

URAdapt

Managing Water at the Urban-Rural Interface: The key to climate change resilient cities

MINUTES

URAdapt 3rd Consultative Group Meeting.

Friday, August 26th, 2011



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International Water Management Institute, Accra

Introduction

The 3rd Consultative Group Meeting had for objective to serve as a monitoring visit by the IDRC team to learn from boundary partners of how the URAdapt project is contributing to develop a response capacity in the area of city water management in the face of climate change. After providing CG group members an understanding of the overall Climate Change Adaptation for Africa program that is jointly funded by DFID and IDRC, in order to understand how the URAdapt project fits into the larger framework of research on climate adaptation in Africa; the members would be requested to share their thoughts around the following topical areas:

- a. **Capacity and pertinence of research:** Is URAdapt generating good research and is it pertinent?
- b. **Usefulness of interactions and PAR:** How do you perceive the usefulness of the platform interactions – have these changed your vision or understanding of events.
- c. **Effectiveness of URAdapt:** How is URAdapt contributing to develop a response capacity in this area of city water management
- d. **Extent of influence:** To what extent is this capacity influencing (or could influence) the policy agenda in Ghana.
- e. **Progress towards achieving targets:** What progress have we made?
- f. **Constraints to uptake:** What are the constraints to climate adaptation in Africa with reference to the project outcomes.

The meeting commenced with opening remarks by Dr Liqa Rashid-Sally. She welcomed Fatima Denton and Henri Lo who are members of the funding project (IDRC) to Accra and introduced them to the URAdapt team members. She commented on other interactions and meetings that have been ongoing with other sister projects. She explained the objective of the meeting, and urged all present to feel free in sharing their thoughts, knowledge acquired or changes that have occurred in their various institutions since the project's inception. She also encouraged members to be critical of the project where necessary. Dr Raschid-Sally indicated her excitement over the interactive nature of the project's meetings, saying it would lead to a better understanding and use of research findings.

She then requested members present to make a brief introduction of themselves and their position within their institutions and also their role vis-a vis the project.

After this, Henri Lo was invited to give a brief presentation on Climate Change Adaptation under the Africa Program.

CCAA Programme at a glance

Dr Henri Lo started by indicating his status at IDRC as the program officer in charge of Climate Change Adaptation situated in Dakar. The presentation was essentially to update members on the research and capacity development program and to show how the CCAA program fits into the global framework. The focus was on how the objectives of CCAA can be integrated into that of the global framework on climate change.

According to Dr Henri Lo, the high vulnerability of Africa is due not only to physical characteristics like geographic location or fragile ecosystems, but also contextual. This includes problems like extreme poverty, lack of resources, infrastructure and technologies, institutional weaknesses and subsequent absence of leadership. To cope with the effects of Climate Change in a sustainable manner will mean building adaptive capacity to cope with the effects of current variability and learn how to adapt to longer term changes.

He explained that CCAA has been designed to significantly improve the capacity of African people and organizations to adapt to climate change in ways that benefit the most vulnerable through four specific objectives. These are: to strengthen the capacity of African researchers, development agents and policy-makers to contribute to adaptation to climate change; support adaptation by rural and urban people, particularly the most vulnerable, through action research; generate improved understanding of research findings on climate variability and change; and inform policy processes with good quality science-based findings.

He indicated that along with activities related to education and training, CCAA has built capacities through the launch of two batches of research. Firstly in the areas of agriculture and rural livelihoods and also issues related to health, sea-level rise and coastal erosion. Findings generated placed an emphasis on agricultural innovations techniques used as adaptation options, new crop varieties which offers more resistance to climate extremes, improved seeds to help create more resilient farms, better understanding and use of seasonal climate forecasting and sharing of climate information to mitigate the risk of climate extremes. He asserted that, the URAdapt Project was part of the 2nd batch of projects trying to look at urban vulnerabilities such as flooding, water and

sanitation, health, etc. This would assist in fostering Participatory Action Research (PAR) to change attitude and behaviour on climate change.

He informed members that the CCAA program is expected to come to an end in March 2012. The main activities slated for the last year of the program would encompass synthesizing and communicating research findings through peer-reviewed publications, guidance notes reporting, evaluation and project monitoring. He however mentioned that, most of the projects in CCAA portfolio are over but urban projects are to be taken over by Climate Change and Water (CCW), a new program put in place by IDRC. He concluded that the objective for transferring the knowledge sharing component to the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD) is to provide a platform for exchange between policy makers and researchers.

After the presentation there were questions and reactions from members.

Delali Dovie of the University of Ghana commented on the lack of reference to research uptake in policy documentation. He recommended that IDRC could fund specific research issues which policy makers can identify with. This would make them appreciate its importance and how it could be done. He explained that bad science does not provide any action plans to execute. He again suggested applying research finding on specific case studies which would result in practical findings being shared with policy makers.

Dr Ohene Sarfoh of Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) asked for clarification on how IDRC has strengthened the interface between researchers and policy makers. He opined that, most often policies are forced on African policy makers by the funders and as such would like to know how IDRC intends to strengthen the interface.

Dr Raschid-Sally answered by indicating that the project is at the stage where its objectives are to move to the policy makers and present them with the findings of the project so far. She asserted that a way of ensuring this would be through consulting with policy makers when translating research to policy.

Ms. Charlotte Engmann of Community Water and Sanitation agreed with the use of case studies and also expanded on the usefulness of small pilot studies to actually concretize the research findings. She also suggested dissemination of research knowledge as a way of bridging the knowledge gap.

Henri Lo said he shared the sentiments of members. He indicated that the problem of translating findings into policy were not particular to climate change issues only. According to him, CCAA as a program has identified the gap between research and policy making and implementation. This has necessitated the use of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach as a means of bridging the gap. It also affords policy makers the opportunity to understand and then incorporate findings into policies.

He gave a brief highlight of the project in East Africa, where the focus is on establishing channels that researchers can take to better influence policy processes. In his view, understanding the policy processes will enable them to strategize for the desired impact.

Dr. Fatima Denton re-iterated the point that fragmentation between the research world and policy making was very real. Often there was a supply of research, without an actual demand from the used side and this is one interpretation of bridging the Research-Policy gap. According to her, the many layers in policy processes complicates the situation. Mapping policy windows/opportunities to the research material being developed can enhance the exploitation of the knowledge being generated. Adaptation was a social process which required that relationships be forged between people with different stakes. She agreed with using the PAR approach for forging a collecting understanding between different people, in this instance policy makers and researchers. She gave the example of the Rainmakers community in Kenya to explain how PAR had been successful in calibrating their knowledge to scientific knowledge thus enhancing the process of understanding. An unexpected outcome of this process was the building of a resource center which was driven by the community. She also referred to the use of informal interactions and contacts, between researchers and policy makers as a means of convincing the latter.

She ended by informing members that the science-policy interface initiated by the research under CCAA was being devolved to the regional level eg via the WECARD/CORAF, where the regional economic commissions would take up the challenge of bringing findings together to take adaptation further through their translation into policies.

Ms Charlotte Engmann confirmed that the gap between research and policy is based on lack of understanding. She explained that policy makers needed to be made aware of research findings for

them to appreciate and implement them. She further brought a different perspective to the discussion referring to policies that are developed without the practical inputs from researchers and practitioners, which then remain policy and are never implemented. This too has to be avoided. She cited the water policy as being a practical document which is being implemented precisely because of the right involvement. Successful pilots were also useful for providing compelling stories.

Mr Wellens-Mensah of the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing highlighted a different dilemma, by commenting on the existence of other problems which were not directly associated with climate change, but which exacerbated the problem, as for instance lack of or inadequate drains and drainage. He alluded to the point that demonstrations through pilot programs are good, but the problem of the gap between researchers and policy makers stems from the unavailability of practitioners for converting research to implementable actions. He reckons practitioners are needed to bridge the gap. He also suggested the need for researchers to come closer and make their results more interesting to the policy maker. In Africa policy makers are politicians who may not have an understanding of the related issues. Better policies are developed in his view by broadening the awareness within relevant agencies at the technical advisory level. Involving professional bodies is also very necessary. He was also of the view that the recommendations from climate adaptation research, must in some way penetrate the planning framework, for it to be useful – he described this as fusing research from climate change into what is being already implemented.

Dr Raschid-Sally pointed out that the role of the Ministry of Works and Housing is that of a practitioner, but because the politician serves as the policy maker, though sometimes without requisite knowledge the interface is widened. However, practitioners or the ministry serve as a reality check on both researchers and policy makers. She gave the example of the Addis Ababa, where it has been suggested that publication and dissemination of result manuals are done by the professionals in that sector.

Dr Claudious Chikozho of IWMI attributed the gap between research and policy to the static nature of project design and development and the funding process in Africa. The funding framework often does not provide room for research projects to engage in policy-influencing activities. Most projects end up trying to have some policy influence and uptake only at the end of the project and this is not really effective. There is need for funding frameworks and project development processes to take into account the need for researchers to continuously engage policy-makers and carry out uptake-related activities throughout the duration of the project. He suggested that, in essence conditions should be created that enable researchers and policy makers to work together.

Fatima Denton assured members that this is increasingly being done in current projects. She was however quick to add that some things needed to go beyond the project boundaries, and influence the arena of ideas, given that the wider the spectrum the more likely the acceptance of ideas.

Barnabas Amisigo of Water Research Institute suggested early and constant education of the younger generation, to appreciate and to buy into issues of climate change so as to create awareness.

Dr Raschid-Sally at this point enquired from members if the project is pertinent in the current Ghanaian urban setting and its importance. All members attested to the project's pertinence and importance.

Mr Mensah added that emphasis could also be on preparedness for change. He indicated the existence of a draft urban policy which includes sections on urban vulnerability to climate change. He indicated that the reality on the ground about the impact of climate change is compelling more awareness from individuals and city authorities as well. He gave the instance of the Swedru flooding as an incident which has compelled more awareness. He also commented on the focus of the program on Accra and suggested a cross country scope.

Mr Ohene Sarfoh mentioned how the Institute for Local Government studies which is a sort of cities alliance, is preparing a masters program on metro-wide disaster responsiveness. He intends to infuse the practical knowledge from the project's exercises into their Master Programme curriculum.

Christine Young Adjei of Water Research Commission informed members of the outfit's rural projects which have been replicated in many areas.

Mr Wellens-Mensah highlighted the relevance of the project modelling work being carried out by the Water Research Institute. Barnabas Amisigo was optimistic that the models can be replicated all over the country to solve some of the problems associated with climate change. A suggestion was made to also interface with the Center for remote sensing and GIS.

Fatima Denton wanted to know the extent to which the platform is confident about the use of its findings in catalyzing new actions.

Dr Raschid Sally explained that, in Ethiopia, the platform tries to work with immediate implementers at the various levels. She was hopeful that if the packaging of the findings is well presented, it will create a conducive environment for interactions with authorities at municipal and other levels. She explained that the situation in Ghana was similar to that in Ethiopia.

Dr Raschid Sally also reflected on how far URAdapt could go in relation to influencing policy change in the lifetime of the project, and which entry points the project could use to do this. The development of the urban policy document was one such entry. More could be identified as we go along.

Barnabas Amisigo explained that some studies have been done on some broad areas for onward adaptation.

Henri Lo wanted to find out how the platform is going to identify entry points for diffusing into the mainstream policy in Ghana. He was also interested in how the process had gone so far.

Farouk Braimah of People's Dialogue explained that the process had been a huge learning experience because of previous with mixed signals on climate change. According to him, most problems faced by communities were attributable to social issues such as over population and lack of or inadequate drain. Bad planning was also one of the drivers of many of the problems. However, when the incidents affect the economic life of the people, they are more responsive to the impact of climate change. He suggested targeting the communities; and strengthening community cadres to engage in action research. He said he would also use his learning from URAdapt in the preparation of guidelines for use by the community.

Afua Prempeh of IWMI commented that, translating results into policies are difficult. She suggested advocacy and lobbying as a way to influence policy decisions.

Fatima Denton brought the meeting to a conclusion by thanking members for their time and the opportunity to have a face-to-face interaction on how the project is turning out. She was happy to hear first-hand from members their knowledge, challenges and suggestions on how best to support the project.

List of Participants

Name	Organization
1. Delali B. Dovie	University of Ghana
2. Charlotte Engmann	Community Water and Sanitation Agency
3. Farouk Braimah	People's Dialogue
4. K. Ohene Sarfoh	Institute of Local Government Studies
5. J. Wellens-Mensah	Ministry of Water Resources Works and Housing
6. Barnabas Amisigo	Water Research Institute
7. Liqa Raschid-Sally	International Water Management Institute
8. Henri Lo	IDRC
9. Fatima Denton	IDRC
10. Edmund Kyei Akoto-Danso	International Water Management Institute
11. Afua Serwah A. Prempeh	International Water Management Institute
12. Diana Owusu	International Water Management Institute