

Tackling Climate and Disaster Risks in Development Cooperation – The experience of Bread for all in community-based adaptation

by Marion Künzler, *Bread for all*¹

It's time to act now

The scientific evidence for a human influence on climate change is unequivocal: Human activities and the emissions of greenhouse gases in particular lead to global warming and to changes in weather patterns. Increases in droughts, floods, and extreme precipitation events are the consequence. With the projected acceleration of climate change, the numbers threatened by the adverse effects of climate change will rapidly increase in near future: According to IPCC 2007, by 2020 up to 250 million people in Africa are projected to be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change and yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50%.

'Climate change is not just an environmental issue, as too many people still believe. It is an all-encompassing threat.' Kofi Annan 2006, former Secretary-General of United Nations²

The changing climate poses severe problems to present and future development goals. Climate risks affect the livelihoods of the rural poor. Their strong dependence on natural resources and their limited capacity to adapt renders the population of the global South very vulnerable to climate change. Therefore, we need to act now! Development projects need to take climate change into account to lead to sustainable improvements in the standards of living of the beneficiaries.

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² Kofi Annan 2006: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10739.doc.htm>



One of the disappearing islands due to rising sea level and erosion in the Philippines (Photo: Marion Künzler)

Strengthen the effects of development projects

Climate variability and change is one of the many stressors influencing the lives of local communities. Although a World Bank (2006) study identified more than a quarter of the development activities to be seriously threatened by climate risks, most community-level development projects do not explicitly take climate risks and their impacts on local livelihoods into account. Neither are long-term effects of climate change nor the potential for mitigating climate change, i.e. reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon sequestration, dealt with while designing development projects. Considering these shortcomings in the planning and managing of development projects, *Bread for all* decided to strengthen the integration of climate and disaster risks into development cooperation.

How to tackle climate change?

In early 2009, *Bread for all* and Heks sent a climate consultant to Honduras to test an existing climate proofing tool and to adapt it to community-level projects, which is the common type of projects *Bread for all* and Heks are supporting. These two pilot studies and further pilot applications resulted in the *Participatory Tool on Climate and Disaster Risks (CliDR)*, now existing already in its fifth version.

Even though the tool was intended to be easy to use, the experience showed that climate project analysis cannot be undertaken without a previous training of the users, if a certain standard of the analysis should be kept.

Therefore *Bread for all* applies the following approach:

- Climate workshops: During a four day workshop, participants learn the basics about climate change and disaster risks and practice the application of the tool.
- Climate project analysis: A specific project analysis is performed by an international expert of *Bread for all*. This analysis serves at the same time as a concrete local example during the workshop on how to apply the tool.

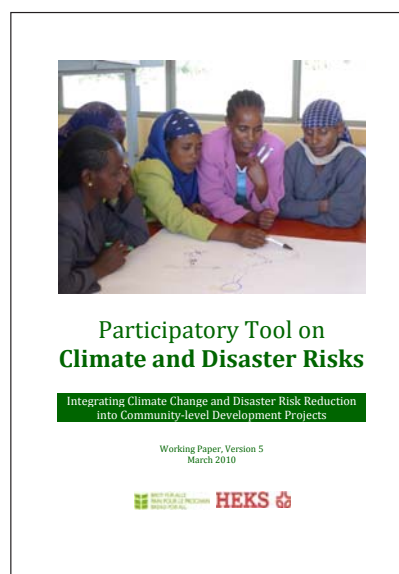
So far five workshops and project analysis were conducted in Honduras, Ethiopia, Haiti, Niger and the Philippines.

Furthermore, *Bread for all* strengthens the institutionalisation of the issue in their Swiss partner organisations e.g. through the integration in strategies, concepts or the design of projects.

To ensure the start up finance for additional climate components in existing projects which were analysed with the CliDR-tool, a Climate Fund³ of *Bread for all* and the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund (Fastenopfer) was set up in 2009.

³ www.brotfueralle.ch/klimafonds

Participatory Tool on Climate and Disaster Risks



The *Participatory Tool on Climate and Disaster Risks (CliDR)*⁴ was elaborated by *Bread for all* and HEKS as a simple easy-to-use tool to facilitate the assessment of climate and disaster risks and the impact of development projects on adaptive capacities as well as greenhouse gas emissions. It can be associated with community based adaptation and sustainable livelihood approaches. Its structure is largely based on the Community-based Risk-Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods (CRiSTAL)⁵ and the CARE CVCA Handbook⁶ and it is continuously adapted and improved taking into account practical experience in application.

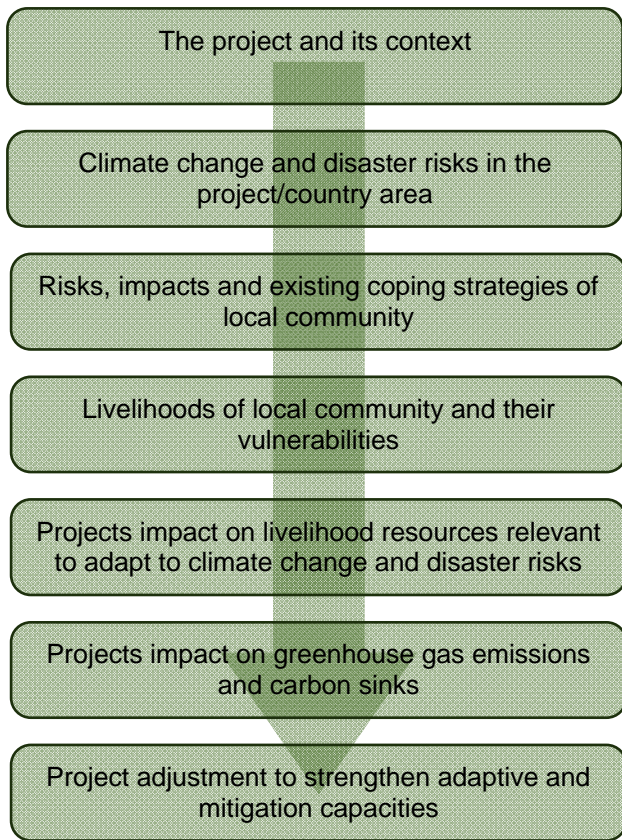
The tool is simple to use in the field and covers apart from adaptation also aspects of climate change mitigation and disaster risk management. A special focus is given to gender as often in rural communities the everyday life of women and men differ greatly and they are affected in different ways by climate change.

⁴ The tool can be downloaded on: www.brotfueralle.ch/klima-workshops

⁵ CRiSTAL stands for Community-based Risk-Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods. The tool has been elaborated by IISD, Intercooperation, IUCN and SEI-US.

⁶ The Capacity Analysis and Vulnerability Analysis (CVCA) Handbook has been elaborated by CARE International with the support of, inter alia, IISD.

The users are guided to analyse their project along seven modules that build on each other:



Modules of the Participatory Tool on Climate and Disaster Risks

The information for a climate and disaster project analysis is mainly collected through stakeholder consultations. Only a limited amount of literature review is demanded in order to know the local climate and expected changes. Consulting the beneficiaries and coordinators of the project ensures that modifications to the project emerging from such an assessment are adapted to the local context. The consultations are held in different groups with men and women separated to respect the different realities of their everyday lives and to make sure that both have their say. In addition, beneficiaries and project coordinators are consulted separately.

The tool lists a series of participatory exercises that focus on climate risks, their impacts on livelihood resources, and current coping strategies. Additionally, the tool includes tables how to collect and structure the information from the consultations and the literature review.

Threatened marine resources: Application of the CliDR-tool in the Philippines

The author, climate change expert of *Bread for all*, carried out the project analysis in a project in Hinatuan Bay on Mindanao Island in the Philippines. The project is supported by the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund (Fastenopfer) and aims to effectively manage the marine and coastal resources. The local NGO ‘Center for Empowerment and Resource Development’ (CERD) supports the fisher families e.g. with organizational development, capacity building, gender mainstreaming and sustainable development of fishing.

The fisher families together with the project staff of CERD discussed in various workshops the climatic changes, impacts and coping strategies and searched for solutions. Mainly in two one day workshops the fisher men and women conducted different exercises and worked out the relevant information.



Fisher women draw a hazard map for Hinatuan Bay (Photo: Marion Künzler)



Fisher village on Mahaba Island in Hinatuan Bay (Photo: Marion Künzler)

Scientists project a rise of the sea level, changing precipitation, increasing temperatures and extreme weather events such as typhoons or El Niño-induced droughts for the Philippines. The testimonies of the fisher families supported these scientific scenarios for the region. The fishers fight already today with sea level rise and an increasing frequency and intensity of droughts and typhoons. For example, heavy rainfall and drought cause fluctuations of sea salinity and reduce the income of fishing and sea weed farming because of their sensitivity to fluctuation in salinity. Future global warming will even intensify these risks, and add hazards that have been less important in the past, such as dengue fever.

The local population developed many functioning coping strategies such as diversification of income with agricultural products or moving sea weed farms in areas, where the salinity of the sea is more stable. However, they cannot reduce the vulnerability of their livelihood resources sufficiently, particularly in view of ongoing climate change.

‘Recently during spring tide the waves were coming up so high into my house (bamboo hut), that my children could learn to swim in the living room instead of going to the sea’, explains a fisher mother of four children living on one of the islands in Hinatuan Bay.

The project already strongly supports the fisher families and their activities - for example, with seven marine sanctuaries, which have led to an increased fish stock or the reforestation of mangroves, which protect the land against high waves – and reduce the vulnerability of the fishers to climate and disaster risks.

Nevertheless, more actions need to be taken to strengthen the livelihood, the resources and the adaptive capacities of the population: For example, further diversification of income from agriculture, salt and / or drought-resistant crop and fish varieties, as well as trainings to interpret the traditional signs of typhoons and other natural hazards have been discussed with the project coordinators of CERD. The next project phase is currently being elaborated and so some of the discussed ideas will be incorporated into the project and implemented.

Climate Change Workshops

The climate change workshops aim at raising awareness for the topic and at providing the basics needed to climate proof a development project.

The workshop participants come from a range of different partner institutions to best cover the various aspects of the topic and to foster fruitful and interesting discussions. Priority is given to project coordinators

and field staff. Local experts from different research institutions and representatives of the (local) government are invited as well.

The different backgrounds of participants are a major challenge when organizing a workshop. Depending on the situation, interpreters are needed and the presentations and exercises have to be adapted to fit the background knowledge and the needs of the participants.

The workshops consist of a series of introductory presentations, movies, group exercises and a field trip. The topics covered in the presentations include:

- Global climate change, its causes and its effects
- Local climate change and its impacts
- Strategies to deal with climate change: adapting to the inevitable local impacts and mitigation of climate change
- Adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction
- International and national climate politics

- An example of a climate analysis of a local community-level development project with the *Participatory Tool on Climate and Disaster Risks (CliDR)*, e.g. the analysis of the marine project in the Philippines.
- Examples of local development projects or activities with a strong climate component, e.g. an agricultural project dealing with climate change.

Whenever possible, the presentations are held by local experts. The intention is to make use of local knowledge, to promote and introduce the local experts to the participants, and to stimulate cooperation between the different organizations and stakeholders.

In group exercises, the participants learn how to use the CliDR-tool. The exercises during the workshop mirror the participatory exercises proposed in the CliDR-tool.

Additionally, the participants are given the possibility to visit a local project that features a strong climate component or a research centre during a field trip.

Field visit in the Philippines

In a one-day field visit of the Fastenopfer project MASIPAG in south-western Mindanao, participants (mainly local partner organizations of Fastenopfer and HEKS) applied their new knowledge and learned about various strategies to adapt to climate and disaster risks. MASIPAG is a farmer-led network of people's organizations, non-government organizations and scientists working towards the sustainable use and management of biodiversity through farmers' control of genetic and biological resources, agricultural production and associated knowledge.



A workshop participants (left) and Arthur (right), a rice farmer, are standing in the trial field with over 170 rice varieties (Photo: Marion Künzler)

Arthur, a rice farmer explained the participants how he is dealing with the risk of recurring black bug pests: 'A seed bank of over 170 rice varieties, targeted water management, appropriate timing of cultivation and organic farming practices have led to a constant harvest and income. My family has now always enough food, a weather-proof house (a brick house instead of a traditional bamboo hut), and we can afford to pay the school fees regularly for my children'.

Lessons Learnt

The Climate Proofing Tool in conjunction with the climate change workshops provide the basics to explicitly take into account climate change in managing and planning development projects. The experiences in five developing countries have shown that climate change as a topic is met with huge interest by the coordinators and beneficiaries of development projects.

The projects analyzed so far strengthen the local communities' capacity to adapt to changing climatic conditions and contribute to reducing greenhouse gases. *Bread for all* and its partner organisations are already working – although implicitly – on the topic of climate change. To take into account how project activities influence the ability to deal with changing climatic conditions is thus not a completely new topic and can be explicitly integrated in the development cooperation of *Bread for all* partners at reasonable additional costs.

'Due to the workshop I have become aware that the work of MASIPAG in the context of climate change is very relevant. We are already researching for climate risk resistant rice varieties, or look for ways to combat pest diseases'. Bobby Pagusara, employee of MASIPAG, a partner of Fastenopfer in the Philippines

To take into account gender inequality the separation of men and women during stakeholder consultations has proven to work well, especially in countries with strong gender inequality.

The integration of climate and disaster risks in one tool is very appreciated by the users. As there is a large overlap between climate change adaptation and disaster risk management, a distinction between disaster and climate risks is unnecessary and often not feasible at all. In contrast, existing activities on disaster risk management can be picked up and synergies with adaptation to climate change can be utilized.

Further, networking among the participants is a very important aspect of the workshops. Project coordinators are often unaware of the possibilities for collaboration with and support from other organizations (e.g. universities, research institutes, national and

international agencies). Bringing together all actors interested in and working on the topic of climate change and disaster risks helps to promote collaboration.

Challenges

The climate change and climate proofing workshops are intended as kickoff events to raise awareness on the topic of climate change for development agencies in the respective countries. A successful implementation of climate change issues in project evaluation and design, however, requires a lot more efforts. The agencies concerned are thus urged to autonomously analyze their existing projects with the CliDR-tool and to use it in the design of new projects.

Furthermore, the climate proofing efforts require new financial resources and a reasonable but nevertheless substantial financial commitment of the partner organisations.

References:

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All articles of the Rural Development News are available on www.agridea-international.ch/RDN