

In response to the query of how to bridge western/modern science and local knowledge when engaging with communities to build their resilience to climate change, I don't think one needs to think too much outside of the box in this case but to explore what knowledge and information is available from the local setting to start with.

Building resilience is about security of our environment, islands, food supply and our health. Of course, the climate science understanding must be translated accompanied with relevant case studies e.g. climatological historical profiles of air temperature, rainfall pattern for the past 10 years sourced from Rotuma's weather monitoring station. Translating definitions of climate, weather, climate change, global warming, greenhouse effect or the greenhouse gasses (GHGs); the list of terminology goes on but recognizing what to be communicated and messaged right is the acting responsibility of practitioners, managers and agencies working with island communities.

There is growing international recognition that local, community-based initiatives are the key to achieving sustainable development of which building climate resilient communities is a core objective. Therefore, to isolate a climate change/building resilience component in the engagement process with a community during any planning process is not smart. I hope that my responses to the listed questions aims to present a Rotuma perspective based on 10 years of experience (LäjeRotuma) with participation in environmental education and awareness development program at my island home.

LäjeRotuma Initiative (LRI, <http://www.rotuma.net/os/lajerotuma.htm>) is a community-based environmental initiative aimed at informing, strengthening capacity of its own community to make informed decisions and mobilising community to manage well natural resources on Rotuma Island. We work with women children, village men, youth and traditional leaders on the island. It is only in the past 4 years that engaging with national/ government departments enabled information flow about our work so that was a lesson.

LäjeRotuma recognises the use and conservation of island biodiversity as an integral part of its culture, inseparable from its ethical and aesthetic values or from its socio-economic reality. However, shift in value and use of natural resources accelerates the loss of Rotuman resource use knowledge and practices important to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. The link between adaptation and development is particularly relevant when seeking to enhance the capacity of people and communities to make informed decisions on managing limited island resources. Adaptation is primarily a local process which

means that technology and solutions need to suit local conditions and that local capacity must be developed to use and build resilience of island life.

Over the years, LājeRotuma has been engaging with target groups of youth, women and children in schools with an age range of 6-17 years old during its island community outreach with the basic belief that these key social groups be empowered in strengthening community capacity in order to address sustainability issues. This is by encouraging public awareness of subjects translated into vernacular and village focused activities; enhancing community participation for maximum stakeholder involvement and commitment.

The [Adopt-a-Habitat approach and EcoCamp model](#) (PDF, size: 2.19MB) is a great approach to engaging women and children, utilising visual arts tools- mural art sessions, driftwood workshop, song and dance, story-telling sessions, field trips such as bird-watching, sea grass-beach-coral reef watch and forest walks that engage the group to observe natural changes and seasonal effects of or variability in their natural environment. Innovatively, these activities specifically work with the women and children to re-tell their knowledge of old stories which describe an event about the environment, real-time local observations about how the changing climate and seasons affect their way of life on Rotuma.

Exploring a custom still in practice, i.e. about the mat-weavers and her pandanus patch with her fickle supply for mat weaving due to missed timing of the lunar cycle now 'riddled with rain' unusual during her time for harvest of the pandanus - a trade she learnt from her grandmother. Such witness stories enabled us to understand better how to work with this specific group with customary links and larger implications to the cultural fabric of our community. The women cope with these observed variability in the weather maintaining that skill and practice but at the same time it highlights priority concerns in not just understanding the changes but ensuring there are opportunities for framing actions that will support their social roles in the community. Being a lateral thinker and doer aids the struggle within our communities.

I do hope that I am able to share some relevant bits to this query. Of course, I can let go with the inquisitive child in me about the natural sciences and climate change but then where is the science without the humanity in understanding!

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