



# Policy Brief



## Building the Capacity of Grassroots Networks to Enhance their Understanding of Climate Change Policy Processes

*Lessons from Capacity Strengthening in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) for Adaptation to Climate Change (CLACC)*

*By Joan Kariuki, Serah Nderitu and Judi W. Wakhungu*

**June 2012**

### Overview/Background

In the coming decades, climate change is predicted to alter rainfall distribution, temperatures, sea level rise and extreme weather events. It is anticipated that climate change will have both direct and indirect impacts on the development of climate sensitive activities. Arguably, climate change has the potential to undermine socio-economic development. The African region and other Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are most vulnerable to climate change despite their relatively insignificant contribution to global warming. Multiple stresses, including poverty, poor infrastructure, lack of information, poor governance and lack of, or inadequate policies to respond to the impacts of climate change make these regions vulnerable to climate change.

There are many initiatives which are geared towards seeking ways to address climate change related challenges. Examples of this include the Adaptation Mechanism under the Copenhagen Accord and the recently created Adaptation Fund. The Adaptation Fund was established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries which are parties to the Kyoto Protocol and which are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change (UNFCC, 2011). Although it is not yet clear how monies from the Adaptation Fund will be administered, it is important for African countries and the LDCs to present

an appreciable case for deserving access to these funds by developing strong proposals worthy of consideration for funding for the implementation of sustainable adaptation projects and programmes. In order to achieve this, a preparedness for climate change adaptation will be crucial. This will entail, as priority considerations, raising climate change awareness both at the national and local level, enhancing the capacity of stakeholders and developing strong policies and institutions.

The objectives of this brief are twofold: first of all to attempt to demonstrate the importance of building the capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to enhance their understanding of climate change policy processes both at the international and national level. CSOs have the potential to reach a large number of local constituents, to improve and increase access to information within communities as well as knowledge about development issues and to influence sound policy-making by enhancing the full and active participation of citizens. They, however, lack the requisite capacity to engage communities on matters of climate change. Secondly, the brief looks at how CSOs can complement government efforts to address climate change at the grassroots level. The brief draws lessons from the Capacity Strengthening in the Least Developed Countries for Adaptation to Climate Change (CLACC) programme detailed in Box 1.

## Box 1: CLACC

The Capacity strengthening in the Least Developed Countries for Adaptation to Climate Change (CLACC) is a global support programme working in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to strengthen their efforts to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The programme, which was established in 2003, aims to build and strengthen capacity of civil society in selected LDCs to enable them to participate effectively in climate change initiatives, including government led processes such as the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA).

CLACC began with a fellowship programme, and has since conducted research, dissemination workshops, 'training of trainers' courses and other outreach activities to build the capacity of CLACC fellows and the NGOs for which they work in selected LDCs, and, hence, for civil society and governments at large.

The programme brings together a team of southern experts from a wide variety of fields, including microbiology, wildlife conservation, natural resources, agriculture, hydrology and anthropology. A multi-disciplinary approach helps to bridge the gaps between climate change and development. As a group, CLACC fellows believe that adaptation to climate change goes hand in hand with sustainable development. Through advocacy, the network tries to influence change related to adaptation to climate change during international conferences such as the Conference of Parties (COP) and with local governments. Although Kenya is not listed among LDCs, ACTS was involved in the first phase of the initiative and hence took part in the coordination of East African CLACC activities and subsequently in building the capacity of other fellows in the region.

## Introduction

In 2001, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identified the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), comprising nearly 50 of the world's poorest countries. These were located mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and it was acknowledged that they were amongst the most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, (IPCC 3<sup>rd</sup> Report, 2001), owing to their geographical location in vulnerable areas and their low capacity to cope with the impacts of climate change.

International processes have provided some support for the LDCs. For example, the seventh Conference of Parties (COP7) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) created a new LDC Fund under the Marrakech Accords to help LDCs conduct their National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). These identify national priorities to enable each country to deal with potentially adverse climate change impacts. Most NAPAs have now been completed.

With the failure of the climate change negotiations at various COPs to deliver a strong framework for international action on climate change, the need to raise awareness about climate change and to build capacity to cope with it in the world's most vulnerable nations is more pressing. With stalling action at the international level, we now need to secure change through other means, and to equip those likely to be most affected by climate change with the skills and tools to reduce the effects of its impacts. Action at the national level, particularly within civil society, is paramount to achieve success. This, however, requires a long-term commitment to building capacity, and our argument is that CLACC fellows are uniquely placed to do this.

Successful adaptation strategies require action at different levels, be they community, national, regional or international. There is growing scientific, economic, political and social consensus that these adaptation measures will require long-term thinking and explicit consideration of climate change risks at the regional (cross-national), national, sub-national,

and local levels (UNDP, 2008). This brief reiterates that capacity building needs to focus on a number of stakeholders such as Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), researchers and extension agents as they are essential to climate change adaptation interventions.

## Origin of CLACC and partners

The CLACC programme, in recognition of the need to build capacity within civil society for adaptation to climate change in the LDCs, decided to focus on NGOs that could get involved effectively with capacity building at both government and local levels. At the time, however, very few NGOs had any significant expertise in climate change activities. The institutions selected had strong links with both government policy makers and communities in their respective countries, as well as convening power and research capacity, but few had worked on climate change.

The programme began by identifying regional partners from the Regional and International Networking Group (RING),<sup>1</sup> with whom the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has a long history of collaboration. These regional partners then worked with the IIED to choose CLACC partner organisations in each of the four key regions in the world where most of the LDCs are located. All CLACC programme partners - both in the LDCs and the coordinating regional partners - have an established track record of working on issues of national policy and, more specifically, on issues concerning the environment and poverty reduction.

International processes have provided some support for the LDCs. For example, the NAPA process was started under the aegis of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as one mechanism through which national stakeholders could understand the problem of climate change and their role in building resilience to its adverse impacts. It identifies a portfolio of appropriate adaptation projects. The CLACC aims to

strengthen civil society in order to support the official NAPA process and to support implementation of adaptation projects in the LDCs over the coming years.

In Kenya, the CSO sector is a fast growing one. Various CSOs are starting to come together in an attempt to address development issues, including climate change. We believe that grassroots CSOs can play a great role in their direct contact with the communities on the ground. It is therefore paramount to build their capacity for better understanding of policy processes at the national and international level. This would consequently influence informed engagement with communities on climate change activities at the grassroots level.

## Climate change and capacity building milestones with reference to Kenya and international arena

The importance of climate change awareness is enshrined in Article 10 of the Kyoto Protocol and Article 6 of the UNFCCC which calls on governments to promote education, training and public awareness on climate change (UNFCCC, 2010). There are initiatives by different stakeholders to fulfill the commitments in Article 6, with a good example being the CLACC initiative. However, the nature of cross-cutting challenges posed by climate change requires a greater magnitude of engagement than that which is currently being experienced. In Kenya, knowledge on global warming is still wanting with only 56% of Kenyans having some knowledge on global warming or climate change (Pelham, 2009). This suggests that an even lesser percentage has knowledge about climate change adaptation. In addition, there is no single policy which seeks to address capacity building in climate change.

The Government has in the past attempted to fulfil the commitment of Article 6 of the UNFCCC by undertaking a capacity building assessment on climate change awareness in 2005. This was conducted through interviews involving representatives from different sectors including business leaders working

in energy and non-energy sectors; government officials; community based organisations; civil leaders; journalists; industrialists and university professors (UNEP, 2005). From the assessment, it was clear that public awareness on the global aspects of climate change and its effects on and ramifications at the local and the national level were low, mainly owing to lack of access to information. The report recommended the need to increase public awareness through the use of the media, to develop awareness training programs with key stakeholders, to integrate climate change in the school curricula and to increase public participation and access to information (*ibid*: 64).

Given a series of climate change events and crucial international meetings which followed the 2005 survey, the level of awareness amongst citizens may well have changed. Some of these events include the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to the UNFCCC which was held in Kenya in 2006, COP 15 held in Copenhagen in 2009 and COP 17 in Durban in 2011. COP 12, held in Kenya in 2006 was hosted at the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) complex in Nairobi. This was the first major international event on climate change to be held in Africa and in Kenya in particular. It played a key role in bringing to the forefront issues on climate change to many Kenyans. COP 15 hosted by the Government of Denmark in Copenhagen on the other hand was greatly covered by both local and international media and it raised climate change awareness to the highest political level with close to 115 world leaders attending the high-level segment and more than 40,000 representatives of governments, nongovernmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, faith-based organizations, media and UN agencies applying for accreditation (UNFCCC, 2009). This was as a result of crucial decisions that were to be discussed and agreed upon, key amongst them being a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period is set to expire at the end of 2012. COP 17 held in Durban South Africa was also greatly covered by local media from several mainstream media houses in Kenya with many of several relaying live TV broadcasts and

many others giving daily newspaper reports to the general public in highly accessible layman's language.

## How CLACC has influenced capacity building of NGOs with reference to Kenya

A number of initiatives have been undertaken since commencement of the CLACC. The initially low knowledge level on climate change of many NGOs has been enhanced through active participation in international meetings and at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties meeting. Networking opportunities have been provided for CLACC fellows by attending these meetings. Their knowledge and capacity on climate change issues has, consequently, been enhanced (see Box 2).

In 2011, one of the main activities of CLACC was to build the capacity of CSOs and CBOs in various countries. In Kenya, these capacity-building efforts were undertaken in Western Kenya with the main goals being;

- To strengthen civil society networks in Western Kenya with a view to strengthening and coordinating civil society action on climate change in the area.
- To provide a platform for civil society from Western Kenya to share its experiences in climate change issues from the area, highlighting both success stories and challenges.

### Box 2: Summary of achievements through CLACC

- The creation of platforms for the exchange of knowledge and the sharing of experience in the African region
- The participation of CSOs in international meetings such as the UNFCCC
- Some CLACC fellows have been appointed by their respective countries as official negotiators during the Conference of Parties meetings on Climate change
- "Training of trainers," whereby those who have been trained on climate change processes proceed to train others
- The strong connection between the CLACC and CSOs at the grassroots level provides a window of opportunity when it comes to advocacy for policy implementation

## Conclusion and recommendations: Reflections for policy

The CLACC's activities have contributed to enhanced and stronger capacity on climate change within CSOs and CBOs at the grassroots level. This has consequently provided a window of opportunity when it comes to advocacy for policy implementation by stakeholders concerned with the effects of climate change. There are however some concerns which still need to be looked into. From evidence gathered from some of the capacity building activities, there has been unanimous agreement that the Kenyan government should lead in the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies because civil society should only complement government efforts. It is also emerging that many stakeholders are engaged in different climate change initiatives targeting the same beneficiaries. This being the case, there is a need for stakeholders to harmonize their plans and to synchronize their efforts to avoid duplication of work and to achieve a productive and cost effective output.

In conclusion, climate change and particularly adaptation to climate will require the mobilization of all actors and the enhancement of capacity of all relevant stakeholders for both short and long term planning. Strategies will be needed to address long term climate change impacts, such as those predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Kenya government should, therefore, endeavour to work with all the stakeholders, allowing the lessons learnt to inform future capacity building engagements.

### Note

1. RING is a global alliance of research and policy organisations that seeks to enhance and promote sustainable development through a programme of collaborative research, dissemination and policy advocacy (see [www.ringalliance.org](http://www.ringalliance.org) for more information).

## References

- IPCC, (2001). IPCC 3rd Assessment Report - Climate Change 2001: Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Accessed from <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/index.htm>
- IPCC, (2001). Third Assessment Report, Cambridge University Press.
- Pelham, Brett W., (2009). Awareness, Opinions About Global Warming Vary Worldwide. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/117772/Awareness-Opinions-Global-Warming-Vary-Worldwide.aspx#2>
- UNFCCC, (2001). Marrakech Accords, COP7, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- UNFCCC (2009). Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, December 2009. [http://unfccc.int/meetings/copenhagen\\_dec\\_2009/meeting/6295.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/copenhagen_dec_2009/meeting/6295.php)
- UNFCCC, (2010). Adaptation Fund. [http://unfccc.int/cooperation\\_and\\_support/financial\\_mechanism/adaptation\\_fund/items/3659.php](http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/financial_mechanism/adaptation_fund/items/3659.php)
- UNDP, (2008). Adaptation to climate change: the new challenge for development in the developing world.
- UNEP, (2005). Education, Training and Public Awareness on Climate Change. [http://www.unep.org/dec/Support/Atmosphere/CC\\_Outreach.asp](http://www.unep.org/dec/Support/Atmosphere/CC_Outreach.asp)

### Contacts:

African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS)  
No. 49 Gigiri Court, off United Nations Crescent, Gigiri

P.O. Box 45917-00100 GPO, Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: +254 020 7126895, 7126890, 7126889,  
7126894

#### Cell Phones:

Airtel: +254 737 916566

Safaricom: +254 710 607210

Fax: +254 020 2339093

E-mail: [info@acts.or.ke](mailto:info@acts.or.ke)

Web: <http://www.acts.or.ke>