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GCCA+ WA FEEDBACK FOR BETTER INTEGRATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION INTO THE DESIGN OF CALLS FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS AND PUBLIC POLICIES IN WEST AFRICA

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WEST AFRICAN AGRICULTURE ALREADY IMPACTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE: AN AGRICULTURAL, FOOD AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

West African agriculture, and more particularly rain-fed agriculture, which is already weakened by high inter-annual variability, particularly in terms of rainfall, is also strongly impacted by climate change. As a reminder, these changes are reflected in a proven rise in temperatures, greater variability of rainfall with a net decrease in rainfall for certain areas, an increase in the frequency of droughts and floods, and a tendency for sea levels to rise. These factors will lead to instability in yields, and therefore in agricultural economies, and threaten food security. By 2050, one of the expected manifestations of climate change will be the exacerbation of this variability. It is highly likely that there will be an increase in average temperature in all countries in the area, as well as increased variability in precipitation patterns[1]. All of these factors will contribute to a disruption of crop cycles, with a risk of a late start and early end to the rainy season, a decrease in productivity and yields for most crops, particularly for staple crops (millet, sorghum, maize, rice, cowpea) but also export crops (cocoa beans), making it more precarious to maintain subsistence farming communities and nutritional security[2]. Livestock farming and transhumance are and will continue to be affected by the impacts of extreme weather and climate events such as more intense and frequent droughts, with increasingly early transhumant movements, and exacerbated conflicts in the host areas over access to resources and land.

If West Africa is identified in the work of the IPCC as one of the most vulnerable regions, it is important to emphasize that these vulnerabilities are highly differentiated according to national contexts, with heterogeneous impacts and response capacities. For example, the ECOWAS territory includes 120 eco-regions with different vulnerability factors. This situation calls for a significant effort at the regional level to propose an appropriate policy and strategic response to climate change. Agriculture accounts for 30-50% of GDP in most West African countries and is the largest source of income and livelihood for 70-80% of their population[3]. As agricultural activities are highly exposed to the direct and expected consequences of climate change (droughts, floods, soil salinization, etc.), adaptation of the sector is a policy priority. Moreover, the challenge is to avoid maladaptation, i.e. developing practices and innovations that would (unintentionally) make the situation worse rather than better[4].

PROGRESSIVE INTEGRATION OF ADAPTATION INTO ECOWAS POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

As such, the regional agricultural policy ECOWAP aims to strengthen and develop a modern and sustainable agriculture, based on the effectiveness and efficiency of family farms and the promotion of agricultural enterprises through the involvement of the private sector. Since 2015, ECOWAS has made Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)[5] and Agroecology (AE)[6] pillars of its agricultural strategy.

Since 2018, ECOWAS has been coordinating and funding with the support of financial partners, calls for projects proposals for CSA and AE field projects led by the public and private sector, NGOs and Farmers' Associations/Organizations in the region.

[1] Source: IPCC AR6 - Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis, 2021

[2] Source: Sultan and Gaetani, 2016 https://doi.org/10.3389/fpls.2016.01262

[3] Source: IIED - Transformations in West African Agriculture and the Role of Family Farms, 2003

[4] We are referring, for example, to the development of irrigation systems that would provide a short-term solution but would generate a rebound effect and would not take into account the water resources available in the medium and long term; or the construction of dykes for rice-growing systems in coastal areas that would not take into account the rise in sea level due to climate change.

More recently, mid 2022 ECOWAS defined and adopted its first regional climate strategy (RCS) to set regional mitigation and adaptation targets for 2030. This strategy is fully in line with the Paris Agreement, is aligned with and contributes to achieving ECOWAS Vision 2050 and also contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Agriculture, fisheries, livestock and aquaculture are among the sectors covered by the RCS.

GCCA+ WA : AN ORIGINAL CALL FOR PROJECTS PROPOSALS FOR THE CLIMATE RESILIENCE OF FARMERS AND COMMUNITIES

The GCCA+ West Africa (GCCA+ WA) project aims to strengthen West African regional action for the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement. Funded by the European Union, implemented by Expertise France, under the political and institutional leadership of ECOWAS, and with the technical partnership of the CILSS, it participates in the emergence of innovative field solutions to strengthen the climate resilience of agricultural and rural actors.

Two calls for project prop« sals «Innovations for Climate Change Smart Family Farming in West A–rica - GC »A+ WA» were launched in 2019 and 2020. Unlike other calls for project proposals that are« more «agric »lture»-oriented, the mechanism has put forward adaptation to climate change as a primary objective, with the ambition of bringing out replicable good practices, and has voluntarily left the call open to projects that fall under both CSA and AE. Fifteen (15) pilot projects led by civil society organizations were thus carried out in eleven countries between 2020 and 2022. They have been financed and deployed, for an average amount of 220,000 Euros per project, from a total envelope of 3.1 million Euros. The mechanism has encouraged partnership dynamics with research and has given a place (and a share of the budget) to capitalization and monitoring-evaluation.

At the end of the call for project proposals and their implementation, a regional capitalization was conducted. The lessons learned from this original mechanism are presented here in order to better integrate adaptation to climate change in future program designs.

TAKEAWAYS AFTER 3 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION

In view of the amounts proposed, project leaders (small structures, local NGOs, etc.) working on a local scale were selected for proposals for so-c« lled «incre »ental» adaptations (i.e., adapting existing agricultural practices). The amounts allocated were in the range of 150 to 240,000 euros per pilot project[7]. In view of these amotw asit was mainly AE pilot projects, developed on a small scale, that emerged from the selection, and not pilot projects oriented towards CSA solutions or developed on a larger scale. The amounts have therefore induced **an orientation towards certain types of leaders and projects**.

Although the selected pilot project leaders have developed promising field projects in terms of rural development and agro-ecological practices, they have nevertheless encountered **difficulties in making the link between their project and climate issues**, and in understanding the complexity of the call for projects proposals, which included a number of theoretical concepts («vulnerabilities», «maladaptation», etc.). Thus, it seems important **to support potential project leaders** who are less familiar with these concepts and subjects, on the one hand by making climate issues readable and concrete in the texts of the guidelines, but also by supporting them so that they can better grasp these issues throughout the project cycle.

The regional capitalization showed that the pilot project leaders had **little knowledge of the vulnerability factors and local climate issues** before the projects, which made it difficult to prioritize climate issues, for example, and that there was **a strong need for prior analysis** to understand the climate impacts and risks as well as the risks of maladaptation.

On the other hand, the selection committee was able to provide additional elements that shed light on the context of the proposed projects and thus better highlight the climate or even maladaptation risks at stake[8]. In addition, the committee was able to play its role and identify the potential for replicability of the projects submitted, one of the challenges of the call for projects being to test pilot projects that can be replicated on a larger scale.

By emphasizing capitalization and action research, the call for projects proposals aimed to «document» concrete experiments by seeking to objectify practices with real climate benefits. In practice, the regional capitalization was able to observe **a successful partnership with research in several pilot projects**. On the other hand, **the time for the implementation of the projects (limited to a maximum of two years) proved to be too short** and did not allow for the evaluation of the spin-offs and impacts of the changes in practices or innovations and for their capitalization. In addition, specific work should be done to help project leaders develop **specific indicators for adaptation to climate change (beyond simple rural development indicators or classic project monitoring indicators, for example)**, making it possible to monitor the combined evolution of practices, adaptation capacities and climate conditions over time. Finally, two levels of capitalization are necessary (both at the level of each pilot project deployed and at the level of the call for project proposals as a whole), to allow lessons to be drawn for the public policies of the Member States.

[5] Climate-smart agriculture is an approach developed around 2010 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that helps define the measures needed to transform and reorient agricultural systems in order to effectively support agricultural development and ensure food security in the face of climate change (FAO, 2010)

[6] «Agroecology is a way of thinking about agriculture that aims to reduce the use of inputs, chemical fertilizers and plant protection products, relying on a strong integration of the different components of agricultural production to take advantage of natural cycles and regulations» (Schutter, 2021)

[7] In view of the amounts involved, it is important to emphasize that such projects do not allow for a more «transformational» adaptation, i.e. a more radical evolution of production structures. We are dealing here with adaptations of existing practices.

[8] Maladaptation is a change made (e.g., a change in agricultural practices) that leads to a worsening of the climate change problem rather than an improvement in the situation and a decrease in vulnerability.

LEVERS IDENTIFIED TO PROMOTE BETTER INTEGRATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN CALLS FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS AND PUBLIC POLICIES IN WEST AFRICA

1- Provide support for project leaders to strengthen their capacities in relation to climate issues and capitalization

The regional capitalization shows that the pilot project leaders need to be accompanied in their understanding of the observed and future trends of climate change in the territory in which they operate, of the existing and expected impacts but also of the available knowledge, the framework for the mobilization of their territorial, national and regional institutions on these subjects, etc. In this regard, the GCCA+WA mechanism has tested capacity building for pilot project leaders via webinar-type formats, but also their accompaniment in the framework of monitoring and evaluation missions. The support to be offered could go further by anchoring the understanding of the challenges of adaptation to climate change in the review of very concrete situations of vulnerability.

In addition, capacity building for pilot project leaders is necessary on capitalization methods at the project level (conducted simultaneously with regional capitalization) so that they are better able to identify good agricultural practices adapted to climate change or innovative practices, the conditions for development or adoption of such practices by farming communities, etc.

These two (02) types of capacity building would benefit from being integrated in the design of future calls for project proposals and in the proposed budgets. Fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships and encouraging partnerships with research and action research on these adaptation issues also seems key.

2- Better understanding of impacts, vulnerability factors and climate risks through preliminary studies

A better prior knowledge of the climate context, including observed, current and projected trends, but also of vulnerability factors, would allow for a better selection or reorientation or even better support of subsidized projects, clarifying what needs to be adapted to what. In addition, such knowledge could provide insights to project leaders about the context for implementing their innovations and adaptations and about the risks of maladaptation.

The financing of light and rapid preliminary/feasibility studies, as can be done by other donors[9], can bring real added value. Project leaders could also be encouraged to develop objective knowledge of climate change upstream and during the deployment of their project, based on existing reports and data.

3- Better support project leaders in their contacts with local, national and regional institutions in order to publicize the projects and the practices developed

In order to promote and disseminate the tested solutions, and to encourage their integration into national policies and investment plans, the managers of the system could facilitate the linkage of project leaders with local, national and regional authorities.

4- The challenge of scaling up good practices and innovations: to go further by financing horizontal exchange programs between farmers, as well as training and advisory services.

As shown during the regional workshop for sharing the capitalization of pilot projects financed by GCCA+ WA, the dissemination and adoption of good practices and innovations cannot be achieved without support and financing: human and financial resources for cross-cutting exchange programs between agricultural actors, as well as the development of services to support producers, are necessary. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the most vulnerable farming families do not have the economic and financial means to invest in adaptation. Financial support for the equipping of these households is a prerequisite for the adoption of adapted practices and innovations.

5- Develop differentiated AE and CSA action strategies according to the vulnerabilities of ecoregions and national specificities

As previously mentioned, prior vulnerability assessments would allow for a better understanding of the factors of vulnerability and the differentiated impacts on the ECOWAS territory. The mobilization of funds to gain a better understanding of these vulnerabilities would make it possible to refine the support mechanisms for project leaders. This being said, given the amounts of the projects financed, these diagnoses can also be based on existing studies and reports in order to provide an objective knowledge base for the deployment of projects. Finally, future calls for project proposals would benefit from taking into account differences in climate contexts, vulnerabilities and adaptation capacities.

[9] We are thinking here of the preliminary studies of the Green Climate Fund or the «rapid climate risk assessment» of the World Bank.

#ECOWAP2025

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