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Overview of Adaptation Mainstreaming Initiatives

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The Commission on Climate Change and Development

The Commission is an international commission initiated and financed by the Swedish Government. The purpose of the Commission is to propose ways to integrate risk reduction and adaptation to climate change into the development and poverty reduction plans of poor countries. It is also to present proposals for how to design development cooperation programs that take account of climate impacts and the risk of disasters. The Commission will issue its report in spring 2009. The commissioners serve in their personal capacity. The Commission is supported by a Secretariat based in Stockholm, Sweden.

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Policy brief by the Secretariat to the Commission on Climate Change and Development

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Background

The IPCC's 4th Assessment Report describes the present and likely future impact of climate change on people, ecosystems, livelihoods and infrastructure. A failure to adapt threatens development gains and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries. On the other hand, it is increasingly recognized that sustainable development in the context of impending climate change is only possible if it strengthens a society's capacity to adapt. Development and adaptation are not identical, but they go together.

Like other complex and cross-cutting issues with wide social and economic implications facing governments, most adaptation to climate change is considered best conducted by integrating measures and strategies into development planning – i.e. through mainstreaming. For donors and aid agencies cooperating with those governments, there is thus the corresponding requirement to mainstream adaptation to climate change in their programs. Recent high-level political attention to climate change impact on developing countries is now reflected in increased attention to mainstreaming adaptation in ODA among donors.

This policy brief is meant to present a snapshot of the status of adaptation mainstreaming, of experiences and challenges, and to some extent what conclusions can be drawn from projects and programs with an adaptation objective. It will become clear that although awareness of the impact of climate change on development is increasing, there are still limited concrete examples of mainstreaming, and experiences of implementing adaptation are mainly found at the project and community levels rather than as a strategic overall approach.

Mainstreaming, climate-proofing and climate-screening

The general purpose of mainstreaming adaptation is to address climate change within development planning, sectoral decision-making and regular budgeting processes, rather than as stand-alone measures or a separate sector. This is meant to provide for a more efficient use of resources and improved sustainability of investments in the context of a changing environment.

Mainstreaming includes 'climate-proofing', i.e. the protection of *existing* ODA projects and programs and their beneficiaries from the impact of climate variability and change, but mainstreaming has a wider purpose and potential. It should aim to ensure that future development plans and programs are actively designed to reduce the vulnerability to climate change. Understood in this way, climate-proofing is a more passive approach while mainstreaming actively seeks to predict and understand future risk patterns and strengthen societies' ability to maintain a development trajectory. The fundamental uncertainty of climate variability and change however presents development actors with great challenges. Mainstreaming in this context therefore must aim to build institutions, assets and resilience that are able to address a range of risk scenarios.

This broad approach is even more important since countries facing the impact of climate change probably also face a number of other risks, some of which are perceived as more urgent and pressing than the uncertain consequences of increasing temperatures. Any attempts at building societal resilience must take such wide needs into account.

A logical first step towards climate-proofing and mainstreaming is to screen program and project portfolios for their exposure to the impact of climate change and how it is being considered in the planning cycle. Portfolio screening thus needs to include assessments of risks, vulnerability and environmental impact. This process also offers the possibility to identify ways in which climate change can be incorporated into future policies and action. A number of screening methods have been developed by different agencies with OECD-DAC actively seeking to promote exchange and cross-fertilization.

A prerequisite for mainstreaming across sectors is clear leadership and internal institutional cohesion and coherence. Managing a mainstreaming process from within a single government ministry or donor agency department will be unsuccessful. However, climate change is still largely dealt with by environmental departments. It is only with broad engagement and ownership that integration into all sectors and parts of government can progress and all aspects of impact be addressed. This means that both donors and partner countries must identify adaptation to climate change as a priority.

Recent policy initiatives

A number of initiatives towards integration of adaptation in development planning and in aid portfolios have been taken during recent years. These include the European Commission's Action Plan on Climate Change of 2004, the independent Commission for Africa in 2005, and the Gleneagles Summit in 2005, when G8 countries agreed to support capacity building with the purpose of improving the generation of and access to climate variability data in Africa.

A further important initiative towards mainstreaming was taken when environment and development ministers of the OECD countries agreed on a Declaration on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Cooperation in 2006. As a result, the DAC Secretariat conducted a stocktaking review of integration of climate change adaptation in development cooperation among member states, international organizations and IFIs. On the basis of its analysis, the Secretariat is now working with a special task team of member countries to develop guidance on mainstreaming. A second draft is about to be presented to member governments.

With a similar purpose, but through a less formal process and originating in the so-called Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group (VARG), a number of practitioners among donors and international agencies have met annually to share experiences of developing climate adaptation tools. Recent meetings were organized by the World Bank, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Institute of Development Studies.

Among development countries much attention has been given to the so-called National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA), established by the Conference of the Parties in Marrakech in 2001, whereby the Least Developed Countries receive funding from a GEF-managed mechanism and technical assistance from UNDP to analyze adaptation needs and design plans.

Recent funding initiatives include the EC's Global Climate Change Alliance, launched in late 2007 with one of its purposes to assist developing countries to integrate adaptation in development planning, including through funding of their NAPAs. The EC has earmarked Euro 50 mill to the GCCA with Sweden as the first country to provide support through a contribution of SEK 50 mill announced during the Bali climate change conference.

The World Bank is in the process of establishing a trust fund, supported from the UK government's Environmental Transformation Fund, to support adaptation strategies in 5-7 pilot countries.

In addition to these initiatives, it is worth mentioning two specific initiatives to analyze costs and cost-effectiveness of investments in disaster risk reduction and adaptation, taken by the ISDR Secretariat and the World Bank, and by the Netherlands, UK and the World Bank, respectively, and that are likely to have an influence on the understanding of mainstreaming efforts since they

will build on detailed risk reduction and adaptation scenarios. None of these initiatives is off the ground in practical terms.

The overall picture is one where high-level awareness and endorsement of integration of adaptation in development cooperation exists. This does not necessarily mean that translation into active implementation has gone very far or is straightforward, however. It is pertinent to point out that general mainstreaming experience has demonstrated a range of problems and challenges, one of which obviously is that donors and partner countries may not attribute the same importance to the issue in question. Furthermore, integrating a high-priority policy concern in all programs and sectors may lead to a paradoxical loss of visibility as well as unclear responsibilities and accountability for its implementation. Measuring and attributing progress and impact of adaptation elements also constitutes a methodological difficulty when integration has gone very far. It is clear that giving weight to adaptation in development planning needs to build on and learn from experiences made from mainstreaming other issues.

Practical experiences of climate screening, climate proofing and mainstreaming

Recent reviews of mainstreaming initiatives¹² give opportunity to draw some general conclusions of where donors and agencies find themselves in terms of integration of adaptation.

General findings are that i) a significant share of development investments are at risk of being affected by climate change; ii) attention to climate change in donor policies, strategies and projects is low, even in areas where climate is already posing considerable risk; iii) where mentioned, climate change is mainly addressed as a mitigation issue and an environmental concern with little links to poverty reduction; iv) it is mainly dealt with by environment departments.

The conclusion is that analysis of potential impact of climate change on development investments is at an early stage, and that more strategic integration towards mainstreaming is largely absent. However, an increasing number of agencies are now in the process of developing tools with the purpose of making mainstreaming possible. This means that we are at a strategic and critical moment in order to achieve consistency and coherence among actors and to engage with countries at risk. If donors work together, supported by the OECD-DAC Secretariat, sharing screening tools and instruments and involving partner countries in the process, then screening and risk assessments can be used as entry points for more substantive dialogue on a strategic approach to adaptation. When donors conduct joint assessments, together with partner countries, the chance will increase considerably of ensuring coordinated and harmonized approaches in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Experiences from adaptation projects and programmes

Although examples and experiences of mainstreaming are still few and far between, a significant number of projects with adaptation as a primary or implicit objective are to be found. A recent review by the World Resources Institute of 135 cases provides some interesting insights³.

Coinciding with experiences from mainstreaming that there is limited integration of adaptation at a strategic level, most examples were in the form of rural projects conducted at a local community level. There were few examples of urban initiatives, or at a national or regional level. Two basic approaches were found – either projects sought to respond to specific climate change impacts, or efforts were made at building resilience and reduce vulnerability to a range of risks

¹ Klein, R.J.T., Eriksen, S.E.H., Naess, L.O., Hammill, A., Tanner, T.M., Robledo, C. & O'Brien, K.L. 2007. Portfolio screening to support the mainstreaming of adaptation to climate change into development assistance. *Climate Change*, 84:23-44

² Gigli, S. & Agrawala, S. 2007: Stocktaking of progress on integrating adaptation to climate change into development cooperation activities. OECD, Paris.

³ McGray, H., Hammill, A., Bradley, R., Schipper, E.L., & Parry, J-O. 2007: Weathering the storm. Options for framing adaptation and development. World Resources Institute.

and challenges. There were few initiatives that did not use existing development ‘tools’, what was unique was rather in the formulation of problems and setting of priorities. Often an ‘adaptation dividend’ was found to be gained from a project having a different purpose because it built general institutional capacity and community resilience. Some projects were in the form of activities that were added to an existing project in order to protect it from climate change or variability – i.e. it had a climate-proofing element. There were also projects with a discrete objective of confronting climate change outside of historic climate variability.

Underlying many of these experiences is a profound uncertainty with regard to what will come. The absence of reliable meteorological data, and even less projections of longer term climate variability and trends, constitute fundamental constraints for local communities and authorities that have to design their adaptation actions and strategies. The importance of information access to empower those that are confronted with risks and hazards beyond their historical experience cannot be overemphasized.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions could be considered by the Commission:

- Although high-level political endorsement of integration of adaptation into development planning is strong, implementation is still largely absent;
- Donors have opportunities to work together, share experiences and conduct joint risk assessments and portfolio screening for efficiency and coherence, supported by the normative role of OECD-DAC;
- On this basis, donors may establish coordinated dialogue with partner countries at risk and seek opportunities for entry points to integrate adaptation in development planning;
- Improved access to information continues to be a critical need for countries and communities facing the impact of climate change;
- There are a number of research questions to be addressed in order to optimize mainstreaming of adaptation: when and how is it most relevant and effective; how can we understand the impact of mainstreaming; how can integration of adaptation be reconciled with the need for transparency and additionality of funding?