

# Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation in Africa

WORKSHOP REPORT



## PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CCAA AND ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTING AT-RISK GROUPS

Dakar, July 26–27, 2007

August 2007

## #1. CONTEXT

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Africa is generally acknowledged to be the continent most vulnerable to climate change. This is in large measure due to weak institutional capacity, limited engagement in environmental and adaptation issues, and a lack of validation of local knowledge.

One of the CCAA program's main strategies to address these vulnerabilities is to build the capacity of African research institutions to help to develop, through participatory methods, local climate change adaptation strategies.

For this effort to be meaningful, research must respond to demand from local populations for improved adaptation practices. This demand is being fuelled by the fact that in recent years, local organizations in Africa have grown stronger and more structured in their efforts.

In fact, Africa's organizational growth these past few years has been characterized by efforts to build community organizations at the local, national and regional level.

This organizational growth, which was reactive rather than proactive in the economic environment of its early days (broad cut-backs in state funding in the 1990s), has resulted in improved structure. Community-based organizations (CBOs) now carry considerable weight when dealing with service providers interested in their environment.

In the context of adapting to climate change, the CCAA program both supports research activities and solicits them, seeking to ensure that research responds to local demand for adaptation strategies and information. In other words, it seeks to give local organizations the opportunity to participate in identifying root problems and their solutions based on the participatory principles of action research.

This poses a number of challenges.

What strategies do local populations have to address climate variability and change? What opportunities are there to build on existing strategies and to consolidate appropriate and sustainable initiatives? What factors are preventing these initiatives from being carried out on a large scale and efficiently?

How can these local experiences be mapped and documented so that appropriate adaptation projects can be extracted from them and supported? Who are the main players and institutional backers?

In short, what is the demand for adaptation practices regarding climate variability and change?

CCAA convened a meeting of community-based organizations on July 26-27, 2007, to address these issues and to reflect on the types of activity that could strengthen partnership between CCAA and community-based organizations (CBOs).

## **#2. HOW THE WORKSHOP TOOK PLACE**

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Thirteen participants attended the workshop from institutions representing West African CBOs and the traditional administration that supports grass-roots organizations as well as local farmers. The list of participants is attached below.

The workshop lasted a day and a half and was organized in two phases.

- A presentation on the CCAA program, on the role of at-risk groups in the program's mandate, and the results expected from this workshop.
- Open discussions on ways of developing and emphasizing local adaptation experiences, pinpointing communities' demand and activating the partnership between the CCAA program and CBOs.

### **#3. SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS**

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The format chosen for the workshop was an open discussion of specific issues. The objective was to gain as much information as possible, and learn the positions of grass-roots organizations and their needs, in order to offer adaptation practices that meet the needs of vulnerable groups. The discussions highlighted the following key elements:

#### **A. What do we know about climate change?**

*“That the rains come later in the year is the first clue to weather variations.”  
Farmer participant*

*“It’s almost the end of July and there is still no rain.”  
Farmer participant*

Rural Africa is faced with multi-faceted problems that wreak havoc on its economic and social development. Vulnerable groups need a better understanding of the economic and social stakes so they can factor in the further deterioration that climate change threatens to their circumstances. The key elements to having more people participate in adaptation practices are a better understanding of

- the robustness of the local ecology and socio-economic systems and
- the communities’ knowledge of the problems confronting people from grass-roots and the existing adaptation efforts.

According to community based organizations, the local groups are experiencing climate change even though they have not considered its deeper implications.

The late arrival of winter, the drying-up in April of a river in Bobo Dioulasso that usually flows year-round, the seasonal shifting of the “mango rains” and of the cotton-sowing period in Burkina, and the gradual disappearance of flood-recession cropping in Senegal are among the effects of climate disturbances in the Sahel.

To approach the issue appropriately, one must take into account local communities’ understanding of climate change, especially since they perceive climate as having a strong spiritual, emotional, and physical dimension.

We tend to assume that these communities have an inborn, adaptive knowledge from which to draw and survive in high-stress ecological and socio-economic conditions. The following questions arise: Who has this knowledge? How can it be identified, developed, capitalized upon and widely shared? How can it be enriched through external contributions, such as research?

*“We must absolutely map local adaptation strategies.”  
Farmer participant.*

Proposed adaptation practices cannot ignore the inventory of existing strategies developed over time by African people to handle weather variations. Once these practices have been identified, they can be improved through research, if necessary.

For example:

- Local adaptation practices in home construction (such as in Northern Senegal)
- The preservation of crop diversity and bulk storage
- Local measures regarding managing natural resources and protecting the environment
- Water and soil conservation techniques (half-moon and zaï)

Developing and sharing an inventory of existing adaptation practices with grass-roots communities could be a means of identifying, emphasizing and sharing local innovations. It would allow new practices to be built on a strong foundation and facilitate their integration.

## **B. What types of partnership should be developed with grass-roots organizations?**

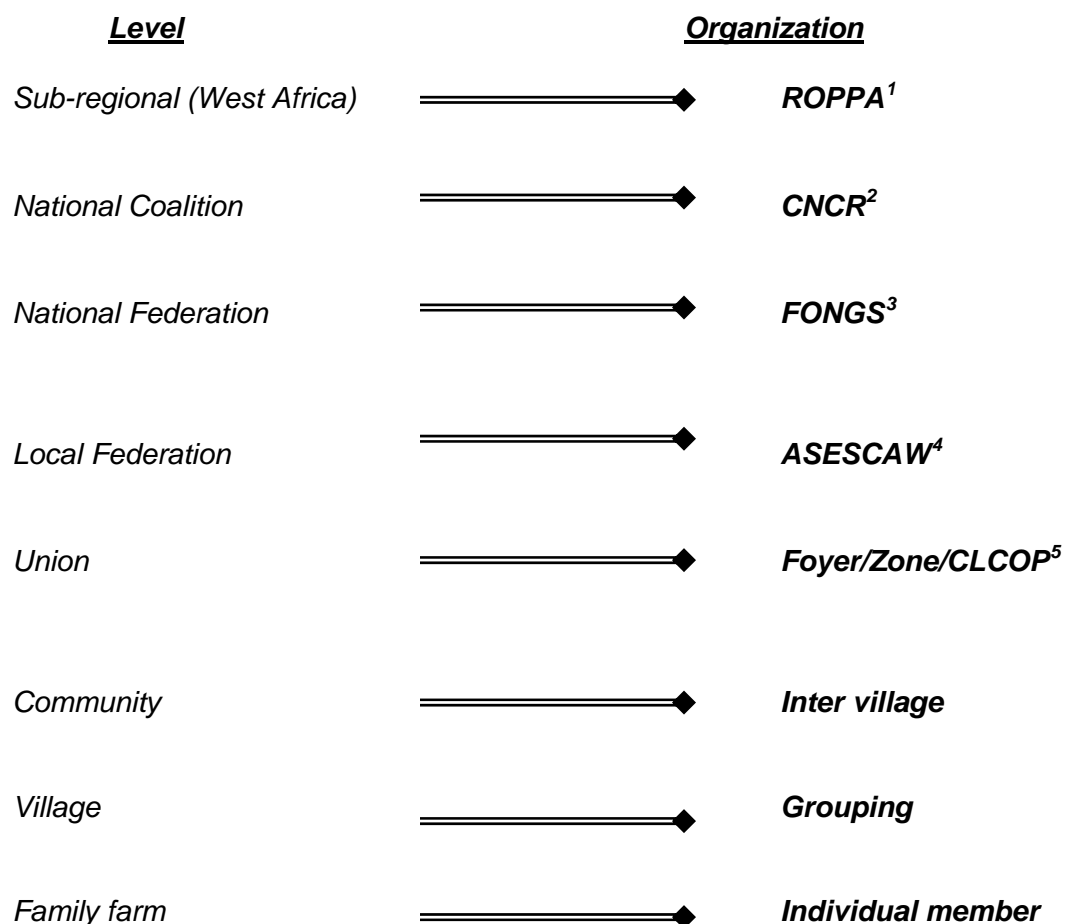
The development problems that communities face are often dealt with from the research angle by researchers. Communities are still often marginalized during such research, even though they are the key targets of development initiatives.

One of the major challenges in the approach that CCAA is trying to develop is effectively reaching vulnerable groups through its various activities. One of the main ways to achieve this is to establish a framework for collaboration with grass-roots organizations. Such partnership with organizations representing the program's key beneficiary (at-risk groups) would permit more direct linkages and an improved understanding of the local environment in terms of opportunities and constraints. However, it does raise a certain number of questions: What type of partnership? With whom? What institutional backers? How to make a difference for vulnerable populations?

*“If you really want to help grass-roots communities, then give the resources to the organizations that represent them.”  
Farmer participant*

The invited community organizations believe that many initiatives target grass-roots organizations but, in reality, assign them a secondary role. This is the case with some programs in West Africa that entrust the resources meant for the grass-roots

populations to third-party organizations despite the extremely advanced structure of the organizations representing the at-risk groups (see figure 1: Case of Senegal). In fact, the reason for developing the capacity of these organizations is so that resources meant for their members can be entrusted to them, to strengthen them more and make them autonomous. In this case, the research and supporting structures would act as service providers based on the needs stated by leading organizations.



**Figure 1: The structure of the agricultural organizations (case of Senegal)**

<sup>1</sup> Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of west Africa

<sup>2</sup> National dialogue and cooperation group of rural stakeholders

<sup>3</sup> Senegalese Federation of Non Governmental Organizations

<sup>4</sup> Farmer's association of Walo

<sup>5</sup> Local dialogue group of farmers' organizations

*“The involvement of locally-elected representatives, from the outset, is fundamental.”*  
*Farmer participant*

The sustainability of adaptation activities depends on the involvement, from the very start, of locally-elected individuals who represent the regional authorities and the national parliament. It will not be possible to prepare budgets, which fall under their jurisdiction, or to integrate adaptation options in their agenda unless they recognize the urgent need to address the needs of vulnerable communities and provide the appropriate resources.

Nongovernmental organizations and decentralized technical services will support capacity-building efforts. Research will contribute to improving the existing adaptation practices and propose alternatives, if need be. The community media will pass on information and act as advocates.

The existing local frameworks for collaboration could serve as a showcase for successful adaptation practices and awareness tools for policy makers.

*“The leading organization supports the project but various groups do the job in the field.”*  
*Technical support participant*

The structure of ROPPA (the network of farmers’ and agricultural producers’ organizations of West Africa that is active in 15 West African countries) allows it to work directly with targets and reach other partners on the continent. However, its key functions are advocacy and lobbying. These functions are carried out at the national level by groups comprising all grass-roots organizations (CNCR, in the example given in figure 1) whose technical support is also responsible for establishing relationships with research institutions. The organizations below the sub-regional and national groups in the organization chart (see figure 1) are in charge of field activities. In other words, institutional targeting can take many forms depending on the type of activity to be carried out.

*“The grassroots—that’s us.”*  
*Farmer participant*

Even though the sub-regional and national groups seem distant from grass-roots organizations, they are actually their offspring. The position of head of a village takes precedence over that of a farmers’ federation since the latter is simply a synergy of local actions at a higher level. Since it is impossible for sub-regional and national groups to work directly with local organizations, instead, they can be meaningful by effectively representing vulnerable groups.

In this case, the leading organization supports the project (in the preceding example, CNCR or FONGs). It also states the need, identifies the research configuration, the capacity-building structure where necessary (for example, NGOs), and follows up with support structures and awareness at the national level.

Community-level groups are responsible for implementation and awareness-building efforts in the field. However, one should bear in mind that as social structures, the community-based organizations can suffer from tensions, competing interests and leadership challenges.

### **C. What procedures should be put in place to activate the partnership?**

The goal of the CCAA program, through this partnership, is to reduce the vulnerability of at-risk groups in the long term by developing effective adaptation strategies.

In the short term, two initiatives have been launched to implement this objective: the mapping/inventory of adaptation practices and providing applicants with access to resources through project grants (challenge fund).

However, the issue of which procedure to implement must be addressed.

What procedure should be used for the inventory, the dissemination and the return of information to the community-based organization? What procedure should be put in place for projects to be supported and what needs should these projects meet?

*“The inventory should be audiovisual.”  
Farmer participant*

According to the organizations, the procedure for documenting local strategies should favour the audiovisual format. This means going into the field to discuss real cases of adaptation with the local populations. The procedure could take the following shape:

Phase (1): CCAA contacts a national umbrella group (example: FONGS in Senegal or CNOP<sup>6</sup> in Mali or CNP<sup>7</sup> in Burkina Faso).

Phase (2): the national umbrella group identifies, within the organizations, which family farms carry out adaptation practices and should be visited.

Phase (3) CCAA and the national umbrella group carry out an on-site visit.

Phase (4) Information is returned to all levels of groups (local, national).

The family farm, which is the first research level in the field, is the gateway for this and any other action-research activity.

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<sup>6</sup> National Federation of Farmers in Mali

<sup>7</sup> National Federation of Farmers in Burkina Faso



*“The information-sharing exercise should highlight the contribution of grass-roots populations.”*  
Resource person, ROPPA

Traditional support structures (NGOs, state communications services), and more specifically, the community organizers who work directly with the populations play a central role in sharing successful adaptation practices that have been identified. This sharing could take the form of cartoons, fact sheets, radio programs, plays and farmers' conferences. In addition to the user populations, it will target and try to influence policy makers. To that end, it would be useful to prepare a simple and clear information kit for CBOs and policy makers.

Besides, policy-makers can also be influenced by highlighting, at the national level, adaptations that have succeeded at the local level. However, the leading organization (NGO or development organization) should not take exclusive ownership of the dissemination of products to the detriment of family farms. The code of ethics should be respected and intellectual property clearly presented to make dissemination easier for local populations.

In this regard, validation sessions should be organized at various levels to inform the populations.

*“As of now, the concept of food security is obsolete for us producers, we now talk about food sovereignty.”*  
Farmer, participant

The inventory of practices developed by the local populations to deal with weather variations can serve as a base to identify priority themes to be supported as projects.

Already, four major themes seem to emerge:

- Food security (this concept is now obsolete for producers' organizations that now talk about food sovereignty): support for traditional seed banks, back-up technologies for cash crops, transformation of alternative crops (for example, cashew), fish-farming, livestock breeding, trade within and between countries, the fight against invasive species (for example, the white fly).
- Water management and soil conservation: water optimization technologies (for example, drop-by-drop, tapping rain water) on the family farm, fight against water- and wind-induced erosion and control of salt contamination of land (zaï, half-moon, integrating crop farming/animal breeding, agro-forestry, dikelets...).
- Energy security: diversifying the sources of energy that populations can choose from for cooking, heating, lighting, pumping, haulage and transportation.
- Housing, water and soil conservation: home construction materials adapted to weather variations (for example, use of clay).

Projects to develop adaptation practices will be supported by regional, national or grass-roots organizations, depending on their nature.

*"We have serious problems regarding information."  
Farmer participant*

*"Information is essential."  
Farmer participant*

To tackle the issue of climate change, the community organizations have proposed a certain number of challenges that should be addressed and for which they seek support.

- Information/training: updating organizations on information on anticipated weather variations (what should they expect in the next X years). This would enable them to inform their members and advocate to policy makers to take the problem into account in policies on managing agriculture and natural resources.
- Strengthening technical and managerial capacities so they can state their adaptation needs to researchers.
- Improving production methods (agriculture, animal breeding, and fisheries) and tools.
- Preserving the genetic resources of traditional plants and animals.
- Establishing permanent collaboration frameworks.

#### **#4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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This meeting is the first phase of the interactive exchange process between CCAA and organizations representing vulnerable groups. At the end of the workshop, the following recommendations were made:

- Consolidate the existing working group and open it up to organizations from other African regions.
- Organize regular meetings to discuss the implementation of actions and their follow-up.
- Rotate the venue of the meetings.
- Regularly exchange information, starting with the list of participants and their coordinates to all members of the group. CCAA could facilitate information exchange.
- Pass on the information gathered during the workshop to their respective organizations (participants) on participants' return.
- Extend the workshop's duration to two days instead of a day and a half.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**PROGRAM OF THE CCAA MEETING- GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS (26-27  
JULY 2007, DAKAR, SENEGAL)**

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**DAY 1: Thursday 26 July 2007**

<b>SCHEDULE</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>FACILITATION</b>
8h30 – 9h00	Registration	CCAA
09h00 – 09h15	Presentation of the Days	<b>Innocent Butaré</b> Senior Program Officer RPE/ CCAA IDRC
09h15- 09-45	Presentation of the CCAA program	<b>Fatima Denton</b> Program Leader CCAA program IDRC
09h45- 10h15	Discussions	
10h15- 10h 30	Coffee Break	
10h30- 11h00	The Grassroots Community dimension in the CCAA program	<b>Alioune Badara Kaéré</b> Research Officer CCAA Program IDRC
11h00- 13h00	<b>PLENARY DISCUSSIONS</b>	
<p>The information provided by CCAA about the program, in general, and the Grassroots Community dimension in its agenda, will serve as an opportunity to discuss with community organizations about some key issues:</p> <p>What are the research and information needs of community based organizations?</p> <p>What role can they play in the conduct of this research program?</p> <p>What type of partnership can they develop with research institutions?</p>		

13h00-14h30	Lunch	
<b>14h30-15h30</b>	<b>PLENARY DISCUSSIONS: ADAPTATION AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE</b>	
<p>In a context of chronic droughts and unfavorable climatic conditions, African communities developed a certain number of adaptation strategies which it would be interesting to map in order to extract the elements of adaptation to climate changes and structure them in the form of projects.</p> <p>On the basis of the experiences of the different participants, this session will try to answer the following questions:</p> <p>What are the forms and types of existing local knowledge likely to be capitalized on as key elements of an adaptation strategy?</p> <p>What process should one put in place to access to such knowledge?</p> <p>How are they developed?</p> <p>How are they structured in the form of projects to be supported?</p>		
15h30-15h45	Coffee Break	
<b>15h45-17h30</b>	<b>PLENARY DISCUSSIONS: CCAA-GCO PARTNERSHIP</b>	
<p>This part of the discussion will enable participants, on the basis of the CCAA program and the place of the Grassroots Community component in its agenda, to spell out the priorities of community organizations within the context of CCAA support to their adaptation projects:</p> <p>What institutional targeting in relation to the institutions should play the role of interface between CCAA and the community organizations?</p> <p>What type of actors should be included in the process?</p> <p>What geographical targeting?</p> <p>What type of approach (sectoral and/or integrated)? Why?</p> <p>What are the difficulties that are likely to be encountered?</p>		
17h30-	Closing of Day 1	

**DAY 2: Friday 27 July 2007**

<b>SCHEDULE</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>FACILITATION</b>
9h00-9h15	Summary of Day One proceedings	<b>Innocent Butaré</b>
09h15 – 10h15	CCAA-GCOs partnership (to be pursued): plenary	<b>Innocent Butaré</b>
10h15-10h 30	Coffee Break	
10h30-12h45	<b>PLENARY DISCUSSIONS: ACTION PLAN</b>	
<p>The linkage of proposals to develop local knowledge and forms that the CCAA-GCOs partnership should take, will make it possible to define a certain number of activities which will constitute the roadmap of the CCAA program within the framework of its support to local organizations.</p> <p>What action plan would be appropriate for the different activities of the adaptation demand?</p>		
12h45-13h00	Closing	<b>Fatima Denton</b>
13h00-14h00	Lunch	