

# Ensuring devolution supports adaptation and climate resilient growth in Kenya

## Policy pointers

- **Good governance of natural resources** is central to successful climate change adaptation and climate resilient growth.
- **Devolved adaptation** funding, managed by local government and supporting locally prioritised adaptation investments is the best way to harness local knowledge in support of climate resilient development.
- **Achieving this takes time**, investment and involvement from a range of stakeholders, to build shared understanding about adaptation priorities and a more harmonised approach to planning.
- **Providing climate** information can help reduce climate impacts, but only if communities and planners can act on it in a coordinated and timely way.
- **It is vital that adaptation** is planned at appropriate scales and is not restricted by administrative boundaries.

Effective governance of natural resources is crucial for adaptive capacity and climate resilient growth — and nowhere more so than in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands. Climate change will hit dryland communities and economies early and severely because it exacerbates existing structural causes of poverty and inequality. Poor governance and exclusion of local voices (particularly from planning and management of natural resources) has eroded dryland communities' distinctive capacity to adapt. But building on Kenya's new constitution, a devolved Climate Adaptation Fund is being piloted in Isiolo County. It puts local priorities at the heart of the development agenda, and can integrate local adaptive strategies and innovations into national policy, providing insights that could also help reform development planning systems in other drylands.

## Natural resource governance

Effective governance of natural resources is crucial for building climate resilient livelihoods and economies in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Specialised dryland production systems such as mobile pastoralism do not just 'cope with a hostile environment', as commonly perceived. Rather, through livestock mobility pastoralists can harness climatic variability to raise productivity above what would be possible if the environment were more uniform.<sup>1</sup>

Good governance of resources in this context means supporting mobility, communal land tenure and reciprocal access to pastures and water across administrative boundaries; and supporting mechanisms for resolving competing claims. Where conditions are highly variable and unpredictable it is essential that resources are managed by local institutions that, in contrast to centralised decision-making processes, have the capacity and flexibility to respond to rapidly changing situations. Simply providing climate information will not build resilience until there are local institutions with the capacity and legitimacy to plan and manage a coordinated response.

Beyond supporting pastoralist communities' resilience, improving resource governance will also support the dominant livestock economy, which is now recognised as a significant contributor to GDP and food security.<sup>2</sup>

In Kenya, the formation of both the Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands (MSDNKOAL) and the ASAL Secretariat (both created in 2008), and the launch of national ASAL-specific policies (see Box 1), are ensuring ASAL concerns become a mainstream part of national and county development planning. Kenya's adoption of its new constitution (2010), the process of devolution, and the enactment of subsidiary legislation such as the County Governments Act (2012), provides a very strong mandate for local people to participate in all aspects of governance.

## Disconnected planning processes

In the ASALs of Kenya, a key factor undermining local people's capacity to adapt successfully to increasing climatic variability has, until recently, been the disconnection between community and formal government planning systems (see Box 2). Centralised

# Building a more inclusive planning system requires a paradigm change

governments have a tendency to treat entire countries uniformly, neglecting the specific challenges and opportunities of areas like the ASALs. Consequently, formal planning often does not benefit from participation by the communities that have learnt over time how best to exploit the ecological and economic dynamics of their own environments.

The major weaknesses of Kenya's former planning system can be summarised as:

- **Poor communication.** There were no funded mechanisms that let government planners engage in meaningful dialogue with local people so as to integrate community planning into formal planning processes.
- **Inflexibility.** National government's fixed and uniform planning and budgeting cycle limited local government bodies' discretionary powers to change plans and transfer resources between budget lines in response to quickly evolving conditions 'on the ground'.

- **Poor coordination.** Coordination was generally poor across sectors, government institutions, and various national funds. The result was badly planned investments, duplication of effort and inefficient use of scarce funds. Insufficient coordination between local government and International NGOs involved in emergency and longer-term development responses (and amongst the NGOs themselves and donors) also exacerbated problems.

- **Poor use of climate information.** Highly variable rainfall across the ASALs, combined with poor weather station coverage (compared with agricultural areas), has meant that downscaled forecasts have sometimes been inaccurate. Seasonal forecasts produced by the Kenya Meteorological Department (KMD) provide a useful guide to overall conditions, although information has often not been disseminated in an accessible way. In addition, government planners did not have the necessary contingency funding mechanisms to react to forecasts of droughts and floods with the required urgency.

## Supporting adaptation and climate resilient growth in Isiolo County

In 2009 Kenya's MSDNKOAL invited IIED to design and test an approach to planning (the Climate Adaptation Fund, or CAF) that would use the challenge of climate change to address the above issues in a way that embodied 'participation, equity and inclusivity' — the principles underpinning the country's new constitution. In partnership with the ASAL Secretariat, the Kenya Meteorological Department, the Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, and the Resource Advocacy Programme (RAP), IIED has been piloting the CAF approach to integrating climate change firmly into mainstream planning in Isiolo County.

**A county-level Climate Adaptation Fund.** Under the new constitution, county governments have authority and responsibility for developing the social and economic aspects of their county according to local priorities. The devolved Climate Adaptation Fund (CAF) mechanism furthers this objective by building capacity among local people and county government actors to identify, prioritise and fund plans at ward, county and cross-county level for public good-type investments that promote climate resilient growth and adaptive livelihoods. County government manages the CAF on behalf of local people and 70 per cent of the fund is allocated to support ward-level plans (Ksh 9 million per ward, approximately equivalent to US\$110,000), while 20 per cent goes to county-level plans and contingencies and 10 per cent is for fund administration. Successful implementation of the CAF is providing evidence that counties have the capacity to draw down and invest national climate funds for climate resilient development, and highlights the potential for channelling global climate funds in the same way.

### Box 1. Kenya's policies for its arid and semi-arid lands

The National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands 'Releasing Our Full Potential' (2012):

*"[the policy] addresses three distinct policy challenges which are particular to Northern Kenya and other arid lands: first, how to close the developmental gap between Northern Kenya and the rest of the country, which is a product of its historical experience [...]; second, how to protect and promote the mobility and institutional arrangements which are so essential to productive pastoralism; and third, how to ensure food and nutrition security across the ASALs, where unpredictability is certain to increase as the impact of climate change deepens".*

The Vision 2030 Development Strategy for Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands (2012):

*"sustainable development in the ASALs will only be achieved when the full resources of government are marshalled towards that end; it cannot be a parallel agenda to the mainstream business of government"*

### Box 2. Testimony from an elder

*"We have no problem with livestock if we get rain, pasture and water. We dug 24 wells by ourselves. We can also treat our animals. The problem is when there is stress – how the government and the community react. People living in Nairobi and the provinces don't know how to interact with us. Even in very dry years, there are places with pasture that we know about. If we are planning together, we can bring water to where there is pasture and then there is no need to bring hay from elsewhere, which our animals cannot eat. Even supplementary feeds like molasses, our animals do not eat these. Let's plan together, especially in times of stress".*

Stakeholders' Workshop, Isiolo, May 2010

## The CAF Approach

The CAF approach (see Box 3) is founded on a process of 'shared learning dialogue'. A range of stakeholders are brought together on an equal footing to discuss and analyse specific development issues. In addition to building knowledge around climate change, this has fostered a greater appreciation among government staff for the value of community knowledge and for the rationale behind key pastoral management strategies. It has also built local people's capacity to articulate these issues to other stakeholders, and to understand the challenges faced by government staff (for example the constraints of budgetary cycles and the difficulties in mobilising resources quickly).

This approach to adaptation planning can be distilled as promoting 'strong voices and receptive ears' (see Figure 1). Coherent development planning based on the priorities and knowledge of local people first needs some level of shared understanding on key issues between local people and government staff. Achieving this shared understanding comes about only through sustained dialogue over considerable periods of time with a range of stakeholders. Participants need time for reflection and learning if they are to change attitudes and behaviours.

The CAF approach also emphasises that planning for adaptation needs to occur at appropriate scales rather than being restricted to administrative boundaries (for example, planning for domestic water supplies may be done at the village level whereas planning for livestock mobility and water point governance may need a county or cross-county approach). This is sometimes referred to as 'landscape-level planning' and necessitates a structure for county planners to coordinate across county and even national borders. As CAF expands into neighbouring counties, this will be an important element to develop and test further.

## Linking policy with practice

County government staff report that participating in the CAF process has helped them collate evidence on successful local innovations and adaptations. This can provide new opportunities to track and learn from adaptive strategies and to share successes both horizontally (among other ASAL communities) and vertically (furnishing government planners with firm evidence for use when formulating County Development Plans). Developing vertical communication channels to allow department heads at county level to communicate evidence-based policy recommendations to national sector ministries will be crucial if national-level policymaking is to benefit from local successes and innovations. Such new channels for vertical communication have already led to CAF experiences being integrated into the Isiolo County Profile (an information tool for use by newly formed county governments). This has in turn been picked up and included in Kenya's National Adaptation Plan. As the

### Box 3. Piloting the Climate Adaptation Fund in Isiolo County

**Planning 'public good' investments that support climate resilient development.** Five Ward Adaptation Planning Committees, together with a county-level committee, government planners and local organisations, conducted livelihood and local economy resilience assessments (incorporating community resource mapping using Google Earth). Through these assessments, different groups within the wider community identified what either improved or undermined their ability to manage challenges like climate variability, changing market conditions, disease, insecurity, and so on. The assessments used methods specifically designed to let local people, differentiated by age, gender and livelihood type, articulate the rationale underpinning their livelihood systems, and identify solutions that would strengthen their adaptive strategies and capacities. All groups highlighted the issue of improving resource access and governance.

Ward Adaptation Planning Committees used the findings to prioritise public good-type investments that would promote climate resilient growth and adaptive livelihoods (see Box 4 for criteria). These included: reforms to customary range management institutions so as to ensure more equitable access to, and rational use of, dry and wet season pastures by resident and visiting pastoral communities; better spatial distribution and temporal management of permanent dry season water points; rehabilitation of a veterinary laboratory; and tracking and treatment of livestock diseases.

The focus on public good-type investments is based on the expectation that supporting the dominant economy is the most cost effective and socially cohesive way of building long-term resilience (in tandem with other support such as grants, loans, cash transfers, food aid).

The Ward Adaptation Planning Committees then submit proposals to a County Adaptation Planning Committee for approval (made up of representatives from the five ward committees, local government and other stakeholders).

**Disseminating climate information.** The Kenyan Meteorological Department (KMD) held a series of seasonal forecast workshops that took a 'shared learning dialogue' approach. Local people and government staff received the latest downscaled forecast for the impending rainy season, while KMD staff learnt from participants what types of climate information are most accessible and most useful.

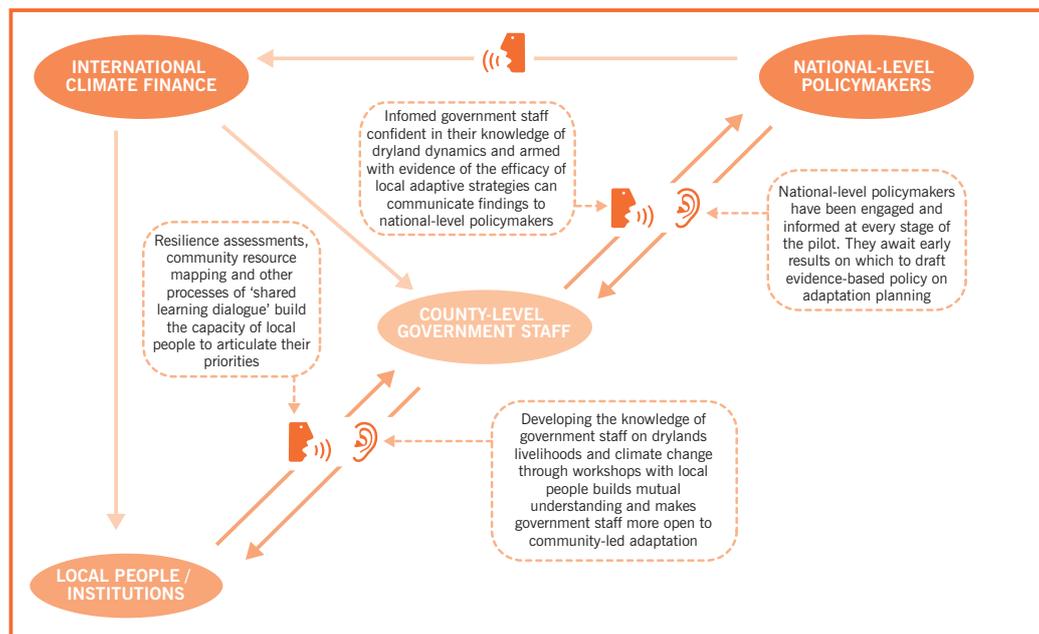
The pilot programme also set up a community radio station (due to begin broadcasting in June 2013), to both disseminate seasonal climate information 'county-wide' in local languages, and to serve other community functions.

### Box 4. Definition of public good investments

Public good investments must:

- benefit many people;
- support the county economy, livelihoods or important services on which many people depend;
- be relevant to building resilience to climate change;
- encourage harmony, build relations, understanding and trust;
- have been developed after consultation with all potential stakeholders;
- be viable, achievable and sustainable; and
- be cost effective and give value for money.

Figure 1. Strong voices, receptive ears: how shared learning dialogues can help develop locally appropriate climate adaptation policies for ASALs.



CAF mechanism begins to disburse funds in support of locally prioritised adaptation actions, we anticipate this pilot will develop a strong evidence base to guide county and national policy formulation, and produce a tried and tested structure for demand-led development planning.

## Challenges and opportunities

**Devolution.** Kenya's process of implementing its new constitution and devolving power to county assemblies represents a fundamental realignment of the relationship between citizen and state. This realignment is not without challenges — a key question will be whether or not state actors are able to change their attitudes and behaviours and assume their new roles under the constitution. There must also be rapid capacity building at the county-level in order to be able to reach up and claim the new powers. County-level decision makers must also be prepared to further devolve powers transferred to them to sub-counties, wards and legally constituted community-based organisations.

And there will also be jurisdictional challenges to effective development planning. Based on the county institutional architecture outlined in Kenya's County Governments Act (2012), there will be multiple institutions involved in planning at the county level with potentially overlapping roles and responsibilities.

**Implementing and scaling-up the CAF approach.** One of the challenges of implementing and scaling-up the CAF planning structure will be aligning CAF committees with the other county-level development and planning structures that are emerging following Kenya's national elections in March 2013.

A demand-led approach to development planning will require significant investment of resources in building a 'shared learning dialogue'. This is a prerequisite to effectively bridging the gap between community and formal planning. Successfully making the argument for such an investment will be key when the approach is scaled-up beyond the Isiolo pilot.

**Paradigm change.** Building a more inclusive and coherent development planning system requires a paradigm change, and cannot be done through the standard 'projectised' approach that channels donor funds through NGOs to local people. This approach creates parallel processes and structures to the detriment of local government capacity — upon which an effective planning system ultimately depends.

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## Notes

■ <sup>1</sup> See Krätli, S, Schareika, N 2010. Living off uncertainty: the intelligent animal production of drylands pastoralists. *European Journal of Development Research* 22(5) 605–622. ■ <sup>2</sup> See de Jode, H. (ed.). 2009. *Modern and mobile. The future of livestock production in Africa's drylands*. IIED, London. <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/12565IIED.pdf>