Development and Climate Days
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Online

How can local actors innovate effectively for inclusive climate resilience in informal settlements?

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Report

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Presentation

Disruptive, climate-induced events have deep impacts on societies and economies, exacerbating the vulnerability of low-income households and, in particular, of those living in informal settlements and/or working in the informal economy. An inclusive approach to people-centred and inclusive climate resilience requires the combination of all the strengths, attributes, and resources available within a society to manage and reduce risks and strengthen its capacities, including the support from local governments. Moreover, the urban poor, being in the frontline of impacts and disproportionally affected by climate change, need to be enabled to implement actions to cope with these impacts, while taking advantage of the benefits and opportunities brought by such interventions.

This session **"How can local actors innovate effectively for inclusive climate resilience in informal settlements?"** held on 9th November 2021 sought to elaborate further on mechanisms to engage the ecosystem for an inclusive urban development and the challenges and opportunities to mobilize communities, civil society organizations, private sector, and local governments to inspire action for climate adaptation in informal settlements.

The session focused on (i) the reasons to include local communities in the discussions around climate change and adaptation; (ii) considerations around multi-stakeholder engagement for climate adaptation, including in contexts of complex crises: approaching vulnerable communities, local governments and the private sector; (iii) examples of how modern technologies can be deployed to promote climate adaptation in informal settlements; (iv) people-centered approaches for engaging communities need to be simple and responsive to intersectional perspectives and local circumstances; but are there generic best-practices?, (V) various lessons learned from local NGOs practitioners on their respective solutions for inclusive approaches.

Accordingly, the session was organized into three blocks. The first one explored the notion of community and perceptions of climate change at the community level. The second block delved into stakeholder engagement for climate adaptation and during crisis. Lastly, the third block analysed the use of digital technologies, highlighting the opportunities and gaps as well as the controversies and consideration for their use.

Participants

Speakers

- Angella Kansemiire, legal counsel, Tree Adoption, Uganda
- Elizabeth Wambui, Future Yetu project assistant lead, Hope Raisers Initiative, Kenya
- Ahmed Hassan - Founder, Action for Women and Children Concern, Somalia
- Mamun Rashid, Co-founder, Badabon Sangho, Bangladesh

Co-facilitation and moderation:

- Arne Georg Janssen, Cities Alliance
- Gabriela Mercurio, Cities Alliance

Key ideas and messages

Climate change and innovation

- **Innovation requires to be context relevant, and people centred**. Innovation should add value for users generating transformation and be generated through networks of collaboration.

Local communities and climate change

- **A community is constituted not only by people living in the same or sharing similar values but also by facing and attending common problems.** A community can be defined as a group of people living in the same area and region, and or have the same culture, norms, values, and religion. Besides that, a community is also defined as a group of people facing and attending common man-made or natural issues. Problems faced by communities can serve as entry points for engaging with them.

  "For us community in our context was people living in the same area, affected by a common problem, and that´s how we got our own context of community and that's how we brought them together, because they were all affected y the same problems and effects of climate change" Angella Kansemiire, Tree Adoption, Uganda [26:00]

- **Building a common ground of understanding is key for climate change discussion and action.** Communities face climate-related issues every day; however, their understanding of those issues is different from other groups or sectors such as science and government. Different groups and sectors speak different "languages" when talking about adaptation and climate change, which hinders effective communication and action. For instance, technical terms used by government officials, academia and others do not create the desired understanding from vulnerable populations; thus, it is crucial to enable stakeholders to know and understand each other for collective action. Local leaders can play an important role in engaging with communities.

  "For sure they [community] understood that [climate change] way before, because as I said before is something that is happening, and they know that; but the way they define climate change is different , even the way they describe it. They don't use the normal terminology and they don't understand that. We had to bring in the county government and the environmental experts so that they could explain to them those terminologies… And that shows there was a gap between the government and the science world, and the community in that this people are describing climate change in a different way...For instance, because of the dumping site, there is a lot of burning of waste. People talk about smoke they don't talk about gas emissions; and they would tell you 'We are affected by the smoke from the dumping site", instead of telling you 'There are toxic emission which are affecting our health'. Working on the ground you have to understand such kind of language. So, when you are having a project, you should address those needs" Elizabeth Wambui, Hope Raisers Initiative, Kenya [32:15]

- **Multidimensional responses can foster community's engagement**. The Three Adoption Uganda project in Bwaise, in Kampala (Uganda), focused on the making saleable briquettes from organic waste, creating a multidimensional response that articulates waste management, the creation of a novel source of energy, and income generation, and which has benefited the community and in particular, women.

> *The whole waste management project provided three solutions by helping the community with waste management; by making the organic waste valuable to the community, and not only making it valuable to the community, but also, to provide an economic source for the community members, especially the women in the area which are unemployed and stay at home… and by providing an alternative source of energy" Angella Kansemiire, Tree Adoption, Uganda [57:25]*

> *"Women in this area usually stay at home, they are unemployed. They ordinarily take care of home setting, everything to do with domestic work; so, they are usually in their homes. And when the floods come, they are the most affected because they are at home with the children, taking care of the domestic aspects of home life in these slums. So, the briquette making project spoke more to the women because it did not require them to move from their homes.... The meetings were close the home so they could attend the training, the meetings... The women would make the briquettes in their homes, there was no need to go to other areas… they benefited the most of this project because of the other source of income" Angella Kansemiire, Tree Adoption, Uganda [1:01:00]*

- **Involve communities in decision-making.** Besides listening to and consulting with communities, it is crucial to actively involve them in the decision-making process to direct any intervention. This is key for the sustainability, effectiveness, and meaningfulness of actions and projects.

- **A gender perspective is crucial when understanding and addressing climate change effects. Gender: women are primarily affects ; but also, they are key for climate action.** For instance, Action for Women and Children Concern (AWCC) found that in Somalia climate change exacerbates child early forced marriages (CEFM). The increase in drought is affecting communities' livelihoods; thus, it is common that they try to remove the ''burden'' of the female child through marriage.

> *"Communities that are not displaced are more likely to maintain girls in school compared to households who have been displaced, either by climate affects, floods or droughts" Ahmed Hassan, Action for Women and Children Concern, Somalia [50:10]*

> *"The consequence of these floods is food insecurity, and food unsecured household are highly susceptible to disown their young girls to men in urban areas who are returning from Europe or America with good amount of money to marry young girls, taking advantage of the vulnerability of households. Not only people returning from outside Somalia but also people well-off from*

Somalia" Ahmed Hassan, Action for Women and Children Concern, Somalia
[51:10]

Multi-stakeholder engagement

- **Engaging different stakeholders takes time and requires building capacities**, such as those related with digital technologies. Each stakeholder has different understanding and capacities; thus, capacity building is key for raising awareness, generate a knowledge dialogue among stakeholders and promote climate adaptation at community level. Among others. data collection and creation of visions of a place are ways for generating Multistakeholder engagements.

  "[the making of the multi stakeholder platform] it would take time because there are different levels of capacities from the different stakeholders. For example, if you think about citizens, there are different types and they have very little or no connection with the informal settlements… and they have very little communication with authorities. And youth community they are less communicated with other communities… In our experience we mobilize different groups differently, and then we manage them to act together, to coordinate them together… [We] mobilise the authorities… the citizen… the youth and the informal settlements, particularly vulnerable communities (the women and indigenous headed households)… We work with them by weekly or monthly meetings, we give them training for building their capacity for the articulation of their needs and priorities. And then, they can start to talk about their needs and priorities, they can speak in front of the public, and that is the one big chance; and then they can connect with other groups" Mamun Rashid, Badabon Sangho [37:46]

  "We collected data by engaging the youth within the community… data make the connecting point for stakeholders" Mamun Rashid, Badabon Sangho [42:00]

- **The building of networks and common spaces where multi-stakeholder dialogue can take place is essential**. The lack of understanding of realities in informal settlements by external factors such as government officials or the private sector can create barriers for effective collaboration. Thus, it is important to create spaces and networks for multi stakeholders' interactions

- **Developing relations between stakeholders over time is crucial for when a new crisis emerges** cultivating and nurturing local networks of support and joint action is also part of being prepared for new challenges.

  "There are lot of crises going on. With the crises, if you have strong stakeholder platform; then, you will get support from different sides mitigation" Mamun Rashid, Badabon Sangho [43:00]

  "We found that when we mobilize them [stakeholders], we mobilize them not only on the issue of climate change. For the last two years we face several

crises of different dimensions… Within the crises we found that these groups
and these platforms are coming together, and they are helping each other"
Mamun Rashid, Badabon Sangho [45:40]

- **There exists a variety of methods for engaging stakeholders**, including training activities, meetings and public displays, and research (data production and validation).

Digital technologies and data production and management

- **Digital tools can contribute to create or reinforce social bonds within communities, and young people play a major role.** The digital storytelling project implemented by Hope Raisers Youth Initiative, generated an inclusive process that brought together different generations: it mobilized youth and their digital knowledge together with adults' storytelling experience, fostering intergenerational bounds. Thus, young people can play a key role for engaging with digital tools at the local level, overcoming the lack of digital literacy.

  "One of our participants talk about how she has been doing greening the area
  and many youths have come together to try to do the same… which has help
  to pull resources at the community level" Elizabeth Wambui, Hope Raisers
  Initiative[1:07:56]

  "When it come to creating of a video youths are very good compared with
  other generations; however, it is very interesting because the older generation
  is very good in storytelling, on how the story flows. They worked together"
  Elizabeth Wambui, Hope Raisers Initiative [1:08:46]

- **Digital tools contribute to generating a more comprehensive knowledge of communities and enable people to connect with others helping them to better understand each other's realities.** For instance, Hope Raisers Youth Initiative used a digital Storytelling campaign, and advertising in the mode of transport called "matatu", to share information about the community and increase awareness of linkages among climate change, air pollution and health.

  "We have different ways to adapt to climate change and when they were
  giving their personal stories you can hear how each and every person, each
  and every group is adapting" Elizabeth Wambui, Hope Raisers Initiative
  [1:10:32]

  "There is a disconnection between the government and community and when
  we are using such stories the communities… were able to reach out; because
  they [authorities] can hear out what everybody is talking about, and it is a very
  good form of activism" Elizabeth Wambui, Hope Raisers Initiative [1:14:45]

- **Digital tools do not operate in isolation and should be embedded in social mobilization diapositives**. In Bangladesh, for engaging with the community, Badabon Sangho combined the use digital technologies for data collection and mapping, using smartphone apps and Open Data Kit (ODK), together with social mobilization tools such as training, public meeting with authorities, and public displays (maps in from of the slums).

- **The use of digital tools is required to address issues related to privacy and security of digital data**. Badabon Sangho collected household information, keeping participants' names anonymous throughout the data collection process. It is important to consider and discuss the level of information to be shared with other stakeholders, specifically with those involved.

Other ideas and messages

- It is important to institutionalize processes, including community advocacy for generating faster outcomes
- During the Covid-19 crisis youth volunteers in Bangladesh came together to provide food and health kit support; however, a broader collaboration among stakeholders was complicated.
- Storytelling is a powerful tool; however, it requires to be guided in other to avoid undesirable or counterproductive outcomes

Next steps

- **Hope Raisers Youth Initiative** plans to continue with digital storytelling and the implementation of pocket park in schools
- **Tree Adoption Uganda** plans to continue spreading awareness against the usage of plastic.
- **Badabon Sangho** plans to conduct advocacy to change how municipalities work.