

# Adapting to climate change: best practices and lessons from ACCRA Uganda



## Background to ACCRA members' adaptation projects

The Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA) is a consortium initiative of Oxfam GB, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), CARE International, Save the Children UK and World Vision International. ACCRA is active in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda and World Vision leads ACCRA in Uganda.

One of ACCRA's aims is to support its alliance members' programming on climate change, so that it addresses the needs of vulnerable communities facing climate change related impacts.

In 2014, ACCRA Uganda conducted an impact assessment targeted at Alliance members, government partners and other CSOs to understand the consortium's relevance to provide research lessons, capacity building and coordinate advocacy initiatives with government.

One of the findings was that alliance members lacked specific funding for climate change that they could use to build evidence on possible adaptation practices which can support fundraising as well as internal learning.

In a bid to fill this gap, ACCRA Uganda supported Community Based DRR and Climate Change Adaptation initiatives that would build the resilience of both farming and

pastoralists communities to the adverse effects of climate change.

A call for proposals was therefore put out for members to compete for 1 year pilot projects of up to \$10,400. Apart from Save the Children, whose policies ruled out their participation, Oxfam, World Vision and CARE joined in this innovative challenge fund to engage in adaptation work.

The criterias for each proposed project to access the funds were as follows:

- Conduct a climate change and DRR capacity and vulnerability assessment,
- Demonstrate appropriate consideration of gender issues within the project context,
- Analyse and use existing early warning systems, promote use of seasonal weather forecasts and indigenous knowledge,
- Using innovative and creative practices to reduce vulnerabilities and increase long term climate change resilience at the local level,
- Initiate/strengthen existing collaboration and linking of local issues/plans and community voices into higher decision-making and planning processes of government,
- Contribute to the country office strategic objective (s) of individual organisations and indicate opportunities for co-financing and sustainability of the initiatives proposed

## Key achievements at a glance

- 2 biogas digesters have been constructed to support school feeding programmes
- Over 70 households are using energy efficient technologies and 130 community trainers now have the skills to replicate them
- 1,679 women and 828 men improved their income by enrolling in VSLAs, with cumulative savings of over \$33,9321.16
- Due to weather proofing of a water dam, women and children walk shorter distance to fetch water
- Local communities have better knowledge on the importance of weather information, which they use to plan for farming activities
- Government staff is supporting climate change, by documenting a climate smart agriculture hand book to support community resilience and livelihoods



Oxfam and local CSOs and government staff learn how to draw a theory of change, one of the tools that ACCRA uses as part of its TOT on climate change and DRR vulnerability assessment . Photo: Lea Doumenjou/Oxfam

# Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Initiatives in Kotido district, Northern Uganda



## Promoting use of integrated scientific and indigenous weather information for decision making

Oxfam, through their partner Caritas-Kotido, is promoting integrated use of scientific and indigenous weather forecasting to improve community resilience.

When the Uganda National Meteorology Authority (UNMA) issues the scientific forecast, Caritas shares it with community elders as well as with radio FM's who organise talk shows where users can discuss what the forecast means to them. Community foretellers, who are one of the most important opinion leaders in the community, are also consulted to generate indigenous indicators and forecast that will complement UNMA's data.

To help end users understand how the forecast will affect them, advisory messages spell out how sectors such as health, water etc will be affected by the anticipated weather changes, and which adaptation measures need to be adopted as a result.

As far as dissemination is concerned, Oxfam and Caritas maximize the reach of the forecast by sharing it through government structures like the disaster management committees, local leaders and line departments. In parallel, trainings are also conducted for the disasters management committees, leaders and other commu-

nity members, which has increased their awareness on risks and possible responses to climate change related disasters.

To strengthen the integrated method of weather forecasting, Oxfam has installed a community weather station which will be managed at the sub county level. UNMA has committed to train sub county staff and community members to record weather data and transmit it to UNMA, who will analyse and send it back to the community. Indigenous forecasters will then come in to compare that data with their forecast and share the information with the wider community.



*A community foreteller organising to interpret what the animal intestines say about the weather. Photo: Harriet Koryang/Caritas Kotido*

## Soil and water conservation in semi arid and water stressed areas



*Kotido women demonstrating how to do kitchen gardening. Photo: Harriet Koryang/Caritas Kotido*

Providing long term solutions to environmental conservation was another focus area of Oxfam and Caritas' project.

The demonstration of new soil and water conservation practices was chosen as a way to minimise soil and water losses during floods and droughts. Communities were also supported to raise tree nurseries of indigenous trees and to allow existing tree species to regenerate using the approach of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). Oxfam also promoted the 3Rs (Recharge, Re use and Refill.) approach to

protect water catchment areas. Because Kotido is home to many pastoralist communities, Oxfam encouraged the local rangeland management committee to advise pastoralists on rotational grazing on the existing rangelands to minimize environmental degradation. This has led to growing adoption of practices, with visible change in individual gardens especially on terracing, grass strips and simple contours. People's attitudes on the damages of ecosystems and water resources have also shifted after trainings and exchange visits carried out by Oxfam.

## Linking local issues to Government decision making and planning processes

Oxfam's project uses the Disaster Management Committee - a platform that connects government and local communities - to ensure inclusion of local issues throughout development planning processes..

This has enabled communities to be fully involved in information sharing and planning since project inception. Indeed, the community vision maps and action plans they developed are now included in the Nakapelimoru Sub-county development plans. Using Oxfam's GALs methodology which helps in capturing gender issues in relation to disasters and climate change impacts, the plans now take gender issues into account.

Through a gender training, Oxfam could also bring together government and local communities, who developed a gender responsive contingency plan. Throughout the project, Oxfam and Caritas used existing government structures at the district and sub county levels to mobilise and sensitise the community.

However, vulnerable groups such as elderly and disabled people remain isolated from development planning processes, which is why Oxfam has been advocating for their involvement through exchange visits, community meetings and other community development programmes.

*Women drawing a community hazard resource map in Nakapelimoru community, Kotido district. Photo: Lea Doumenjou/Oxfam*



## Sustainable DRR and CCA projects in Kaabong district, Northern Uganda, and Kibaale district, Western Uganda

World Vision

### Promoting energy efficiency to prevent deforestation and support women and children

High levels of deforestation is one of the biggest challenges in Kibaale district, where hard to reach areas are already impacted by lack of fuel wood which in turn intensifies deforestation practice.

This is why Kibaale adaptation project has been promoting technology transfer in household energy, by training local artisans in the production of Lorena improved energy saving cooking stoves, using locally available materials. So far, 104 men and 87 women in both project sites have been trained.

The benefits of the new stove materialised almost immediately, with community members giving testimonies that the firewood they would use in a day now lasts for one week. The new stoves release much less smoke than the traditional ones. Women experience less chest and eye infections, which is a significant health improvement. *'Since my wife started using the new stove, I no longer spend money on pain killers'* said Mr Sulaiti, one of the beneficiaries.

Since all the food items can be cooked at once, which wasn't the case before, he can now eat on time. Children reported that they use less time to collect firewood and use the saved time for other activities including doing their school work.

Because World Vision is using skills that are resident in the communities as well local materials, this intervention is sustainable.

*'Before the Lorena cooking stove, I felt sick whenever I inhaled smoke.*



*Now, my headaches are gone, and my husband doesn't have to buy medicine for me anymore. In addition, I use less time looking for firewood because the bundle I was using for one day now stays for a whole week!' Saidata Sulaiti, (right picture).*

*Photo: Lea Doumenjou/ Oxfam*

### Supporting school feeding programme through biogas technology



Kaabong District suffers from the negative effects of climate change such as climate variability, environmental degradation and harsh weather conditions. Such hazards, which affect Karamoja region as a whole, increase the risks of extreme poverty. Limited energy sources in the area accelerate rates of indiscriminate tree cutting to burn charcoal. This is why, building on the World Food Programme school feeding programme, World Vision introduced biogas technology in 2 schools to act as demonstrations for indi-

viduals who can afford to replicate them. 10 local artisans were trained on how to construct the biogas digesters by a consultancy firm. This technology, which requires cow dung and water to run, is adapted to Karamoja and its pastoralist culture. If subsidized appropriately, the bio gas digesters could provide a sustainable solution to the energy and environment degradation problems in Karamoja.



*Biogas digester (top left) and biogas cooker (bottom right) being set up in 2 primary schools in Kaabong district as a way to support existing school feeding programme. Photo: Leo Amwona/ World Vision*

### Addressing nutrition and food security by growing vegetables & fruits trees

Prolonged drought is a recurring hazard in Kaabong, which compounds water scarcity and drying up of crops. In spite of those challenges, World Vision distributed vegetable seeds to selected farmers groups and schools, because plants can be watered easily and grow in a short time. School environment clubs in Nariamaoi and Kamacharikol primary schools grew cabbages, onions, tomatoes, sukuma wiki, green pepper, egg plants, and spinach.

The club volunteers established their vegetable gardens, which they watered twice a day during school times. The first harvest was successful and served to supplement school meals. Fruit trees were also distributed to 180 community members and 13 model households were identified to scale up learning to other households.

*"The first round was planted in April and the harvest season that followed was successful. The school was able to serve vegetables to pupils twice a week for 3 weeks. The children taught their parents who also established gardens at home"*  
John Loteni, Head teacher, Nariamaoi



*Model farmers receiving tree seedlings, Kaabong district. Photo: Leo Amwona/World Vision*

## Building community resilience through Climate Change Adaptation and DRR in Northern Uganda Women Empowerment Program, Gulu district



### Using Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) to strengthen community resilience



A VSLA group organising to collect savings from members in Gulu district.  
Photo: Denis Mwaka/CARE

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) are a form of insurance for local community members. Building on principles of trust and social cohesion, they act as a mobilisation tool that improves the lives of the poor and vulnerable people. This is why CARE identified VSLAs as an entry point to strengthen community resilience, by working with groups formed through an ongoing CARE project. Those have accumulated liquid capital through their savings, which members can access in form of loans that can be used to adapt and mitigate climate change and disaster impacts, such as crop failure.

CARE targeted 1,000 female and 500 males who previously received training on DRR, CCA and climate smart agriculture. Evidence gathered during community meetings shows that, after the trainings, VSLA members have adopted community managed DRR actions such as dissemination of seasonal weather forecasts, afforestation, formulation of byelaws against harmful practices such as bush burning and swamp reclamation among others. This shows that VSLAs are a powerful way to support community based adaptation to climate change.

### Improving food security and climate resilience through Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)

CARE's project started with a climate vulnerability and capacity assessment, carried out in one of the field sites. Amongst other findings, issues of pests, diseases and unreliable rainfall patterns, leading to crop loss came out strongly. This is why CARE, with support from the district agriculture officer and one local partner, facilitated a participatory Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) training to improve production, productivity and value addition of community farm products.

The usefulness of the training was demonstrated in several ways. Indeed, participants requested for reference materials to guide other farmers so that they could also use the knowledge from the training. The district agriculture officer, who led on the training, responded to the trainees' demands by developing a simple CSA hand book for farmers. Three thematic areas are being focused on, based on the livelihood context and the district technical expertise: crop science, fish farming and animal traction. Through technical cooperation between neighboring districts in the 3 thematic

areas, district experts are providing avenues for peer to peer learning and team building.



VSLA group leaders attending training on climate smart agriculture in Patiko subcounty, Gulu district. Photo: Denis Mwaka/CARE

### Mainstreaming climate change into CARE Uganda's programmes

*The project recognised and supported engagement of Women and girls, men and boys, sharing benefits of production, empowerment and capacity gained, representation on committees, access to resources and information, confidence to participate in governance processes. The role of men in supporting women and households in adaptation work was emphasised, District Agriculture Officer, Gulu District*

This adaptation project builds on CARE Women Empowerment Project III.

It started with the training of CARE staff and partners in Gulu district on how to carry out capacity and vulnerability assessments to climate change, using CARE CVCA's handbook and ACCRA tools. Participants could practice the tools by carrying out a community vulnerability assessment in the field. This enabled them to earmark

DRR/CCA for mainstreaming in their future project designs. Plus, some of CARE staff committed to advocate and influence organizational decisions to mainstream these cross cutting and emerging themes. This started with them giving feedback to senior management in field and national offices after the training. The approaches used in this adaptation project are also influencing some proposals being written. Indeed, CARE

partner GWED-G has started integrating DRR/CCA/Ecosystem restoration and management into their proposal design.

FAPAD, who partners with CARE in Gulu district, has won a 1 year grant from National Forestry Authority to implement an environment protection project which has integrated climate change and DRR.

# Cross cutting themes

## Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning



The District Natural Resource Officer from Kibaale during a briefing session with the Disaster Risk reduction Committee in Ndaiga subcounty, Kibaale district.

Photo: Lea Doumenjou/Oxfam

The adaptation projects were designed on the premise of promoting participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning.

This means that tools such as the CARE

**Participatory monitoring, evaluation, reflection and learning (PMERL)** manual for community adaptation and the **Tracking Adaptation and Measuring Development (TAMD)** framework are being used to extract learning from each adaptation project.

Alliance members are also promoting monitoring and learning through joint monitoring visits with ACCRA staff, Local Government officials and community members.

This enables to generate learning from a different ranges of perspectives on themes

such as climate smart agriculture, manufacturing of energy saving cook stoves, biogas technology transfer and tree planting among others. PMERL has influenced the practices of some Local Governments, who are now supporting byelaws on natural resources management, developing CSA handbook, strengthening dissemination of seasonal weather forecasts etc. Plus, Oxfam conducted an exchange visit for the DRR committees to learn from the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) adaptation technologies which they scaled up in their interventions.

Creating such learning foras is important for sharing adaptation best practices at all levels and need to continue among members.

## Gender sensitive approaches to adaptation

Climate change and disasters affect men, women, boys and girls differently, compromising their capacities to deal with related impacts. This is why alliance members emphasised gender sensitive approaches including **gender analysis as part of risk assessments**, while also ensuring fair representation on VSLA and DRR committee engagements. Oxfam used the **Gender Action Learning Systems (GALs)** model in Karamoja to capture gender issues in the planning and awareness activities.

World Vision purposefully targeted girls in skills development activities. Indeed, Jane, a 22 year old school dropout girl from Kibaale was trained in making Lorena energy saving cook stoves. She is now supporting her community as well as earning income for her personal projects..

*"Some people used not to trust in me, they used to say building a stove was more of a boy's job, until they realized that my stoves were just as good."*

Jane spends five hours a day on constructing a Lorena Stove and charges between UG15,000 – UG20,000 (US\$7.5 – US\$10) for the job.

Despite these efforts, gender inequality remains ingrained in many rural areas of Uganda, therefore exacerbating vulnerabilities of women and children to the impact of climate change and disasters.



Oxfam and Caritas project team sharing issues of climate change in relation to gender in a radio talk show broadcast in Kotido district.

Photo: Harriet Koyang/Caritas

## Strengthening access and utilisation of weather information

ACCRA together with alliance members has been supporting Uganda National Meteorology Authority (UNMA) to strengthen dissemination, access and utilization of seasonal forecasts for end users. ACCRA has documented this model over time in a booklet that can be accessed [here](#).

Alliance members have been using different channels to disseminate seasonal forecasts to farmers throughout the adaptation projects. Oxfam and CARE explored the use of indigenous knowledge in weather forecasting and documented indicators and lessons. Oxfam has also invested in a community weather station which will generate data to compare with local indigenous knowledge with the help of UNMA staff.

In support to climate smart agriculture, CARE worked with farmers to document local indigenous knowledge in the climate smart agriculture hand book, but also intensified dissemination of seasonal forecasts using VSLA groups.

*"My yields have increased due to better farming methods. I used to harvest 2 bags of rice from 1 acre of land. Because of accessing the weather forecast and using the information to plan, I planted in April instead of March and harvested 6 bags of rice!"*  
VSLA group member, Patiko subcounty, Gulu district

The unpredictable and intensifying nature of climate change means that communities need information more than before in order to cope with uncertainties. Their appreciation in accessing the seasonal weather forecasts should strengthened alliance members' commitment to scale up ACCRA and UNMA's climate forecast model to improve community resilience to climate change impacts.

## Key learning points

### Best practices and opportunities for scale up

- The VSLA methodology effectively promotes adaptation practices because CCA/DRR information is channelled through sustainable groups who can keep scaling up good practices the community.
- Linkages between district sectors and Local FM stations keep dissemination of weather information alive but require regular monitoring and reporting back to UNMA to sustain efforts in improving the quality of the forecast information
- Empowering men and women, boys and girls to challenge the underlying causes of gender inequality is paramount to allow transformative change in power relations, decision making and access to resources and benefits
- Innovative technologies that require cheap and local materials provide opportunities for community skills building while ensuring sustainability of the interventions since the skills to maintain the facilities reside in the community
- Civil society engagement is key for capacity building and sustainability of interventions at community level.

### Challenges and recommendations

- The project lifespan was too short which leaves alliance members with a challenge to sustain and scale up projects' good practices. However those can continue to be promoted and learning to be integrated in on going projects
- Engaging civil society in the short term was hard for alliance members who worked in partnership with CSOs. Expectations to pay for administrative costs and salaries for staff to implement were high, yet the ACCRA budget was too small to meet such costs. Engaging CSOs meaningfully requires a long term programme approach to build their capacity to support community resilience.
- Some of the government structures, specifically the disaster risk reduction committees, were dysfunctional in some areas. However, using such existing structures rather than forming new ones would be a cheaper way to achieve sustainable impact. Alliance members could work with government and invest in strengthening local structures in the long term.
- Weather changes continue to affect agricultural and farming activities in the community. This calls for innovative approaches by alliance members to support community resilience.

## Community voices

***'The vegetable seedling I received from World Vision opened a business opportunity for me. Our local market only sells vegetables that come from other districts, so there is a need for local and cheaper products. I planted tomatoes and onions and watered them as regularly as possible. The first harvest was successful and I sold half of it on the market. With the other half, I was able to buy maize flour for my wife and 5 kids.'*** Peter Dodeng, model farmer in Kaabong district

*"Traditionally, in December, people would hunt for bush rats by bush burning. But now, there is no more bush burning because of the by-laws."*

*"I never used to plant in certain months e.g. December, but due to the weather changes we've been experiencing, we are trying anytime it rains."* VSLA group members who participated in CARE's DRR and CCA training

*"After I learnt that digging deep is better than shallow digging, I went ahead and practiced it. My vegetables in deep cultivated areas did far better than the shallow cultivated ones."*

*"My yields have increased due to the new farming methods I learnt in the CSA training. I used to harvest 2 bags of rice from 1 acre of land. Because the weather forecast I received, I planted in April instead of March and harvested 6 bags of rice!"* VSLA group leaders who attended CARE's training on CSA in Gulu district

*' Becoming a VSLA trainer brought me a new environment, new skills, and new friends. I am happy to continue supporting the group and encourage more community members to join 'Hadisha, VSLA trainer, Ndaiga subcounty, Kibaale district*



*Mpasana community members during a VSLA session in Kibaale cluster. Photo: Lea Doumenjou/ Oxfam*

***"My main purpose in the VSLA is to save money and pick it after one year to buy a water tank to solve the water stress in the family. With the changing seasons, water is a very big problem!"*** VSLA group member in Mpasana subcounty, Kibaale district

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