

COP26 Workshop: Building Transformational Pathways to Adaptation in Eastern Africa

Feedback from breakout groups

Breakout Group 1

What research is needed to respond to the adaptation gap?

What planning and implementation regimes are appropriate for participatory and inclusive adaptation

1. Research on adaptation needs to be inclusive and involving and be informed by local actors and processes. To do this, we may need to ensure that there is local capacity to lead research i.e. people who have pre-existing knowledge of the local context.
 - Working with local partners to do the research and not inform the research e.g. PhD students and local postdocs from local communities who can get an understanding of the issue in an efficient way.
 - Governance issues
2. Identification of adaptation research needs should be context specific for each context.
3. Need for more updated and rigorous vulnerability assessments to complex climate change risks and how they interact with social, economic and political drivers.
 - Some of the information that is available on vulnerability is dated or not rigorous enough. We need more frequent and updated assessments of vulnerability that match the rate of change of these drivers.
4. An understanding of the political and governance related drivers of vulnerability and adaptive capacity, which are not easily or sufficiently captured by existing research, mostly because there is not enough (time) investment into research that looks into these issues: i.e., research does not invest enough into building trust by those who experience vulnerabilities.
5. Need to understand the power relations between groups at different levels which will be used to inform adaptation planning processes. It is particularly important to focus on power relations mapping that is community-centric. This should also focus on uncovering historical injustices and their roles in shaping or constricting adaptation choices.
6. Also need an understanding of which participatory processes and platforms are effective in enabling more inclusive adaptation planning processes.

How can research be used to stimulate learning?

- Better understanding of what people are doing successfully and how to scale this up to accelerate climate adaptation.
- Maybe have research funding for case studies that demonstrate success. These case studies can then be used by those who are looking to learn from other examples of adaptation.
- We also need to understand what is stopping adaptation I.E. what is preventing people from adopting adaptive strategies. E.g., people from Zanzibar are transitioning from unsustainable lifestyles to another, and we need to better understand the drivers of these

transitions and what could be barriers to these transitions, e.g. financial barriers, lack of or limited education etc.

- More systematized methods for managing knowledge on adaptation. These exist at different levels. For example, countries have databases of information on climate change risks and adaptation strategies. The suggestion here is that these need to be easily accessible to researchers so that any research builds on this knowledge.

Finance

- Effectiveness of adaptation finance: A more granular understanding of how diverse types of finance are allocated and how it is spent.
- Greater transparency for projects spending adaptation finance. Researchers can work with projects to develop mechanisms that improve transparency.
- We need to know how different financial models or tools perform in different contexts. For this, there needs to be a more balanced allocation of research funding across regions and places, e.g. there is more research funding going to Kenya as compared to Uganda.
- We need to understand where more research needs to be done, in a geographical sense as opposed to thematically.

General

- All research should be community-centric, because perceptions of climate change risks differ across communities and within communities.

Breakout Group 2

How to evaluate the feasibility of adaptation options and outcomes for resilient and sustainable development?

• What lessons can we learn from current research on the evaluation of adaptation feasibility and outcomes from multiple viewpoints?

1. There is a need for a common understanding of what 'feasibility' means to different communities. This is because different NGOs, research groups, local governments etc have different approaches/metrics/tools of defining adaptation strategies that are effective/not effective.
2. It is impossible to have a universal index/tool that can measure adaptation feasibility because adaptation measures are context specific in terms of biomes, cultures, objectives of interest, governance structures etc.
3. Some metrics that are used in East Africa and can be used to measure the effectiveness of climate change adaptation are a) household income e.g. measuring the fish harvested and income received in periods of droughts, floods or normal weather and when climate change measures are in place, b) household savings and loans during stable and unstable weather patterns, c) agriculture yields when climate change adaptation measures are in place and when they are absent, d) assessing if climate change risks (e.g. food, water and fodder scarcity) are avoided/or not avoided.
4. Funding agencies should fund research that allows communities to determine the success of adaptation measures and not researchers.

• How can evaluation research feed into the immediate needs of adjusting policy, finance and programming, including for transformative adaptation?

1. Simplify the accessibility and use of technology used for collecting data and monitoring environmental change.
2. Governance structures are critical in driving/hindering the success of climate change adaptation measures. They are also complicated and there is a need for cooperation between non-state actors and between local governments of different communities.

• What can be done to enable evaluation when data is scarce, for example when baselines are missing, time-series data unreliable or those impacted are difficult to reach?

1. Share available data in public repositories for academics and communities to access

Breakout Group 3

What examples are there of transformative adaptation research enabling action through addressing social justice, capacity building and governance?

This breakout group took the presentations of the morning as inspiration to further explore examples of transformative adaptation in Eastern Africa. We began with discussion of examples of circular bio-economies that had been highlighted by Professor Jacqueline McGlade. We briefly discussed the origins of these in industrial and urban design and then considered their application to ecological systems including forestry and agriculture.

The group felt there was considerable potential in such approaches, but also that there was scope to better consider issues of social justice. As an example, the group discussed the issue of marginalised and excluded communities, such as the Okiek of the Mau forest region who have been historically alienated from their forest lands. In this context the group agreed that more work would be needed to ensure that social justice was addressed either prior to or during the implementation of such approaches. The group noted how justice processes themselves as well and transformative actions must be led by communities and could not be designed by people from the outside.

In further discussion, the group noted how any schemes designed to foster environmental/ecological protection and especially carbon sequestration need to be designed to improve wider livelihoods but without overly commercialising the process – for example ‘Carbon Tanzania’. who have worked with Hadza communities in northern Tanzania as a good example of carbon sequestration work that acted to empower communities. Others expanded on this by noting how REDD+ schemes had often been presented in a top down and exclusionary manner, causing multiple issues - for example in the Cherangani Hills of Northwest Kenya and contrasted these kinds of approaches with, for instance, Costa Rica’s Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme as a stronger example where landholders seem to have been motivated first to protect their land in ways that are ecologically sustainable first because these are effective livelihood strategies and second because of additional government payments.

The group considered a recent report on Regenerative Agriculture for Africa (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/igp/sites/bartlett/files/igp_ra_for_africa_report_2020.pdf) as another good source of examples of African-led agricultural adaptation, including push-pull integrated pest management systems, the work of Pesticide Action Network, UK on organic pesticides in Ethiopia, the work of the Centre for no-till agriculture in Ghana and the Savory institute for regenerative agriculture in Zimbabwe.

Overall, the breakout group felt that social justice, capacity building and good governance in research were especially well delivered when the research was co-designed with partners and communities and that there is a considerable wealth of innovative good practices already in existence across the continent and that research might target learning from and foregrounding these examples.

Breakout Group 4

How can research funders, universities and data managers best champion inclusive, urgent and solutions-oriented adaptation research?

Structuring of Funding Calls and Research Design

- Funding calls need to move away from a model where questions and themes for investigation are created by external funding bodies removed from the lived realities of everyday people, and instead be bolder in allowing for the funding of research that emerge from criteria set by the communities that such calls often seek to assist. This may, for example involve supporting experimental 'emergent' projects that do not begin with a prescribed research question, but where the co-creation of research questions and methods IS the focus of research.
- Current criteria of funding calls result in very few opportunities to have PIs based out of an African institute to lead on projects. This results in continued imbalances of research agency and autonomy, where decision making processes, curation, analysis and dissemination of results are all too often led by host institutes in the global north.
- Enacting positive and urgent change is made all the more challenging when the energy, capacity and resources of many academics is taken up with institutional procedures that are inefficient to the point of being unethical (e.g. instances where partner institutes in Kenya have not received funds until after the project lifetime due to delayed due diligence processes).
- Procedures that allow for research ethics to be designed and co-created with research partners and communities as part of the initial research rather than being imposed by western institutions, often following a medical research format designed to protect western institutions and researchers rather than protect and empower research participants and partners.
- Strong sense that genuinely impactful research will only work with participation and co-design of local communities are at the centre of research processes. The solutions needed for adaptation research are place-based, complex and intersecting, and it is only by talking to and working with people that we may be able to identify and address the issues at hand.
- This may involve researchers rethinking their role not as the experts to be parachuted in to extract data, but rather as facilitators, enablers, curators and disseminators of community led knowledge creation.

Data Management and Dissemination

- Data needs to be deposited in both national and regional repositories where it can remain open access and accessible for people to be able to use it to interpret.
- We strongly recommend the use of FAIR principles in data management (<https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>) and highlight that there remains much work to build capacity for in country data management facilities.
- Data needs to not only be accessible in terms of open access storage, but also in its legibility for ordinary citizens who are not experts in the field. This means data and results need to be disseminated clearly and simply back to communities in order to allow for empowered decision making.
- Outreach channels through a range of avenues, particularly making use of the dynamic media networks (internet, TV, Radio), need to be tapped into, with funding possibly supporting a new generation of African content producers, journalists, teachers etc to convert data into digestible, relevant and impactful narratives in locally appropriate ways (e.g. African Voices, Shujazz Inc.), and to recursively engage with and foreground community led action as a source of inspiration and information for other communities.