



Planning for the future and adapting to climate change in Ethiopia

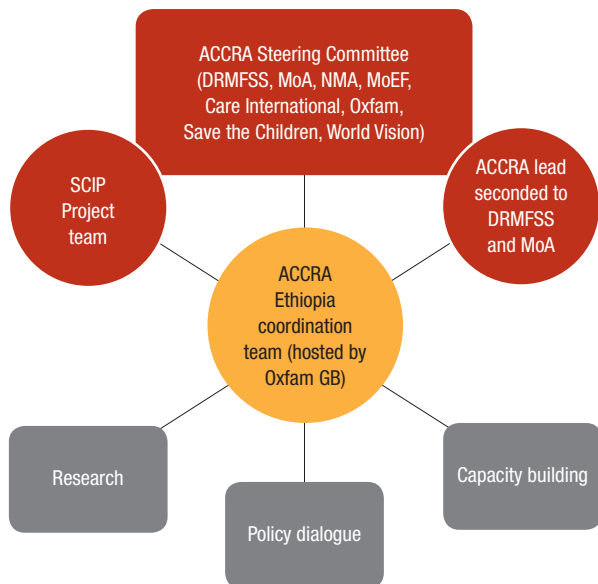
Lessons from ACCRA

March 2014

ACCRA USES A SET OF research and capacity building tools to promote pro-poor and participatory climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) in planning processes. Through supporting the government and engaging local communities, ACCRA seeks to help woredas produce better plans in the face of future change and uncertainty. In turn, ACCRA supports the scaling up of its activities across the country and influence on national policy.

ACCRA in Ethiopia is a consortium made up of Care International, Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision and key government actors including, Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), National Metrological Agency (NMA), Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF). Internationally, ACCRA works on CCA and disaster risk reduction (DRR) across Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda.

Figure 1: ACCRA’s structure in Ethiopia



ACCRA’s approach

Promoting Flexible and Forward-Looking Decision Making (FFDM)

ACCRA’s earlier work showed that policymakers face difficult trade-offs in planning for a changing and uncertain future.

Yet many development actors continue to plan for the near-term, with little room for manoeuvre or contingency. ACCRA therefore chose to focus on one specific characteristic of adaptive capacity in order to help decision makers and planners to better prepare themselves for the future: Flexible and Forward-Looking Decision Making (FFDM).

What is FFDM?

Decision making is flexible and forward-looking when it:

- Recognises that change will happen and requires adaptation, but that the specific direction and magnitude of change, as well as the implications for development trajectories, are uncertain.
- Is able to consider and reason about the impacts of different drivers of change on development trajectories and plans accordingly in order to maintain progress.
- Can identify enablers and initiate steps to overcome barriers to adaptation.
- Can, where needed, make changes to structures and planning processes to implement adaptation effectively, whether incremental or transformational.

As a concept, FFDM is relatively straightforward to understand (see Box). In practice, though, it is often hard to communicate and to relate to complex real-world problems. We therefore need new approaches to help communicate and promote the principles that make up FFDM to development practitioners. One solution comes in the form of ‘serious games’ supported by tools to initiate reflection on how to relate principles of FFDM experienced during the game to the real world. In collaboration with The abaci Partnership and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, ACCRA developed a ‘game-enabled reflection approach’ to promote FFDM.

The game-enabled reflection approach was tailored for woreda-level planners and developed into a two- to three-day workshop. This was held in Gemechis woreda in West Hararghe zone of Oromia region. Key stakeholders in government and civil society were trained as facilitators. At the same time, ACCRA undertook research to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in promoting FFDM with woreda and zonal development planners in Ethiopia.

Capacity building for development planning

ACCRA’s strong partnership with DRMFSS has meant that ACCRA’s participatory approach and evidence from pilot projects is being integrated into the roll-out of national disaster planning. These elements, as well as ACCRA’s Local Adaptive Capacity Framework have been integrated into woreda level DRR planning. This has included development of guidelines, Training of Trainers and support to woredas to develop woreda DRR and Contingency Plans. Through this work, ACCRA is ensuring national and local level planners take into account climate change and other future trends into DRR planning.

ACCRA is working with MoEF to support the capacity of woredas and regions to put national development plans into practice.

The Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) is Ethiopia’s development vision to gain middle-income status by 2025 through climate resilient green growth. ACCRA is assisting with the design of woreda level CRGE investment plans. The accompanying investment planning manual is being piloted to test the approach. ACCRA seeks to bring input from the local level into regional and national level planning and implementation of CRGE.

ACCRA is also proactively engaging key government and civil society actors to see benefits of linking DRR and CCA.

Using a unique gradual training approach, over six months stakeholders are being trained and coached on how to mainstream DRR and CCA into processes, policy, programmes and practice.

Lessons learned from ACCRA research and capacity building

What has ACCRA learned from having conducted 4 years of research and capacity building in Ethiopia? Below we described some of the key findings:

Local and national plans are focused on the near-term. They often fail to take a long-term perspective and recognise future change and uncertainty.

Decision making, even under normal circumstances, is a tough task. Add climate change-related uncertainties to it and it becomes even harder. Therefore, district-level decision makers need tools that help them deal with complexity in a flexible manner and allow them to consider potential future threats – climate-related and otherwise.

Although communicating concepts such as uncertainty and FFDM can be difficult, a game-enabled reflection approach can help in communicating FFDM to development practitioners.

But changing perceptions and institutional structures is a gradual process, requiring continuing support from development partners. Interventions delivered as a one-off and in isolation are unlikely to succeed. Successful and sustainable interventions will require considerable and well-timed investment.

Ensuring political buy-in is key for promoting FFDM and adaptation. Woreda and zonal officials recognised that they do have some space for putting the principles of FFDM into practice, even within strict centrally-defined planning processes. For example, one workshop participant described the following local activities:

‘[After the workshop] we increased involvement of the community in the identification and prioritisation of district problems. In addition, the planning process now considers future challenges and problems in anticipation. For example, the district’s emergency plan was previously prepared based on prevalent disaster risks – after the disasters occurred. But we now use weather forecast information, and preparation of the emergency plan is carried out not only based on what is prevailing but also in anticipation of potential hazards.’ (Zonal Official, West Hararghe, 2013)

However, opportunities like these quickly reach their limits unless active support and buy-in from political leaders is guaranteed.

Opportunities do exist to do things differently. Recognising inherent limitations in the rigidity of policy cycles and planning processes in Ethiopia, there is always *some* flexibility. Even when targets are handed down from central government, woreda planners can often decide the specific modalities of implementation.

First experiences have been made in doing things differently.

To be flexible and forward looking, planning should use an integrated approach bringing together DRR and CCA. Woreda staff highlighted their experiences in an integrated planning approach, bringing together different sectoral offices and communities as well as mainstreaming DRR and CCA.

“This participatory planning process helped identify root causes of problems, multi-directional solution searching and helped us to see that some things were within ours and communities’ capacity to solve. The relationship between us and communities has fundamentally changed. We understand the necessity to consult and to make our work more participatory”. (Gemechis Woreda Official, 2013)

Recommendations

To enhance adaptive capacity and promote FFDM, many different actors will need to take action. ACCRA recommends that the following activities be instigated:

Woreda governments should exploit opportunities to promote FFDM within constraints by:

- Integrating CCA and DRR into implementation of plans. For example, woredas are required to invest in natural resource management and afforestation. Where and how this is implemented is largely up to the district administration. If planned effectively, efforts to promote afforestation can both meet allocated targets

as well as reduce the risk of landslide and damage to infrastructure through well-informed site selection.

- Seeking information and advice from external sources for more informed decision-making, whether from central line ministries, national and international NGOs or private sector actors. Examples may include the use and uptake of seasonal or decadal climate information from the National Metrological Agency (NMA) or the sharing of experiences in promoting climate smart agriculture among development partners. Targeted support can help to foster innovation in a specific sector, e.g. agriculture, to enable long-term CCA.
- Collaborating across and within different sectors and districts to pool resources and draw up contingency plans. In West Hararghe Zone, given its exposure to climate extremes, contingency plans are increasingly elaborated that allow quick reaction in the case of a disaster by relevant government agencies and NGOs, including deployment of funds for emergency measure. As well as integrating activities across sectors, training of other colleagues in the principles of FFDM will assist in effecting change at the woreda level. Some initiatives have already been carried out in Gemechis woreda to train nine colleagues from different sector offices.
- Reflecting on where the woreda aims to be on time horizons beyond the traditional three- to five-year planning cycles.

National governments play a key role as they set the parameters for planning at all administrative levels:

- MoA and MoEF should encourage woredas to develop longer-term strategies that incorporate principles of FFDM.

- Woredas should be given freedom to define and shape their own development targets based on local needs and priorities. Currently in Ethiopia, a typical woreda sector budget allocates less than 10% to capital investments, with more than 90% allocated to recurrent costs, of which the majority is allocated for salaries, which does not promote decision-making at the woreda level.
- Greater exchange and eventually coordination across sectors and ministries, including DRMFS, MoA, MoEF and NMA, and between different levels of government should be promoted.

Non-governmental and civil society organisations should ensure their programmes take forward the lessons learned by:

- Mobilising technical and financial resources to promote ongoing dialogue around FFDM.
- Promoting collaboration across sectoral boundaries and bringing together stakeholders that would not normally collaborate together.
- Sharing learning and practical experience.

Donors and multilateral agencies need to ensure they are responsive to changing priorities and unforeseen circumstances by:

- Enabling greater flexibility by moving away from short-term target-based thinking (e.g. payment by results) to use their funding mechanisms to promote beneficial outcomes in the longer term.
- Adjusting funding timescales to provide incentives to consider and promote longer-term objectives within projects and programmes.
- Promoting planning reform processes which recognise the need for local level adaptive planning.

This Briefing Paper is based on research carried out by ACCRA in 2012–14 in Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique. The full report is available from www.odi.org.uk.

‘Planning for an Uncertain Future: Promoting adaptation to climate change through Flexible and Forward-looking Decision Making’, London, ODI.

ACCRA – the Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance – is a research, advocacy and capacity building consortium of Oxfam GB, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Care International, Save the Children and World Vision International. It works in Mozambique, Uganda and Ethiopia. ACCRA is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Further information about ACCRA and contact details can be found at: community.eldis.org/accra/

Detailed information about the ‘game-enabled reflection approach’ can be found at: www.climatecentre.org/site/accra

The views and opinions presented in this briefing paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of ODI, ACCRA, ACCRA consortium members and affiliates or DFID.

Other relevant ACCRA publications include (available at www.odi.org.uk):

- Jones, L., Ludi, E. and Levine, S. (2010) ‘Towards a Characterisation of Adaptive Capacity: A Framework for Analysing Adaptive Capacity at the Local Level’. Background Note. London: ODI.
- Levine, S., Ludi, E. and Jones, L. (2011) ‘Rethinking Support for Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change: The Role of Development Interventions’. London: ACCRA, ODI.
- Ludi, E., Jones, L., and Levine, S. (2012) *Changing focus? How to start taking adaptive capacity seriously*. Briefing Paper 71. London, ODI.
- Jones, L., Ludi, E., Beutement, P., Broenner, C. and Bachofen, C. (2013a) ‘New Approaches to Promoting Flexible and Forward-Looking Decision Making: Insights from Complexity Science, Climate Change Adaptation and “Serious Gaming”’. London: ODI.
- Jones, L., Ludi, E., Amsalu, A. Artur, L., Bunce, M., Matheson, S., Muhumuza, W. and Zacarias, D. (2013b) ‘The Political Economy of Local Adaptation Planning: Exploring Barriers to Flexible and Forward-looking Decision Making in Three Districts in Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique’. London: ODI.