

# Changing climates, changing lives

This study examines the vulnerability of farmers and herders in agro-pastoral and pastoral areas in Ethiopia and Mali, and shows how they are adapting to climate variability and change. It focuses on people's perceptions and experience at the household level, and the role of local institutions in supporting adaptation and improving food security.



*“My grandparents spoke a lot about the past. In their time, everything was green. Then the sun started to burn, the cattle died and people knew they were in trouble.”*

## In what ways do farmers and herders perceive the climate as changing?

Communities are no longer confident about rainfall patterns. Over the past ten years the rain has become increasingly unpredictable and erratic; the seasonal rains have started later and finished earlier.

## How are the changes affecting people's livelihoods?

People are already making fundamental changes to their livelihoods in order to deal with the scarcity of natural resources. But a high degree of climate variability, even at the local level, reduces their livelihood resilience and makes decision making more complicated. The research revealed a broad range of livelihood strategies that people use to respond to livelihood shocks and stressors. These may incorporate elements of both coping and adaptation. The type of activity employed will depend largely on a household's socio-economic status.

## How are local institutions supporting and hindering adaptation?

Multiple stressors and variable patterns of access to institutions produce complex outcomes among different social groups. There is a trend towards increasing access to benefits from existing institutions. But this study has found that some institutional structures have become stronger, while others have been eroded.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT ADAPTATION AND INCREASE FOOD SECURITY

- Strengthen existing household adaptive capacities, strategies and community solidarity, in order to avoid negative coping mechanisms that lead to a loss in assets.
- Increase the options of the poorest people to diversify their livelihoods, by improving their access to and sustainable use of assets such as agricultural inputs, natural resources and credit, particularly during critical hunger periods.
- Strengthen existing local institutions with financial and technical support so that they can boost household strategies (regardless of the wealth, gender or ethnic identity of household members) and fill gaps in institutional support.
- Integrate adaptation into national development policies, plans and poverty reduction, with a joined up approach between agriculture, water, nutrition, the environment, climate change and disasters. Ensure that programmes are predictable and longer-term in order to build resilience to climatic and economic shocks.

*“This year, we will move our animals, because the pastures are nearly gone and the rains are delayed. There is no water here; we have to move otherwise our animals will die”*



*“In the rainy season, I'm in my fields. When it's dry, I do blacksmith work, making ploughs and knives. Agriculture alone cannot nourish our households and we don't want to sell our animals.”*