



# THE ARKLETON TRUST

## Community Adaptation to Climate Change

### Seminar Report

This report summarises the discussions and outcomes of the Community Adaptation to Climate Change Workshop, held October 25-27 2010 at Douneside, Scotland. The workshop was hosted and facilitated by The Arkleton Trust.

#### **Context**

The Arkleton Trust has promoted the empowerment of rural communities, in both the developed and developing world, for many years. It has done this by means of various relatively low cost initiatives including the funding of fellowships, publications and residential seminars bringing together a wide range of stakeholders.

This seminar focuses on the recent, actual and potential response of rural communities to the particular challenge of climate change, and in particular draws on the five fellowships of 2009-2010, which were devoted to the mapping of community adaptation initiatives across five continents: Europe, the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australasia.

#### **Objectives**

- To engender open and broad discussions with respect to the impacts of climate change on rural communities and the adoption of adaptation and mitigation responses.
- To be informed of the findings of the mapping projects carried out by the five fellows and to examine these projects together to find broader conclusions.
- To consider how the above work can be developed and disseminated.
- To contemplate further research possibilities with regards to rural communities and climate change.

#### **Participants**

Participants at the seminar demonstrated a broad range of backgrounds and expertise and included: trustees, fellows and past David Moore awardees as well as a number of others.

## Summary of discussions

### Day 1

The five fellows were each given an opportunity to outline the main findings of the mapping studies they undertook and to articulate patterns and trends that had emerged from their research. They also presented a number of case-studies throughout the seminar which highlighted points and proved fundamental to a practical understanding of rural community adaptation.

Key trends across all continents included:

- Partnerships – most rural community based adaptation responses were perceived to be collaborations between a number of organisations, rather than solely community driven responses. Potential actors in community adaptation projects included: communities (of varying types), NGOs, local government institutions and academics amongst others.
- Passive/reactive adaptation – in many rural communities, climate change is exacerbating or accelerating existing problems. Adaptation responses are not just reacting to climate change, but also issues of poverty, environmental degradation and so forth. Most community projects identified were in response to existing problems (be they climate change related or otherwise) rather than encompassing long term strategic planning based on expected future impacts of climate change.

Following the fellows' briefings and presentations of case-studies, the group discussed a wide variety of topics. Key points which emerged from the discussion as being central to issues with community adaptation projects were:

- Flexibility – communities need to exhibit varied responses due to the
  - Uncertainty of climate change predictions
  - Local context – cultural, socioeconomic, political factors etc.
- Knowledge exchange and traditional vs. technological solutions
  - Technology can be used to compliment and enhance traditional adaptation strategies
  - Knowledge transfer and new technology needs to be appropriate and sensitive to the local context
- Level of community involvement in community adaptation
  - Different levels of community participation in projects
  - Community ownership key to project success and to ensure empowerment
- Governance – are institutions enabling or disabling? What are the barriers and opportunities associated with dealing with governments and policy at micro, meso and macro levels.
- Networks and linkages – recognition of the importance of partnerships and support networks in helping to build adaptive capacity and enhance resilience at the community level.

Towards the end of the first day, a number of questions and contextual issues were drawn out to underpin the day's discussion and to help formulate an overarching approach to subsequent discussions.

### Questions

1. What are the common trends and responses seen?
2. What are the training requirements and practical knowledge exchanges required?
3. What are the positive aspects and opportunities for adaptation?
4. Where are The Arkleton Trust's opportunities for engaging with dissemination?

### Contextual matters

- Responses of rural society to climate change
  - Governance
  - Coping strategies
  - Short-term vs. long-term tensions
- Power issues
  - Differential impacts within communities
  - Adaptation in context (culture, history etc)
  - Environmental justice and community participation
  - Accountability
- Integration at local and global levels
  - Local context
  - Socioeconomic impact of climate change on rural areas
  - Links between technology and tradition
  - Lack of predictability – uncertainty

## **Day 2**

In the morning, the group split into breakout groups to discuss the questions and contextual issues agreed the previous day. In the afternoon, each group reported back on their main discussion areas. There were many similarities between what the groups had looked at and the topics which dominated the overall discussion are outlined below.

- Generalisation – There was too much generalisation in the discussion of community adaptation to draw overarching conclusions. Communities are incredibly diverse in their nature and structure, so adaptation strategies and approaches need to be equally diverse.
- Building Resilience – There is a huge amount of uncertainty in climate change science. Furthermore, climate change impacts are exacerbating existing issues of poverty and environmental degradation. Enhancing resilience is fundamental to helping communities to deal with climate change impacts and other shocks.
- Proactive Approach – So far responses have been highly reactive. Communities need to look at long-term adaptation strategies, employing a proactive approach. Asset based management could be a key tool in accomplishing this.
- Knowledge Exchange – Knowledge exchange could employ a number of different media sources in order to portray messages in a high impact and powerful manner.

- Social justice – Climate change is a manifestation of huge North-South injustice. Owing to our carbon intensive lifestyles, we have a responsibility to demonstrate sustainable pathways. How can do this in a positive way?

### **Day 3**

In the morning the group went on a field trip to Strathdon micro-hydro power plant. Mike Beswick gave us a tour of the area and an explanation of the workings of the Archimedes screw turbine, as well as the challenges faced in setting up the project. The turbine is extremely efficient, with a 77% 'Water to Wire' conversion, and has the capacity to generate 75 kW.

In the afternoon we re-joined the seminar to discuss the field trip. An interesting point raised, was the existence of the enabling environment that had allowed the hydro project to go ahead, despite issues with a number of different stakeholders (including salmon). This drove home the importance of the complexity of power structures which exist within communities.

The group then examined a number of ways in which we could move forwards in our climate change adaptation work: both as individuals and The Arkleton Trust itself. Personal intentions varied widely from one individual to another, but everyone was able to propose positive ways and actions in which they could move forwards from the work carried out at the seminar. With regards to the trust's work, a number of suggestions were put forward by the group and are outlined below.

- Signposting – using the website to link to other sites and places with relevant information
- Case-studies – linking case-studies to other networks and databases
- Publishing and disseminating research through other events
- Regional seminars to examine community perspectives
- Development of a discussion document to link the five fellowships
- Identifying positives steps to a sustainable lifestyle
- Working in partnership, with and through NGOs, to add-value

Further work is also to be carried out to examine the opportunities that have arisen from climate change and climate change policies.

Overall the seminar proved to be an interesting forum for a wide-ranging discussion that examined a broad range of issues related to climate change adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development.