



FIG: 1

Evaluating Climate Change Adaptation from a Development Perspective

The evaluation of climate change adaptation interventions raises considerable challenges. The report, commissioned by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), assesses the current state of evaluation of climate change adaptation interventions, identifies the main gaps in their evaluation and the current indicators being used to evaluate projects and programmes. It also assesses how to evaluate development interventions from a climate change adaptation perspective.

Conclusion

A consensus of what constitutes 'successful' adaptation is urgently needed in order to develop a clear framework to evaluate the interventions intended to deliver it. This report proposes five main factors that could be used to determine successful adaptation:

- effectiveness – has the CCAI achieved objectives?
- flexibility – does it make allowances for the uncertainty of climate change and a rapidly evolving knowledge base?

- equity – does it increase justice across sectors; regions and societies?
- efficiency – does it address agreed acceptable levels of risk?
- sustainability – does it take the wider implications of adaptation into consideration?

Credits

McKenzie Hedger, M* ; Mitchell, T* ; Leavy, J. ; Greeley, M* and Horrocks, L** (2008) 'Evaluating Climate Change Adaptation from a Development Perspective', commissioned by the GEF Evaluation Office and supported by DFID

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IDS or any of the other institutions involved.

The full text of this report is available at: www.ids.ac.uk/go/evaluating-adaptation-to-climate-change

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Introduction

Climate change adaptation interventions (CCAIs) are diverse, cutting across sectors and scales. Though often funded at an international level, they need to deliver outcomes at the household level and are being delivered through a variety of institutional mechanisms. They need to tackle unknown changes over the coming decades. There are known barriers and constraints to their delivery.

As development agencies scale-up CCAI delivery, they are also paying more attention to how they are evaluated. The climate change adaptation industry needs to engage with evaluation professionals who have already developed frameworks and methods for systematic assessment. They must work to build consensus on what 'successful' adaptation means and how to measure it, in order to create a clear framework for evaluating the CCAIs intended to deliver it. The report proposes a framework to demonstrate the multi-scaled nature of the challenge.

Why evaluate climate change adaptation interventions and what are the main issues?

Few projects formally categorised as CCAIs have been evaluated. But as investment is scaled up – in order to deliver to achieve a post-2012 deal within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – there is growing interest in CCAI evaluation and adaptation metrics. An assessment of emerging efforts will help identify the key issues for further attention, and to see where consensus should be built.

There is, as yet, no agreement on how far the global community will go to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions, or how that might be achieved – it is therefore unknown how much adaptation to climate change will ultimately be necessary. The key drivers for action and resources for adaptation will be international but delivery will take place within local contexts and, ultimately, at the household level. Integrated frameworks for CCAI are

therefore needed at international, national and community levels.

There is considerable theoretical debate about how to define adaptation, and even whether adaptation is primarily about the enhancement of adaptive capacity. Moreover, there are some politically contested areas about mainstreaming adaptation and the provision of additional resources for climate change outside overseas development aid (ODA) – many CCAI at the local level are implemented as part of the standard development portfolio. Placing the evaluation of adaptation – and measures which increase resilience to current climate variability – within a broader development perspective would provide a longer-term perspective for development efforts, opening up the possibility for new and different strategies.

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“ Clear and effective feedback mechanisms are needed – at local, national, regional and international levels, from household to project to programme. Lack of a global consensus on adaptation is likely to extend further [and] will further complicate CCAI evaluation ”

“ Climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction are developing separate institutional frameworks at international, national and local levels. They have many similarities and present opportunities for synergies rather than duplication ”

The few databases that exist for CCAIs are incomplete. However, research shows that a range of public and private actors are undertaking adaptation measures that consider climate change through policies, investments in infrastructure and technologies and behavioural change. It is possible to identify eleven distinct adaptation strategies including: changing natural resource management practices; promoting planning and policy changes; improving infrastructure; and empowering people. These diverse activities take place at different scales; international, national, programmatic, project, community and local levels, and across many sectors, including agriculture, water, health and poverty reduction.

How does evaluation of climate change adaptation fit into the broader development agenda?

The changing context and trends in international development evaluation – a move to larger scale, sector-wide thematic country level and synthesis evaluations – support the need for CCAI evaluation. Support for the main drivers for change to deliver the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is stimulating a more coherent approach. There is growing interest in ensuring that country-led poverty reduction processes become

the focus of evaluation effort and greater engagement with developing country partners.

CCAI will, in general, fit one of three approaches, which will have implications for evaluation:

1. Existing development projects re-labelled as climate change adaptation.
2. Existing programmes and projects which are now mainstreaming climate change.
3. Interventions which have been framed from the outset as addressing climate change.

What is the current status CCAI evaluation?

Very few CCAI have been evaluated. As many projects are participatory and demand-driven, monitoring and evaluation has been designed post-hoc and not embedded in the project. A review of the

GEF database shows that methods used in the evaluation of methodologies for CCAIs could be improved and strengthened and a greater focus placed on the critical features of what makes successful CCAIs. The key modifications that are needed to evaluate CCAI include:

- Time frames: mechanisms to provide ongoing feedback on impacts beyond the lifespan of the project; and institutional memory in the form of information storage and retrieval systems
- Methods: Participatory and 360 degree evaluation
- Impact indicators developed in partnership with beneficiaries
- The establishment of baseline scenarios and development of the capacity to monitor change over long timescales, retain the information and provide it in usable formats as required.

Clear and effective feedback mechanisms are needed – at local, national, regional and international levels, from household to project to programme. Lack of a global consensus on adaptation is likely to extend further: to national differences, between Ministries, within civil society groups, across programme administration, and

across scales. This will further complicate CCAI evaluation. Careful choice of methods and indicators can help improve transparency and avoid conflict. Methodologies, such as outcome mapping, work in an integrally participatory way.

Next steps

To avoid an explosion of evaluations of the many interventions which can be labelled as CCAI, efforts must ensure that from the outset adaptation rests within Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), with consequent integration of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). In addition sectoral plans, particularly those covering water and agriculture, must have climate change fully integrated within them. Indicators that can measure progress in knowledge generation, its assimilation and application and flexible institutions at all scales are needed. The report tentatively identifies potential trade-offs between short- and long-term actions in relation to ecosystem resilience and also between different social groups with CCAI which should be examined in more detail.

Some large development agencies are already developing approaches to evaluation by establishing methodologies and indicators for process and outcomes but incorporating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) would improve coherence and coordination. Both climate change and DRR are developing separate institutional frameworks at international, national and local levels. They have many similarities and present opportunities for synergies rather than duplication.

Integrating adaptation evaluations with existing evaluation frameworks will help to avoid issue fatigue on the ground. Commonly used indicator frameworks for vulnerability and sustainable livelihoods analysis can provide a considerable amount of data that is compatible with climate change adaptation – and only require ‘re-packaging’ to fit an adaptation context. This is particularly important when many development agencies and practitioners with long-standing experience often see new issues as ‘fads’. It will also avoid generating additional work.

A variety of monitoring and evaluation tools will be needed to cope with the complexities created by the diversity of

CCAI, across the continuum and across all scales. Where CCAI closely match development projects, this is already happening. The report proposes a pyramid of indicators which might provide a framework to measure the accumulation and culmination of effort at local, national and global levels. It also indicates where different evaluation methods fit in. These are intended to stimulate further discussions in order to devise common approaches and establish diverse routes. (See Fig 1)

Climate change practitioners have experience with the tools used to develop analysis and policy. An Evaluation and Monitoring Tool could be developed within the realm of the Nairobi Work Programme of the UNFCCC – with the involvement of groups such as the Least Developed Country Expert Group (LEG).