



# *Preparing for the future?*

## Rethinking support for adaptive capacity to climate change

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# *Why adaptive capacity matters*

- Change is a constant in the lives of rural people in Africa
  - shocks (war, displacement, rain failures, food price spikes)
  - stresses (population pressure, terms of trade, land degradation)
- Climate change is another pressure - and interacts/magnifies other shocks and stresses
- Climate change (like other changes) is uncertain at local level





# *why adaptive capacity matters*

- No development is sustainable without the ability to maintain wellbeing in the face of change  
i.e. adaptive capacity

But we don't know ...

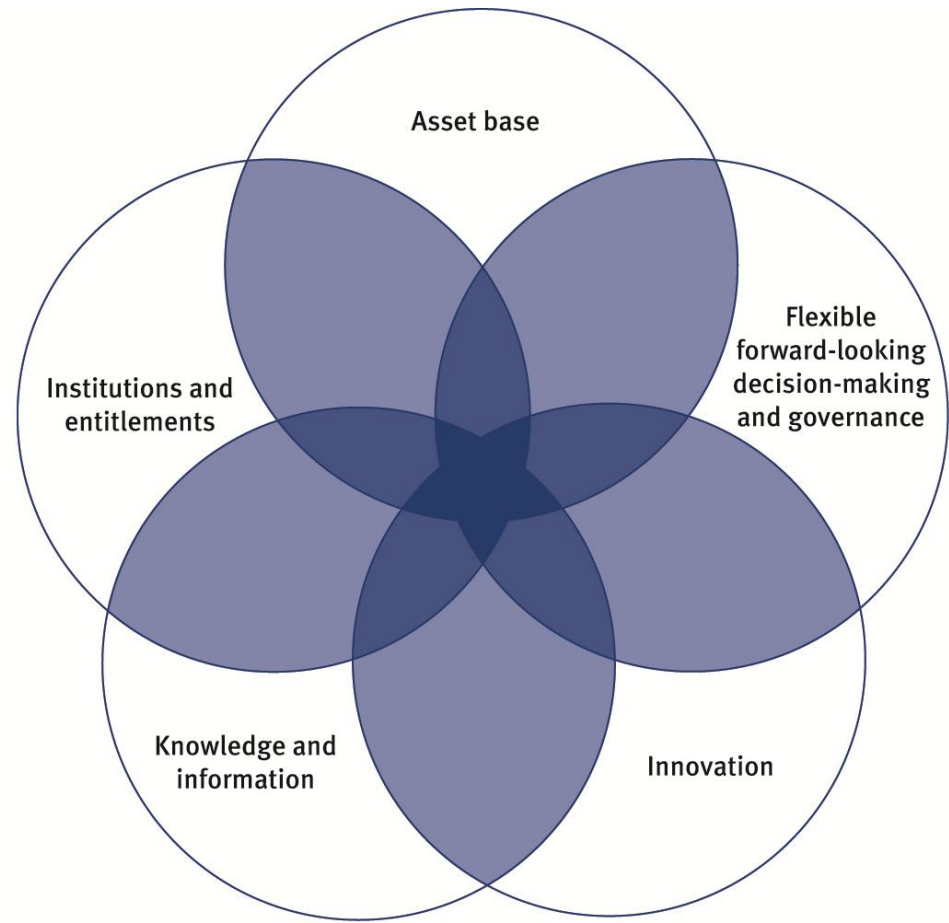
- how well communities can currently adapt to change
- how much existing development interventions build (or undermine) adaptive capacity

(Problem: little consensus about what AC is)



# *A framework for thinking about local adaptive capacity*

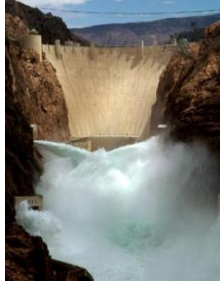
- Assets
- Institutions
- Knowledge
- Innovation
- Decision-making





# *Insights from the Field*

- People do adapt, but
  - not to climate change directly or in isolation
  - reactive
  - short-term, immediate needs
- So... high risk of maladaptation







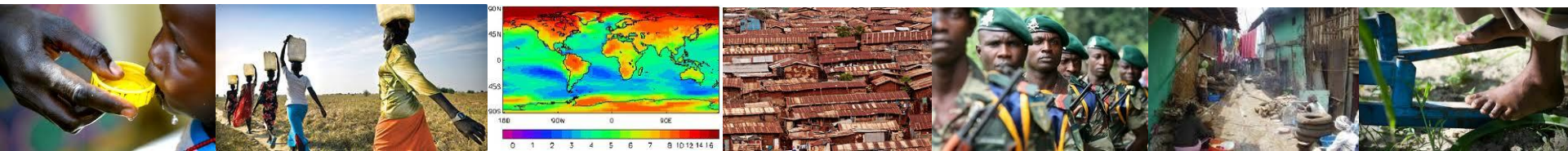
# Insights from the Field

## Are development interventions helping?

- Technology packages
- Direct provision of assets
- Group creation and capacity building
- A missing link: assets - AC
  - Helping people find, adapt and use assets
  - Attention to what makes assets ‘come alive’



- **Institutions** can undermine sustainability
  - Elite capture (*e.g. irrigation and women*)
  - New institutions created not socially grounded (*e.g. project committees and savings groups, quotas*)
  - No institutions created to support what was introduced (*e.g. communal pasture enclosures*)
- Insufficient analysis of institutions and power
- Institutions can also undermine **innovation...**





# Insights from the Field

- Another missing link: we're not recognising innovation or identifying what's blocking it
  - confidence, information, finance, risk tolerance, community acceptance, perceptions of 'failure', paradigms of 'authority knows'
- Innovation also undermined when *information* is treated as a technical package from above

But if we saw information as part of AC...

- range of info
- range of criteria (e.g. \$/day, not MT/ha)
- sources of info
- use of info - turning information into *knowledge*







# *Insights from the Field*

Development agencies are as short-term and reactive as everyone else

- programming focused on immediate needs (reinforced by ‘shopping list’ participation)
- Longer term context (climate, economic) rarely considered (e.g. irrigation in arid lands)

But how to plan if future is uncertain?

- Adaptive capacity!
- Build people’s own agency
- Flexibility



# *WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE ?*

We can't prepare for climate change in isolation. It's part of the development challenge.

We're missing out on the huge potential contribution that development interventions could bring to AC

We can't hope to build AC through separate interventions

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE ?

## We need:

to focus on people's ability to make and achieve their own plans (at all levels) - i.e their *agency*

better decision-making ('governance' ) from all stakeholders.

far-reaching change : administrative, managerial, technical, etc.

## new skill-sets

- institutional analysis (power, culture, sociology)
- scenario planning (and understanding uncertainty)
- how to support agency, not give messages

# *WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE?*

## **The Big Five**

**Longer-term future and uncertainty.**

**Innovation, not introducing specific changes.**

**Institutions** - social, cultural, political, economic

**Power** - There are reasons why status quo exists

**Knowledge** - not just information

# *WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE?*

**But...**

None of this is new

Climate change underlines the importance  
and urgency

*Until we identify and address what has  
stopped us from taking it on board we are  
condemned to continue business as usual*