

Adapting in an Uncertain World: Learning for Capacity Building within Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Communities in Botswana

Deborah Wojcik¹, Dr. Brian Child², Dr. Martha Monroe¹

¹School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida

²Department of Geography and Center for African Studies, University of Florida

Balancing the conservation of natural resources with the cultural and economic needs of rural communities is a persistent challenge of environmental management in developing countries. A nation's vulnerability to environmental risks and hazards is exacerbated by its development status, with poorer countries having less capacity to adapt to challenges than wealthier ones. This is particularly troublesome in semi-arid regions of southern Africa, where climate change predictions include significant environmental risks and potentially devastating impacts on agricultural, forest and freshwater resources. In light of these pressing challenges facing ecosystems and communities, it is critically important to assess and build the capacity of human systems to adapt to anticipated changes and broad uncertainties.

This interdisciplinary research examines the capacity of highly vulnerable populations to adapt to environmental challenges within the context of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in rural Botswana. This study will investigate the linkages among environmental risks and uncertainties, the flow of information among individuals related to these challenges, the learning that occurs by various actors within the system, the integration of knowledge into adaptive management frameworks, and the resulting capacity for adaptation within affected communities. As the science of global climate change brings to light great environmental risks and uncertainties for vulnerable populations, it is critical to understand how people adapt and make decisions about natural resources based on their knowledge and capacity to act. This understanding can in turn contribute to both the conservation of scarce and threatened natural resources and the protection of livelihoods for vulnerable rural communities.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Community-Based Natural Resource Management, Learning, Environmental Risk, Uncertainty

Contact Information: Deborah Wojcik, School of Forest Resources & Conservation, University of Florida, P.O. Box 110410, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-0410, USA; Phone: 352-213-7263; Email: deb.wojcik@ufl.edu