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Coping with Climate Change as a Cause of Conflict in Coastal Communities of West Africa (C7-WA).

Introduction

Academic Associates PeaceWorks (AAPW) is implementing a project with three partners, referred herein as consortium members, namely Fondazione Accademia Italiana della Marina Mercantile (FAIMM), Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), and West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) with support from the European Union (EU). The title of the project is “Coping with Climate Change as a Cause of Conflict in Coastal Communities of West Africa (C7-WA). The aim of the project is to strengthen West African Coastal Communities’ resilience to cope with climate change and conflict by developing innovative tools related to conflict sensitive climate change (CC) adaptation and prevention of environmental crimes that exacerbate climate change impact on communities as well as monitoring of the impact of climate change as a driver of conflict.

To achieve this, the project intends to develop tools, based on innovative research and global best practices, which will be tested through the establishment of a Community Stakeholders Network, constituted with highly influential community stakeholders’ by AAPW. The CSNs will then be trained to deliver nature based innovative solutions to the climate change challenges in the region, through a large-scale capacity building program, targeting communities and local actors. Information about climate change and conflict will be used to update the ECOWAS regional framework for Conflict prevention and early warning.

While, the CSNs will be trained to advocate and mobilize resources to address the climate change challenges, the project will also finance climate change mitigation and adaptation interventions of the project targeted communities in the Niger Delta through a small-scale grant scheme. Thus, as part of the project, AAPW carried out community entry and stakeholders mapping as well as supported HOMEF one of the consortium partners to conduct a research. Findings of the research have been encapsulated in a report after validation by community representatives and copies made available for each community. Below are key points during the community entry and stakeholders mapping visit.

Creek Town Climate Change Issues

- There is increase in heavy rainfall resulting to gully erosion in the area
- High level of deforestation due to timber logging and mangrove cutting
- Poor crop yield due to changes in climatic conditions, loss of the top soil to erosion, other factors such as the use of pesticides, herbicides and poor farming techniques.
- Low fish catch is a predominant issue in coastal communities

- Nypa palm invasion of the mangrove forest within the riverine areas of creek Town
- Poor waste disposal and management system: Plastics, cellophanes, etc. are dumped in the forest areas or the sea
- Lack of portable water
- Increase in insecurity (piracy, kidnapping, sea robbery, etc) due to livelihood depletion as caused by climate change.

Current Creek Town Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies

- Multiple trade and occupation: Most people are involved in farming, fishing, trading and transportation business to earn a living
- Use of different fishing nets and methods, some of which are said to be unacceptable to the people and are likely to cause conflict
- Use of Nypa palm seed for fire. Though not widely practiced.
- Farming of short term crops to support family livelihood during farming season of long term crops.
- Migration to cities in search of jobs.

Questions for Discussion

1. As a community member, what adaptation and mitigation strategies would you recommend to each of the above issues if any?
2. What skills are available in the community that will be useful to the adaptation and mitigation strategies you have recommended?
3. What are the current adaptation and mitigation strategies in the community?
4. What can community members do collectively that are different or supportive to improve the current adaptation and mitigation practices?

Conclusion

The visit of AAPW and HOMEAF this time, is to fulfil our commitment of presenting our research findings to the community. We will also commence the next step in the project implementation activity plan. As stated in the introduction. Setting up of Community Stakeholders Network as well as commence Tools development interactive session with selected representatives of the community. Particularly the CSN members.

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