Assessing barriers to adaptation to climate change in coastal Tanzania: Does where you live matter

Author(s)

Frederick Ato Armah
Isaac Luginaah
Herbert Hambati
Ratana Chuenpagdee
Gywn Campbell

Abstract

Research on barriers to climate change adaptation has, hitherto, disproportionately focused on institutional barriers. Despite the critical importance of personal barriers in shaping the adaptive response of humanity to climate change and variability, the literature on the subject is rather nascent. This study is premised on the hypothesis that place-specific characteristics (where you live) and compositional (both biosocial and sociocultural) factors may be salient to differentials in adaptation to climate change in coastal areas of developing countries. This is because adaptation to climate change is inherently local. Using cross-sectional survey data on 1,253 individuals (606 males and 647 females), barriers to adaptation to climate change were observed to vary with place, indicating that there is inequality in barriers to adaptation. In the multivariate models, the place-specific differences in barriers to adaptation were robust and remained statistically significant even when socio-demographic (compositional) variables were controlled. Observed differences in barriers to adaptation to climate change in coastal Tanzania mainly reflect strong place-specific disparities among groups indicating the need for adaptation policies that are responsive to processes of socio-institutional learning in a specific context, involving multiple people that have a stake in the present and the future of that place. These people are making complex, multifaceted choices about managing and adapting to climate-related risks and opportunities, often in the face of resource constraints and competing agendas.

Keywords

Place Biosocial Sociocultural Human–environment Indian Ocean Tanzania