

Introduction

Why Write This Book?

Two of the most important groups of people in community based adaptation are field staff—the people on-the-ground doing the work—and the communities that they work with. This book has been written for you—a development practitioner who wants to begin working today, with your communities, to successfully adapt to the climate challenges they are facing.

The best-intended generosity of donors and the most carefully researched development program won't have the intended impact if trained, effective field staff are not on site to implement projects—and if well-prepared communities are not ready to take over when the non-governmental organization (NGO) staff depart. Without the cooperation of these two groups in project design and management, project outcomes run the risk of coming to an abrupt halt at grant's end—undermining the long-term impact that all parties had worked so hard for.

The world's poor will be the most critically affected by a changing climate. These human beings have been struggling for decades with poverty, malnutrition, poor health, and a lack of access to education. Development professionals are beginning to realize that, for many communities, their plight may not be improving rapidly enough to reach the UN's Millennium Development Goals by the targeted date. If experienced development organizations are finding it difficult to solve decades-old development problems, how will they additionally solve new challenges driven by a changing climate?

An underlying cause—with a veiled solution—may be that development has not always included communities in the process of assessing need, designing project activities, having a stake in project management, and taking over project stewardship at grant's end. Cutting-edge development now sees this community participation as paramount for maintaining the positive outcomes that contribute to long-term impact. This is the beauty of community based adaptation (CBA): it both improves development results by fully engaging community members as partners and owners—and at the same time increases the community's resilience to a changing climate through sound adaptation practices.

A second underlying reason for a lack of forward motion in development may be that many development practitioners do not have access to the field tools, sound information, and training necessary to improve project impact. Without effective tools and methodologies, how can these practitioners learn to design projects that are both sustainable and impact-oriented? How will they learn to introduce CBA activities into traditional development projects when resources are already stretched thin?

The goal of this book is to increase the effectiveness of community based adaptation so that many, many more people worldwide can enjoy increased resilience to climate change

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challenges. This book hopes to do this in two ways. One: by leverage. If this field guide can help put sound tools and techniques into the hands of in-country staff, the staff will be better prepared to design and implement impact-oriented projects for increasingly greater numbers of people. Two: encouraging in-country staff to engage community members in project design and implementation will increase the likelihood that positive project outcomes will be sustained by communities for the long term.

After observing the challenges that field staff face with a relatively small arsenal of tools and techniques I decided in 2008 to found the Center for Sustainable Development—a US registered charity. The Center specializes in providing accessible, sound, evidence-based information, tools and training for humanitarian development professionals worldwide. The Center is firmly committed to proven, results-based solutions to end suffering and poverty. The Center's goal is to spread these solutions across the globe through online field guides and interactive online training. My thanks to the many friends, supporters, and students of the Center who have made this possible. This book, the *Field Guide to Community Based Adaptation*, takes this dissemination of information to a new level.

What the Book Will Do for You

Where does one turn to for information on designing, launching, and managing CBA projects? For many staff members it may feel overwhelming to launch an adaptation project. Where do you begin? What practical tools are working today? How do you convey climate change concepts to a community? Together, through this book, we will explore the full process of developing CBA programs.

This field guide provides a system for field staff to use in developing successful projects that can be co-managed and sustained by communities, and includes the tools needed to do the following:

- assess and organize information about climate challenges and vulnerabilities that communities face;
- work side-by-side with communities to develop long-term, sustainable adaptation programs;
- link development, disaster-risk reduction, and adaptation activities into sound projects;
- empower communities to take full charge of programs once the programs are up and running.

Why is community engagement in project design and implementation important? A criticism of the traditional project cycle is that when an NGO completes its two-year project, they leave their community at the helm of project management without sufficient training and technical support—and perhaps even without much interest in the project. For example, how many communities have you been to and seen two-year-old water projects that no longer function?

Unlike a childhood vaccination program, where once vaccinated, neither the child nor the parents need to oversee project continuation, CBA projects are for the long term: decades. If they are to be successful projects, the behavioral changes, forest management schemes, or the water harvesting systems you promote will need to be maintained indefinitely—or the positive results will wane. Community based adaptation ensures that communities are engaged from the beginning of the project concept and are involved in each important step of the process. Community engagement creates the caring ownership that sustains these important adaptation components for long-term sustainability.

A Field Course in a Book

The book is arranged in a progression where each chapter represents one sequential step in the process of project development, including problem assessment, project design, project launch, and community adoption. Each chapter has the tools needed by field staff to complete that chapter's step in developing a real, on-the-ground project. So that you can stay on track, the field course follows one consistent, example project as it grows and develops during the step-by-step field assignments.

The field activities in each of the chapters are designed to be accessible by people at different levels of your organization—and to be able to be started quickly. The low cost/no cost activities are simple enough for implementation by field staff with basic skills, and for adoption by community members with basic capacities for sustaining activities. You can get started empowering your community today with this very powerful set of tools. For those of you wanting to explore individual techniques in greater depth, each chapter provides recommended resources for further study.

There are four parts in this book. [Part I](#) deals with discovering and defining the full climate change context that a community of people find themselves in. [Part II](#) develops a full project, complete with solution-oriented activities, management tools such as log frames, and an introductory fact sheet for presentation to donors. [Part III](#) launches and implements the project—and hands it over to the community as part of your exit strategy. Finally, [Part IV](#) is a collection of how-to field guides on specific activities for you to use in your project.

CBA Project Activities

There is some confusion over what adaptation activities are. Many people expect a palette of brand-new technologies to begin arriving any day now: adaptation silver bullets. But problems caused by a changing climate will likely pose a risk for livelihood, health, food security, and access to water—many of the same things that traditional development projects struggle with. CBA project activities will in many cases be the same activities used in a development project—but simply used to solve a different problem: challenges driven or intensified by a changing climate.

The book will therefore promote cross-cutting initiatives that combine traditional development, disaster-risk reduction (DRR), and CBA activities. In a cross-cutting—or mainstreamed project—an activity can be incorporated specifically to address a traditional development challenge, a challenge related to climate change—or perhaps a solution specifically designed to reduce risk associated with disasters. Combined, these interrelated activities work in support of each other and facilitate community members in developing resilience, safety, and prosperity. For example, by adopting the use of drought-resistant crops, farmers can adapt to a drier climate. Through improved health, nutrition, and preparedness for disaster, communities will reduce their vulnerabilities and increase their resilience to climate change impact.

The Steps

How do you know if your community project is linked to climate change? What practical, CBA tools, solutions, and activities are available today that you can include in your project? In order to address these questions, the book offers two approaches. The first approach is to use the step-by-step field assignments (one per chapter) that show how to design, launch, and

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manage a sustainable CBA project. The second approach is a collection of ten hands-on field guides about individual CBA activities for readers to use in solving classic climate change challenges.

In [Chapter 1](#), you will learn how to assess the challenges that a community faces. In [Chapter 2](#), explore their understanding of how the climate is changing around communities, and learn how to uncover the adaptive solutions which they have developed on their own. In [Chapter 3](#), you will research scientific information about climate change for your specific location. This will help you determine which are the most likely climate change (CC) scenarios that are unfolding now—and what will play out in the future.

In [Chapter 4](#), you will compare your community's local knowledge with scientific knowledge, verify that the community's challenges are linked to climate change, pinpoint underlying causes, and put together a clear definition of the local climate change context. [Chapter 5](#) begins with the selection of specific field activities to use in strengthening community resilience. Before finalizing a project outline, you will confer with the community to get their feedback and input on the emerging plan.

In [Chapter 6](#), you will develop the management and funding tools that you will need to launch the project. Your project outline will be transformed into a logical framework complete with a monitoring and evaluation plan, and expanded with a detailed budget, schedule, and a concise project fact sheet—all for presentation to a donor. The development of each of these documents will be taken in simple steps using downloadable templates and examples.

[Chapter 7](#) quick-starts the section on project implementation where you will organize a community based project management team. In [Chapter 8](#), you will initiate the process of handing the project over to the community as part of your exit strategy. This will include planning for long-term management, and developing a plan for long-term technical support. You will develop adaptation capacity building workshops for community members, and officially launch the project in partnership with the community.

[Chapter 9](#) will help you design a post-project participatory monitoring and evaluation plan so that the community can continue to evaluate their project, learn from their project, and fine-tune activities in an effort to stay on course.

[Chapter 10](#) is a collection of hands-on field guides on CBA activities that have been compiled for use in your project. These field guides include a snapshot of the activity, illustrated workshop handouts, and participatory workshop lesson plans. Ten examples of project activities have been chosen that address adaptation challenges that communities face in the areas of water, food security, agriculture, disaster-risk reduction, and livelihood diversification. They very likely represent solution-based activities that you could use as-is in designing and implementing your project.

The field guides chosen for this chapter represent ten of the most universal challenges that communities face in building resilience and in adapting to a changing climate:

- Participatory Community Needs Assessments;
- Participatory Capacity and Vulnerability Assessments;
- Preparing Family Garden Beds and Planting Seeds;
- Participatory Mapping of Soil and Water Resources;
- Soil Restoration and Conservation for Smallholder Farmers;
- Agricultural Soil and Water Management for Sloping Land;
- Household Rooftop Rainwater Harvesting;
- Community-Level Water Harvesting;

- Developing a Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Plan;
- Diversifying Livelihoods through Market Links.

The Appendix to this book gives the background to the course and details the successful project activities undertaken by the students, and the list of international organizations that have benefited from our courses.

I hope that the book will be useful and enjoyable, and will help you in assisting a greater number of people adapt to a changing climate, break out of the cycle of poverty, contribute to the development of their communities, and lead fulfilled, meaningful lives.