

LINKING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICIES AND PRACTICE

The Climate Change Task Force gathered international and national experts on climate change adaptation in a workshop on 'Climate Change Adaptation - linking policies and practice' in Copenhagen on 22-23 November 2010 to identify key climate change adaptation issues and challenges for developing countries, and share tangible experiences from policies, approaches, and tools that have proven to work at the national and local levels.

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Denmark's new development strategy has climate change adaptation as one of its priority themes, and the workshop aimed at providing concrete recommendations on how to implement the strategy. In addition, the workshop contributed to the wider debate on climate change and served as a forum for exchanging views prior to COP 16 in Cancun.

The participants discussed and debated how to ensure 'climate smart' development assistance to reduce vulnerability and build climate change resilient development pathways. A starting point for the discussion was the recognition that there is an urgent need to link high-level policy decisions with practical development assistance to ensure effective future interventions and impact.

KEY MESSAGES

- Mainstreaming funding for climate change adaptation (CCA) as part of development activities is important, although specific CCA interventions may be needed in certain fields. For example, CCA interventions can strategically be linked to disaster risk reduction frameworks already in place – and vice versa.
- Awareness of the need to integrate CCA actions across sectors should be created to promote and enhance sustainable adaptation solutions.
- A 'no-regret' approach is essential. CCA interventions should support measures and mechanisms that have positive impacts regardless of the actual climate change effects and global climate change agreements.
- CCA should be pro-poor and enhance the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable population groups. Lack of fundamental services (e.g. water and health) constitute a currently unfilled CCA gap, which needs to be prioritised.
- Institutions are crucial in CCA. Strengthening institutional capacity to address CC, to absorb and benefit from CCA funds, and to provide enabling environments for stakeholders at all levels must be a cornerstone of all support.
- The private sector will be significantly impacted by climate change and consequently, the private sector will be an important stakeholder and actor on issues related to research and development for climate change adaptation.
- Risk management and dealing with variability and uncertainty will be key competencies required to deal with CCA.
- We already have good tools and approaches. Much progress can be made by using existing tools and methodologies for sustainable development better, rather than waiting for 'silver bullet' solutions.
- Progress in specific and integrated tools for CCA and the monitoring and evaluation of progress have improved awareness, prioritisation, approaches and methodologies of CCA.
- It is necessary to go beyond traditional training approaches and rethink our focus and training mechanisms to enable people to act in a quickly changing environment and respond to uncertainty.

APART FROM THE ABOVE KEY MESSAGES, A NUMBER OF CURRENT DILEMMAS FOR ENGAGEMENT IN CCA NEED TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION

1 Can we act based on the limited knowledge and uncertain data available?

While knowledge generation is important and risk management will be a crucial aspect of adaptation, there are different perceptions on the extent to which more knowledge is needed before acting. Will climate modelling and projection ever be sufficiently reliable to be used as a secure basis for planning interventions?

More focus on assessing experiences and lessons learned of interventions rather than on generating new knowledge may improve future interventions. On the other hand, we may need to strengthen national research capacity to ensure more reliable data and figures in the future, and improve knowledge management and sharing to enhance CCA efforts. In any case, uncertainty should not be an excuse for inaction and negligence!

2 Can we combine the need for urgent action and the need for long-term solutions?

CCA requires quick action due to the speed of change. However, sustainable development requires participation, good planning, and long-term investments. All this takes time. As a minimum, it should be ensured that short-term and 'quick' CCA actions focus on no-regret options, and are implemented through well-proven mechanisms and approaches. In the meantime, mechanisms for more long-term investments can be tested and rolled out.

3 Where should we focus our interventions?

Should CCA funds be invested in infrastructure when the future needs still are very uncertain? Some argue that we get better results and more value for money by investing in education and knowledge generation. Others stress that functioning institutions and infrastructure are crucial for development and resilience and that proven 'no-regret' options exist.

What is the role of the private sector in CCA efforts? While potentially an effective and relevant partner, some are concerned that the involvement of the private sector could diminish the poverty alleviation focus of CCA. At the same time it is important that the private sector is fully aware of CC risks to business and similarly informed about possible new business areas evolving from a changing climate.

4 Should we focus on developing, strengthening, or mobilizing capacity?

Qualified people are central in CCA interventions. Some experts call for more training and capacity strengthening because in their view there is a lack of local professionals, who can implement CCA interventions. Others believe there already is a significant local capacity waiting to be mobilised. Not everybody has to be trained to be an expert in CCA; most people only need to learn how and where to find reliable and sufficient information needed for carrying out their work.

While CC is a global issue and concern, most CCA interventions need to be context-specific and build upon local knowledge and institutions. However, while involving local communities is important, it is only effective if there is proper knowledge management in place. Furthermore, existing adaptation knowledge in communities may need to be complemented and combined with new knowledge and scaled up to more large-scale contexts.

5 How can funding mechanisms support coordination and mainstreaming efforts?

CCA funding and management need to be anchored with influential line ministries. To avoid overburdening the local administration, there is need for more donor coordination. Donor coordination can increase the effectiveness of resource utilisation. Endorsed national policy documents exist and they should be used as a starting point for planning and coordination of interventions as is done in the other more conventional sectors. Based on good experience from other fields, one funding window for all CCA interventions could be a solution. However, such a model may further isolate climate change issues and work against mainstreaming efforts.

In addition, it can be difficult for smaller community-based initiatives to access funding. While such interventions are important, it is difficult for small civil society organisations to access large international funds. Therefore, their funding should be ensured by other mechanisms. At the same time, larger projects that go beyond small, specific CCA projects may be necessary, in order to address social and environmental dynamics and complexities at larger scale.

The workshop was organised by the Climate Change Task Force in collaboration with the Technical Advisory Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Climate Change Task Force is a joint initiative established by the Danish Development Research Network (DDRN), Danish Water Forum (DWF), and Enreca Health - the Danish Research Network for International Health. The aim is to address issues of common interest related to climate change research and knowledge management. More information about the Climate Change Task Force and the workshop is available at: http://ddrn.dk/ddrn_working_groups-climate-change-task-force.html.

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