

Policy workshop report on the project Titled “Empowering Women as Key Leaders in Promoting Community-based Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risks Reduction Initiatives in Niger Delta Region”

September 28, 2021 via Zoom

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Introduction

This policy workshop was organized by CPED and was the last activity of the above project which lasted for three years. It was an action research project implemented in 10 LGAs of Delta state namely *Aniocha North, Ika South, Ethiope East, Ndokwa East, Isoko South, Sapele, Warri South, Burutu, Patani & Ughelli South*. The project which was implemented by the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* in collaboration with *Intervention Council for Women in Africa (ICWA)* and the Delta State Government through the Ministry of Environment (DMoE) was financially supported by the *International Development Research Centre (IDRC)*, a crown corporation of the Government of Canada.

The policy workshop which took place via zoom, provided an avenue for policy experts and scholars to debate, cross-examine, and re-evaluate problems that are directly relevant to public policy, allowing government decision-makers to put their ideas to the test. Present at the workshop were directors in the ministries of environment, agriculture and natural resources, and health, representatives of some departments in 10 LGs councils, project team members, project mentees, project staff, members of the Community Project Implementation Committees (CPIC), research assistants, representatives of some media houses, representatives of some CSOs and others.

Workshop Opening

The policy workshop started with the introduction of the different categories of participants by the Deputy Executive Director (DED) of CPED, Engr. Job Eronmhonsele. He also intimated the participants on what they should expect in the workshop by giving an overview of the agenda for the day.

Welcome Remarks

The welcome remarks and project brief was given by the Chairman, Board of Trustees (BOT) of CPED, Professor Gideon E. D. Omuta. The BoT chairman welcomed invited participants to the workshop and encouraged everyone to feel relaxed and enjoy the proceedings. In his brief remarks on the climate change project, Prof. Omuta alluded to the fact that Nigeria like other Africa countries is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, particularly as it relates to agriculture and rural living. He further explained that the problems of coastal erosion in the Niger Delta was caused by sea-level rise, which has led to myriad of problems like floods, intrusion of sea-water into fresh water sources which had been affecting agriculture, fisheries, settlements and general livelihoods. On while the project had to focus on the women and girls, Prof. Omuta stated

that although disasters pose threats to everyone in their paths, they often have distinctly harsher impacts on women and girls due to their heavy reliance on climate-vulnerable natural resources, limited asset based and reduced access to adaptive measures. In his conclusion, Prof. Omuta encouraged the policy and decision makers virtually present to please consider how the learnings from the completed climate change project can help them to implement their policies and programmes on climate change in their various states and localities.

First Symposium: Brief Report of the Project Baseline Research

Prof. May Nwoye took over the platform to give a brief on the project methodology and climate change awareness among rural dwellers in Delta state. She depicted that the project was carried out in 3 ecological zones in Delta state and that the LGAs targeted in Mangrove Swamp ecological zone were in Delta South Senatorial District, those in Freshwater Swamp were in Delta Central Senatorial District while those in Lowland Forest zone were in Delta North Senatorial District. In regards to the baseline data collected, Prof. Nwonye said a total of 4,000 successfully completed household questionnaires were retrieved, cleaned up and used for the quantitative data analysis while a total of 107 key informants, with at least ten (10) identified in each LGA were also retrieved and used for the qualitative analysis. She further stated that findings of the survey showed that about 90 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had knowledge of the occurrence of climate change and that majority of the respondents perceived that these changes in climatic variables affect their agricultural products as well as a decline in the availability of forest products.

Thereafter, Dr. Johnson Dudu took the stage to present on ‘Impact of Climate Change on Community Health and Food Security in Delta State, Nigeria’. In his presentation, Dr. Johnson highlighted the drivers of climate change and their indicators in Delta state. He stated that his research showed that the impact of climate change on health in the rural areas in Delta state includes: increased incidences of malaria and diarrhea particularly on children, excessive heat, extended transmission seasons of vector - borne diseases and variation on their geographic range. On the area of food security, Dr. Johnson affirmed that the climate change is having its negative toll on food security in the Niger Delta region. Some of these impacts according to him included but not limited to agricultural losses, annual ritual of financial losses, increased infertility of soil, wastage of farm inputs, increased in price of food items, e.t.c.

Second Symposium: Brief Report of the Capacity Building and Intervention Strategies and Outcomes

The Executive Director of CPED and the climate change project principal investigator, Prof. A.G. Onokerhoraye took the centre stage to give a presentation on ‘Mentorship and Capacity Building of Project Team’. The P.I. revealed that team members’ knowledge were enhanced on the challenges of climate change in Niger Delta with special reference to women groups in rural communities. He said the team members were also empowered on how to engage with the policymakers to implement action research projects which would lead to adopting policy recommendations. For the junior academics, the P.I. stated that they were mentored on the design of survey instruments and collection of primary and secondary data on the impact of climate change on rural communities in Niger Delta and also on how to write good publications in peer reviewed journals. The P.I. also stated that four (4) project staff capacity were also built on working

with community-based women groups and other stakeholders to implement interventions on adaptation to climate change and disaster risks reduction. In concluding his presentation, the P.I. revealed that two (2) M.Sc. students were mentored on publications in peer reviewed journals and had also finished their postgraduate studies.

The next presenter, a member of the project staff and a gender officer in CPED, Ms. Mercy Edejeghwro, presented on 'Working with Women and Girls'. In her presentation, she explained that CPED engaged the women and girls in the implementation of the project. To achieve this, she said that CPED mobilized existing social groups in the communities and the various groups were brought together to form a coalition for social change referred to Community Project Implementation Committee (CPIC). According to her, about 2-3 members who are leaders of the functional social groups were nominated to form the various CPICs which consist of 25 members in each community with about 65-70 percent of women representation. Ms. Mercy stated that upon establishment of the CPIC and consequent identification of climate change adaptation measures appropriate for each community, the CPIC members in each target community were trained. This she said was to assist the farming population to practice climate-smart agriculture. Concluding her presentation, Ms. Mercy highlighted some of the immediate results of engaging with the CPICs which included the following;

- that women farmers have now been empowered in the target communities to understand the basic issues involved in climate change adaptation and that they have also acquired skills needed to participate in the adoption of various adaptation approaches;
- that the climate change adaptation training has fostered interactive dialogues between women leaders and the community members to create a collective vision of desired future conditions with respect to responding to climate change and disaster reduction with appropriate activities;
- that women and other stakeholders are already applying the skills acquired which have led to increased farm yields and;
- that the gender training received by members of the CPICs have encouraged and sustained active participation and cooperation of both men and women in the communities.

The presentation that followed was 'Working with Men and Community Leaders' and was presented by Engr. Osagie Aitokhuehi, a mentee and a member of the Project staff. In his presentation, he highlighted some of the society norms in the rural communities that tend to put the women at the disadvantage. On why the men had to be included in the project, Engr. Osagie said finds show that the men are very powerful in the rural communities, and therefore to ensure that women play key roles in promoting community-based climate change adaptation and DRRI, the men had to be carried along. He said the men were included in the formation of Community Project Implementation Committee (CPIC). According to him, the men in the CPICs were trained on gender equality, equity and mainstreaming as it concerns climate change adaptation. He stated that the trainings provided opportunities for the men to reflect on, discuss and challenge their own perceptions, values, beliefs and behaviours through sharing ideas with others. Also as part of the training, the presenter explained that the men were also trained to become change agents and peer-educators. He further stated that the training and mentorship, was to help them become a recognized advocacy group that would address some of the gender biased practices and behaviours

in their fellowmen and to support the women in the climate change project. Thereafter, a video interview of some CPIC men in some target communities was shown. In the interview, the men were seen responding to some questions which included:

- How the men in their respective community have been supporting their women and girls;
- If there is inclusiveness in the decision making process in their communities and;
- And how have they been working as peer-educators in their respective community.

The fourth presenter in the second symposium was Mrs. Ireroturi Iyamba who is a research staff of CPED and also a member of the project staff. She presented on 'Working with Network/Coalition of Women and policy makers at local levels'. She talked about the establishment of a network known as Coalition of Niger Delta Women on Climate Change Adaptation with the acronym (CONDWOCCA), a network formed in-line with one of the project objectives of the project. In forming the network, Mrs. Iroro made it clear that the network was formed by selecting two women from each of the 10 project communities as well as one female policy actor at the local Government level for each of the community represented, making it a total number of 30 members. Regarding the purpose of the network, she stated unequivocally that the network is to contribute to equitable development in the Niger Delta region by promoting women coalition to lead climate change adaptation. She further stated that members of the network are to work with Policy/decision makers to support formulation and implementation of policies on climate change adaptation. As a major outcome emanating from the network, the presenter said that it has become the voice for women in their various communities, as they have been engaging community leaders, elders and local authority by advocating for women's inclusion in matters concerning climate change issues as well as improving the exchange of information among women on adaptation. In her conclusion, Mrs. Iroro by way of recommendation, implore the various Governments both at the state and local level to collaborate with the already established climate change network in order to achieve climate resilient communities.

The last but not the least presentation was from a member of the project team and a permanent secretary in Delta state, Dr. Francis Onojeta who presented on 'Working with Policy/Decision Makers for Sustainability-the Way Forward'. In his introduction, Dr. Francis stated that climate change is the greatest environmental challenge that the world has ever faced. He said that so many of the world's biggest challenges, from poverty to wildlife extinction, are made more difficult by climate change, and things will get worse if we do nothing. He applauded CPED and the IDRC for the work they have done in the area of climate change in Delta state. On working with the policy/decision makers, Dr. Francis stated that series of meetings were held with the commissioners of Environment and his Permanent secretary, Local government chairmen of 10 target LGAs and heads of environment, health and agricultures in the 10 target LGAs at different stages of the project. He said that the meetings held at different fora helped to intimate them of the findings from the field and also to let them know the interventions on ground by CPED. He said the Delta state government through the ministry of environment is aware of some of these solution-based interventions and has promised to look at them and scale-up these interventions in all LGAs in the state. On the network i.e. Coalition of Niger Delta Women on Climate Change Adaptation with the acronym (CONDWOCCA), Dr. Francis applauded CPED and stated that the network

formed on climate change is the first of its kind in Delta state and even in Nigeria at large. He said machineries are already in place by the Delta government through the ministry of environment to ensure its sustainability and also ensure that it is scaled-up to include the remaining 15 LGAs in Delta state.

After the last presentation of the second symposium, it was followed by discussion and comments section as seen below.

Commenter 1: A participant advised CPED to also come to the aid of other LGAs and communities that were not captured in the project. In response to the comment, a team member made it clear that the project was just a pilot study and that if there are more funding it will be scaled-up to other communities and LGAs in Delta state.

Commenter 2: A participant asked of what the women are doing differently in leading community-based climate change in their respective communities? In a quick response to the question, a project staff answered by saying that most of the target communities now have improved crop varieties and crop diversification is now been practiced in these communities.

Commenter 3: A question was asked if the challenges posed by climate change in rural areas are same as those in urban areas. A project team member responded that the effects of climate change in the rural and urban communities differs and also the challenges they pose to gender such as lack of information and many others are different. Also responding to the question, a member of the mentees in the project responded by saying that the project is skewed towards the rural areas because most of the climate change challenges are mostly on rural areas and these areas are majorly involved in agriculture and farming.

Closing Remark

The closing remark was given by a member of the project team Prof. Mrs. Dicta Ogisi who commended the presenters and thanked all the various levels of participants for their time and patience.

Prof Dicta Ogisi... Prof Dicta Ogisi, NG	CPED	Dr. Johnson Egbemudia Dudu	V. S. Balogun	Timodošky
Edejeghwro Mercy	Eronmhonele	Ekhosuehi Oghator	Emamuzo Agba... Emamuzo Agbanye	Osagie Atolhuehi
Flora	Iloroturi (CPED)	Prof. Emeritus Onoks	Prof. A.O Oladip... Prof. A.O Oladipupo	Patience Aika
Omuta-BOT	Okobia nkechi deborah	TECNO SPARK 5 Air	Purity Onosiakpor	Mary Igharo
Briggs Vivian	Itua Osasunmhen- WJF	Princewill	Eddy Akpomera	Sandra Obi

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