Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 17, EGU2015-6953-1, 2015
EGU General Assembly 2015


# Enhancing stakeholder participation in land-based adaptation to environmental change with photo elicitation and photovoice

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Land degradation is one of the main environmental changes confronting South Africa. Active participation from local land users to adopt land-based adaptation to land degradation is necessary for at least two obvious reasons. Firstly, most of the lands in South Africa are privately owned. Secondly, the costs for adapting to land degradation are substantial and are not feasible for an individual entity to afford. Land-based adaptation includes management practices that can reduce the vulnerability of land users to the threats posed by land degradation. To engage land users to participate in land-based adaptation, approaches to allow diverse stakeholders to effectively communicate their observations, knowledge and perspectives are needed. In addition to semi-structured interviews, photo elicitation and photovoice were implemented to engage 25 local livestock farmers from two rural areas in the South African Kalahari – Mier and Molopo – in a participatory research project. The results showed that photo elicitation enhanced stakeholder interaction relative to semi-structured interviews in a number of ways. Firstly, photo elicitation provided more details and new information beyond those in semi-structured interviews. Secondly, photo elicitation also allowed stakeholders to more easily communicate personal or concrete examples, comparisons, contrasts, explanatory information, attitudes and values. The results also showed that photovoice created opportunities for mutual learning among the participants. These enhancements have the potential to improve co-production of knowledge and quality of stakeholder engagement. Improvement in stakeholder engagement can in turn contribute toward land-based adaptation that is more locally relevant and a greater degree of translation of scientific advancement into actual adaptation practices.