

Asia-Pacific Regional Adaptation Experts' Inputs to Technical Examination Process on Adaptation

More than 1,000 adaptation experts from government ministries, academic and research institutions, non-governmental and civil society organizations, financial institutions, private sector, and UN agencies gathered at the headquarters of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila from 17 to 19 October 2018, for the sixth Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum.

The forum was jointly organized by ADB, the Climate Change Commission of the Philippines, the Government of Palau, and the United Nations Environment Programme, Secretariat of the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN). This expert gathering is the biennial flagship event of the (APAN), and included the “Resilience Roadshow” technical expert meeting, as one of a number of climate resilience and adaptation related deep dive sessions.

The focus of this year’s forum was ‘Enabling resilience for all: Avoiding the worst impacts’. Discussions focused on actions towards climate-resilient development in the context of Asia and the Pacific, taking resilience as a unifying theme. Sessions centred on the desired end-point of adaptation and its applications to natural, human, economic, engineered and island community systems. The forum was structured around four thematic “streams” focusing on the resilience of (i) social and human systems, (ii) natural systems, (iii) industry and the built environment, and (iv) island communities. One plenary session and six technical sessions were held under each of the four streams.

Practitioners, officials and experts presented high-impact case studies demonstrating actions taken and technical solutions, while several sessions explored the ever-expanding role of financing institutions and the private sector in developing and providing adaptation-relevant technologies, products, finance and knowledge.

Key messages around current practices, lessons learned, and way forward emerged from the forum sessions include:

Policy and governance

- i. **Policy sets the tone for action**, but work needs to be done to move from policies to action and implementation. It takes both national and international cooperation to address the overarching issue of climate change, and to mobilize resources and financing. Better communication is needed to ensure that support provided fits the adaptation needs of the island and local communities.
- ii. **Building a ‘green economy’** requires the identification of skills requirements for ‘green jobs’ and strengthening education systems to support this transition. Ensuring a ‘just transition’ to build resilience for all means that investments must ensure access for the most vulnerable sector, including the informal economy. A just transition can be facilitated by building awareness,

developing sector- and occupation-specific skills, and enhancing financing mechanisms and market mapping, and can be expedited by fostering partnerships.

- iii. **Mainstreaming the consideration of climate risks in investment projects** is often challenging, but integrating and investing in resilience has long-term benefits and dividends that must be recognized. Targeted scientific assessments and amassing evidence of successes could play a significant role in building cases for financing and investments for resilience building.
- iv. **Local leaders and champions** can support the process of downscaling adaptation planning and actions, by mediating the many coordinating mechanisms, and translating policy into action to benefit local communities.
- v. **Bottom-up approaches involving all stakeholders** are necessary to develop resilient infrastructure. Whilst design standards have their own legal barriers, community engagement and the involvement of businesses can trigger the change process.

Focusing on the most vulnerable

- i. **Climate change exacerbates existing inequalities** and vulnerabilities, which can be offset if a gender perspective is integrated into all aspects of adaptation action.
- ii. **Non-economic loss and damage**, including forced displacement, is increasing. Addressing data gaps on risk information and developing early warning systems can help ensure that migration is a choice, rather than a necessity.
- iii. **Innovative social protection programs** can help the vulnerable and poor to cope with climate impacts, if they are flexible and responsive to individual requirements. Resilience is best supported when social protection covers various aspects, such as employment, livelihood, and skills development. Targeting of beneficiaries must utilize risk information to address poverty and climate resilience at the same time.
- iv. **Adaptation should be embraced at the local level**, as achieving climate resilience is context specific. Local governments must employ the best available science and downscaled climate data, whilst empowering communities to address their risks and vulnerabilities. Adaptation often involves being innovative in finding solutions to address locally specific risks. Science-informed governance that puts the welfare of the communities, especially women, children and vulnerable groups, at the core of climate action and investment plans, provides the ideal environment to build genuine resilience and ensure 'no one is left behind'.
- v. **Youth leaders can be powerful communicators to raise awareness** locally and globally, on environmental stewardship, climate consciousness and ecosystem protection. Youth leaders may also be the most influential conduit of community needs and represent a powerful intermediary to inspire government actions. They can be the best channels of climate responsibility messages and adaptation awareness to corporations and other actors, to support climate resilient development.
- vi. **Solutions for climate-proof infrastructure** are becoming available in island contexts. Development plans are increasingly integrating sustainable development and resilience-building. The private

sector is becoming more proactive, and public-private partnerships are providing strong opportunities for advancing adaptation action.

Science and technology for climate-resilient development

- i. **Community-level adaptation technology** often draws substantially on many traditional practices employed across villages and regions. A “bottom-up” network, with the ability to capture these experiences, would transform them into systematic, rather than anecdotal, learning.
- ii. **Climate information services must be enhanced** to address both rapid and slow onset events and benefit the most vulnerable. Climate information should underpin policy and practice, and downscaled data can inform community-level adaptation and action, if information is delivered quickly and appropriately.
- iii. **Indigenous knowledge links to climate science** – and better understanding of this inter-relationship between science and traditional practices will build local and national-level resilience.
- iv. **Protecting coastal and ocean ecosystems** not only enhances livelihoods but can also increase resilience.
- v. **Digital technology, big data and crowdsourcing** are key to informing adaptation decisions moving forward. Systems thinking is becoming increasingly important to deal with the many different elements and actors involved. Information analysis, accessibility, and applicability of information is crucial for policy makers and capital markets alike.
- vi. **Uncertainties are no excuse for inaction.** Decisions need to be taken now and it is possible to work with uncertainties by characterizing and managing them programmatically and transparently.

Financing climate resilience

- i. **Adaptation financing is drawing on a growing and diverse range of sources**, including from national budgets, public-private-partnerships, and other non-traditional, non-vertical mechanisms. The capital market at large is paying more attention to adaptation projects and social impact investment is gaining more traction. Yet, there is a need to agree on definitions and criteria to identify adaptation projects.
- ii. **Timeliness in risk financing** is crucial, as evidenced by lessons from *forecast-based financing*. Vulnerable communities must be provided with assistance before they are hit by hazards, to maximize adaptation actions and preparedness, and minimize the impacts.
- iii. **Risk insurance and transfer** must be integrated into the resilience framework. Risk insurance must be affordable, accessible, and appropriate, and converge with disaster risk management. Multi-sector participation in planning is beneficial to mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction at all levels.
- iv. **Expediting adaptation finance and investment** relies on presenting a strong rationale, based on an improved understanding of climate-related risks and vulnerabilities, as well as adaptation prioritization and options, in key sectors and regions.

- v. **Agriculture must be integrated into adaptation efforts** in financing to feed the growing population and protect livelihoods.

Nature-based approaches to climate resilience

- i. **Urban environments are unique ecosystems** where most of our economic activity takes place and significant impacts can be achieved. However, applying ecosystem-based adaptation principles in these contexts is unprecedented and rural experiences are often not relevant.
- ii. **Nature-based solutions are not a silver bullet**; they need to be used in conjunction with other solutions integrating the built environment with the broader natural environment, in gray-green approaches.
- iii. **Financing ecosystem-based adaptation** faces the challenge of justifying and prioritizing investments. Scientific data based on pilot interventions is available, but there is no integration across sectors.
- iv. **Nature-based solutions and examples are available**, but these need to be scaled up, and existing practices adopted and funded. This requires strong collaboration across sectors, and building partnerships and capacity for monitoring of interventions.
- v. **Maintaining ecosystem services whilst alleviating competition** and demand for resources is a key objective. Building resilience in ecosystems requires long periods of time which are inconsistent with electoral cycles and traditional investment parameters. Nevertheless, not doing so brings many species closer to extinction and poses clear anthropogenic threats. Hence, it is only wise to finance and invest in the ecosystem-based approaches.

All information on the forum (including programme, speakers, presentations, daily reports) can be found on the forum website: <http://www.asiapacificadapt.net/adaptationforum2018>.

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