Experiences in Climate Change Adaptation

My name is Gifty Ampomah (Mrs.), I work for ENDA in Dakar in the climate and development field. In particular, I am working on the ENDA Communities project combining work on community-based adaption, indigenous knowledge and communications networks.

I was previously involved in two projects on climate change adaptation in Ghana. These were the Climate Change Learning and Observatory Network-Ghana (CCLONG) and Advancing Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation (ACCCA) projects. Both were in the Afram Plains (Kwahu-North) district of Ghana. The CCLONG project was aimed at educating, raising awareness and assessing the adaptive capacity of local people to the impacts of climate variability and change in terms of their livelihoods which were mainly farming and fishing. Some data collection tools used were mental models, vulnerability mapping, historical matrices, participatory risk mapping and household surveys/cognitive steps.

Participatory risk mapping was used to identify climate change and its impacts as an observed problem in the study area. Historical matrices were use to collect information on extreme climate events which people had experienced in past years. Interview sessions were held at the household level to identify and understand the adaptive measures people used in the past. They were asked to grade the efficacies of all the strategies used during the period of the event and their future efficiency as well. Reasons were given as to why some of these strategies may be more or less efficient in the future.

To know how local people understand climate change phenomena, mental models were used. In this method, causes and consequences (both negative and positive) of climate change were identified and examined. Vulnerability mapping was used to know the impacts of climate related stressors on the community. This was done at the household level. The data entry was done mostly in Excel spread sheets for analysis. Some information covering food security was analyzed manually even though they were in spread sheet format. Storylines were developed from the data to form a qualitative output on impacts of climate change on food security.

This project gave me experience in using different participatory tools to collect climate change data; coding them and entering them in excel spread sheets. However, my skills in electronic data analysis in spread sheet are limited.

My objective for this two-week course is to learn how to analyze large data sets on climate change adaptation using excel spread sheets and other software tools. I also hope to obtain knowledge and hands on experience of different tools for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. I also hope to broaden my knowledge in related fields within the scope of human and ecological security using the conceptual framework of the socio-ecological system promoted by my organization, ENDA, to better integrate climate related socio and biophysical dynamics into sustainable development in Africa.

In my work, I am about to lead a new community based action in Banjul, The Gambia where an urban community is experiencing problems associated with sea level rise and saturation/salinisation of land leading to out-migration of people and businesses to other areas. I hope to be able to use cognitive tools and methods learned in this course to better prepare me for this exercise.