

Act Locally, Think Globally



Mother Earth's Future in our Hands

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REPORT OF CLIMATE CHANGE WORKSHOP ORGANISED FOR PEASANT FARMERS IN OKU

Introduction

The workshop was organized on the 15th of January 2015. This workshop was organized in partnership with Mrs. Azong Matilda of the University of Johannesburg South Africa. Matilda is a PhD student from the Department of Geography and Environmental Management of the University of Johannesburg. The workshop was attended by 55 farmers of Nguinkei II, Manchok, Keyon and Ngashie of Oku. The workshop facilitators were the Director of CAMGEW- Wirsiy Emmanuel, Ngum Jai Raymond-CAMGEW Project Officer, Azong Matilda and the Delegate for Agriculture and Rural Development for Oku Sub Division- Mr. Nkyembeng Charles Nche.

Mrs. Azong was carrying out a research project on the vulnerability of rural communities to climate change in the Bamenda Highlands region of Cameroon with focus on the changes and adaptations in community livelihoods in the context of climate and environmental changes. The workshop was aimed at knowing how women were adapting to the changes caused by climate change and variability.

Objectives: the workshop objectives were;

- To discuss with peasant farmers the changes that have occurred in their farming systems and cycles over the years.
- To assess the impact of climate change on gender and agriculture and how women were adapting to the changes.

Methodology and Activity Summary:

Prior to the workshop, Mrs. Azong and Ngum Raymond had carried out a field study along the slopes on which agriculture is practiced in Oku. This was done on the 14th of January 2015 from 9:00 AM to 4:00PM. The farming communities of Manchok, Nguinkei, and Keyon were visited. Through this activity, Mrs. Azong was able to appreciate the topography, the water courses and nature of soil. The course of the largest river that flows in Elak area-Emfve River was studied and some interviews with community members made. The out come was that the river course had reduced in flow rate and size over the years.

On the 15th of January 2015, the workshop on climate change and its effects on agriculture was organised in Manchok at CAMGEW office. The workshop started with a general presentation of the project that involved the impact of climate change in agricultural practices. After the

presentation, the participants were divided into two groups- a group made up of women and another made of men. The group composed of women was facilitated by Mrs. Azong and Mr. Charles Nche. The group comprised of Men was facilitated by Wirsiy Emmanuel and Ngum Raymond. Both groups discussed on the farming trends in the past and now, ownership of land and labour, ownership of crops and sales. After the separate discussions, there was a joint discussion to synthesize the group discussions and findings. This first session was followed by a lunch break. The second session involved discussions on rain fall patterns and the agricultural season.

During the syntheses of the group discussions, it was discovered that;

1. Women dominated in agricultural activities. Women put more labour and time in farming activities in Oku.
2. Land was owned by men in Oku. Women had no access to land. A woman could be given a piece of land for farming but that did not ensure her ownership of the land. Their husbands will sell the farmland without seeking their opinions.
3. Family heads who are men had to own land and decide on its distribution because they were polygamous and could get a new wife anytime and this new wife will need land.
4. Women were not permitted to plant permanent crops in farms. All permanent crops were property of men (family heads). Ownership of land could be possibly identified through permanent crops.
5. Land had to be in the name of men who are polygamous because if one of the women owned land she will only concentrate on her children but if land is owned by the father who own all the children and women, every family member will benefit from it.
6. Women carried a lot of farm loads. Food was transported from the farm to the houses by women and in very rare cases men helped their wives.
7. Men did not help women in energy supply for their families (fire wood for cooking). Women in greater cases will come back from the farm and get to the forest to fetch for firewood that will be used for cooking and warming water.
8. Food crops were cultivated by women. Men got involved only in cash crop (Coffee) farming. Though women will mostly take care of the weeding, mulching and harvesting of the coffee fruits but they had no access to incomes from coffee.

Despite all these findings, women agreed to the fact that some men though very few helped their wives in farming activities.

Results:

- The workshop revealed that climates had greatly changed in Oku. The changes were affecting farmers adversely. Rains will either come earlier or delay. The example quoted was what happened in 2013 when rains came earlier and some farmers planted and the rains went and did not come back until April. Those that planted later had better yields.

In 2014 rains came earlier in February and some farmers planted, the rains remained. Farmers who planted later in March had very poor harvest.

- Women had no access to land in Oku. For example, a woman could be given a piece of land to farm by her husband but that same piece of land could be sold by the man without the consent of the woman at any time.
- Women put more efforts in raising farms in Oku. The labour for farming activities was mostly provided by women.
- Fuel wood provision for family use is done by women.
- Men put less time in farming activities that involve food crop. They however put more time in cash crop cultivation.
- Rainfall patterns have greatly changed. This has affected the agricultural cycle. Corn is planted in March and harvesting is done in some communities in Oku between October and December and in some extreme cases in January.
- The cultivation of Solanum Potatoes has become important in some communities. The low productivity of farms planted with corn has caused some farmers to shift from the cultivation of corn to solanum potatoes that have greater yields and provide greater incomes.

Conclusion

The workshop that had as aim to discuss with peasant farmers the changes that have occurred in their farming systems and cycles and also assess the impact of climate change on gender and agriculture and how women were adapting to the changes ended at about 3:30PM. The workshop was attended by 55 peasant farmer from Oku. The workshop was only the first phase of the research process. The second workshop of the research will be organized later this year (2015). CAMGEW hopes that the outcome of this study will be used to better the living conditions of peasant farms in Oku through adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change in the livelihood activities of farmers.

Report written by: Wirsiy Emmanuel Binyuy and Ngum Jai Raymond