Despite these potentials, the work of women remains unseen, unrecognized and undervalued. Women have become victims of work overload, gender disparity, discrimination and are exposed to all kinds of sexual abuses. They are neither involved in policy making nor implementation, the speakers noted.

The speakers identified some discriminating factors that inhibit women from playing key roles as leaders and promoters of change initiatives in their various communities, to include:



- Discrimination in family & tradition- all power rests with men
- Male-child Bias- son keeps assets in the family and girls left with nothing
- Resources Control-misallocation in the distribution of resources & talents
- Leadership/Political Rights- non-participation in public policy making/reforms

Identified Needs for Successful Project Implementation

- Capacity building and empowerment for women in the rural communities
- Clear, efficient and target oriented methodologies for transforming women into decision makers need to be developed
- Strengthen women's rights and bridge the equality gap between women and men
- Build the women's capacity on how the agricultural land could be used differently
- Re-position women to become agents of change in their communities rather than helpless victims
- Strengthen the women's capacities to access and utilize agricultural technologies and practices to mitigate the potential effect of climate change on their harvest.

Stakeholders Participation in Action Research- Session

This session focused on the different strategies for engaging grassroots population in action research to get their buy-in and support. The first speaker in this session **Engr. Eronmhonsele** emphasized the benefits of effectively engaging and involving grassroots population in research projects to include:

- Allows for the joint identification of needs
- It makes the target population to understand the relevance and promote acceptance
- Encourages public input and feedback mechanism and proof that stakeholders viewpoints and preferences are being considered
- Build trust between implementers and the community groups which can possibly lead to long-term collaborative relationships.
- Create a sense of ownership of project in local people so that it is likely to continue in the long run
- Promote sustainability of the community-based research initiative

Dr. Dudu, the second speaker in this session stressed the need to effectively mobilized women, and the key steps that can be adopted in rallying them for action of this nature. He highlighted these strategies to include:

- Inclusion of men during mobilization (*Total Mobilization*)
- Being culturally and religiously sensitive to the needs and believes of the people
- Establishment of grand rules with community leaders before involving women

Key Factors to Bear in Mind

- **Timing of engagement-** engage key stakeholders outside the period of their normal daily economic activities if possible
- **Selection of Communities-** Select from communities that were friendly and receptive during mobilization
- **Gender Balance-** ensure different relevant groups are involved
- **Ethical Issues-** Be polite and firm when enforcing ethical orders

Engaging Policy Makers in Research- Session

This session was designed to explore effective strategies for engaging policy/decision makers at various level of governance in order to facilitate uptake of research recommendations and evidence use. **Prof. Omuta** who made the first presentation in this session considered two important concepts in knowledge translation efforts: Knowledge exchange and Knowledge brokerage. According to the speaker organizations involved in generating knowledge to informed policymaking must adopt an inclusiveness approach from the inception of any project. He emphasizes the need to widen the net of inclusiveness to all vulnerable groups that are often left out in the policy influencing processes. The speaker also shared his experience of the various strategies used in other research projects of CPED that helped to facilitate uptake and utilization of research recommendations, to include, setting up steering committees and management committees at the state level which created space where citizens are invited not only as recipients of knowledge but producers as well. **Dr. Onojeta**, a policy maker in Delta state in his presentation, shared his experience of government use of research recommendations and uptake. He emphasized inclusion of various policy actors in the research process as a veritable strategy to get government and those who decide and implement policies to consider and use any evidence emanating from research. According to the speaker, actionable policy recommendations from research evidence that are in consonant with government manifestos are those that are more likely to be considered. He noted that change in government is likely to further slow the process of knowledge transfer and

therefore recommends building the capacity of policy makers in the project so that they are able to manage, adopt and replicate recommendations.

Most Promising Practices

- Develop research questions in partnership with decision-makers/key stakeholders
- Involve policy/decision makers from inception of the project
- Develop relationships that make researchers, policy makers and other stakeholder co-producers and co-owners of research results
- Co-create policy briefs and occasion papers and other communication and evidence dissemination materials
- Strengthen the capacities of policy/decision makers for evidence use.

Strategies for Women Empowerment- Session

It has been said that when women are empowered they are better positioned to play key roles in climate change risk reduction and adaptation initiatives. To this end, **Dr. Dudu** who made presentation in this session re-echoed the need to include men in the empowerment process for the success of the project. He noted that cultural barriers and traditional norms preclude women from exclusively undertaking functions and actions in their respective communities. But when the men and community leadership are involved in the process, it will encourage the women to openly volunteer to become champions and change agents rather than be seen as assuming positions which traditions see as men's job, he added. **Mrs. John-Abebe** supports the assertion that rural women in the communities of Nigeria's Niger Delta region, to a large extent, depend on their men for decision making, even on their behalf. She examined some strategies that have worked well in empowering women in rural communities and to promote gender equality, to include:

- Building their capacity on income generation activities
- Prioritize women, especially girl child education
- Training for women on modern farming skills

Some Reflections and key Factors to Consider

- Understand community dynamics and hierarchy
- Respect the culture of the community
- Identify local institution and Allies that can help drive the process

Research Communication and Dissemination- Session

This session focused on best practices that can be adopted in communicating project findings for the purpose of influencing policy. **Dr. Akpomera** who presented in this session noted that disconnection still exist between research and the public, whereas, the degree of success in research depends on how well its findings are communicated to key stakeholders, **Engr. Eronmhonsele** noted. He further mentioned that as each project is unique, so are its target audience. The speakers,

therefore, emphasized that deliberate efforts must be made to design and adopt appropriate communication strategies in reaching these key stakeholders. The key questions to ask would be:

- Who are the target audience?
- What do the audience need to know?
- How are they involved in the implementation process?
- What are the specific interests/practices to be addressed?

The presenters also showcased sections from the CPED policy engagement and communication strategy document where it emphasized methods of capturing key target audience to influence with research outcomes and recommendations (*Actors Analysis Framework*). This framework which has been used in many other CPED research projects will be modified to be used in the current climate change project. Other strategies identified for engaging stakeholders with research outcome include:

- Policy briefing meetings
- Policy workshops/seminars
- Community meetings/dialog
- Feedback meetings, e. t. c.
- Website/Social media platforms

The guiding principle in the development of various policy documents for communicating the research results (Newsletter, policy briefs, policy paper, monograph, research article, media briefs, e. t. c.) would be:

- Keep the message simple
- Keep the message brief
- Identify the right people (target audience)
- Use the right channel that is appropriate for a specific audience
- Get the right support
- Make the recommendations actionable
- Follow-up interest shown

Prof. Oladipupo who also **made a presentation** in this session emphasized the need to align the design of the questionnaires with the objectives of the research. According him, this will help to facilitate coding and analysis.

General Reflections- Session

This session organised in fish bowl setting provided opportunity for the participants to reflect on the emerging issues that surfaced during the three-day event. The key points noted during the discussion are highlighted below:

- Early engagement of stakeholders and insistence on “I CAN” mentality for women will lead to a successful implementation
- Both women and men should be engaged even though the target population is the women.
- Strengthening collaboration between research and policy makers will facilitate uptake of the research recommendations

- Inter-ministerial collaboration in the implementation of the project should be encouraged
- Inclusiveness of women in all stages of the implementation would help to build their capacity
- Nigeria Meteorological Agency should be involved in the project execution as they have climatic data in various regions that can be utilized in the implementation of the project
- Women should be seen as agents of change rather than victims of circumstances
- There is need to make the programme understandable by policy makers and research assistants should be well trained in data collection
- The project should consider sustainable climate change adaptation model that can be managed and deployed in the short term of the project period
- There is need to strengthen women's capacities to access and utilize agricultural technologies and practices to mitigate the potential effect of climate change

Conclusion

At the end of the three-day workshop on building the capacity of the research team to implement the climate change project, it was apparent that the team's interest have been galvanized and are well ready to move to action in the implementation of the process. The presentations and interactions during the sessions further demonstrated that the communities in the Niger Delta region are highly vulnerable to impacts of climate change. However, the people in the region have practiced some community-based adaptation and risk reduction strategies over the years which can be improved upon and replicated. These strategies are often initiated and led by women who play crucial roles in building the social fabric that make such adaptation possible. The workshop recommends considering building the capacity of the target population on sustainable climate change adaptation model that can be managed and deployed in the short term of the project period in order to create impact. It also recommends strengthening collaboration between research and policy makers which will in turn facilitate acceptance of the research recommendations and a sense of ownership of the project by the local people as it becomes sustainable.

Appendix A: Workshop Attendance List

Climate Change Project Inception Workshop Participants list

S/N	Name of Participants	Affiliation/Organisation/Category	Contact
1	Professor Williams P. Akpochafo	Member, CPED Board of Trustees	wilakosefj@yahoo.com
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Appendix B: Workshop Photographs



Project PO Dr. Melanie Commenting on a Presentation



Project PO Dr. Melanie Making a Profound Remarks during Opening



Project PI Commenting on a Presentation made by Prof. Ogisi



Project Team Members and PO in Group Photograph After 1st Plenary



Participants in Panel Session to Discuss Highlights of the Workshop



One of the Project Mentees Commenting on a Presentation