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## Women’s Engagement in Climate Change Adaptation: Perceptions of Power and Knowledge in Western Kenya

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### Abstract

Global climate variability and shocks place growing pressure on the livelihoods, health, food production capabilities, and other aspects of the lives of the rural poor. Agriculturalists are particularly affected, making successful adaptation to the impacts of climate change critical for maintaining and improving resilience. Climate change adaptation often benefits from collective action, such as community-based adaptation approaches. Beyond the household and community benefits of these collective initiatives, group participation has been shown to increase social capital and empowerment for women, and is a determinant of asset accumulation. Likewise, women’s empowerment has been linked with poverty reduction and increased investments in children, making it a critical ingredient in a sustainable development process. These issues are particularly significant in Western Kenya where livelihoods largely depend on rain-fed agriculture and fishing. In addition, gender norms and power inequalities impact women’s rural livelihoods and ability to cope with and adapt to climate change. In the context of collective action, these power inequalities may govern the ability of women to participate in and access group resources and to contribute their distinct knowledge and skills to the challenges at hand. Thus, it becomes critical to understand gendered concepts of power and knowledge and how they regulate the ability of women to engage in climate change adaptation. This study examines the socially constructed and gender disaggregated definitions of power and knowledge in three Western Kenyan farming communities. Taking an inductive analytic approach, qualitative data collection techniques – in-depth individual interviews, semi-structured small-group interviews, and participant observation – will provide the inputs for developing an empirically-based theory on gender, knowledge and power.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, Kenya, climate change, community-based approaches, gender, knowledge, power, sensitizing concepts, small-holders