

PALM-TREES NEWSLETTER

A Pan-African and Transdisciplinary Lens on the Margins:
Tackling the Risks of Extreme Events



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Collaborative research Pathways: Launching the PALM-TREES Newsletter

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the PALM TREES Newsletter, where we embark on a journey to explore the pressing challenges posed by climate change and its impacts on marginalized communities across the sub-Saharan regions of Africa.

As we face an era marked by extreme weather events—devastating floods, prolonged droughts, and rising temperatures—our commitment to understanding and addressing these challenges has never been more crucial. In this issue, we highlight the collaborative efforts of researchers, community organizations, and local stakeholders as they work together to develop strategies that enhance resilience and promote sustainable livelihoods.

From the project launch workshop held in Cape Town in November 2023 to regional events across the six countries where the project is implemented—namely Ghana, Cameroon, DR Congo, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa—our collective actions are paving the way for meaningful change. Community voices were amplified in these workshops in Accra, Bolgatanga, Douala, Ilorin, Kitui, Lagos, Tamale, and Turkana. Additionally, our ongoing research in Durban and Limpopo focuses on the intersection of climate change and gender-based violence, underscoring the importance of inclusive dialogue and participatory approaches in shaping effective climate adaptation strategies.

We invite you to engage with the stories and insights shared in this newsletter, reflecting our dedication to fostering collaboration and building a brighter, more resilient future for vulnerable communities. Together, we can create a lasting impact and ensure that no one is left behind in the face of climate extremes.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Your support and involvement are vital as we navigate the challenges ahead and strive for a sustainable future.

Warm regards,

**Edith Abilogo | PALM-TREES Communication
and Knowledge Exchange Manager**

PALM-TREES: Shaping Impactful Solutions through Participatory and Interdisciplinary Research

The PALM-TREES project is a 3,5 years groundbreaking initiative aimed at understanding the impact of climate extremes on marginalized populations in Africa. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the project seeks to bridge the gap between research and practical, actionable solutions. Our main objectives revolve around not only identifying the challenges posed by climate change but also translating our research findings into concrete changes in policies and practices that benefit vulnerable communities.



**OUR MAIN OBJECTIVES
REVOLVE AROUND NOT
ONLY IDENTIFYING THE
CHALLENGES POSED BY
CLIMATE CHANGE ...**

As climate extremes become increasingly frequent and severe, it is essential to focus our efforts on those most affected. The PALM-TREES project emphasizes collaboration, ensuring that the voices of marginalized populations are heard and their needs prioritized. By engaging with local stakeholders, we aim to create a comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face and develop impactful solutions that resonate with their realities.



CO-PIs Wilfried, Ellen and Babatunde at project launch in Cape Town © PALM-TREES project

Building a Common Vision with Stakeholders

A crucial aspect of the PALM-TREES project is the mobilization and engagement of key stakeholders, which includes local authorities, community leaders, NGOs, and the populations directly impacted by climate extremes. In each of our target countries—Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa—we have initiated dialogues that aim to foster a common vision.

For instance, in Kenya, our focus on flooding in Kitui and Turkana counties has revealed specific local priorities, such as the need for improved drainage systems and better emergency response strategies. Engaging with community members and local authorities allows us to capture their unique perspectives and challenges.

In KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, we are exploring the dynamics of heat stress and gender-based violence. Here, discussions with local NGOs and community groups highlight the interplay between climate stressors and social issues. This co-creation process is vital, as it ensures that our research is grounded in the realities on the ground, reflecting the true needs and concerns of the communities involved.

Through these exchanges, we are not only identifying specific needs but also building trust and fostering relationships that are essential for effective collaboration.

Designing Tailored, Interdisciplinary Research

The PALM-TREES project thrives on its interdisciplinary approach, combining insights from social and physical sciences to address complex issues related to climate extremes. Each research team is adapting their methodologies based on the priorities identified through stakeholder engagement.

In Cameroon, our case studies focus on the impacts of floods, droughts, and heatwaves on the agricultural productivity of women in Guider and Foubot. By employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, we aim to understand how these climate events specifically affect women's livelihoods and food security. This holistic view enables us to craft solutions that not only address environmental challenges but also promote gender equity.

Women farmers in Foubot © PALM-TREES project



Similarly, in the DRC, the focus on Mbanza-Ngungu allows us to investigate how climate extremes impact local agricultural practices and food systems. By involving communities in data collection and analysis, we ensure that local knowledge is integrated into our research. This local ownership is crucial; it empowers communities and fosters a sense of agency in addressing their challenges.

In Nigeria, we are examining the health and livelihoods of communities in informal settlements in Lagos, particularly in the context of heat stress. Engaging with residents and local organizations helps us capture the nuances of their experiences, leading to more effective interventions.

Our work in Ghana focuses on the impacts of droughts, floods, and water management on diverse communities in the Volta River basins and Accra. By collaborating with local experts and stakeholders, we can develop tailored strategies that address the specific needs of these communities.

Finally, In South Africa, extreme weather events like floods and droughts have severely impacted both urban and rural communities, particularly affecting marginalized groups. Researchers from the University of Cape Town, the University of Limpopo, and Project Empower are investigating how these climate stresses intersect with gendered social identities and contribute to gender-based violence in eThekweni.

Paving the Way for Lasting Policy and Practice Changes

One of the key outcomes of the PALM-TREES project is the development of actionable lines of intervention with stakeholders to translate research findings into concrete policies and practices. The initial discussions have already revealed several priority actions.

For example, in response to flooding in Kenya, stakeholders have identified the need for improved infrastructure and community training on disaster preparedness. In South Africa, discussions around heat stress have led to recommendations for policy changes that address gender-based violence as a climate response strategy.

To ensure these recommendations lead to meaningful change, we are establishing mechanisms for continuous dialogue between researchers and decision-makers. Regular workshops, policy briefs, and community forums will facilitate ongoing discussions, allowing for adaptive management of interventions based on feedback from stakeholders.

Building strong, long-term partnerships is essential for sustainably anchoring these changes. By fostering relationships with local governments, NGOs, and community organizations, we aim to create a collaborative ecosystem that supports the implementation of our research findings over time.



BUILDING STRONG, LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS IS ESSENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLY ANCHORING THESE CHANGES.

In conclusion, the PALM-TREES project aspires to contribute to systemic transformation in the face of climate challenges in Africa. By focusing on participatory and interdisciplinary research, we are committed to developing impactful solutions that resonate with the realities of marginalized populations.

We invite readers to follow the continuation of this exciting adventure as we work together with communities, stakeholders, and partners to forge a path toward resilience and adaptation in the face of climate extremes.



Data collection in Turkana communities © PALM-TREES project

METHODOLOGY

Interdisciplinary Strategies for Addressing Climate Extremes

The PALM-TREES project aims to tackle the pressing issue of climate extremes and their impact on marginalized populations across six African countries. With a focus on understanding the needs of these communities, the project adopts an interdisciplinary approach that extends beyond mere characterization of climate events. By examining socio-political contexts and engaging stakeholders, PALM-TREES seeks to develop actionable strategies for adaptation and resilience.

Central to the methodology is the integration of various disciplines, including social sciences, physical sciences, and policy studies. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of climate extremes, taking into account not only the physical manifestations of events like floods, droughts, and heatwaves, but also their social implications and community experiences.

The project employs a “living lab” methodology, where community members actively participate in data collection and analysis. This ensures that the perspectives of marginalized populations are central to the research process. By conducting focus groups, community workshops, and participatory mapping exercises, researchers gather qualitative data that reflects local experiences and needs.

A key objective is the creation of “risk narratives”—accessible descriptions of the consequences of climate extremes tailored to different social identities. Developed through qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), these narratives draw on historical events to illustrate the varying impacts of climate risks. By focusing on differential experiences, the narratives aim to inform communities and practitioners about equitable adaptation strategies.

To complement qualitative insights, the project will utilize existing demographic and health surveys alongside new data collection efforts. This quantitative data will be analyzed using multilevel modeling to understand how climate extremes



impact different communities based on gender, socio-economic status, and other identities.

Combining local weather observations with satellite data, PALM-TREES aims to refine climate models to better predict future scenarios. This includes utilizing historical, present-day, and future climate data for accurate forecasts and comparing different models to identify effective approaches for predicting compound climate risks.

Significant emphasis is placed on strengthening the capabilities of early-career researchers and local stakeholders. Training sessions and workshops will enhance their understanding of climate science and its implications for policy and practice, ensuring the sustainability of the project’s outcomes.

Engagement with local authorities, NGOs, and community organizations is a cornerstone of the methodology. By fostering strong partnerships, the project aims to align research efforts with the needs and priorities of the communities involved, facilitating the co-creation of contextually relevant and culturally appropriate solutions.



BY FOCUSING ON DIFFERENTIAL EXPERIENCES, THE NARRATIVES AIM TO INFORM COMMUNITIES AND PRACTITIONERS ABOUT EQUITABLE ADAPTATION STRATEGIES.

The PALM-TREES methodological framework is designed to yield several key outcomes. By prioritizing stakeholder engagement, the project aims to develop inclusive, climate-resilient solutions that address the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data will provide a nuanced understanding of the impacts of climate extremes, enabling better-informed decision-making. Additionally, collaboration will strengthen relationships between researchers and communities, fostering a sustainable approach to climate adaptation.

Ultimately, the PALM-TREES project underscores the importance of an interdisciplinary, participatory approach to addressing climate challenges. By focusing on the needs of marginalized populations and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, the project aims to create transformative change in how communities respond to climate extremes. Insights gained from this methodology will be crucial in shaping effective adaptation strategies that contribute to sustainable development across Africa.

Research framework in Addressing Climate Extremes and its effects on marginalised

Understanding the impacts of climate extremes on marginalized communities requires a comprehensive research framework that integrates both social and physical dimensions.

The research utilizes the concept of “hegemonic masculinities” to analyze how idealized male identities shape societal norms, while “slow violence” addresses the gradual harms of climate change that often go unnoticed. This combination emphasizes the importance of marginalized voices in climate discourse and informs a framework for examining external factors affecting an organization, including Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental influences (PESTLE analysis) of the gendered aspects of climate impacts.

Climate extremes are examined as compound events with multiple drivers, necessitating analysis across different temporal and spatial scales. Modifying hazard metrics allows for a reflection of the lived experiences of marginalized populations in defining what constitutes an “extreme” event.

The initial phase involves utilizing secondary data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) to analyze social inequalities. Participatory research methods, including stakeholder workshops, photovoice, participatory mapping, and archival research, will document local experiences of climate extremes. Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) will facilitate the creation of differential risk narratives to effectively communicate vulnerability and resilience.

Stakeholder engagement will guide the analysis of existing climate data, focusing on traditional methods of quantifying extremes. Incorporating local observations and satellite datasets will enhance the understanding of climate drivers, supporting the development of risk impact metrics.

The project is organized into four work packages: investigating social impacts through mixed-method data collection, examining physical drivers of floods and droughts, developing climate-resilient solutions through collaboration, and strengthening the capacity of early-career researchers and local communities via training and workshops.

Ultimately, this research aims to illuminate the complex interplay between social identities and climate extremes, promoting inclusive responses to climate change and empowering marginalized communities to ensure their voices are central to resilience and adaptation efforts.



Overview of the project launch meeting in Cape Town
© PALM-TREES project

Climate extremes and vulnerable communities: Empowering marginalized groups in Accra

In a concerted effort to address the escalating challenges posed by climate extremes and marginalization in Africa, The “Pan-African and Transdisciplinary Lens on the Margins: Tackling the Risks of Extreme Events” (PALM-TREES) project was launched in Accra, Ghana on February 23rd, 2024.

To kick start the project’s activities in Accra, PALM-TREES collaborated with University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR) and Sustainable Solutions for Africa (SSA) to organize an Inception Workshop. The primary objective of the workshop was to introduce the project to key stakeholders in Ghana, encourage thoughtful discussions, and gather valuable insights on project execution and timelines. Moreover, the workshop served as a platform to establish and strengthen collaborations with relevant institutions and organizations invested in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

The Inception Workshop held at Accra attracted approximately 40 participants representing universities, non-governmental organizations, local communities, government ministries, and agencies. The event featured informative presentations followed by engaging discussions and reflections, allowing participants to make queries, express concerns, and provide crucial inputs to enhance the project’s execution and timelines.

Among the objectives achieved during the workshop were heightened awareness of the PALM-TREES project among stakeholders in the Greater Accra region, the gathering of valuable insights to refine project execution and timelines, and the establishment of collaborative partnerships to ensure ongoing engagement and success.

The PALM-TREES project represents a significant stride forward in addressing the unequal risks and impacts of climate extremes felt by marginalized



communities in Ghana and Africa at large. By adopting a transdisciplinary and inclusive approach, the project aims to co-produce climate information and policies that prioritize the needs and amplify the voices of those living on the margins. The Inception Workshop in Accra served as a crucial milestone, fostering stakeholder engagement, gathering valuable inputs, and setting the stage for future collaborations that will contribute to building climate resilience and reducing the impacts of extreme events on marginalized groups.

It should be noted that the Greater Accra region of Ghana has witnessed the detrimental effects of rising temperatures, extreme precipitation, droughts, and heatwaves, resulting in significant disruptions to agriculture and food production. To address these specific challenges, PALM-TREES has partnered with the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR) and the Sustainable Solutions for Africa (SSA) to conduct research on the impacts of heatwaves and heat-induced stress on women in Accra.

As PALM-TREES progresses, the project is poised to generate a transformative impact by providing marginalized communities in Ghana and across Africa with the tools, knowledge, and agency required to navigate the challenges brought about by extreme events. By amplifying the voices of those most affected, the project aims to pave the way for a more equitable and sustainable future, where climate information and policies truly address the unique circumstances faced by marginalized populations.



NEWS FROM REGIONS

Integrating Gender Perspectives in Climate Solutions for Central Africa

A regional workshop was held from February 13th to 15th, 2024, in Douala, Cameroon, as part of the PALM-TREES project launch in Central Africa. Organized by the African Women's Network for Sustainable Development (REFADD) in partnership with the University of Yaounde I, the event aimed to discuss climate extremes, involve stakeholders and key institutions in the Congo Basin region, particularly Cameroon and the DRC, and promote sustainable solutions while integrating a gender perspective into regional policies. The workshop brought together researchers, experts, decision-makers, and representatives from civil society in Central Africa.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to discuss the guidelines of the PALM-TREES project, develop a nuanced understanding of the differential impacts of climate extremes based on gender and other social identities, characterize climate extremes based on local experiences, promote a transdisciplinary and co-development approach, create knowledge exchange networks, and develop strategies to influence policies and practices regarding climate risks.

During the workshop, participants formulated key recommendations to enhance resilience to climate change in the region. Firstly, they emphasized the importance of considering gender dimensions in regional climate-related policies and strategies. This entails integrating a gender perspective into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of climate actions to ensure equitable participation of women and men and address the specific needs of each group. In addition to gender integration, participants recommended initiating communication and awareness-raising processes to inform the general public about ongoing climate actions in the region. Public and policymakers awareness is crucial for fostering engagement and support for climate change mitigation measures, highlighting the social, economic, and environmental benefits of these actions.

Another important point raised during the workshop was the collaboration with academics specialized in gender sensitivity. Participants stressed the significance of collaboration between academics and civil society actors to strengthen knowledge and research on gender and climate change issues. By incorporating specialized academic perspectives on gender sensitivity, it will be possible to develop more effective policies and programs based on solid evidence and addressing the real needs of communities.

Lastly, participants emphasized the importance of establishing mechanisms for collecting and sharing information on ongoing climate actions and involving civil society partners in evaluations. This will enable a better assessment of the effectiveness of implemented measures and identification of improvement opportunities. Furthermore, civil society participation will ensure inclusive decision-making and better ownership of climate actions by communities.

In summary, this regional workshop highlighted the importance of gender integration in climate policies, public awareness, collaboration with specialized academics, researchers and civil society participation in enhancing resilience to climate change in Central Africa. These recommendations provide a solid foundation for promoting sustainable, equitable, and inclusive solutions to address current and future climate challenges in the region.

The participants were driven by a sense of hope and strengthened determination to tackle the region's climate challenges and promote sustainable solutions. The PALM-TREES project and this regional workshop foster research and collective action to address climate extremes, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future for all in Central Africa.

NEWS FROM REGIONS

Engaging Stakeholders in the Lagos Case Study

On April 23, 2024, the PALM-TREES project team, comprising Lead City University, the University of Lagos, and the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), held a crucial stakeholders' engagement workshop at the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This initiative aims to address the impacts of climate extremes, particularly flooding and heat waves, on vulnerable communities in Lagos.

The workshop brought together 69 participants, including community representatives, government officials, NGOs, and stakeholders from various sectors. The primary objective was to foster collaboration and gather insights on the lived experiences of extreme weather events in Lagos. Participants shared their perspectives on the causes and impacts of flooding and heat waves, along with coping strategies and policy responses.

The discussions highlighted several critical issues:

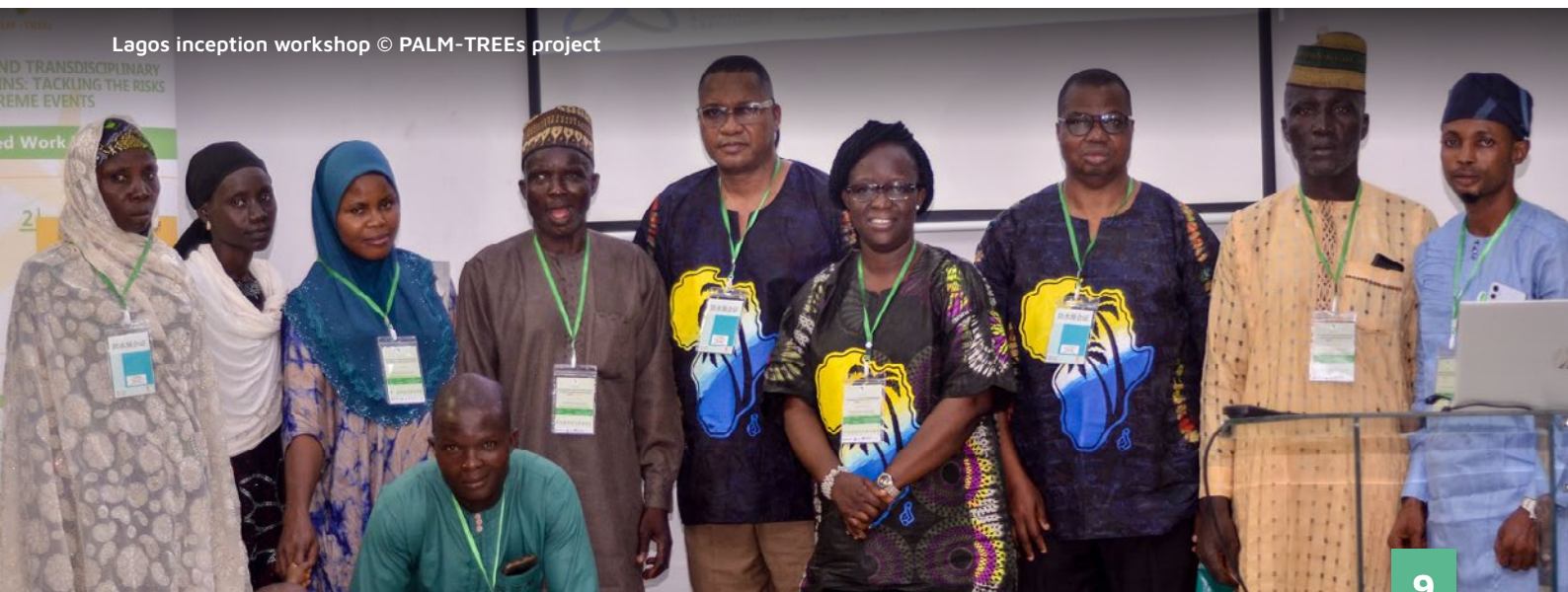
Causes of Flooding and Heat Waves: Participants identified factors such as poor urban planning, waste management issues, and climate change as primary contributors to flooding. They noted that many communities suffer from inadequate infrastructure, which exacerbates the effects of extreme weather.

Vulnerable Populations: The impacts of flooding and heat waves disproportionately affect marginalized groups, including women and low-income households. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive policies that address these vulnerabilities.

Policy Gaps: While existing climate change policies were acknowledged, participants expressed concerns about their ineffective implementation. A lack of communication between policymakers and communities was identified as a significant barrier to effective climate action.

The successful engagement workshop marks a vital step in the PALM-TREES project, setting the stage for further research and community involvement. By understanding local experiences and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, the project aims to develop tailored strategies that enhance resilience against climate extremes.

The insights gathered will inform the next phases of the project, including fieldwork and data collection, ultimately contributing to more effective climate adaptation strategies in Lagos.



Lagos inception workshop © PALM-TREES project

Kwara State Inception Workshop: Engaging Communities for Climate Resilience

On May 15, 2024, the PALM-TREES project team held an inception workshop at Monarchs Luxury Palace Hotel in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, bringing together 110 participants from various sectors. Attendees included representatives from rural communities, government ministries, NGOs, academia, and the press, with a significant turnout of 59 community members from 28 communities across nine local government areas.

In the opening of the workshop, Prof. Grace Oloukoi set the context for the meeting, emphasizing the importance of gathering input from stakeholders to understand how climate extremes impact livelihoods in Kwara State. Prof. Mayowa Fasona, the team lead, highlighted the project's focus on marginalized groups—women, the elderly, and disabled individuals—who often bear the brunt of climate events. He engaged participants in local Yoruba to ensure inclusiveness, explaining the project's objectives and methodologies.

Participants broke into thematic groups—Policy on Climate Change, Flood Extremes, and Drought—to discuss pressing issues. The discussions revealed a strong awareness of the climate challenges in their communities, including significant impacts on food security, health, and livelihoods due to droughts and floods. Stakeholders expressed a willingness to collaborate with the PALM-TREES research teams, hoping the outcomes would strengthen their resilience.

The policy group confirmed the vulnerability of the selected local government areas to climate extremes but noted a lack of comprehensive policies addressing these challenges. Current climate-related issues are managed under the Ecology and Erosion Control Unit, with an intergovernmental Climate Change Committee recently established to draft a dedicated climate policy for the state. Participants identified inadequate funding and capacity building as significant barriers to effective policymaking.



PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED INADEQUATE FUNDING AND CAPACITY BUILDING AS SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE POLICYMAKING.

The workshop received extensive media coverage, with interviews conducted by local press representatives and a prepared press release distributed to capture the event's purpose.

While the workshop was largely successful, challenges were noted, particularly the underrepresentation of women and individuals with disabilities. The PALM-TREES team is committed to addressing these gaps in future engagements and during fieldwork.

The insights gathered from this workshop will play a crucial role in shaping the research and interventions aimed at building resilience in Kwara State communities facing climate extremes.



Kwara state inception workshop © PALM-TREES project

Strengthening Kitui's Resilience to Climate Change

The PALM-TREES EA Hub of the larger CLARE PALM-TREES project, hosted its inaugural inception meeting from March 19th to 22nd in Kitui County, Kenya. Stakeholders, including National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), Kenya, Kenya Red Cross, Kitui County Government, Kitui County Commissioner's Office and University of Nairobi (uonbi), Chuo Kikuu cha Nairobi, convened to kickstart discussions on the upcoming PTEA project interventions in Kitui County. The workshop aimed to garner stakeholder buy-in and refine project activities through collaborative input.

Kitui County in Eastern Kenya faces significant challenges from climate extremes such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves. These events threaten local livelihoods and exacerbate inequalities, particularly among vulnerable groups like women, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. The PALM-TREES project (Participatory Approaches to Learning from Marginalized Communities for Transformative Resilience to Extreme Events) aims to tackle these issues through community engagement and co-produced climate information.

The project's initial phase included workshops that brought together local government officials, community members, and researchers. These sessions fostered dialogue about the importance of sustainable Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) meetings, which help communities prepare for climate impacts. Participants highlighted the need for clear sub-county naming conventions and effective communication channels to disseminate early warning information.

Discussions revealed critical insights into the challenges faced by Kitui residents. Women often bear the greatest burden during climate events, facing longer journeys for water and increased food insecurity. There is also a concerning rise in gender-based violence during times of scarcity. Resource conflicts intensify as competition for limited supplies



Turkana inception © PALM-TREES project

escalates, particularly near national parks and game reserves. Marginalized groups frequently lack representation in policy discussions, which can lead to their needs being overlooked.

An assessment of existing climate policies in Kitui showed several gaps. While there are frameworks like the County Climate Change Policy, their broad nature can hinder effective implementation. Stakeholders called for regular reviews of these policies, increased budget allocations, and a focus on evidence-based decision-making to ensure that strategies are relevant and impactful.

As the PALM-TREES project progresses, the next steps include conducting surveys in Kitui County to collect baseline data and inform future actions. Engaging the community and training enumerators are key components of this phase, along with plans for an inception workshop in Turkana to extend the project's reach.

By prioritizing community involvement and leveraging local knowledge, the PALM-TREES project aims to build resilience among Kitui's vulnerable populations. As the initiative moves forward, it holds promise for creating sustainable solutions that enhance community well-being and effectively address the challenges posed by climate change.

Building a Resilient Future: Key Insights from the Turkana Inception Workshop

The recent Inception Workshop for the PALM-TREES project in Turkana, Kenya, held on April 22–27 2024, marked a significant step forward in our commitment to enhancing climate resilience in the region. This gathering brought together stakeholders, researchers, and community leaders to share insights and strategies for addressing the unique challenges faced by pastoral communities.

A key takeaway from the workshop was the recognition that wind's impact is more critical than heat in influencing local climate conditions. Additionally, participants noted the recent subdivision of Turkana West into two sub-counties, necessitating updated engagement approaches.

Dr. Ellen Dyer, Co-Principal Investigator of the project, emphasized the importance of actionable data, stating, "By repackaging Early Warning Information, we can ensure it is not just data but a tool for empowerment within pastoral communities." This tailored approach will empower local populations with the knowledge they need to respond effectively to climate extremes.

The workshop successfully garnered buy-in from stakeholders, enabling the project to move forward

with a shared understanding of its goals and objectives. Participants left with a clear sense of their roles, fostering a collaborative environment essential for the project's success.

Alice Odingo, another key researcher, noted, "Engaging local leaders early in the process is crucial. Their involvement fosters trust and encourages community participation, which is vital for the success of our surveys and initiatives."

Several lessons emerged during the discussions, including the importance of identifying potential risks that enumerators might face during data collection, such as flooding and security threats. Early engagement with local chiefs and elders was also emphasized as vital for ensuring survey participation and building trust within communities.

Looking ahead, the project team will focus on distributing iButtons, essential for data collection, alongside the survey questionnaires. Plans are in place to test the survey tool in Kitui and conduct baseline surveys across both counties.

The Inception Workshop laid a strong foundation for the PALM-TREES project, fostering valuable insights that will guide our efforts in Turkana. With a commitment to collaboration and community engagement, we are poised to make a significant impact in building resilience against climate extremes. We look forward to sharing further updates and progress with all stakeholders involved.

Kitui inception © PALM-TREES project



Strengthening Resilience: Voices from the White Volta Basin Workshops

In a transformative effort to combat the challenges posed by climate change, the PALM TREES project recently convened inception workshops on May 21, 2024, in Tamale and May 23, 2024, in Bolgatanga, Ghana. These gatherings united community members, disaster management experts, and researchers to discuss strategies for enhancing the resilience of marginalized communities in the White Volta Basin.

The workshops provided a vital platform for community voices to be heard regarding the impacts of floods and droughts on their livelihoods. Alfred Awuah, an early career researcher, stressed the importance of understanding these economic consequences. “We must quantify the economic implications of floods and droughts on our communities,” he stated. “Only by recognizing the financial toll can we develop effective adaptation strategies that truly resonate with local needs.”



WE MUST QUANTIFY THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF FLOODS AND DROUGHTS ON OUR COMMUNITIES.

Participants engaged in breakout sessions, emphasizing the need for policies that consider community insights. One participant noted, “Our voices must be included in the decision-making process. We know our challenges best, and only through collaboration can we find solutions.”

Dr. Andrew Manoba Limantol presented the concept of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) as a means to enhance financial stability in farming communities. “VSLAs are crucial for our communities,” he explained. “By facilitating savings and providing access to loans, we empower individuals to better prepare for and recover from climate shocks.”



Volta Basin inception workshops © PALM-TREES project

Despite existing initiatives, many participants expressed concerns about the lack of awareness surrounding climate policies. A member of the policy group remarked, “We need to educate our communities about these policies and ensure they are designed with inclusivity in mind.”

The insights gathered from the Tamale and Bolgatanga workshops will be instrumental in guiding the PALM TREES project as it progresses. With an emphasis on co-production and collaboration, the project aims to create tailored strategies that address the specific needs of local communities.

As the workshops concluded, participants expressed hopeful anticipation for the future. “These discussions are just the beginning,” said Dr. Limantol. “Together, we can build a resilient future for the communities in the White Volta Basin, ensuring that no one is left behind.”

The PALM TREES project is committed to ongoing engagement with local stakeholders, fostering a participatory approach that elevates community voices in addressing the challenges of climate changes.”

Addressing Climate Extremes and Gender-Based Violence in South Africa

In South Africa, the escalating impacts of extreme weather events—such as devastating floods and prolonged droughts—have left both rural and urban communities in precarious situations. The catastrophic flooding in April 2022 in eThekweni, for instance, displaced over 40,000 individuals, resulted in more than 400 fatalities, and left dozens missing. This tragedy underscores the urgent need to understand the differential vulnerabilities of marginalized communities, particularly those living in informal settlements, to flood-related risks.



THE CATASTROPHIC FLOODING IN APRIL 2022 IN ETHEKWINI, FOR INSTANCE, DISPLACED OVER 40,000 INDIVIDUALS ...

While urban areas face immediate threats from flooding, rural communities, particularly those in the Limpopo River Basin, grapple with different but equally severe challenges. Heavily reliant on rain-fed subsistence agriculture for both income and nutrition, these villages often experience frequent droughts and infrequent but devastating floods. The situation is further complicated by demographic factors; many rural households are predominantly led by women, as men often seek employment opportunities in cities like Gauteng, South Africa's economic hub. Unfortunately, the challenges faced by women in these communities due to climate extremes are not well documented, leaving significant gaps in understanding their experiences.

Research Focus: Intersection of Climate and Gender

To address these critical issues, researchers from the University of Cape Town, the University of Limpopo, and Project Empower are set to investigate how the stresses from floods, droughts, and rising temperatures intersect with gendered social identities. This research will specifically explore how these factors contribute to gender-based violence (GBV) in eThekweni.

Project Empower, an NGO dedicated to preventing GBV and supporting community activists, will play a key role in this initiative. By leveraging participatory co-development approaches, researchers and Project Empower will collaborate with affected communities and government stakeholders to create targeted interventions that address GBV exacerbated by extreme climate events.

Integrating Research and Community Action

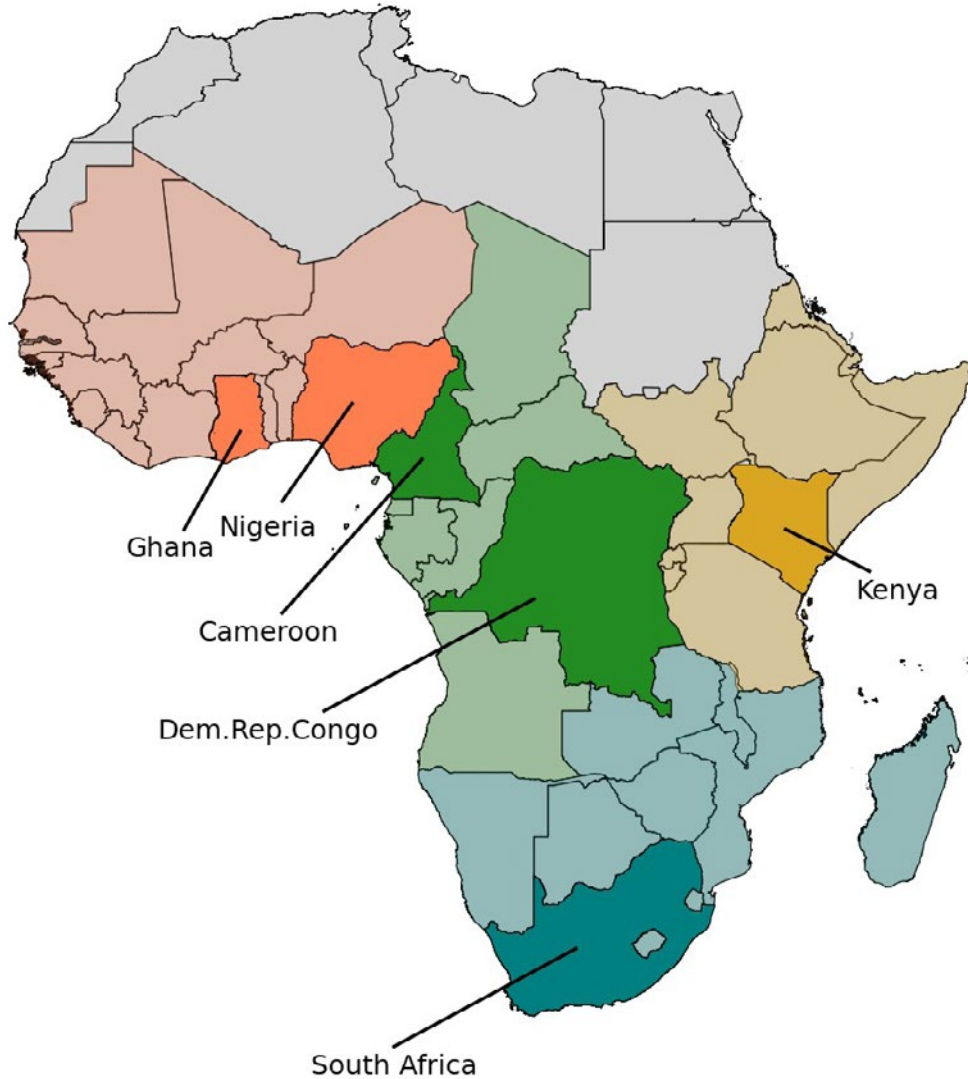
This investigation will also align with ongoing initiatives supported by the Water Research Commission (WRC) in South Africa, which focuses on the economic viability of various land use change scenarios in regions north of eThekweni. By examining the implications of climate change on local rural communities reliant on small-scale agriculture, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected challenges faced by both urban and rural households.

The collaboration with the WRC will facilitate a nuanced exploration of how climate impacts affect community dynamics and livelihoods. Researchers aim to support the integration of new ideas into climate adaptation plans at the district and local municipality levels, aligning with government strategies.

The work being undertaken promises to bridge the gap between research, community needs, and government action. By engaging with local stakeholders, the project aims to develop tailored interventions that not only address the immediate impacts of climate extremes but also consider the long-term implications for gender equity and community resilience.

As South Africa grapples with the realities of a changing climate, initiatives like this highlight the importance of understanding and addressing the complex interplay between environmental challenges and social vulnerabilities. Through collaborative efforts, it is hoped that marginalized communities will gain the support and resources needed to build a more resilient future.

Palm-Trees Countries Map



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