

# *Empowering communities and building climate resilience.*

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*CREST Research and Development  
Institute (CRADI)*

**(A Case Study)**

## Overview

The CREST Research and Development Institute (CRADI) has been working to strengthen climate resilience and reduce conflict through a process that combines awareness raising with collective action around climate change adaptation. With support from the SPRiNG programme, CRADI has been working in communities across Benue and Plateau States that have been facing climate-driven livelihood pressures.



Source: CREST Research and Development Institute (CRADI)

The work has involved integrating marginalised communities into decision-making through communal climate adaptation initiatives. This has improved access to climate interventions in places like Etulo community in Benue state, which was previously excluded from pastoralist dialogue platforms.

Also, in Buruku LGA of Benue State, the focus was on inclusive climate risk planning. Meanwhile, in Plateau State, the emphasis was on translating climate awareness into collective environmental action. Climate resilience awareness training in Angwa Hausawa, Takai, and Shukur, led to the adoption of sustainable land management practices such as community-led tree planting. The project has improved community participation, promoted sustainable land use, and demonstrated that inclusive, evidence-led climate interventions can reduce vulnerability and build social cohesion.

## Context

In several parts of North Central Nigeria, climate change intensified pressure on land and livelihoods, increasing the risk of conflict and reinforcing exclusion. For instance, in Buruku, marginalised groups such as the Etulo community were excluded from planning and extension services, they experienced severe flooding and drought but remained excluded from extension services and local governance. Without the CREST intervention, exclusion, environmental degradation, and conflict risks would have worsened.

Also, in Plateau, low awareness led to limited community uptake of climate-smart practices specifically in Bokkos LGA, communities in Angwa Hausawa, Takai, and Shukur where people struggled with delayed planting seasons and declining agricultural productivity due to erratic rainfall patterns. Although engaged in some traditional practices like banana tree planting, farmers possessed minimal understanding of climate risks or comprehensive adaptation strategies, viewing environmental interventions purely as economic activities rather than resilience measures.

## Approach and Activities

CRADI adopted complementary strategies tailored to each context while maintaining **core principles of participation and empowerment**. CRADI employed **adaptive management** rather than rigid adherence to data-driven selections. The team engaged Etulo directly to **assess their climate vulnerabilities and governance marginalisation**, validating concerns through multi-stakeholder consultation including the Ter Buruku (traditional leader). The implementation plan was revised to integrate Etulo, requiring resource reallocation and activity schedule adjustments.

This approach **balanced technical data with qualitative understanding of marginalisation**, prioritizing equity alongside statistical significance. In Bokkos LGA, Plateau State, CRADI conducted intensive **capacity-building training** to transfer practical, actionable knowledge on climate risks, soil fertility management, erosion control, mixed farming systems, and environmental conservation.

Critically, the approach equipped participants with technical knowledge as well as the confidence to become community advocates. The training made the connection between climate adaptation to economic benefits **promoting economic trees** like guava, mango, and banana while **highlighting environmental co-benefits** including soil retention, erosion prevention, and heat mitigation.

## Results

Early results indicate an uptake includes adoption of climate adaptation measures such as tree planting and mixed farming in Takai and Shukur. Because of this, farmer-pastoralist dialogue processes have been enriched, and there is reinforced community trust and ownership.

Farmer-pastoralist dialogues have become more inclusive with representatives from previously left behind communities now actively participating in these sessions. For instance, members from the Etulo community (4 female and 3 male) participated in two inter-community dialogue sessions alongside members of other target communities.

Trust between CRADI and communities, creating an enabling environment for collaboration to work for peace and climate resilience. 150 participants (71 in Buruku, 39 in Jos North, 40 in Bokkos) including farmers, pastoralists, and marginalised communities gained skills in climate-resilient practices.

*"Before the training, many of us were not aware of the dangers of climate change or the simple actions we could take to protect our land. Now, the spirit of the people has been awakened. They understand that planting trees is not just for income it helps our land and environment."*  
- **Kamshak S. Haruna, Beneficiary, Jos, Plateau State.**

## Lessons

The intervention established a precedent for inclusive programming, demonstrating that resilience planning must balance technical rigor with community voice and practical actions. In addition, empowering beneficiaries as peer advocates extends impact beyond project timelines. While adapting approaches to local context rather than applying uniform solutions is critical for lasting resilience and peacebuilding.

