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THEME: Strengthening Research and Innovations for Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Development

Community Resilience to Climate Related Disasters in Kenya

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Abstract

Hazard events become disasters because of communities vulnerability. Sometimes it may be difficult to reduce the scale, intensity, or frequency of hazards while it is possible to reduce vulnerability and its causes which are socially constructed. Communities which have strengths and resources available for mobilization to reduce the level of risk are considered resilient. Resilient communities are therefore able to prevent, withstand or bounce back better from shocks of climate change related disasters. This is achieved through disaster risk reduction activities which aim at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk, while strengthening preparedness for response and recovery, thus contributing to strengthening resilience. Most communities in Kenya have similar exposure to flood hazards and have developed ways to prevent or mitigate such flood hazards, adapt to and prepare for them using local materials and methods. The Kenya Red Cross Society along with other partners such as; CARE Kenya, Wetlands International and Cordaid have worked closely with communities at grassroots level to strengthen resilience to disasters, including floods. Despite the community's experiences to past disasters, they have not been able to enhance their coping capacity due to their limited adaptive capacity. Indigenous communities world over have been recognized as being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to the close connection between their livelihoods and the environment. This group of people are believed to have specific Knowledge Systems about various aspects of diversity, which they rely on to create coping and adaptation strategies to the changing contexts and the high variability in climate factors, experienced in recent decades. This paper compares the resilience of communities in Kenya and uses past data in order to observe emerging patterns and trends to enhance predictions of flood hazards as part of disaster risk reduction initiatives. The paper also explores the role of traditional-Local-and Indigenous-Knowledge in responding to climate change.

Key Words: Community resilience, climate change, disaster risk, vulnerability, disasters, adaptative capacity and indigenous knowledge