GIVRAPD
Global Islands' Vulnerability Research Adaptation Policy and Development

POLICY BRIEF

RECONCILING NATIONAL ADAPTATION POLICIES WITH LOCAL LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION IN SIDS: INSIGHTS FOR REPLICATION

Nº 4: JULY 2015

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- The existence of adaptation deficits in SIDS require linking national adaptation plans of actions and other climate policies with local level development needs for successful replication efforts.
- National level governments play a crucial role in the governance of adaptation as they confront existing barriers by changing policies or providing enabling conditions. But they could also constrain local bottom-up initiatives on adaptation by marginalizing community inputs and local leadership.
- Stakeholder workshops and participatory planning exercises in GIVRAPD learning sites provide insights into local implementation barriers that can be overcome through collective action by targeting national adaptation units for research and local monitoring, citizen science, and knowledge mobilization.
- Furthermore, field research demonstrates that the 'problem of fit' between local institutions and global change dynamics require various governance mechanisms that empower stakeholders, build social capital, and nurture collaborative partnerships capable of innovative decision-making.

THE GENESIS OF NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANS

In planning towards climate change adaptation, most vulnerable countries in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are expected to provide their National Communications and National Adaptation Programs of Actions (NAPA). This is a requirement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These action plans offer insights into the level of vulnerability, adaptation needs, priority sectors, and targeted stakeholder groups. Most SIDSs have made significant progresses in developing their national adaptation policies and action plans. Some are still work in progress (e.g. the Jamaica National Climate Change Policy and Action Plan) whilst some are already in place (e.g. St Lucia National Climate Change Adaptation Policy). Despite these milestones, there is still room to mainstream climate adaptation considerations into key sectoral goals and to improve inter-ministerial collaboration by linking national adaptation policies with local development needs.

Increasingly as well, NAPAs are becoming conduits for leveraging donor funding mechanisms such as the Adaptation Fund, Least Developed Countries Fund, and the Special Fund for Climate Change for strengthening the adaptive capacity of SIDS and to mainstream adaptation into national development policies. These projects and programmes are mainly focused on the most vulnerable sectors (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, water, and forestry) and on assessment, capacity-building, and knowledge mobilization. However, these programmes and projects mainly respond to national priorities and little input is sought from the local level with gaps existing between national adaptation policies and project implementation at the local level, where most of the impacts are felt.

This brief and GIVRAPD research offers opportunities to address these disconnects between national adaptation policies and local level implementation.

LOCAL LEVEL CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Despite their geographical and cultural diversity, SIDS share similar economic and sustainable development challenges under changing climate. As there is no immediate sign that the global level of greenhouses gases will be reduced significantly to curb the likely impacts of climate change, SIDS need to augment their adaption portfolios to be resilient as the cost of doing nothing is high in the long-term. Gaps do exists on suitable approaches in translating global climate scenarios into down-scalable national action plans that can easily be implemented at the local community level (Figure 1). Hence a nuance understanding of the linkages between first and second order adaptation interventions is necessary in reconciling national level planning and local implementation. These challenges are due to an adaptation deficit, scale mismatch, sectoral approaches, and diverse stakeholder needs.

Figure1: Gaps exist in matching institutional response to coastal and marine social-ecological systems

The GIVRAPD project recognizes these challenges and underscores that climate change adaptation, community resilience, and disaster risk reduction need to be coordinated not only from the national level but also at the local level with the support and participation of communities and stakeholder groups. The Hyogo Framework for Action, which is embraced by SIDS, is useful in meeting these synergistic and complementary benefits. Hence the capacity to adapt and be resilient depends on the level of integration of national level policies on adaptation and disaster risk reduction with local strategies in partnership with community members and stakeholder groups in a collective manner.

ASSESSING AND OVERCOMING ADAPTATION BARRIERS FOR LOCAL ACTION

SIDS has a high awareness of the impacts of climate extremes and their need to adapt. Their socio-economic contexts, in addition to their exposure to natural disasters make these SIDS some of the most vulnerable countries in the world. Whilst GIVRAPD project countries such as Jamaica, Mauritius, the Seychelles and St Lucia are making real progresses in adaptation planning at the national level, there are still barriers and limitations that need to be understood and circumvented. These limits include biophysical, political, financial, sociocultural, and institutional concerns. Studies about addressing barriers to adaptation remain limited and typically conclude with short-term recommendations that are theory driven and does not reflect real life experiences. In gaining a better understanding of the possible barriers underlying disconnects between national adaptation policies and local implementation, participatory planning and stakeholder workshops were convened to assess and identify enabling conditions and governance mechanisms in the in the GIVRAPD learning sites (Figure 2).

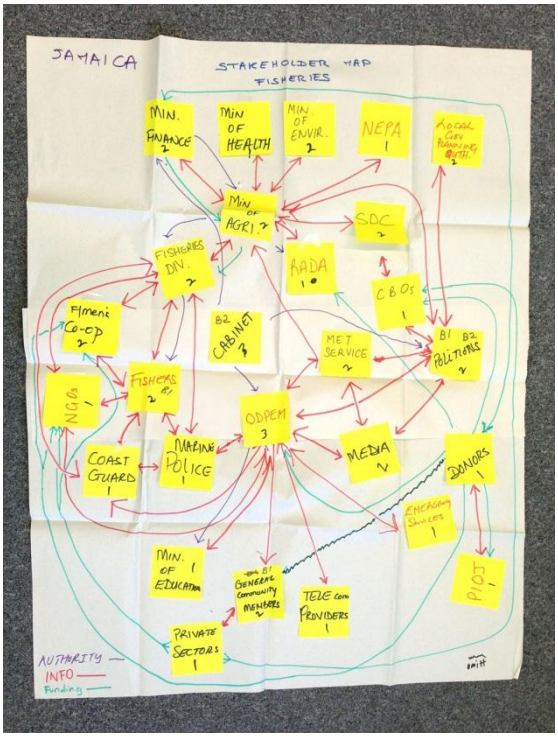

Figure 2: Governance stakeholder map

These workshops included representatives of local organisations as well as national organisations, covering three sectors identified as most vulnerable to

climate impacts: agriculture, fisheries and tourism. Five main activities were planned throughout the workshop, which aimed to bring diverse sectoral participants together: i) identify the existing stakeholders involved in adaptation planning and implementation; ii) assess linkages and relationships between the various stakeholders; iii) discuss and agree on critical barriers related to the implementation of adaptation measures; iv) identify strategies and actions that could contribute to overcoming the causes and drivers of the identified adaptation barriers drawing on 'adaptation good practice action'; and v) map relational ties, influence, and social networks amongst actors and partners. These activities provide insights to apprehend the quality and quantity of information flow, policy advice, funding streams, and lines of command and authority for institution al change.

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING FOR BEST PRACITICE GUIDELINES

Research findings from the various country workshops indicate that participants were very engaged with the group activities and welcomed the opportunity to talk face to face and agree on collective solutions in overcoming the identified barriers to local adaptation. Some of the participants highlighted they rarely have the occasion to brainstorm ideas and find consensus on climate change policy issues in this way. Most of the barriers identified in the workshops are surmountable, i.e. can be addressed using existing resources and capabilities without requiring external support or international expertise. For example, the lack of evidence and data towards local climate change vulnerabilities could be addressed by establishing and reinforcing national units and adaptation taskforces to coordinate research and monitoring activities as well as citizen science in mobilizing knowledge for action.

Figure 3: GIVRAPD researchers at the CARIBSAVE-CDKN Workshop and WriteShop

The participants underscored that solutions to overcome barriers are not always complicated nor should they always call for the external assistance outside of their region. The workshop participants in the four pilot countries were able to identify tangible barriers as well as come up with implementable solutions.

This demonstrates that participants had a real commitment in building consensus to address local adaptation issues in these islands and to go beyond 'barriers' to 'readiness' and local 'action'. However, a few of the barriers identified were more deeply-rooted into historical practices (i.e. development planning, sectoral approaches, critical infrastructure needs, cultural values, and education) and will therefore require longer time and institutional and behavioral changes to address these.

LINKING LOCAL ADAPTIVE CAPACITY WITH GOVERNANCE FIT

Knowing that adaptive capacity is necessary to address the local impacts of climate change in coastal social-ecological systems, concerns do arise as to how institutional processes can adjust to meet the scope and scale of climate change. Addressing the 'problem of fit' between local institutions, NAPAS, and global change requires various governance mechanisms that empower stakeholders to build social capital and nurture collaborative partnerships capable of innovative rules and modes of decision-making (Figure 3).

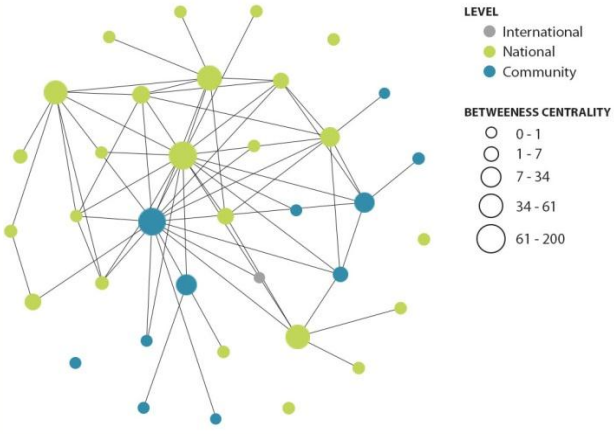

Figure 4: Institutional networks and governance arrangements for coastal-marine sustainability in St. Lucia (Source: Pittman et al. 2015)

Findings on the linkages between institutional adaptive capacity and governance fit using the Soufriere Marine Management Area (SMMA) in St. Lucia as a case in point revealed several strategies for addressing climate and other global changes. These include i) holistic and integrative approaches that recognizes human-nature interactions across scales and ecosystems; ii) collaborative arrangements between state and non-state actors; iii) local empowerment of actors and capacity building initiatives; iv) public-private and community partnerships; v) information flow and data monitoring systems for decision-making; and vi) strategic planning and integrated management under uncertainty.

The findings imply that although SMMA was intended to deal with coastal conflicts (between fisheries and tourism), it has evolved from a top-down state institution to an inclusive and collaborative multi-stakeholder association with diverse policy instruments that can address other emerging coastal threats such as climate change.

FOR FURTHER READING

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ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This policy brief is a product of research undertaken by the GIVRAPD project, a two year interdisciplinary research project funded by the Climate & Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) in collaboration with government agencies, community stakeholders and universities. The participating universities include University of Cape Town, University of Waterloo, University of Mauritius and University of Oxford. The project was led by INTASAVE/CARIBSAVE in partnership with the African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI), Global Climate Adaptation Partnerships, in addition to the Governments of Saint Lucia, Jamaica, Mauritius and Seychelles. The project seeks to understand the multi-scale socio-economic, governance and environmental conditions that shape vulnerability and capacity to adapt to climate change in four learning sites. Brief 4 identify and assess enabling conditions to reconcile barriers and limitations associated with participatory planning, cross-sectoral partnerships, and governance fit at the local level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CDKN Disclaimer and other acknowledgements to be added