

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE INFORMATION SHARING AND NETWORKING

Introduction

Climate change adaptation is a multidisciplinary undertaking, requiring collaboration from diverse actors who operate in different sectors. This makes it critical to share information and share it well. Informed by a forum organized by the Global Adaptation Network (GAN) that was attended by nearly one hundred participants, this brief looks at tools, activities, and techniques for effective knowledge sharing through adaptation networks.

About GAN and the Forum

The GAN's mission is to help build climate resilience of vulnerable communities, ecosystems, and economies through the mobilization of knowledge for adaptation. The GAN works globally to influence policy, while its regional networks work to aid policy nationally and regionally. The GAN comprises four regional networks: the Regional Gateway for Technology Transfer and Climate Change Action (REGATTA) in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN), the West Asia Regional Network on Climate Change (WARN-CC), and the Africa Adaptation Knowledge Network (AAKNet). The GAN Forum, held in Panama City in March 2015, brought together experts and government officials from the various adaptation knowledge networks. It provided a unique opportunity for dialogue and learning between adaptation actors and networks inter-regionally and globally.

The knowledge exchange among the GAN Forum participants aimed at learning from the region's most successful activities: those that have reached the most diverse actors and were considered most effective in terms of supporting policymaking. Based on a discussion around the success factors ("Why was the activity useful?" and "What were the outcomes?") as well as a subsequent analysis with participants, GAN found that three activities were

the most successful: REGATTA's "webinars and communities of practice," APAN's "Finance Forum," and the "Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative." Each activity was successful for distinct, and sometimes unexpected, reasons, as discussed in this brief on "Climate Change Adaptation: Tips for effective information sharing and networking," which is aimed at policymakers, practitioners, and network leaders working in the field of climate change adaptation.

The need for effective networking

During the GAN Forum, a presentation on “Making Adaptation Knowledge Networks Work” was given by Dr. Blane Harvey, senior program officer at the International Development Research Centre. During his presentation, Harvey emphasized that networks are necessary because.

“Complex problems [such as climate change] require collaborative approaches that place the capturing and sharing of learning at the heart of organizational culture. This requires working across organizational boundaries and building relationships, creating a shared understanding of the problem and people’s framings of it from early stages.”¹

However, developing a collaborative approach in and between knowledge networks is not always easy and can, for example, be hindered by.

- A lack of incentives to share or use new knowledge.
- Poor coordination.
- Information overload.
- Differences in cultural norms and languages.
- Limited resources and technological access.

In the context of climate change adaptation, it is important to spread information through effective networking as the mobilization of knowledge for adaptation is needed in order to build climate resilience around the globe. Although the recent

1. 2007 Report of the Australian Public Service Commission.

rise of online adaptation knowledge networks has led to knowledge innovations, reduced costs of engagement, and widened audiences, the human dimension remains essential. The following chapter presents three examples of effective networking from the regional GAN networks.

Effective networking: Examples from the regions

REGATTA’s webinars and communities of practice

REGATTA offers access to communities of practice (CoP) and online seminars or “webinars” through its online platform. The online CoP focus on climate change adaptation organized around either a particular ecosystem (e.g., the Andes) or theme (e.g., health). Currently, REGATTA facilitates eight active online communities of practice that have a total of more than 4,000 registered users, and it offered 73 virtual webinars.²

Why was the activity useful?

- The CoP provide targeted information produced by experts in the field.
- They are maintained by an expert content manager so they are constantly updated.
- They are accessible “on demand” at any time
- The REGATTA platform provides a “one-stop shop” with access to specific fields of expertise so that professionals have to look at only one

2. For more information, please see REGATTA’s web page: <http://www.cambioclimatico-regatta.org/>

site to find extremely precise information for all their needs

- It offers tailored and specific support from a reliable community.

What were the outcomes?

Through the online webinars and CoP, REGATTA was able to target specific topics of current relevance and at the same time engage simultaneously with diverse actors across the region, from producers to users of knowledge. The capacity of practitioners and policymakers was built. For example, in the case of CoP Andes, approximately 2,000 persons subscribed to the community, in which the 11 organized webinars attracted 1,150 participants.

APAN’s Finance Forum

One of APAN’s most innovative activities has been to go beyond traditional environmental policymakers and work with policymakers from ministries of finance, planning, and development. Adaptation is a long-term, multi-sectorial investment that requires attention well beyond the traditional environmental sector. APAN has reached out to engage these communities of policymakers through training activities and workshops. APAN has hosted five workshops on the topic of climate finance, in addition to discussing finance in sessions devoted to the topic during the third and fourth APAN forums. A recent workshop on climate change adaptation finance was held in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum 2014, offering 30 participants from 11 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific opportunities for high-quality learning and knowledge exchange. APAN has also conducted research on climate finance.³

3. “Gap analysis related to adaptation finance” 2013 – In order to provide the necessary support and enhance the adaptive capacity of developing and least developed countries, various adaptation funding mechanisms have been set in place to provide resources for adaptation and adaptation-related projects as created and prioritized by the UNFCCC Adaptation Fund. This report is a study on existing climate adaptation funds to assess gaps in accessing adaptation finance.

Why was the activity useful?

- The Finance workshops brought together diverse communities of policymakers to bridge the usual gaps and help them prioritize mutually beneficial activities.
- The workshops demonstrated to countries how to access climate funds in order to implement the programs and projects of their National Adaptation Programs of Action, National Action Plans, etc.
- Through mock exercises, the workshops also demonstrated how to develop proposals, donor pitches, and how to engage in face-to-face interaction with donors such as Adaptation Fund, GIZ, AusAID, GCF, CTCN, etc.
- The workshops enabled the participants to recognize the importance of taking a multi-disciplinary approach and the need to involve different stakeholders as well as different line ministers while formulating and implementing programs and projects such as the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Planning, etc.

What were the outcomes?

Although no analysis of spending has been undertaken, presumably the activities have increased investment in adaptation by the targeted ministries. Furthermore, investments in infrastructure, development, or planning may now be more “climate-resilient” or “climate-proof”

The Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative

GAN and REGATTA together with UNFCCC developed and piloted an activity in the Andes that is already on its way across the globe to West Asia. The Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative or “LAKI” was developed with the understanding that knowledge



gaps are a barrier to widespread and successful adaptation, and that prioritizing such gaps is essential to effectively addressing and fulfilling them.

The LAKI methodology employs a variation of the Delphi method to identify knowledge gaps, identify prioritization criteria, evaluate and prioritize knowledge gaps, and identify and prioritize responses. Although workshop participants have different opinions and select different criteria, the LAKI methodology is a means for a diverse group to optimize group thinking, and potentially result in agreement. The outcome of the Andean pilot was a list of the top 10 climate change adaptation knowledge gaps. Further action is being taken to indicate which organizations or entities could lead in finding solutions to the identified gaps.

Why was the activity useful?

- The LAKI brought together diverse actors and produced a universally agreed-upon road map for addressing knowledge gaps that crossed knowledge sectors.
- It provided an opportunity to bring to light the various adaptation gaps across the region, and to prioritize ideas for solutions.
- It also gave diverse actors a common reference point for collaboration and a common platform (agenda) for advocacy.

What were the outcomes?

The main outcomes of the LAKI were a list of the top 10 universally agreed-upon adaptation knowledge gaps, and the establishment of closer connections and optimized group thinking among the participants.

Upscaling network activities

Based on presentations and discussions that took place during the GAN Forum, seven best practices for adaptation knowledge networks for upscaling activities could be identified:

➤ Know your audience

Be aware and remain aware of your audience, who are you trying to reach, which information is useful for your audience, and in what shape and at what pace do they need it? Take into account limitations of virtual interaction for local communities and choose adequate media for your audience. For example, when working with local communities in developing countries, showing a short movie in the local language is likely to create more effect than promoting a high-tech phone application.

➤ Develop a sense of community

It is important to create bonds among participants and foster sense making, for example, through

the co-creation of a common vocabulary. Network activities must focus on the creation of a feeling of ownership of the knowledge that is produced together by the network members, and engagement within the regional communities is a prerequisite for sustainable and effective regional engagement.

➤ Create success online or face to face

Several regional GAN networks are (co-) organizing annual conferences and fora in the field of climate change adaptation. This is an excellent way to provide knowledge-sharing opportunities for the research community, policymakers, and decision makers on the ground, and to link your network's activities to a higher policy level. At the same time, other networks were successful in engaging exclusively online through a combination of webinars and online discussions. In both cases, it is vital to have a list of high-quality contacts and experts right from the beginning.

➤ Connect with both ends

While focusing your network activities to attract the interest of policymakers, remain connected to regional and local NGOs that work with people on the ground. Their wants and needs should be clearly communicated at the higher policy level, and local traditions and adaptive practices must be taken into account in problem-solving processes.

➤ Add value to the network

As users tend to become lost in the huge amounts of information available online, aim to prevent duplication by bringing existing information into context or linking your users to highly relevant information sources. The climate change adaptation space is highly complex, and it is important for all networks to find a way to clearly capture and communicate information. Bring in experts and facilitate dialogues that are context-specific, and, based on specific needs of your members, you could create new knowledge.

➤ Measure your impact

Try to define and measure the added value and effectiveness of your network. Stay in touch with your members and listen to their feedback to improve your activities. Develop clear targets so you can define concrete indicators of success.

➤ Ensure sustainability

The importance of sustainability to grow incrementally and evolve over time cannot be underestimated. Ensure your network's future activities by building a solid financial base, establishing strategic partnerships, and forming a core group of committed community champions. When possible, collaborate and integrate with others rather than compete.

