

## Pursuing Climate Resilient Development in Kenya's Drylands: Key issues for policy

A climate resilient development pathway (CRDP) is **'a development pathway that actively and deliberately chooses policies and practices that strengthen mitigation and adaptation outcomes and that enables an equitable, just, and sustainable development.'** Identifying suitable and effective CRDPs therefore requires integration between the goals of responding to climate change and responding to the development needs of present and future generations. This summary presents highlights from our research reviewing the issues and prospects for achieving CRDPs in the drylands of Kenya, based on review of existing research outputs, analysis of key national policy objectives and survey/interview consultations with a panel of experts. It is part of a wider study on CRDPs in three countries that have extensive arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs): Kenya, India and Namibia.

### The Climate Change Context in Kenya

Even a relatively modest increase of 1.5°C in global temperature could have a significant impact on Kenya's ASALs. The 1.5°C threshold could be breached within the next decade, and the 2°C threshold the decade thereafter. Temperature increases will result in significant increases in extremely hot days and nights, and more frequent and intense heat waves. Arid and semi-arid regions are already susceptible to droughts and this is likely to increase, at the same time as increasing intensities of heavy and extremely heavy rainfall events that generate flood risks. This means there is an urgent need to accelerate Kenya's adaptation responses, as well as its mitigation plans.

The Climate Change Act (2016) established a governance structure and approach to address climate change in Kenya. In the short to medium term, strategy for and coordination of action on climate change mitigation and adaptation is made through successive Climate Change Action Plans, sector specific plans and devolved County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs). Kenya has adopted a National Adaptation Plan (2015-2030) and made a commitment to mainstream adaptation into all activities. Kenya is also committed to developing its '2050 Long-Term Greenhouse Gas Strategy and Carbon Resilience Development Pathway under the Paris Agreement'.

However, climate change adaptation and mitigation cannot proceed in a vacuum: neither their benefits nor their progress can be realized without taking into account other development challenges and dynamics. Equally, Kenya recognises that climate activities must sit within the broader development trajectories elucidated through the Vision 2030 and the Big 4 Agenda (food security, affordable housing, manufacturing, and affordable healthcare). From our research in Kenya and across ASALs, we conclude that climate-resilient development implies an approach to development that has three key interlinked 'imperatives'. Here we summarize information on each of those three imperatives, highlighting issues for policy strengthening in Kenya.

### Tackling Inequalities

Social inequalities including gender inequality have deep, historical roots, but addressing them should be central to CRDP efforts if these are to decrease vulnerability and bring about broad-based strengthening of societal resilience.

- Many of Kenya's national policy objectives echo the importance of social inclusivity, and several sectoral policies related to CRDPs aim to target vulnerable and marginalised groups. However, what remains key is to ensure that those targets are translated into appropriate actions on the ground, and that interventions take full account of differentiated needs.
- In Kenyan ASALs, as in most semi-arid regions, management of land and water resources should integrate the needs of all livelihood sectors in responding to climate change. It has been argued, for example, that the needs of livestock farmers should receive much stronger attention in Kenya's water management policy, especially as pastoralism will remain the livelihood mainstay for many rural communities in Kenya.
- Differential access to livelihood assets such as land raises further inequities in access to resilience-strengthening measures, if poorly addressed. Membership rules in Mara's wildlife conservancies, for

example, has excluded participation of landless households. Change to the basis of participation would strengthen their ability to pursue alternative livelihoods to mitigate risk in a changing climate.

- Gender inequality has similar effects. Studies in Narok found that women involved in agricultural small and medium enterprises faced barriers to securing credit. Without land tenure or legally secured entitlements, they were restricted in their ability to make decisions to invest in climate resilient business strategies.

### Avoiding unsustainable outcomes

A long-term integrated view on climate risk management must be taken in order to sustainably build adaptive actions and adaptive capacities at different scales that take account of trade-offs between development paths and avoid lock-in to unsustainable or inequitable practices.

- Across drylands, there are examples of both strategic developments and emergency measures that have taken place in response to pressures on resources and livelihoods, but which have created maladaptive outcomes that ultimately undermine sustainability.
- Barriers on access to land and productive livelihoods again play a role, generating unsustainable forms of adaptation in times of crisis. During drought periods in Kenya, many poorer and female-headed households are forced to 'adapt' through emergency coping measures such as shifting to charcoal production, which not only leads to loss of biodiversity but also exposes agricultural land to erosion, diminishing future productivity and thereby weakening longer-term resilience.
- Almost all adaptive actions entail trade-offs of some kind, and it is crucial to weigh up both the negative as well as the positive effects of interventions in management of risks and resources, especially water and pasture. In semi-arid Kenya, the establishment of conservancies and associated tourism both enhances and restricts climate resilient pastoral livelihoods. While conservancies allow for extra source of income to manage drought risk and can prevent land fragmentation, they also impose restrictions on livestock mobility, which is a key coping strategy during droughts.

### Strengthening of capacities

The strengthening of capacities at all levels is especially important if society is to be able to make the types of inter-linked innovations that responding to climate change and development challenges entails. Capacity rests on strengthening skills, resources and decision-making structures.

- The current structures of institutions and governance in many dryland regions suffer from inadequate skills, capacity and resources, especially at local scale, and would benefit greatly from more coherent policy structures, a shift from overly top-down decision-making, better strategic planning and improved channels of engagement with communities.
- While decentralisation of water services in Kenya, for example has brought service delivery closer to the local level and promoted new water projects and infrastructure, it has also created confusion and coordination difficulties owing to the greater complexity of actors involved in managing water governance with overlapping roles and responsibilities.
- One of the more specific adaptive capacities that should be strengthened is the effective flow of climate-related knowledge within society. Failure to take into consideration local contexts of farming and livestock production in semi-arid areas can mean that the knowledge produced by governmental agencies is often ill-suited to inform decision-making at the local scale, both for crop farmers and pastoralists. Strengthening the capacity to generate, disseminate and make use of accessible, reliable, and relevant weather information and advice on how to respond to climate stresses is especially important if society is to be able to make the types of innovations (or transformations) that responding to climate change entails.

### Policy support for climate resilient development in Kenya

- ▶ Our policy analysis suggests that climate change features as a salient issue in some, but not all, key sectoral policies, and even within those that consider it important not all address it much beyond issue recognition - **a more integrated approach is required that embeds issues linked to climate change more centrally across differently sectoral agendas.**

Positively, the review does show a good level of harmonisation with the 'big four' agenda and the Vision 2030. This clearly demonstrates that aligning different strategic policy documents and actions across sectors is a realistic goal.

- ▶ The **distinction between current challenges and future risks is seldom expressed** in policy documents beyond those explicitly focusing on climate change. This is clearly a concern as decisions made now, especially those concerning infrastructure and energy will have long and significant implications for decades to come. Most obviously, boosting energy provision through the exploitation of new coal and oil reserves may contribute to economic growth but threatens Kenya's long-term mitigation goals.
- ▶ Issues of equity and justice are addressed in a similarly uneven fashion, and much more emphasis could be placed on them to support a broad-based strengthening of societal resilience. Similarly, a clearer focus is required to **ensure that all populations are supported to manage current and emerging risks**. A strong message coming out of our consultations is the importance of effective institutional support for people to practice sustainable livelihoods.
- ▶ A key element of climate resilient development approaches is the **recognition of trade-offs and synergies**. If trade-offs remain unidentified, risks exist that action in one area will undermine progress in another, thereby reducing the effectiveness of actions overall. Conversely, if trade-offs are acknowledged it provides a foundation for discussion on the logic behind decisions. Similarly, identifying areas where policy actions across different domains can work well together and bring about synergistic benefits greater than the sum of individual actions is a highly desirable outcome.
- ▶ The level of change indicated in the policy documents appears incremental and unlikely to realise the **large-scale system-wide transformations** that many commentators indicate are needed in Kenya to achieve climate resilient development. A model of economic growth with implied carbon costs is still providing the underlying rationale and basis upon which decisions are made. Many policies seek to refine current practices but do not indicate a radical shift or step-change in approach.

- ▶ However, two policies which appear more closely aligned to a climate resilient development approach are the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (NCCAP) and the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy (KCSAS). These aim to deliver sustainable development through low carbon climate resilient approaches and to transform agriculture to achieve food security and support development in a changing climate. Unsurprisingly, both policies are strongly and clearly connected to the climate agenda. **Reshaping development priorities using the NCCAP and KCSAS as a model potentially provides one route to shift development trajectories so they are more climate resilient.**

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#### ABOUT THE PROJECT

The name of the project is 'Climate Resilient Development Pathways for Semi-Arid Regions of Africa and Asia (CRDP-SAR)', part of 'Building on CARIAA learning on women entrepreneurs, migration and climate-resilience development'. Project grant number: 109223-003

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