

Question Five: How Can Information for Adaptation Decision Making Be Collected and Disseminated?

Timely, relevant and targeted information is the lifeblood of effective decision making. In this expert paper series on information for adaptation decision making, we ask authors to focus on innovative means for collecting and distributing the information required for countries to take effective national-level actions for climate change adaptation.

Merely having the “right” information does not ensure that a policy or plan will adequately address risks or opportunities presented by a changing climate. To successfully implement such policies and plans, information must also be collected and disseminated in ways that serve those who need it, such as affected local communities and government decision makers. In addition, enabling societies to adapt to climate change will require establishing systems that transfer relevant information both from the national to the local level and vice versa.

Of course, many countries will not have adaptation-relevant information. As a result, critical information gaps may affect some countries’ ability to maximize efforts to achieve climate resilience. The importance of filling these gaps should not be minimized. In this question, however, we seek specifically to assess the following: when useful information on climate risks and vulnerability *does* exist –

even if incomplete or imperfect – how can this information be effectively collected and disseminated?

Collection of Information

As climate change intensifies, collecting relevant information will become increasingly urgent and will expand in scope and scale. Both the increased variability that will result from a changing climate and the long-term nature of many climate-related impacts suggest that information for adaptation will need to be continually updated over long periods of time. Previously uncollected types of information may also be necessary to promote adaptation efforts. Both long-term political will and community buy-in will be needed to provide the capacity and support for such expanded collection activities. As climate-related surprises are also likely to trigger the need for rapid information collection in affected areas, vulnerable countries will need to develop both institutions and incentives accordingly.

Dissemination of Information

To be useful, information, once collected, needs to be analyzed and distributed to those who need it in a relevant and timely manner. For example, a farmer in the Sahel may not have much use for a spreadsheet of average regional rainfall over the past 100 years. However, if he or she has forewarning of when to expect reduced rainfall in the future and how that may affect yields, then a farmer can make potentially livelihood-saving interventions. Adding to the challenge facing governments, information for climate adaptation must reach *all* those who need it. New, innovative methods of information distribution will be crucial in a changing climate. A central online clearinghouse of data may not be accessible for a rural community in developing countries, but members of that community may be reachable by cell phone text message.

Information collection and dissemination is a mammoth task that will require significant support from local populations. Incentives for collection of information at the local level – as well as distribution of information across governance levels and communities – may therefore be needed to ensure ongoing provision and delivery of accurate data.

It is in the context of these imposing challenges to information collection and dissemination that we ask authors in this series to shed light on the question: ***How can information for adaptation decision making be collected and disseminated so as to advance integration of climate risks into plans and policies and be useful for those who need it most?*** In responding, we ask authors to draw upon real-world examples

of innovative processes for information collection and dissemination, whether from a climate context or another context that presents a similar need. We also invite authors to take into account any or all of the following sub-questions:

- What models and incentives can enable effective information collection?
 - Given the long-term nature of climate impacts, how can these models and incentives be sustained to continuously gather information?
 - Given the need for updating of information as climate risks evolve, what are effective models and incentives for ensuring continuous updates of information?
 - What are models and incentives for information gathering in response to events/surprises such as weather-related disasters?
- How can information effectively be translated into a form that fits users' needs? Who should be the target when translating information?
- What national-level processes and incentives can enable effective information dissemination?