



# CHALLENGES IN ADAPTING TO CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Exploring institutional and socio-political barriers to flexible forward-looking decision-making in three African districts

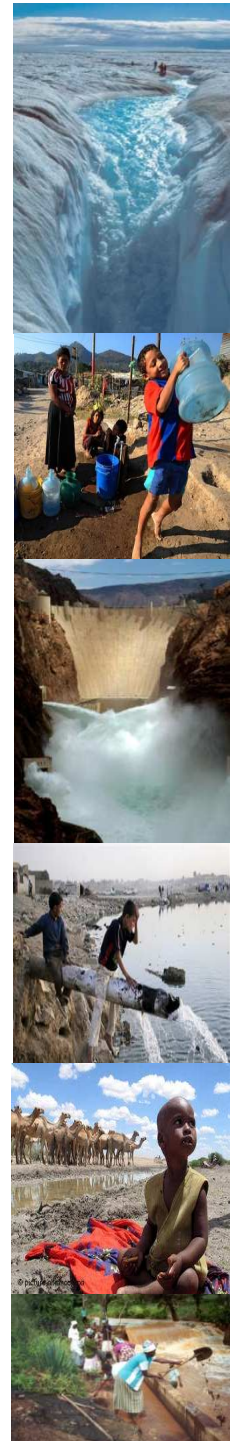


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## *Why adaptive capacity matters*

- Change and uncertainty are immovable principles of development
  - Short-term (conflict, displacement, rain failures, food price spikes)
  - Long-term (population dynamics, terms of trade, land degradation)
- Improving the ability of governance mechanisms (both national and local) to accommodate for change is increasingly a focus of international support for adaptation to climate change
- African (local) context: existing development planning remains largely rigid and rooted in shorter-term timescales (3-5 year cycles).



*ACCRA Alliance Members*





## *The Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA)*

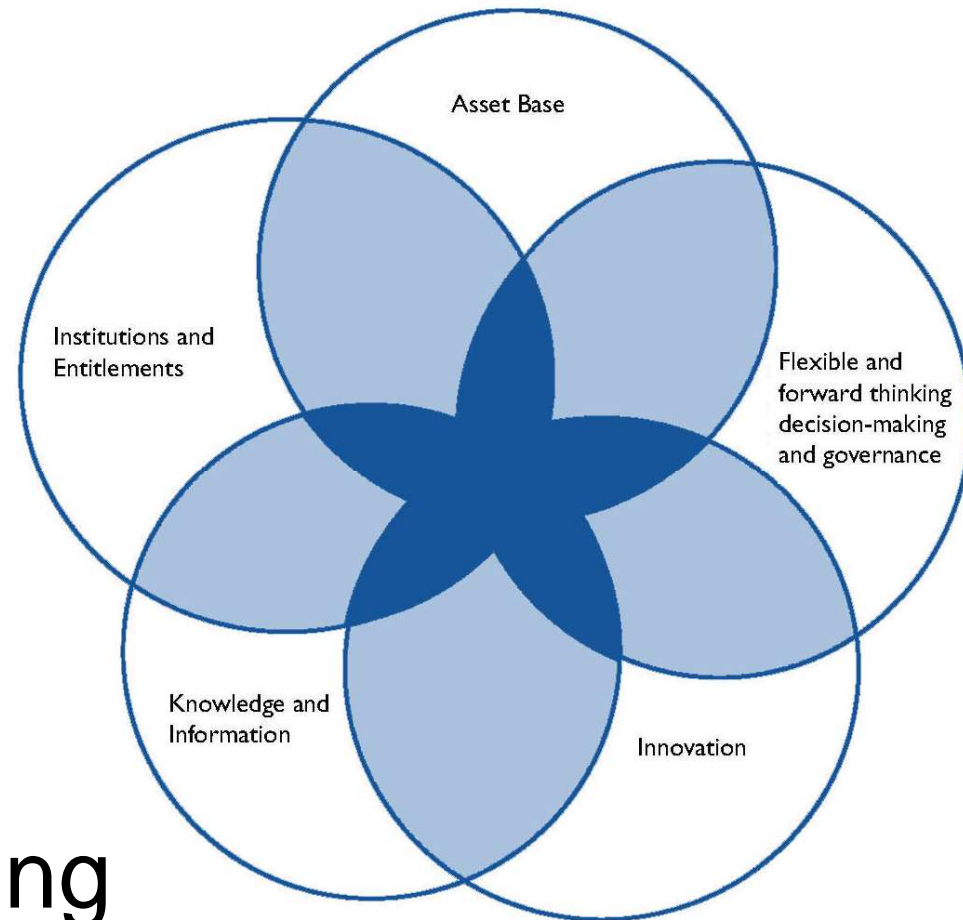
- ACCRA is an alliance of four large NGOs (Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision, Care) and ODI. Member countries include Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique
- Research activities are split into two phases:
  - Phase 1 (2009-2011): Impacts of development interventions on local adaptive capacity
  - Phase 2 (2012-2014): Opportunities and barriers to flexible forward-looking decision-making in district governance





## *The Local Adaptive Capacity (LAC) framework*

- **Assets**
- **Institutions**
- **Knowledge**
- **Innovation**
- **Decision-making**





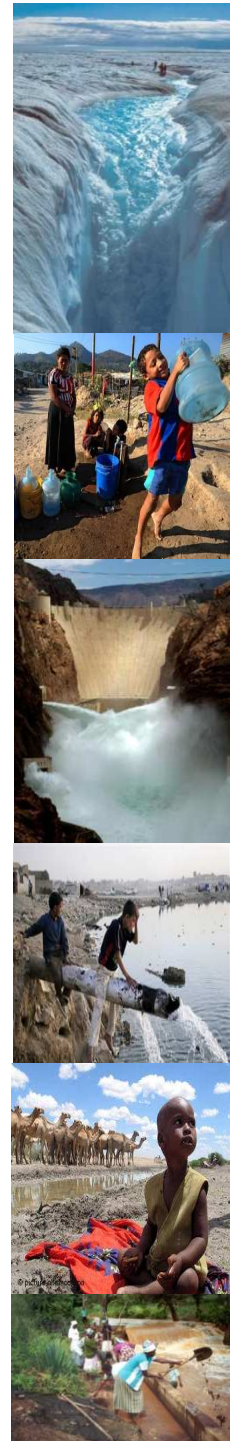
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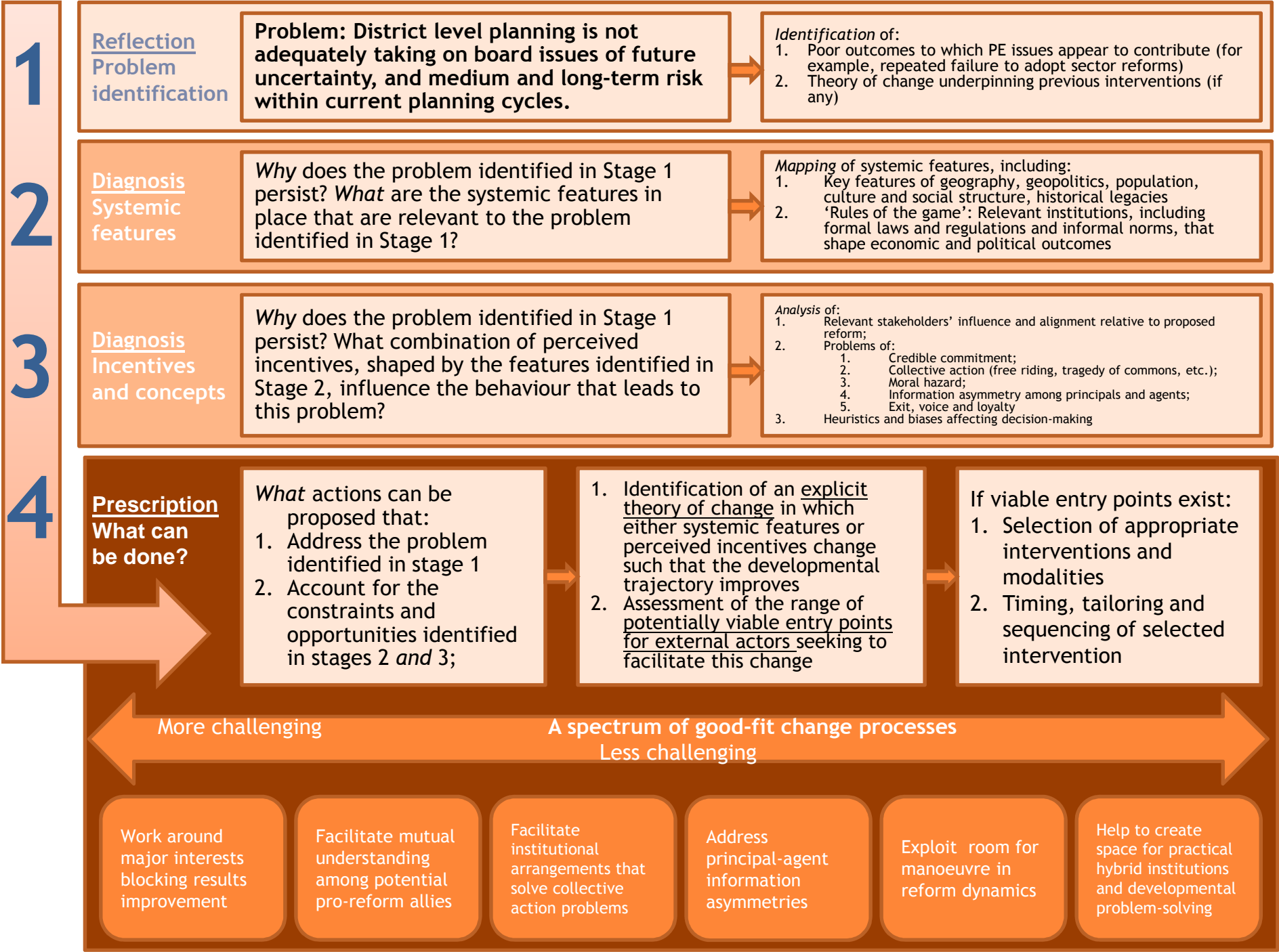
Intent: An exploration of institutional and socio-political barriers to Flexible Forward-Looking Decision-Making (FFDM) at the district level

Approach: Problem-driven political economy analysis (Fritz et al 2009)

Inputs: Mixed methods qualitative research over two phases, including-

- Review and analysis of key literature;
- Semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KII);
- Focus group discussions;
- Use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools
- Triangulation across various data sources



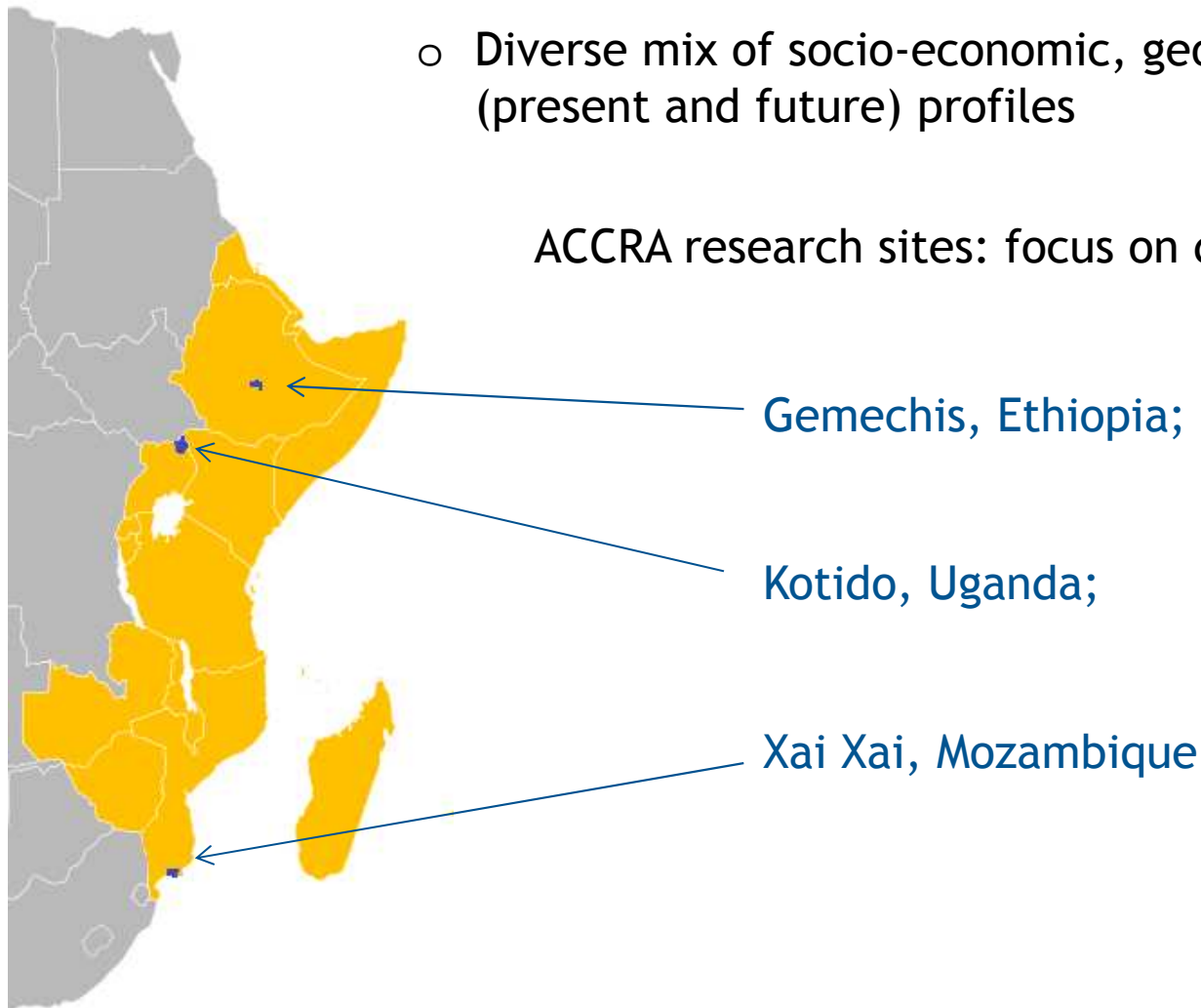




## *The Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA)*

- Diverse mix of socio-economic, geographic and climate (present and future) profiles

ACCRA research sites: focus on district governance







## *Insights from the Field*

- Important to recognise diverse country contexts, as well as the heterogeneity of the ‘development sector’ as a whole
- The main instrument for development planning and governance at the local level are seen in the form of District Development Plans (involving all district level actors)
  - Link to National Development Plans (largely operate on a 5 year timescale)
  - Annual budget review and cycle





**KOTIDO DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
**P.O BOX 1, KOTIDO**



**KOTIDO FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
**2010/11 – 2014/15**

**DISTRICT VISION:**

*“A peaceful and developed District by the year 2025”*

**DISTRICT MISSION:**

*“To promote a peaceful, Accountable and self sustaining Local Government”*

**THEME OF THE PLAN**

*“Democratic, stable and peaceful population able to exploit and use resources gainfully and sustainably”*



## *Insights from the Field*

### **Synthesis of findings from three district PEA assessments:**

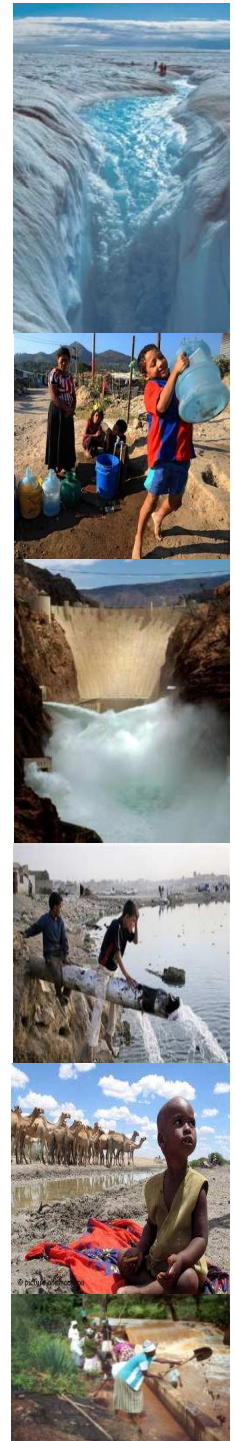
- Despite awareness of CC and need for FFDM, standard mode of delivery see development actors continue to plan for, and deliver outputs towards relatively short-term agenda (1-5 yrs)
- Partial acknowledgement of the impact of shocks within district planning
  - Disaster contingency planning common: though rarely effectuated
- Longer-term climate & economic change (15+ yr) is neither considered in planning nor programmatic activities





## *Insights from the Field*

- Understanding reasons for this requires an observation of the system as-a-whole (and the interest, incentives, and motivations of the actors that drive it)
  
- Three dominant political economy barriers to FFDM at the district level are synthesised:
  - i. The top-down nature of prioritization and spending**
    - Bottom-up rhetoric v top-down reality
    - Lack of agency for local actors (government and others) to identify their own priorities and allocate spending
    - Centrally allocated funding streams (national priorities)
    - Implications of lack of local revenue





## *Insights from the Field*

### **ii. Lack of district agency and ownership in responding to change and uncertainty**

- In the case of disaster, channels of financial resources and technical support are typically delivered through central government
- INGO generation of external funding during a time crisis typically bypasses district government activities
- Much of the responsibility and ownership for district actors to deal with the situation on the ground is absolved
- District contingency plans (developed amongst all actors) rendered obsolete - blamed for the disbanding of Kotido District Disaster Management Committee





## *Insights from the Field*

### **iii. Lack of awareness and incentives for action on adaptation, DRR and FFDM.**

- District planning is done on the basis of a ‘normal year’
- District governments in each of the three countries are appraised against central priorities and targets
- Issues of adaptation, DRR or FFDM are not included in the evaluation of a district’s ‘success’ in delivering on targets
- Little awareness of the long-term changes (implications and actions-needed)
- Widespread feelings of helplessness in the face of stringent central targets
- Policy mismatch between national and local incentives and drivers



# *WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE?*

Raising awareness of the benefits of long-term action and planning at the district level (not just short term shocks) -  
*relevancy in fragile contexts?*

Incentivising action on FFDM (bridging the policy mismatch between local and national)

Where relevant, building on and strengthening existing institutions and initiatives (benefits of PEA)

Effective change has to be implemented system-wide (whether incremental and/or transformative)