



ADAPTATION AND RISK REDUCTION

Introduction

The majority of people we work with live difficult lives and are exposed to high levels of risk in many fronts. Poverty, systemic inequalities, and the impacts of an increasingly volatile climate are preventing the poor and the marginalised from accessing their basic rights and is deepening their poverty.

GEM projects aim to improve the ability of communities to mitigate and reduce the impact that risks, both slow onset and sudden, have on their lives.

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What's the problem?

Climate change is one of the biggest global problems we face, and studies show us that it will get worse before it gets better: continuing to stress ecosystems to breaking point, making rain-fall patterns more erratic, and raising temperatures -- all resulting in a much more difficult environment for agricultural systems, and the communities depending on them, to subsist and thrive.

Climate change is, however, not the only problem. Inequalities in power, wealth, gender, and access to rights and information affect billions of people on a daily basis. People's ability to reduce and manage these other risks is integral to their ability to build a sustainable livelihood despite environmental challenges and climate change. That's why our approach acknowledges and addresses the interdependencies between social, cultural, political and environmental risks when designing ways forward to wellbeing.

Gender and risk

It is clear that hazards affect people differently based on circumstances such as wealth, gender, social status, where they live, how representative institutions in that country are, social capital, etc. Studies and data show that women are often more vulnerable than men, e.g. after experiencing a sudden shock. This is because of the structural inequalities that limit their capacity to adapt and respond. Supporting women to overcome these limitations is a fundamental part of our ARR work.

Rather than framing climate change adaptation as incremental adjustments to a changing world, we address the complex, root causes of vulnerability with practical, on the ground, solutions, that are born from participatory and gender sensitive analysis.

How do we work?

We aim to build adaptive and trans-formative capacities at all levels of society — from individuals and households, to local, district and national governments. The outcome of our climate change adaptation work is to enhance:

- **Absorptive capacity** – the capacity to take intentional protective action and to cope with known shocks and stresses. It is needed as shocks and stresses, like extreme weather events, will continue to happen.

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- **Adaptive capacity** – the capacity to make adjustments in anticipation of, or in response to, change, in ways that create more flexibility in the future.
- **Transformative capacity** – the capacity to influence the people and systems that drive risk and vulnerability.

How do we do it?

Oxfam uses the **Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (VRA)** and **Participatory Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment (PCVA)** tools to identify the sources of risk and vulnerability – whether they result from climate change impacts, weather impacts, or other sources such as unequal access to resources or conflict – and develop, based on the findings, CCA and risk reduction measures.

The PCVA and VRA methodologies are complementary. The PCVA (local level analysis) has often served as a prior step to the VRA (social-ecological landscape analysis). With the input from existing or recently implemented PCVAs, the VRA supports a participatory process which collates detailed knowledge from communities in a given landscape with expert input that inform the identification and prioritisation of hazards, issues, social groups and livelihood activities – and is followed by the design of ways forward.

Go to the **PCVA** and the **VRA** tools to learn more about what to use in your context.

Both tools are designed to assess gendered experiences of risk and vulnerability. For more on how to assess and manage gender related risks, see **Women's Economic Leadership**.

Further reading

ACCRA Consortium. (2013). ACCRA takes its resilience game to Uganda's north eastern pastoral district of Kotido [Video content]. Retrieved 10 February 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLD1x2XB-s8gBRXD9f2MiHpu1rUzOH9ZS5&v=mIgtjEpdE4>



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Carty, T. and Magrath, J. (2013). *Growing disruption: Climate change, food, and the fight against hunger*. Oxford: Oxfam International. Retrieved 10 February 2016 from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/growing-disruption-climate-change-food-and-the-fight-against-hunger-301878>

Morchain, D. (2013). *Resilience for all, not just the market-ready*. Retrieved 10 February 2016, from GrowSellThrive Blog: <http://growsellthrive.org/profiles/blogs/resilience-for-all>