

# AERC NRM-CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT

By

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## **Background**

This international conference was commissioned by African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) as part of its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. The climax of the celebrations was an international conference held from 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> September, 2008 in Nairobi. The conference gathered about 600 participants comprising academics, policy makers, politicians and government officials from all over the world. The focus of the conference was on “*Natural Resource Management and Climate Change in sub-Saharan Africa*”. A number of invited papers by renowned scholars were presented in plenary sessions.

*Why was the conference being held?*

While policy agenda for natural resource management may have gained attention, the effects of climate change have raised new challenges. Although everyone on earth may be affected by changes in climate, SSA is most vulnerable. The increasing complexity of the development challenge including multiple linkages to climate change, natural resource management, food security, and energy security has been brought to the fore by the on going food price crisis. Implications of a combination of all these and other factors for poor people need to be better understood and addressed on a country –by- country basis. Papers have also shown that accelerating or sustaining high economic growth remains critical for SSA- and is more urgent because of climate change and natural resource degradation.

The digressions concerning climate change and natural resource management underscore the complexity of the development challenge faced by SSA countries. They magnify growing concerns about food security, water scarcity and energy security. Recognition of climate change for instance is owed to modern science, yet solutions involve deeply ethical considerations. Both climate change and natural resource management are daunting threats that raise the most difficult issues of economic disparity, political power and social justice. Climate change makes people dependent on actions of others, and the way forward will require overcoming divisions among regions. How can SSA come together to tackle these unprecedented challenges is likely to become a defining feature of our time, affecting the lives of current and future generations?

## **Role of EFD-Kenya at the conference**

EFD-K was contacted by the AERC to help organize the workshop. The conference provided EFD first hand opportunity to interact with AERC secretariat on their activities. Our role at the conference involved setting the agenda for AERC by providing a broad

write-up for the call for papers on issues involved in NRM and CC and their relevance for Africa. In particular we were asked to link NRM and CC issues to the current thematic groups within AERC research namely: *Group A*: Poverty, Income Distribution and Labour Market Issues; *Group B*: Trade, Regional Integration and Sectoral Policies Group C: Macroeconomic Policies, Stabilization and Growth and *Group D*: Finance, Resource Mobilization and Investment.

The second task involved screening papers received following the call for papers. This was a rather elaborate task bearing in mind the number of papers received and the very diverse competencies in the field. An important lesson learnt during the exercise was the need to develop more capacity in Africa in the areas of climate change and natural resource management.

From the EfD initiative perspective mainstreaming research in NRM and CC into the AERC research agenda gives us a platform to showcase our work. Given the clout enjoyed by the AERC among governments and policy makers this is yet another avenue to participate in the development process. I would encourage network fellows to also send their proposals to this new field.

### **Participation by EfD centres**

There was a good response from EPRU which managed to have about 3 of their papers accepted for presentation. Congratulations to Edwin and his team of MSc students-Brendam, Justin and Sue who were able to interpret the conference theme very well and present highly relevant research papers in renewable energy and adaptation to climate change. Paul Maina of EfD-Kenya presented joint work with Wilfred and others on forestry management in Kenya. Ethiopia too was well represented by EEPFE associates, Fitsum Hagos and Yonas Alem. From Tanzania, Adolf Mkenda and other associates attended.

### **Emerging issues from the conference**

The papers that were presented at the conference from the plenary to the group discussions highlighted that urgent capacity building and further research were needed to address the problems. For instance how will SSA cope with the anticipated impacts of climate change that include: dangerous floods and storms; exacerbated water stress; decline in agricultural productivity and food security and further spread of water related diseases? This could lead to population displacement, migration and potential conflicts. Women, indigenous communities and marginalized societal groups are most vulnerable. SSA countries have a myriad of other pressing priorities, low capacities, a very high opportunity cost of investment, lack of investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure, extensive degradation of arable lands, forests, poor access to credit and markets and inadequate social safety nets.

Fundamentally, the challenge is to help poor SSA countries, grow their economies and improve living standards despite the higher costs of development inflicted by the challenges of climate change and resource degradation. Subsequently, there is a need to improve regional and country based knowledge of these cost components and ways to minimize the total burden. This also implies adaptation policies should be balanced with the consideration of national burdens of adaptation and the equity and social concerns across and within the countries. There is scope for research in adaptation actions that can achieve lower carbon growth and be supportive of national development priorities and local business opportunities such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable livelihoods and environmental protection.

### **Roadmap: Challenges for research, training and policy dissemination**

It is critical for SSA countries to gain access to additional knowledge and capacity to effectively use these in their national, regional and local policies. Priority areas for research and analytical work in climate change and natural resource management include but are not restricted to the following:

- Understanding the nature and process and the costs of adaptation to climate risks in different sectoral and country contexts.
- Understanding the different impacts of climate change and climate policies in different countries. More work is needed especially to understand the impacts on the poor of different responses to climate change.
- Understanding how national policy responses by SSA countries to climate change can improve their development outcomes, how to make decisions that address trade-offs and manage uncertainties related to both climate science and economic cost, while dealing with the long-term.