

HUNGRY OCEANS, URBAN FLOODING & CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION THE CASE OF HALF-DIE, GAMBIA

**Location: HALF-DIE, Banjul
(The Gambia-West Africa)**



Banjul – Less than 1 meter above sea level, exposed to climate variability - coastal erosion, floods, saline water infiltration and rising temperatures. Reportedly having a high level of out-migration. Target sector for project - sustainable livelihoods.

Project supported and driven ‘from below’ by **ENDA**, implemented by - **Women In Service Development Organisation and Management (WISDOM)** with strategic support of the **Department of Water Resources-(DWR) Gambia**.

CBA action commenced August 2009-still active

- Preliminary field research (consent of national authorities, identify stakeholders and select local CBO)
- Build capacity of CBO
- In-depth field research
- Local decision makers’ workshop
- Community sensitization
- Build adaptive capacity
- Launch adaptation action
- Monitoring and Evaluation



From left, the leader, organiser, secretary and member of the local branch of WISDOM NGO in Half-die

Our community is called Half Die located in Banjul, the capital city of the Gambia. Banjul literally means ‘bamboo’ in our local Mandinka language. The island was famously known of its large collection of bamboo trees and was named as such. Historically, during the colonial era, there was an outbreak of cholera in the community which resulted in the death of half of the population. The community was consequently named Half Die.



Mangrove forests serving as spawning ground for fish and as a very important livelihood resource - oysters

Our community climate change adaptation project is led by Women In Service Development Organization (WISDOM), a non-governmental Organisation founded in 1989 to organise and empower women groups particularly at the community level. It creates awareness on contemporary and cross-cutting developmental issues such as gender, environmental protection and climate change, and strategies for sustainable development. Community discussions on project’s activities were led by the local branch of WISDOM in the Half Die community. The project is aimed at sensitizing community members on climate change and to develop more adaptive measures against the impacts of climate hazards on our lives and livelihoods. Banjul is built on a low-lying coastal spit of erodible sediments which is less than one meter above sea level. We are currently battling with rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, intense rainfall and storm surges. Our important natural resources are the sea and sandy beaches, the River Gambia, mangrove forest and wetlands. These are important assets for our livelihood activities such as hotel services, fishing and oyster harvesting. Other livelihood activities in our community are fish preservation (smoking), petty trading and some small scale cottage industries (baking, batik and soap making).

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Coastal erosion destroying Banjul beaches. This beach was rehabilitated in 2004 but erosion has begun again.



Flooded compound with cement blocks serving as pathway.



Building capacity of local CBO staff - training in participatory action research methods.

These climate hazards associated with these extreme events are causing damages to our natural resources upon which we depend on for our livelihoods. Our beaches are being constantly eroded away as a result of rising sea levels, our fresh water from the river Gambia is being intruded by saline water and our mangrove forests are gradually being washed away. The low-lying nature of our land propels serious floods as we experience intense rainfall in the months of July, August and September. These floods destroy our infrastructure such as shelter, roads and markets. Some of our compounds are flooded with stagnant water in the rainy season serving as breeding grounds for mosquitoes, resulting in high incidence of malaria cases. We are currently experiencing heat stress and post harvest fish loss as a result of rising temperatures. Most of our coping strategies to these hazards have not been very efficient.

This year with support from ENDA, we are aiming at getting sustainable adaptive measures which can be locally driven and implemented to help us cope better with and adapt to future extreme events. The upcoming local decision makers' workshop will be a platform for most of our local people to be well informed about climate change and help us better adapt. Through the implementation of this project, the capacity of our local CBO staff has been built on research methods and this will enable the replication of this project in other communities which are also impacted by climate variability and change.

Many people have moved away from the old town, leaving behind old homes, memories and traditions. Climate is not the only cause but life is not easy where we move to either. St Mary's island has been home to many generations of families and life on the main land in the Kombos, Serrekunda and Brikama is just not the same. But God teaches us to accept life so what can we do?

Participatory Action Research Methods in Half Die



Risk mapping, Half Die (October 2009, Ampomah)



Livelihood community discussions on climate risk, Half Die (October 2009, Ampomah)



Livelihood exposure matrix, Half Die (October 2009, Ampomah)

- **Social learning**- facilitated by using participatory action research methods. Community members engaged in local climate change talks.
- **Severity of hazards** – Floods and heat stress, identified to be having strong negative impacts on community members. These affect all livelihoods activities and available resources.
- **Local coping strategies** - Very simple and less efficient. Available resources have no or weak influence on coping strategies. These strategies need to be improved to make them more sustainable.

Lessons Learned in Gambia

1. Inhabitants of this community are found to be socially tied by self-help groups and associations like that of 'WISDOM'. They are therefore easier to reach through these groups which could be used as risk communication channels.
2. Current high migration out of Banjul is partly due to economic constraints underpinned by climate hazards on resources which undermine the sustainability of livelihoods making it difficult for human survival. The provision of alternate livelihoods to complement existing ones could slow down the level of out-migration.
3. The impacts of these climate hazards on inhabitants are worsened when people in some key livelihoods migrate outside the community. Once most members of this community are emigrants, they find it easy to move out because they are not traditionally tied to the place. Most of them migrate when their resources are no longer helping them to cope with existing stressors. For instance, most local fishermen being emigrants, move out of the community during lean seasons when temperature is very high, resulting in scarcity and escalating prices of fish. It is therefore important to create avenues by which natural resources such as mangrove forest which serve as spawning grounds for fish to be protected.
4. An understanding of climate change is a key factor in sustainable adaptation. Thus, although climate hazards are being experienced continuously, local people have not yet developed sustainable coping strategies. This could be due to limited knowledge on climate change rendering communities handicapped in predicting future extreme events. It is therefore necessary to sensitize local people and increase their understanding on climate variability and change.

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