

LOCAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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Publisher

BNRCC

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The BNRCC newsletter invites correspondence from interested stakeholders.

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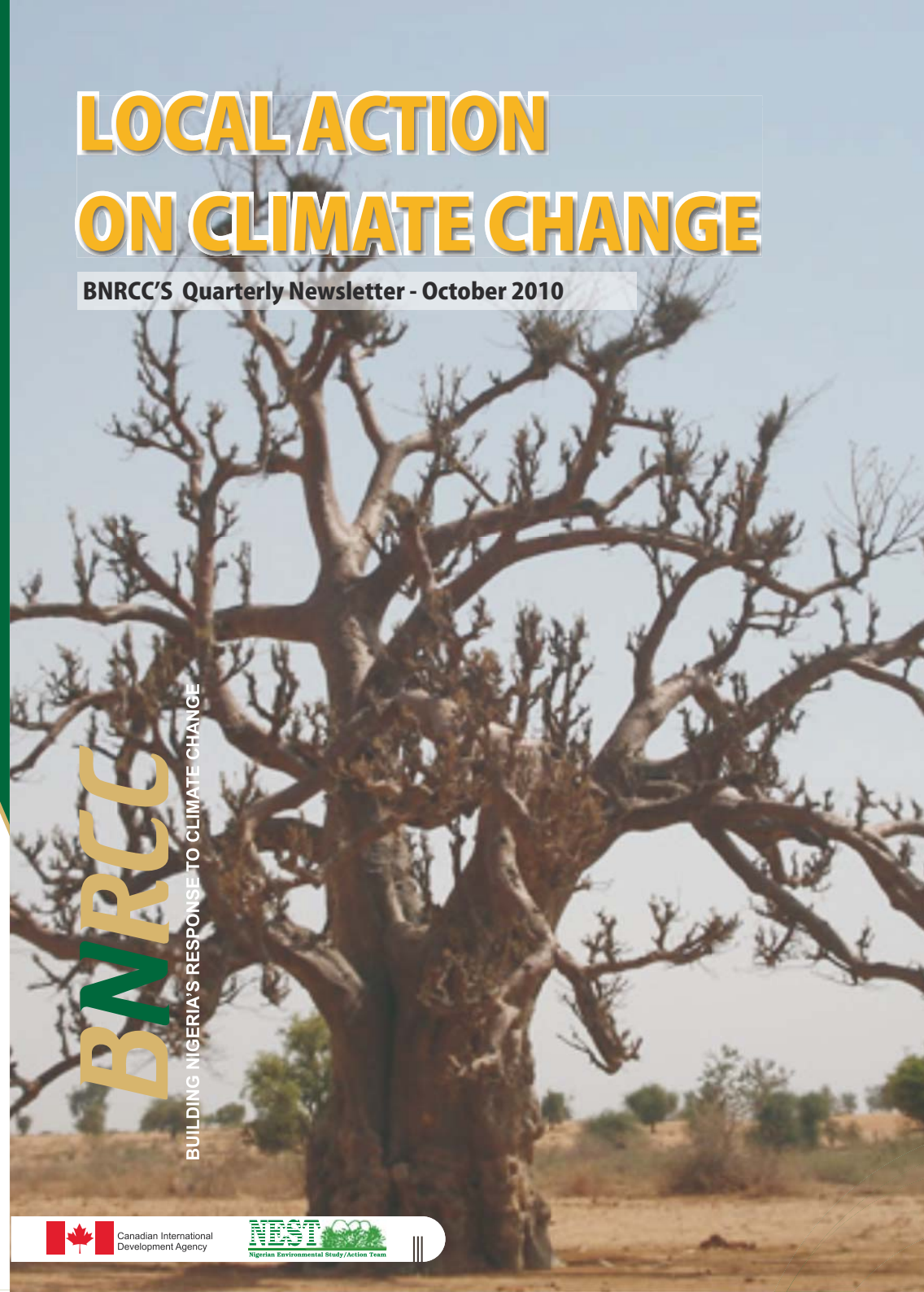


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BNRCC
BUILDING NIGERIA'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE



Beekeeping: An Alternative Livelihood



Photography: Samson Samuel Ogallah

In the last year alone, Hudu Ibrahim has made more than 200 beehives. His method is meticulous as he wraps rope around straw to protect the hives from water or any unwanted pests. Beekeeping has been in his family for generations and although his father wanted him to give up the business solely to farm, Hudu is happy he stuck with what he calls a “lucrative dry season business”.

During the dry season, when farms, crops, livestock and subsequently families, suffer due to drought, Hudu has managed to generate enough income to sustain his family of 10 children. Recently, he produced an additional 88 hives to be handed out to farmers in his Falgore community as part of the Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change (BNRCC) project being implemented by local NGO, Greenwatch Initiative.

As one of 15 pilot projects across the country, BNRCC is working with communities like Falgore to address the needs of vulnerable people most impacted by the effects of climate change. The pilot projects are focused on adaptation strategies or helping communities respond to the new realities in the face of unpredictable or extreme weather patterns.

Falgore, is a small town of approximately 70,000 to 100,000 people, and situated in the

north-west of Nigeria in Kano State. Like many in rural Nigeria, Falgore's settlers are predominantly farmers by trade – reliant on their land and the whims of the weather.

While 'climate change' may be a new term in Nigeria, communities across the country have long experience of effects similar to those expected, perhaps in a more severe form, from climate change. In Falgore, the dry season in particular has proven to be a time associated with hunger and suffering. According to the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET), “agricultural drought may be inevitable across the country... agricultural production is therefore likely to witness low yields leading to food scarcity.” Falgore may be unaware of the science behind the hunger, but most can peg their every day struggles and hardships on the changing climate patterns in their region.

Ahmad Tijani Hamza, the Chief of Falgore in Dogowa Local Government, remembers when he first arrived to the settlement in 1971, “water levels in the well were so high you could fetch it with your hand. Now the wells are dry. We used to get heavy downpours in August and now it may rain once every ten days.

There used to be a lot of grass for the livestock during the dry season, but now both livestock and humans are facing difficulties because of the lack of water.”

The unpredictable rains, more extreme weather and climate related events could have a severe effect on the livelihood of farmers, creating a desperate need to find alternative means of generating income during the longer dry season.

One popular alternative is that of felling trees for firewood – an option that may help a farmer with his immediate needs for income, but in the long run is not sustainable for his farm, the community, or the environment at large.

Deforestation across Nigeria is a serious problem and according to the Food and Agriculture Organization

“ I no longer sleep in the room with my two eyes closed again for fear of being buried alive by a sand dune. It happened to one of my neighbours in this community. The desert is fast spreading and this has increased the speed of the wind that is carrying sand in this village ”

Hajiya Wasira (community women's leader in Toshua, Yobe State)

Cover photo: A baobab tree

In Bursali, Zaki Local Government of Bauchi State a lone baobab tree stands bare but with a few seeds growing and a few nests atop the highest branches. According to some community members, the 'Shamua' birds nests perched high on the trees indicated that the rains were yet to come.

Cover Photography: Samson, Samuel Ogallah

Design: Adeyinka Akingbade



Photography: Samson Samuel Ogallah

of the UN, Nigeria has one of the world's highest deforestation rates. Since 1990, the country has lost 35.7 percent of its forest cover, and collection of firewood has been identified as one of the leading causes of this depletion.

Climate change can be defined as the marked and measured change in weather patterns over a 30-year period. One of the largest contributors to climate change is the increase of greenhouse gases, one of them being carbon dioxide (CO2) levels, present naturally in the atmosphere. As trees absorb CO2 while pumping oxygen into the atmosphere, they have a natural ability to store carbon. Some of the other important functions served by trees may be so obvious that we take them for granted.

Acting as a strong shield, or barrier, trees can protect houses and communities from severe windstorms, and their sturdy roots can reach deep into the soil and protect the land against wind and water erosion and flash floods. For many, it is simply a tree's ability to shield humans and animals against the relentless Nigerian sun that marks their vitality.

Abdulrahman Ishaka is a farmer in Falgore who has faced hardship over the years as a result of the impacts of climate change. As his crop yields continued to diminish, Abdulrahman had trouble supporting his wife and 10 children; "whenever we had lack of rainfall I would go into the bush to fetch firewood, because we didn't have enough food.

Unless we went to fetch firewood we wouldn't

be able to meet our basic needs." Things became so dire that his eldest son, Hussein, left home in hopes of a more profitable life, abandoning the family and the farm. Still heartbroken, Hasiya, Abdulrahman's wife, remembers when her son left, "we were so sad, we couldn't even speak."

This year things are looking better for Abdulrahman and Hasiya. With more than 40 beehives hung high in trees around his farm, Abdulrahman produced enough income from honey to feed his family during the dry season.

Hasiya filters and processes the honeycomb her husband brings home, and packages the honey in bottles for sale. A proud smile crosses Hasiya's face when she admits that her involvement in the family business means that she too is contributing to the needs of her children. In the Islamic religious community of Falgore, a woman is often responsible for household duties, making it difficult for her to contribute to the family's livelihood. Hasiya's involvement in this new business is another positive outcome of the beekeeping intervention.

If the beehives can sustain the family's needs and continue to be a successful business, Abdulrahman will no longer look at firewood as a means to earn a living. Engaging communities in alternative livelihoods, such as beekeeping, can help address the needs of vulnerable communities impacted by the effects of climate change.

Karen Shaw



Photography: Samson Samuel Ogallah

Gender and Adaptive Capacity using Fuel-Efficient Wood Stoves: BNRCC Pilot Projects

For many women across rural Nigeria, forest products, such as firewood, is an essential element used for domestic activities such as food processing and preparation. Overexploitation of the forests across the country is depleting this valuable resource, critical in mitigating the impacts of climate change. Forests can act as carbon sinks, protecting and preventing the soil from the effects of flooding or a prolonged dry season. They also provide sources of food and income for vulnerable communities.

Adaptation to climate change seeks alternatives to the current status quo and in this case one solution is the adoption of locally constructed, fuel-efficient wood stoves. These fuel-efficient stoves reduce the amount of time required for cooking food, consume less firewood and produce less smoke. By reducing the consumption of wood, the amount of time and labour devoted to locating and carrying wood is also greatly reduced. The time that women save by using these stoves, allows them to attend to other responsibilities.

Hassana Pindar



Photography: Hassana Pindar

Woman carrying firewood in Falgore Community, Kano State.



locally fabricated fuel efficient wood stove

RESEARCH AT WORK



Photography: Samson Samuel Ogallah

Site of a gully erosion in Ikot Ebam Itan, Akwa Ibom State

It is well known across Nigeria, that more emphasis needs to be placed on evidence-based research to study the impacts of climate change. In its funding of five research projects across the country, BNRCC is building Nigeria's capacity to understand, adapt and respond to the current and future effects of climate change, and its negative impacts on the livelihoods of vulnerable men, women and children across Nigeria.

In the south-east Agro-ecological zone of Nigeria, the research team, Women and Children Development Initiative (WACDI), is conducting a study on "Gender Dimensions and Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Adaptation to Climate Change". One of the

main objectives of this study is to identify the major climate change hazards in the region and the impacts on livelihoods. Using primary data obtained during their fieldwork, WACDI met with community members in focus group discussions, conducted interviews with community leaders, and administered questionnaires to 800 households (made up of 400 male household heads, and 400 female household heads).

Questionnaires were used to collect data on gender differences in awareness, perception and vulnerability to climate change impacts of the household heads and were the basis for the estimate of the cost of adaptation measures of identified climate change hazards.

“ the sun has come down close to human beings ”
A female leader in Anambra State

Preliminary results showed that an individual and community's capacity for adaptation is limited by access to funds.

While some community members may be unable to attribute the changes they are witnessing to climate change, they have noted that weather conditions “are worse than they were 30 years ago due to the hotness of the sun.” A female leader in Anambra State aptly describing increased temperatures as the feeling that “the sun has come down close to human beings.”

Covering four states in the south-east zone, Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Imo states, WACDI's study groups noted similar climate change hazards and impacts such as: heat stress, absence of the Harmattan, unpredictable rainfall patterns, heavier rains, gully erosion, flooding and landslides. In addition to other factors these hazards have affected soil fertility, water and forest resources, and ultimately farmlands. Presently farmers in Imo state said they are now unable to determine when to commence their farming season given the unpredictable rains resulting in poor crop yield.

Given that farming and trading is the major source of livelihood in most of these communities, climate change can adversely affect the major income generating activity in these areas. For communities already suffering from economic hardship and poverty, climate change is just adding on another layer of vulnerability.

In looking at a community's ability to respond and adapt to climate change, WACDI noted that construction of catchment pits is a practice being upheld to collect floodwater, planting of trees and bamboo around homes is practiced to prevent further erosion, and in Imo state, the women use powder or native chalk (“Nzu”) on their bodies to provide some relief against the heat.

Knowledge gained from WACDI's community based research project, will be shared with policy makers at all levels of government and in turn will help guide the development of a comprehensive national strategy and policy for adaptation to climate change in Nigeria. When you build a community's resilience, you can reduce the negative impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and their means of livelihood.