

**Project Title:** Promoting Participatory Action Research through Structured Learning on Climate Change Adaptation in Africa

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## Synthesis

This project is designed to support the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA) programme through support to project grantees in Participatory Action Research (PAR). CIFOR was contracted to work with and support a team of African mentors in supporting CCAA grantees to strengthen PAR within their research programmes, to enhance project impacts and lessons learning and publication of research findings. For CIFOR, the project provides an opportunity to generate global public goods from collaborative research highlighting “what works” in supporting multi-level efforts in climate change adaptation in Africa, for more widespread dissemination and impact.

During the reporting period (April 2009 to March 2010), all project objectives were for the most part fully achieved. The first objective, *to build and enhance the capacity of CCAA-supported researchers to practically apply PAR in the context of climate change adaptation*, was achieved through: (1) three sequential in-field mentoring visits by project to assist teams in evaluating progress to date and overcoming challenges faced in implementation; (2) distance mentoring; and (3) a final synthesis and writing workshop to advance the synthesis and communication of PAR findings. The second objective, *to support CCAA partners in developing PAR approaches and methodologies suitable to their regional contexts*, was also in large part achieved through in-field mentoring and team-based learning in which methods for implementing different stages of PAR were tested and adapted by teams not only to local contexts but to specific project objectives and design. The third objective, *to develop appropriate training processes and materials and test them*, was also fully achieved during the period through a mentor exchange workshop in which: (1) a revised version of the PAR Reference Guide was developed to take into account lessons learnt during implementation of PAR in the context of climate change adaptation; and (2) mentors reflected on the PAR knowledge exchange workshop (KEW) methodology and developed a facilitation plan for future KEWs. The fourth and final objective, *to develop or enhance peer-support and networking among CCAA-supported researchers and others who use the methods in other institutions in Africa*, was advanced through: (1) a final synthesis workshop with teams supported by mentors to synthesize lessons learnt about the application of PAR in the context of climate change adaptation and advance publications for sharing with a global audience; and (2) a reflection by mentors and by mentored teams on the mentoring process itself, and a synthesis of lessons learnt as a means to support other initiatives within IDRC or other institutions interested in institutionalizing PAR into their programs. However, more needs to be done to foster experience sharing with others who use the PAR methodology in other institutions in Africa.

Mid-course adjustments in the work plan and budget were instrumental in deepening the mutual understanding of PAR and the mentoring process among mentors, deepening the learning of supported teams and enabling the development of final knowledge products. These products include:

1. Version 2.0 of, “The Application of Participatory Action Research to Climate Change Adaptation: A Reference Guide” (Attachment 1)
2. Version 1.0 of, “Knowledge Exchange Workshops on the Application of PAR in Support of Climate Change Adaptation: A Facilitation Guide” (Attachment 2)

3. A final synthesis of lessons learnt about PAR mentoring (Attachment 3)
4. A final synthesis of lessons learnt on the application of PAR in support of climate change adaptation (Attachment 4)
5. Draft chapters of a proposed book on the application of PAR in support of climate change adaptation in Africa
6. A series of policy briefs to disseminate messages emerging from community engagements to key audiences

## **The Research Problem**

It is now widely recognized that global climate change is a reality and is already affecting economic growth, food security and rural livelihoods. Climate change however, does not affect all regions or households evenly. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005), Stern Review (2006) and IPCC 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report (2007) all emphasized the particular vulnerability of Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly poorer households, to the impacts of climate change. They also highlight the region's limited capacity to cope with projected climate change scenarios. In the face of this challenge, the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) and the Department for International Development of the UK (DfID) have embarked on a large initiative to enhance climate change-related adaptive capacity in Africa. The Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA) research and capacity development program aims to significantly improve the capacity of Africans and organizations to adapt to climate change in ways that benefit the most vulnerable members of society.

One of the cornerstones of IDRC's approach to supporting climate change adaptation is to support participatory action research (PAR). Through its emphasis on shared learning and on iterative cycles of planning, action, monitoring and reflection and re-planning, PAR may be seen as a tool uniquely suitable to supporting climate change adaptation. Since the challenges associated with climate change are complex, situations ever-changing and knowledge limited, prescriptive and top-down solutions are unlikely to work – requiring an adaptive approach to change that builds upon diverse sources of knowledge and experience, and enables shared learning and builds complementarity within and across levels. By providing a set of tools and approaches for facilitating and sustaining learning and adjustment over time as new information and experiences are acquired, PAR can not only assist in supporting coalitions of at-risk communities, government institutions and other actors in solving location-specific adaptation challenges – but can also aid in generating lessons for a wider audience facing similar adaptation challenges.

Limited familiarity with and capacity in PAR, however, poses challenge to the programme's ability to achieve its objectives. This project is therefore designed to support IDRC's climate change adaptation work in Africa by building institutional capacity in PAR as a precursor to using research as a social transformation process. It is also strongly linked to CCAA's main tenet of building capacity as a pathway towards devolved units or 'centres'. Through close collaboration between CIFOR, a small group of African mentors and IDRC programme officers, and intensive training, knowledge exchange and mentoring of CCAA project teams, this project seeks to enhance the impacts from funded projects while also generating lessons of relevance to

the global community. Importantly, it will also develop a cadre of mentors versed with a robust set of methods and tools in PAR and capable of supporting IDRC's longer-term goals of building participatory action research capacity in the region.

## **Research Findings**

Findings may be separated into two main areas: (1) lessons learnt from the mentoring of project teams; and (2) lessons learnt about supporting climate change adaptation or local adaptive capacity through PAR.

The lessons related to the mentoring of project teams, described in detail in Attachment 3, include the following:

1. *The need to adapt the PAR mentoring process to the project life cycle*, both initiating the process during project development and screening and arranging in-field mentoring visits to the more challenging steps of PAR.
2. *The need to ensure team commitment to the PAR process in order for the process to yield significant benefits*. Key components of this commitment include personal conviction of the utility of the approach in advancing project aims and impacts, particularly among managers; commitment in the contractual obligations of grantees; and the provision of adequate financial support for PAR implementation.
3. *The need for relationship-building between the mentor and project team members*. This includes reaching a common understanding about the purpose and scope of the mentoring process, and about the division of roles. It also includes the development of norms for data sharing and use and for co-authorship in products jointly developed by teams and mentors. It also includes finding the right balance between mentoring and coaching, both of which are important at moments in time, depending on the stage in the PAR process and the competencies of teams.
4. *The critical importance of getting team composition and roles right*. PAR requires project teams composed of researchers from various disciplines (social and biophysical), experienced development agents with a command over community facilitation techniques and good project managers with a clear understanding of the goal of the change process being undertaken and knowledgeable about the basic requirements of PAR. Key competencies required to operationalize action-based learning must also be present, including facilitation, ability to observe and to document process, analytical capacity and writing and communication skills.
5. *The need to harmonize IDRC and PAR methodologies*, given the relationships between but divergence of approaches to outcome mapping, project monitoring and evaluation and PAR. Separate training and accountability processes for the different methodologies led to confusion and skepticism within project teams. While those individuals receiving training on multiple methods were more able to relate and reconcile the different approaches in the field and assist their team members in doing so, there is an urgent need to reconcile them at program level.

6. *The limited usefulness of distance mentoring.* Difficulties in communication, the tendency to focus email exchanges through project managers rather than the entire team and the difficulties teams faced in translating words into processes undermined the effectiveness of distance mentoring. It was, however, instrumental in preparing for in-field mentoring visits (provided project managers are actively engaged in planning) and in providing support to the writing process. Difficulties in translating words into processes could be partially overcome through ensuring conditions #2 (ensuring commitment to PAR) and #4 (team composition and roles) are met, which would improve upon the effectiveness of distance mentoring.
7. *The need to strengthen coordination between PAR mentors and program officers.* This is important for enabling mentors to respond to the expectations that emerge through the PAR process, and for better coordination of program management activities with PAR conceptualization and implementation.
8. *Effective mentoring can lead to more effective project implementation.* Key components of this were assisting teams to engage more effectively with communities, and helping teams achieve a balance between research and action.
9. *Efforts to build local institutional capacity in PAR is a worthwhile pursuit, yet will require a systemic approach and sustained commitment by research managers and donors to make a meaningful difference to society.* The benefits are evidenced by the realization by grantees, through PAR implementation, of the shortcomings of (and even harm caused by) other purportedly “participatory” methods. These include the tendency to focus on processes and outcomes whose primary beneficiaries were researchers, and the tendency to erode or deter community-led solutions to development challenges. As for the nature of the commitment, it would require support to very strong teams over the medium-term (10 years) to: (i) develop a critical mass of individuals versed in PAR theory and methods and enabled to carry out dedicated research on how to make this change in research orientation possible, under which conditions, etc.; and (ii) generate very strong evidence of the outcomes and impacts enabled by PAR, and advertise these widely.

Lessons learnt about supporting local (or multi-level) adaptive capacity through PAR, presented in greater detail in Attachment 4, are tentative – based on observations made during early testing and evaluation of adaptive responses. Below is a brief summary of the most significant lessons:

1. *Climate change and climate change adaptation occur over long time scales, posing a challenge to short-cycle projects and PAR.* The main objective of project-based PAR should therefore be enabling communities and other boundary partners to adopt and ‘own’ the action-reflection cycle enhancing social and experiential learning rather than (or in addition to) addressing specific adaptation challenges. Perhaps the most significant shortcoming of PAR when applied to climate change adaptation derives from the mismatch between “slow variables” (climate change, adaptation) that manifest themselves over long timeframes, and the short-term thinking that often characterizes human decision-making and collaborative action (Holling and Meffe, 1996). The long time scales over which the impacts from climate change are manifest, and over which

“adaptations” may be evaluated, limits human capacity to respond to the appropriate stimuli (see, for example, Abel and Langston, 2001). The unpredictability of climate change requires immediate actions for which the results are often unpredictable. It is important to recognize that actions providing benefits today may provide uncertain results in the future, requiring ongoing monitoring and reflection of ongoing as well as past innovations. It is also important to plan activities that are likely to bring change over the short-, medium- and long-term, so as to provide an incentive for ongoing engagement of the intended beneficiaries.

If PAR is viewed not only as a tool for solving particular climate-related problems, but as a tool for fostering sustained learning and adaptation over time through partnerships between at-risk communities, government institutions and other actors, it becomes a tool which (together with its corollary, adaptive management) which may be considered *uniquely suitable* to climate change adaptation. It is the ongoing, iterative, cumulative nature of PAR that make it appropriate in the context of ongoing climatic change and variability. When adaptive capacity has improved, PAR has been effective. But improved adaptive capacity does not mean a water pump or improved rice varieties; it means the ability to continue learning and innovating in an uncertain climate. The main task of the PAR project is thus to enable boundary partners to appropriate the process, and the development of an exit strategy that enables the learning process to continue following project closure.

2. *The social and experiential learning engendered by PAR is perhaps its greatest contribution to enhancing local adaptive capacity.* Individual farmers are developing and testing individual adaptation strategies to deal with climate change, but they lack a platform where they can share experiences, contribute to each other’s capacity, and capitalize on adaptive strategies that require collective solutions to be realized or be effective. PAR provides one such platform for social learning. It also provides a mechanism to enhance learning-by-doing, by emphasizing iterative action-reflection cycles with systematic monitoring of outcomes – thus provides an additional platform for experiential learning. One important outcome of this is enabling communities to realize that climate change may also offer worthwhile opportunities, such as improved performance of certain crops.
3. *The integration of knowledge systems is a key component to the identification of adaptive strategies.* PAR offered a framework favourable to the exploitation of synergies between the local and scientific knowledge, which in turn created opportunities for developing novel adaptive strategies.
4. *PAR is not necessarily a solution to the vulnerabilities induced through climate change, but is rather the backbone of integrated climate change adaptation strategies.* Through the planning-action-reflection cycle in PAR, diverse components of climate change adaptation strategies come to light which go beyond PAR. So it is not a case of “adaptation = PAR”; it is rather PAR supporting a lot of other methodologies and inputs that can be linked together innovatively through the PAR process to make PAR relevant to climate change adaptation.

5. Generation of effective adaptive strategies often required collective action, which is in turn hindered by the difficulty of reconciling individual and collective interests. Teams engaged in PAR, whether for enhanced adaptive capacity in the face of climate change or other aims for which collective action can yield greater returns than individualized solutions, require knowledge of collective action theory so that they can support communities and other partners to build the fundamental building blocks for collective action into local adaptive strategies. They must also differentiate between the collective learning and the collective implementation dimensions of PAR. While the collective learning is an essential ingredient to the development and testing of adaptive strategies, individualized implementation may be effective for some solutions and is generally preferred by participants (even when not very effective) over collective actions.

A more detailed treatment of these lessons and other lessons related to the PAR methodology (e.g. how to identify climatic risks, vulnerability and local indicators in the diagnostic phase; how to implement multi-level participatory monitoring and evaluation) may be found in Attachment 4.

## **Project Implementation and Management**

Early stages of the project were implemented according to the original cooperative agreement, while later stages were implemented according to the revised agreement. The following is a chronological summary of activities carried out over the course of the project:

### Needs Assessment

A needs assessment of CCAA grantees and potential Mentors was carried out through the distribution and analysis of electronic questionnaires to assist in the selection of the Mentor Group (MG) and effectively target structured sharing and training events. Questionnaires covered: (i) whether they have received any formal training in PAR; (ii) experience implementing PAR; (iii) detailed enumeration of experiences facilitating past events or change processes, and their specific role; (iv) a brief essay requesting them to describe an experience where they applied PAR to address a development challenge, with tools used and associated outcomes or impacts; (v) any publications arising out of PAR; (vi) areas in which they excel and in which they need further support; and (vii) detailed information about their organizations. This assessment was utilized in the selection of resource persons to participate in the first Expert Meeting and Knowledge Exchange Workshop on PAR, as well as to assess the level of current understanding of PAR among CCAA grantees.

### Knowledge Exchange Workshop (KEW) on PAR

A four-day workshop was held in Abuja, Nigeria to foster knowledge exchange among African scientists and practitioners with experience applying and facilitating PAR. The main purpose of this workshop was to develop a common understanding of the PAR methodology and develop a detailed outline of a PAR methods guide for use by CCAA grantees. However, a number of sub-objectives were met at the same time, including: (i) analysis of the needs assessment for CCAA grantees; and (ii) evaluation of experts for the selection of a smaller group of PAR

mentors to support CCAA grantees in subsequent stages of the partnership agreement. Time was far too short to develop a plan for supporting experiential learning on PAR among CCAA grant recipients in subsequent Knowledge Exchange Workshops. While the group successfully distilled the PAR methodology into a set of concrete steps, the methodology was still found to be so complex and nuanced that four days proved to be inadequate in fostering a deep exchange on a number of important topics. It was also agreed that rather than produce a PAR Methods Guide, we should produce a PAR Reference Guide – given both the nature of the subject matter (there is no single approach, but rather the approach must be matched to the objectives and circumstances) and the limited methodological depth we were able to achieve in the course of a four-day knowledge exchange.

The plan for supporting skill development in PAR among CCAA grantees was also shared with the group. Starting from this time, several participants felt the plan was inadequate in supporting real skill development given the limited time allocated to hands on, field-based mentoring.

### Mentor Selection

A meeting was held following the Abuja workshop to finalize the selection of mentors based on observations made during the Knowledge Exchange Workshop. Panel members included Anthony Nyong, Pascal Sanginga and Laura German. The following list of “core strengths” required for the task were developed, and utilized for evaluating potential mentors:

- Leadership
- Conceptual understanding of PAR
- Hands-on experience
- Analytical and writing skills
- Experience outside home country

Gender and linguistic balance in the mentor group were also considered in the selection.

The final selection of mentors considered to meet the criteria was as follows:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Francophone</b>	<b>Anglophone</b>
Male	Ali Daoudi	Edward Chuma
Female	Anne-Marie Tiani	Tendayi Mutimukuru

### Development of a Draft PAR Reference Guide

Over the next 3 months, a full draft of the PAR Reference Guide was developed by transforming bulleted lists and notes from group discussions into running narratives to reflect the content of exchanges taking place during the Abuja workshop. While this process was led by Laura German, all participants of the Abuja workshop were requested to contribute case studies illustrating different concepts presented in the Guide (with all participants except for one actually doing so). The chosen Mentors were given additional tasks in developing sections of text under paid contracts, including the writing of sections of text and editing the draft Guide. The Guide was printed and used as a reference material in the workshop in Ethiopia, and quickly translated



into French for use in the Benin workshop. The translation was, however, too poor in quality to enable us to make adequate use of it in Benin. Instead, we relied on short summaries and other didactic material (e.g. presentations, role plays) developed for the occasion.

### PAR Training and Knowledge Exchange with CCAA Grant Recipients

Two Training and Knowledge Exchange Workshops were then held with CCAA grantees, one in Nazreth, Ethiopia to cater for English speakers and one in Cotonou, Benin to cater for French speakers. These workshops were successfully hosted by CCAA projects to facilitate logistics and to enable “real life” learning with project beneficiaries. Both workshops were successfully conducted as Knowledge Exchange Workshops, integrating formal presentations by Mentors and project teams with practical exercises, field-based application of select PAR tools (Diagnosis and Visioning, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation) and group reflections on field activities (e.g. to document observations from the field, or distill lessons about “good practice”). In each workshop, projects developed plans for how they will incorporate PAR into their future project activities.

Lessons learnt from Ethiopia served as an important platform for improving upon the facilitation process in Benin. Two important shifts were made. First, some confusion in the Nazreth workshop about how the various concepts relate to one another (e.g. outcome mapping and impact assessment, adaptive management and PAR) and how the various steps of the process fit together led us to believe that the methodology should be presented in a simplified format of sequential steps in Cotonou. Secondly, formal presentations were kept shorter in Cotonou and much more time given to group discussion and debate. Both of these shifts proved instrumental in deepening understanding among participants. These adjustments enabled the refinement of the facilitation approach for knowledge exchange workshops on PAR, which were later written up for use by other IDRC programs.

### Negotiation of New Terms of Engagement

Following the PAR Training and Knowledge Exchange Workshop in Benin, three mentors met with IDRC Programme Officers to discuss the implications of lessons learnt to date for the program of work. What was clear from the two workshops is that there was a very different level of commitment between projects and between the participants in the two workshops (Ethiopia, Cotonou), with some participants in Ethiopia disinterested and at times hostile towards the approach. The mentors wished to support only those teams that expressed a willingness and interest to apply PAR and engage in a co-learning process with mentors. Two options for adjusting the work plan were considered: (1) to adjust the work plan and budget to give more time for deepening the mentor exchange and support more meaningful in-field mentoring but to fewer projects; or (2) support all projects equally until the budget is finalized, evaluate where the teams stand in terms of their understanding of PAR, and then request a second phase of funding if warranted. The team felt the first approach was the more reasonable, as we would only start something we were sure to be able to bring to completion.

The group then discussed a means to evaluate which projects would be selected for in-field mentoring. As not all project teams were equally receptive to the PAR approach and the Mentor

Group felt the only effective approach was to support projects truly committed to applying it, we decided to carry out a formal evaluation of projects to determine which projects would receive support. Teams were asked to use the format for development of Action Research Protocols presented to them in each workshop and described in the PAR Reference Guide to develop detailed PAR plans for their respective projects. These Protocols were then evaluated and – together with questions about the importance of PAR to their respective projects and levels of interest expressed during the workshops – used to determine levels of commitment of the various projects to the PAR approach. Based on this evaluation, seven projects were selected for in-depth in-field mentoring. Please refer to Annex I for the evaluation, where projects recommended for further in-field mentoring support are highlighted in green font.

The group also discussed the need for a distance mentoring component, so that the mentoring process does not come to an end once mentors leave the field. This distance mentoring function was needed to support teams in overcoming challenges as they occur, to help distill lessons learnt by projects, to follow-up on team progress on applying “essential” PAR tools (e.g. participatory M&E, process documentation) and to support the write-up of findings.

Finally, the group discussed issues of relevance to how large-scale programmes such as CCAA are operationalized. The first observation is that PAR needs to be the base from which a project is developed, rather than something add-on – requiring Programme Officers to be convinced of its relevance during the project evaluation stage. Secondly, there is need to integrate the methodologies used by various resource persons in their interactions with project teams. Much benefit was derived from having Nathalie Beaulieu present at the Benin workshop, in terms of our ability to harmonize various methodologies being presented to teams (e.g. articulating how outcome mapping and monitoring and evaluation are embedded within PAR). A recommendation was made to IDRC to organize an umbrella process among Programme Officers and resource persons for all 4 themes targeted for capacity building (climate change adaptation, policy influence, PAR and monitoring and evaluation) to enable them to reach a common understanding of how these processes fit together. Otherwise, each supported project will have multiple resource persons interacting with them, each with different demands, creating a sense of confusion and frustration. It should be the responsibility of resource persons to reconcile the different components of the program before bringing them to grantees.

Following this meeting in Benin, a host of consultations were held by email with all mentors as the work plan was being adjusted. This dialogue focused on the following key points:

1. *How to strengthen the learning and documentation of lessons by project teams, including roles and responsibilities of mentors and project teams.*

To strengthen the learning and documentation of lessons by project teams, quality control and accountability mechanisms for in-field and distance mentoring were discussed. The approach to in-field mentoring agreed by mentors was to include: (i) an appraisal of progress, with documentation of lessons; (ii) planning for the next step(s) in PAR and the approach to be used, in detail, using the Process Documentation Guide; (iii) field-testing of one core aspect of the methodology; and (iv) group reflection using the Process Documentation Guide, and re-planning for subsequent steps in PAR. This was seen as a means to help teams to move beyond their main

hurdles, while deepening their collective planning and documentation skills. As teams begin to gain significant experience in supporting local adaptive capacity through PAR, it was thought that less time would be dedicated to strengthening implementation and more time to documentation and write-up. While the above steps were more or less followed in practice, mentors diverted from this standardized process based on their own evaluation of the most serious challenges faced by teams and the most critical next steps in PAR implementation.

For an effective distance mentoring process, a strategy for mutual accountability between project teams and mentors was also developed. Mentors were to be responsible for: (1) Facilitating three in-field mentoring meetings of 5 days' duration each with each team mentored; (2) Writing a short report for each in-field mentoring visit to summarize the initial reflection (including challenges faced and lessons learnt), the plan for field work, the reflection following field work, and the work plan for subsequent months; (3) Providing four days of distance mentoring per project to follow up on progress, help them to overcome challenges faced and distil lessons learnt; and (4) Providing four days of distance mentoring to each team to support the write-up of action research findings. Milestones or deliverables were to include products that are the joint responsibility of research teams and mentors, including:

- (i) One quarterly Participatory M&E report and one or more Process Documentation reports for each project mentored;
- (ii) A bi-annual summary of lessons learnt with teams on supporting CCA through PAR and on the mentoring process;
- (iii) Development of two final knowledge products, one for a scientific audience on supporting CCA in practice, and one for one of the boundary partners (led by site teams and co-authored by mentors); and
- (iv) One or more case studies from each supported team for the PAR Reference Guide, to be written by mentors or by site teams – based on mutual agreement.

In exchange for this support, project teams were asked to commit to the following:

- (i) Support the costs of bringing the research team together (local PAR team, and at least 1 team member – preferably a PAR facilitator – from each country supported by the project) for each of the 3 mentor visits;
- (ii) Participate actively in distance exchanges with the chosen mentor to share challenges faced, share Participatory M&E and Process Documentation reports (at least once quarterly), jointly distill lessons learnt in the application of PAR to CCA challenges, and share draft knowledge outputs;
- (iii) Nominate 3 project team members (at least one per participating country) working closely with boundary partners to participate in the final synthesis workshop;
- (iv) Work with mentors to co-produce two knowledge products, one for a boundary partner and one for a scientific audience, involving mentors as co-authors; and
- (v) Team members and/or mentors to write at least one case study for the PAR Reference Guide to illustrate a principle or a step in the PAR process.

This mutual agreement was largely effective in clarifying the mutual responsibilities of teams and mentors in the mentoring process. Bi-annual summaries of lessons learnt by mentors were produced twice, with contributions from all mentors. In addition to supporting communities to proactively evaluate adaptive options being tested in the field, participatory monitoring and evaluation reports enabled some teams to better substantiate the positive outcomes associated with PAR. Process documentation, when carried out, deepened team-based reflection and learning on their own efforts to support local adaptive capacity. And despite the tight timeframe during the closing weeks of the project (from the synthesis workshop and the project end date), a host of different project publications are also forthcoming.

Yet despite these successes, three key challenges were faced. A challenge faced with most teams was to ensure that regular process documentation and participatory monitoring and evaluation activities are carried out. While all but one team carried out some participatory monitoring and evaluation, these activities were in some cases held up by delays in implementation. Challenges faced with process documentation were slightly different, in that few teams developed a culture of documenting processes carried out and accountability mechanisms between teams and mentors on the one hand, and IDRC on the other, were weak. A second challenge relates to the effectiveness of distance mentoring, which was in many cases undermined by poor communication from project teams. A third challenge relates to the difficulties faced by some projects in financing week-long team meetings with mentors, given the failure to initiate the mentoring process (and write these activities into project work plans and budgets) from project inception.

*2. How to support lessons learning by teams not directly supported in the field; and*

In order to support lessons learning by teams not directly supported through in-field mentoring, plans were made to generate a synthesis of lessons learnt from mentors through in-field mentoring and distribute these to the wider set of teams for discussion. The envisioned bi-annual summaries of lessons learnt by mentors was compiled as planned (see Attachments 3 and 4), but dissemination was hindered by poor understanding of the mechanisms for programme-level communications by the mentors and delayed responses by IDRC program officers on queries related to how to most effectively disseminate these lessons.

*3. How to build a monitoring function into the process.*

Since monitoring is integral to PAR, it was thought that monitoring should be built into the mentoring process. Specifically, reports produced through regular participatory monitoring and evaluation activities (by communities) and Process Documentation (by site teams) were envisioned as the primary basis for monitoring, as they are already embedded in PAR and highly focused on bringing change on the ground and monitoring change as it occurs. It was thought that the importance of these results for scientific publication would serve as an added incentive for research teams to take this component seriously.

In practice, while these reports were found by mentors to be a critical component of PAR implementation, holding teams (and some mentors) to these outputs was proved to be challenging in practice. Those teams who carried out participatory monitoring and evaluation

had stronger results to show in their PAR publications, yet poor commitment of teams to the implementation and/or documentation of these processes and lack of accountability mechanisms between teams and IDRC undermined their effectiveness in practice.

### PAR Application and In-Field Mentoring

Following participation in Knowledge Exchange Workshops on PAR, project teams were tasked with implementation of the next steps in PAR based on the theoretical and methodological skills acquired during the workshops. This was first done by the teams without any support from Mentors, to enable them to “get their feet wet” and carry out their own team-based experiential learning. This is designed to enhance project learning as well as to foster a richer exchange – due to experience acquired – for subsequent mentoring.

Three sequential in-field mentoring visits were planned to give support as needed to team-based implementation of PAR. Contracts with mentors specified the nature of this support, as follows:

1. Facilitate three in-field reflection / planning / applied field action / reflection and re-planning meetings, 5 days’ duration each, in one agreed field site but involving representatives of each country supported by the project.
2. Write a short report for each in-field mentoring visit, highlighting the initial reflection (including challenges faced and lessons learnt), the plan for field work, the reflection following field work, and the work plan for subsequent months.
3. Provide four days of distance mentoring per project on an as-needed basis or proactively contacting teams if they are silent, to follow up on progress, help them in troubleshooting on challenges faced and distilling lessons learnt.
4. Provide four days of distance mentoring to each team to support the write-up of action research findings.

With the exception of the Benin team, for whom the annual agricultural cycle delayed implementation of agreements reached in the second in-field mentoring visit and follow-up mentoring before the closing date of the mentoring process was deemed unnecessary, all in-field mentoring visits were held as planned. A brief methodological description of the approach used in supporting in-field mentoring of CCAA research teams, developed and agreed to by all mentors, is available upon request.

### Mentor Exchange Workshop

During the early stages of PAR implementation, a follow-up mentor workshop was held to deepen our mutual understanding of PAR, consolidate lessons learnt from the implementation of training and knowledge exchange workshops, and plan for in-field mentoring. This meeting had the following objectives:

1. To reflect on project evolution, troubleshoot on challenges faced and adjust expectations of what we can achieve.
2. To further refine and reach a mutual understanding of the methodology presented in the PAR Reference Guide.

3. To facilitate retrospective reflection on how to improve upon the methodology for conducting PAR Training and Knowledge Exchange Workshops and refine didactic material for use in future IDRC programmes.
4. Refine the methodology for in-field mentoring of project teams, and agree on reporting and mentor exchange mechanisms.

This workshop was carried out as planned, with all objectives fully met through the workshop itself or post-workshop writing by mentors.

### Final Synthesis Workshop

At the end of the mentoring process, a 5-day synthesis workshop was held with the Mentor Group, IDRC Programme Officers and 2 representatives of each supported project to: (i) reflect on the PAR mentoring and implementation processes, and the relevance of PAR in supporting climate change adaptation; (ii) equip CCAA teams to continue implementing PAR and disseminating experiences beyond the close of the mentoring process; and (iii) assist teams to better formulate lessons and findings to be shared with a wider audience and to advance publications. This workshop was effective in reaching a common understanding of key publications to be produced, in the development of these publications and in advancing team capacity to document PAR experiences. It was also effective in more proactively capturing lessons learnt by grantees on the mentoring process and in the application of PAR to support climate change adaptation. Yet the agenda item of equipping teams to continue implementing PAR beyond the close of the mentoring process was left for the final in-field mentoring visits, to allocate more time to furthering the development of diverse knowledge products.

### **Project Outputs and Dissemination**

Thus far, the project has produced the following major outputs:

1. Versions 1.0 and 2.0 of a methodological guide on PAR entitled, “The Application of Participatory Action Research to Climate Change Adaptation: A Reference Guide.” This 103-page English document (and 114-page French document, each excluding annexes) integrates the experience of mentors, grantees and IDRC programme officers in PAR through theoretical overviews, presentation of key steps and sub-steps of the methodology, case studies illustrating different methodological steps or challenges faced in implementing them, and a summary of common challenges faced in the application of PAR. These Reference Guides were distributed to all funded CCAA projects, and utilized as reference materials during training workshops. Volume 2.0 integrates new case studies from field-based application of PAR in the context of the CCAA Programme; however, additional case studies envisioned by some teams have yet to be integrated due to time restrictions and should be incorporated final to the publication of the Guide. This guide is submitted as Attachment 1.
2. *Version 1.0 of a guide for facilitators entitled, “Knowledge Exchange Workshops on the Application of PAR in Support of Climate Change Adaptation: A Facilitation Guide.”* This guide describes a relatively robust approach to facilitating Knowledge Exchange

Workshops (KEWs) on PAR, based on lessons learnt in implementing two KEWs in the context of this project as well as prior experiences of mentors (submitted as Attachment 2). Draft didactic materials for use in these trainings (presentations on each major step in PAR, role plays, etc.) are also available upon request, but require updating based on the most recent reflection by mentors on the KEW methodology and revisions in the PAR methodology.

3. *A final synthesis of lessons learnt about PAR mentoring.* This synthesis of lessons learnt was developed first by mentors through a reflection following each in-field mentoring visit, and finally by grantees during the final synthesis workshop. The document provides important lessons for any future mentoring process undertaken by IDRC. For more details, please see Attachment 3.
4. *A final synthesis of lessons learnt on the application of PAR in support of climate change adaptation.* Similar to #3 above, this synthesis of lessons learnt was developed first by mentors through reflections on theory (on PAR, climate change adaptation and adaptive management) and from experiences acquired through in-field and distance mentoring, and finally by grantees during the final synthesis workshop. The document provides important lessons for any future efforts to apply PAR in support of climate change adaptation. For more details, please see Attachment 4.
5. *Draft chapters of a proposed book on the application of PAR in support of climate change adaptation in Africa.* This proposed book profiles the experiences of each project in applying PAR in support of climate change adaptation, followed by a cross-project synthesis of: (i) Capabilities and limitations of PAR in supporting local adaptive capacity; (ii) Other innovations that operate in synergy with PAR in supporting local adaptive capacity (e.g. empirical research, innovations in support services or policies); (iii) Conditions under which PAR is effective (capacity, funding, etc.); and (iv) Implications for applying lessons learnt beyond the CCAA Programme. For an outline of the proposed volume, please refer to Annex II.
6. *A series of policy briefs to disseminate messages emerging from community engagements to key audiences.* These briefs profile the PAR process and its outcomes, key climatic risks and their manifestations (as viewed by local communities) or calls to action by key stakeholders who have a role to play in supporting local adaptive capacity but who have not yet fulfilled this function.

## **Capacity-Building**

Capacity building was achieved in two fundamental ways. First, the mentors themselves have a much better understanding on PAR from the detailed exchanges among themselves and with project teams, from the collaborative writing process and from the KEWs themselves. Joint reflection sessions at the end of each day and week-long event (KEW, mentor workshop, synthesis workshop) proved instrumental in enhancing mutual reflection, understanding and co-learning among mentors. In addition to forcing mentors to articulate important processes and

relationships with greater clarity, this has resulted in a small but critical mass of mentors in the region with a common understanding of what PAR is and how it is implemented.

The second important way in which capacity was built was for CCAA grantees. The primary events or processes in which this learning took place were: (i) the regional Training and Knowledge Exchange Workshops; (ii) field-based application (trial-and-error) by teams; (iii) in-field mentoring visits (in which in addition to capitalizing upon mentor experience in planning new steps in PAR, participants were facilitated to capitalize upon what they had learnt collectively during prior steps in implementation); and (iv) the final synthesis workshop, including the important step of writing up PAR lessons and findings.

Based on the statements made by grantees during the final synthesis workshop, it is clear that the teams have a much clearer understanding of the concept, its basic steps or components, and how most of these steps are implemented in the field. This has most certainly reinforced institutional capacity in PAR and the application of related tools and methods. Some teams have indicated the skills and experience acquired have also been useful in competing for new streams of funding, suggesting that the tools will be applied towards new challenges. However, further implementation of PAR by teams is required to consolidate these experiences and reach a situation in which the mentees may also effectively mentor others in the future.

## **Impact**

The only form of impact that can be reported here is the effective acquisition of PAR principles and approaches by grantees, and their improved understanding of how to implement these in the field. Other hoped for impact relates to the widespread dissemination of knowledge products developed through this project, most notably the policy briefs, the PAR Reference Guide and the case studies under development by teams. Given the early stage of closure of the mentoring process relative to the closing dates of funded projects and the (future) dissemination of project publications, no effort has been made to assess any outcomes or impacts resulting from this project. If IDRC has an interest in gaining a greater understanding of future impacts related to this project's activities or knowledge products, mechanisms to follow up on local impacts and product usage will be necessary.

## **Recommendations**

Key recommendations that may be derived for IDRC are summarized in the section on "Research Findings", above, where the main lessons on PAR mentoring and on the application of PAR in support of climate change adaptation are summarized. However, a few 'higher order' recommendations for programming in IDRC are highlighted here:

1. *Find a mechanism to support the efforts by grantees to document and publish lessons learnt from the application of PAR in support of climate change adaptation.* This is needed both to reward the initiative shown by teams in developing draft book chapters to publicize their experiences, to disseminate practical solutions to Africa's adaptation challenges (as well as processes for generating these) and to increase global awareness of the value of PAR in addressing everyday development challenges. This should include



publication of detailed PAR case studies in some form of compendium where lessons may be drawn across projects, as well as potential expansion of the CCAA Policy Brief series to enable those teams supported by mentors as well as other teams to convey messages to key audiences.

2. *Build lessons learnt on mentoring into future mentoring processes within IDRC.* For future capacity building programs requiring a similar level of investment, whether related to PAR or other topics, it is recommended to build upon lessons learnt from this process and explore means to develop mechanisms to ensure the key requirements to successful implementation and outcomes are met.
3. *Find a means to deepen the reflection by project teams and mentors on effective approaches and lessons learnt in supporting local adaptive capacity.* Given the widespread nature of the climate change adaptation challenge and the paucity of practical experiences in overcoming these challenges, it is urgent that the experiences from the CCAA programme be capitalized upon and shared widely. This should be done near the end of the project, so as to enable further lessons learning by grantees and strengthen lessons capture. In the meantime, mechanisms to encourage concerted attention to PAR implementation despite the close of the mentoring process are likely to be necessary to encourage teams to maintain the momentum of the learning process.
4. *Find a mechanism to share lessons learnt with other funded CCAA projects.* Given the difficulties faced in implementing this component of the revised work plan and the potential benefits that other funded teams could derive from the lessons documented to date, it is recommended that these be shared and a discussion facilitated with these teams based on demand.
5. *Explore the potential for a systemic approach for building PAR capacity in the African region through sustained commitment by research managers and donors.* While PAR holds great potential for leveraging the potential role of research in supporting practical solutions to Africa's development challenges at multiple levels, application of the methodology is currently hindered by its low status within the scientific community (and the related challenge of poorly documented impacts that may be achieved through it), by research managers and researchers' very limited familiarity with the methodology, and by failure to adequately synergize existing disciplinary and institutional roles. As an 'enlightened' donor, IDRC could potentially spearhead a multi-institutional, multi-country, multi-donor effort to mainstream PAR into ongoing initiatives to strengthen (e.g. agricultural) research in the African region so as to: (i) develop a critical mass of individuals versed in PAR theory and methods; (ii) understand the conditions under which this change in research orientation possible; and (iii) generate strong evidence of the outcomes and impacts enabled by PAR, and advertise these widely to engender endogenous institutional commitments within and beyond pilot research (and development) institutions.

**Annex I:  
Evaluation of Action Research Protocols**

Project Name	Countries	Relevance of PAR	Evaluation of AR Protocol	Proposed Action
<i>Francophone Projects</i>				
1. Adaptation des politiques de pêche aux changements climatiques en Afrique de l'ouest à l'aide des connaissances scientifiques et des savoirs endogènes	Senegal	5 (très pertinent)	Very Good (use of format, some areas need refinement but shows interest and conceptual understanding of PAR)	Support
2. Modifier le climat de la pauvreté sous le Changement Climatique en Afrique Sub-Saharienne : mettre en place les priorités et les stratégies d'adaptation au changement climatique avec les forêts	DRC, Cameroon, CAR	4 (bien pertinent)	DRC: Good (very thorough and applies steps in PAR Reference Guide, but misses the action orientation of PAR in some sections)  Cameroon: Good (thorough; applies steps in PAR Reference Guide, but most steps involve preparing for PAR rather than doing it; largely misses the relationship between forests and climate change)	Support
3. Projet ACCA-VICAB	Burkina Faso	Do not specify	Poor (does not use format, does not mention steps or evolution beyond December)	Do not support unless substantially improved
4. Vulnérabilité et Adaptations des Systèmes Agraires à Madagascar aux Changements Climatiques	Madagascar	5 (très pertinent)	Excellent (well written, excellent justification, clear grasp of the concept and format)	Support
5. Renforcement des capacités d'adaptation des acteurs ruraux béninois face aux changements climatiques		5 (très pertinent)	Excellent (well written, clear grasp of the concept and format, shows clear interest in and understanding of PAR approach).	Support
6. Plateforme participative d'information pour l'adaptation des communautés vulnérables aux changements climatiques (InfoClim)	Senegal	4 (bien pertinent)	Very good (well written, good use of material provided to them, clear grasp of concept, shows interest and understanding of PAR); team needs to be encouraged to use a more interactive than linear approach to information exchange and to go beyond information exchange to action.	Support

<i>Anglophone Projects</i>				
1. Nancy Omolo (Kenya)		5 (highly relevant)	Poor. They have made a serious effort to develop the AR protocol, but the result illustrates they have very poor understanding of what it is. They are mostly doing empirical research. They should clearly demonstrate what they wish to achieve through PAR in order for us to support this project (e.g. identify objectives through which PAR is essential).	Do not support unless substantially improved
2. Lack of resilience in African smallholder farming: Exploring measures to enhance the adaptive capacity of local communities to pressures of climate change	Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia	Do not specify	Medium. Shows interest and an orientation toward action-based and participatory research, but they do not follow the format and it is incomplete.	Support
3. Participatory Action Research to develop Potential Management Strategies to Manage Risk, Reduce Vulnerability and Enhance Agricultural Productivity of Smallholder Farmers	Ethiopia ( <i>please note the broader project involves other countries</i> )	5 (highly relevant)	Quite good, and shows clear interest in the approach, but with a few gaps (e.g. questions 2 and 3 left blank). This team also needs to be supported to use a more interactive / flexible approach to innovation that goes beyond technology testing; they allude to institutional and policy innovations, but say nothing about how they would go about it. They also highlight areas that will require a second level of PAR among support institutions, but this is missing in the approach outlined. I anticipate they will need support in these two areas.	Support
4. Enhancing the Capacity to Reduce Community Vulnerability to Flood Risk as a Response Measure for Climate Change Adaptation in Kano Plains of Western Kenya	Kenya	4 (quite relevant)	Medium to Poor. They use some parts of the format but not others, and do not show much initiative in integrating key processes or lessons from the Training and Knowledge Exchange Workshop. The writing is sloppy. The topic is, however, well-suited to PAR.	Do not support
5. Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Risk Management to Support Community-Based Adaptation	Kenya	Do not specify	Medium to Poor. They seemed to pull directly from their IDRC proposal without integrating newly acquired information about PAR. As a result it is	Do not support

			largely science-driven and prescribed, with little opportunity for local innovation and ownership. While some reference is made to PAR steps, big gaps in the AR Protocol format remain.	
6. Action Research in Central, Southern Zone Tanzania and Malawi (Umbrella project: “Strengthening local agricultural innovation systems in less and more favoured areas of Tanzania and Malawi to adapt to the challenges and opportunities arising from climate change and variability project”)	Malawi, Tanzania	Do not specify	Medium. Proposal is largely driven by transfer of technology focus. While there is interest in innovation systems, the concept is mainly operationalized through information flows from science to farmers and on-farm trials. This is a Participatory Research plan that shows little effort to broaden the scope for a truly community-driven, iterative change process – and must less “innovation systems.” They fail to use the format of Action Research Protocols.	Do not support

## **Annex II: Final Agreed Outline for Book**

### **I. Introductory Chapter: “Climate Change in Africa: Impacts and Challenges”**

- Characterize climatic changes occurring in Africa
- Introduce challenges faced by Africa in adapting to climate change
- Explore possible ways that the adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable communities can be enhanced
- CCAA Program (history, objectives within wider CC arena, modus operandi)

### **II. Climate Change Adaptation in Africa: Program Overview**

- Theoretical overview to adaptive capacity
- Supporting adaptive capacity
- The Role of PAR in Supporting Endogenous Adaptive Capacity (the aspect of adaptive capacity that PAR can support, theoretical overview, methodology)

### **III. Supporting Adaptive Capacity in Practice: Case Studies**

#### **A. Introduction (1/2 to 1 page)**

- Relevance of the research (how climate change interfaces with broader setting / poverty context)
- Scope of the paper / case study (e.g. “this case study profiles the application of PAR in support of local capacity to adapt to increased incidence of hurricanes in Madagascar”)
- Brief findings / key message

#### **B. Project Context (1 to 2 pages)**

- Manifestations of Climate Change in Country X
- Project Description
- Review of Specific Issue being Addressed by PAR [“State of the Art”]

#### **C. Site Description (1 page of text, with optional map; 2 pages if including context study)**

- Location / geography
- Population, economy (e.g. main livelihood activities, characteristics of the production system) and ecology
- The adaptation challenge at site level (climatic risks and their consequences for local livelihoods, local adaptive strategies<sup>1</sup> and limitations in local adaptive capacity<sup>2</sup> identified in the context study)

#### **D. Research Questions (specific to issue being addressed by PAR)**

#### **E. Supporting Local Adaptive Capacity through PAR (tell the story of what happened, in sequential steps, showing how the approach has evolved in practice) (5 to 10 pages)**

- Cycle 1 – Original approach (planning<sup>3</sup>, implementation, M&E)

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<sup>1</sup> How people have coped in the past, how effective these strategies were historically and in recent history.

<sup>2</sup> How recent changes in climate have strained local adaptive capacity.

<sup>3</sup> For each sub-step, discuss what was done, and the outcome. In steps where challenges were faced, mention those challenges.

- Cycle 2 – Modified approach (planning, implementation, M&E)
- Cycle 3 – Modified again...

F. Lessons and Future Directions (1 to 2 pages)

- Lessons learnt (what works, what doesn't work, and why)
- Next steps: Addressing remaining challenges (how to deal with what is not working – whether through PAR, policy change, etc., in the form of new PAR hypotheses)

G. References

**IV. Synthesis of Experiences in Supporting Adaptive Capacity**

- Capabilities and limitations of PAR in supporting local adaptive capacity
- Other Innovations that Operate in Synergy with PAR in supporting local adaptive capacity (e.g. empirical research, innovations in support services or policies)
- Conditions under which PAR is effective (capacity, funding, etc.)
- Beyond CCAA (applying findings / lessons beyond of project context)