

APRIL 2013

OVERVIEW

IIED Climate Change Group

Project name:

Government official group for mainstreaming

Project leaders:

Nanki Kaur (IIED lead), Mousumi Pervin (PECM lead)

Time frame:

Ongoing from 2011

Cost:

Approximately £265,000 since 2011

Objective:

Contribute to the ways that developing country governments are integrating climate resilience into development planning, and capitalise on their experience to move forward.

PROJECT SUMMARY

In November 2011, government staff from eight countries in Africa and Asia met at a workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to discuss ways to integrate climate change into development planning. Participants conceived a framework to assess and plan the process of 'mainstreaming' climate resilience, and developed the framework over two further meetings in Hanoi and Dar es Salaam. The term 'mainstreaming' was coined to describe a strategic, country-led approach to more efficiently and effectively address climate change in planning. IIED is now working with these government staff as a community of practice to share experiences and knowledge of climate main-streamlining.

THEORY OF CHANGE

As climate change challenges are recognised as constraints to development in poorer countries, governments are responding in ways tailored to their specific circumstances. There is no panacea for incorporating climate into planning – many actions could be taken – so development planners are rationalising what could be done with what needs to be done and what feasibly can be done. These experiences should be

Climate resilience: from mainstreaming to 'main-streamlining'

Government officials recommend a pragmatic approach to integrate climate issues into development planning.

Efforts to address climate change have grown beyond environmental policy and technical fixes. The latest planning in many developing countries looks to protect poor people and growing economies from climate threats by working across many sectors. Kenya's new Climate Change Action Plan spans finance, institutional arrangements, technology, capacity development, adaptation and mitigation, and knowledge management. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategic Action Plan is another national strategy with a wide remit, and the government is investing domestic revenue in implementation.

The push to integrate climate resilience into development policy is also coming from the industrialised countries that are responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions. They have pledged support for 'mainstreaming' climate change. But while everyone wants mainstreaming, those holding the purse strings have too often tried to dictate what the process should look like.

This is a problem for developing nations where climate impacts demand action now. At a 2012 meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, organised by the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) and IIED, officials from Bangladesh, Cambodia,

Myanmar, Laos, Kenya, Tanzania, The Gambia, Rwanda, Zanzibar, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Morocco shared common experiences of inefficient and superficial mainstreaming.

The issues being mainstreamed were perceived as coming from the outside, with development partners imposing specific expectations for planning, disbursement and monitoring systems. Governments that urgently need climate finance felt pressed to tick the boxes, follow along with the capacity-building exercises, and wait for approval and funding. This process ignored their own capacities and knowledge of the country's unique context and priorities; in fact, their supposed lack of capacity was treated as the problem to be solved. There was no sense of ownership by government staff, and little real impact.

The officials called for a different approach that would do what mainstreaming is supposed to do: build the response to climate change into the government's most vital institutions and policies. They argued that the process needs to be country-driven, using the government's existing priorities and capacities as the starting point and its planning expertise as the engine. Country officials should be asked to determine how climate change issues

shared across countries so that lessons can have wider benefits and mistakes and pitfalls can be avoided. The work on main-streamlining climate into planning is based on facilitating reflection, systematisation and sharing of experiential learning.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- Donor-driven efforts to 'mainstream' climate change issues into development policy have quickly spread, but with mixed results. Developing-country officials see prescriptive programmes ignoring their own knowledge and priorities – and treating their capacity as the problem to be solved.
- An alternative approach is to empower governments to determine how climate change issues relate to their plans and priorities, and to decide on actions. Government officials have named this more pragmatic and strategic approach 'main-streamlining'.
- Reflecting on their experiences with main-streamlining, officials from eight African and Asian countries identified three main building blocks for the process – an enabling environment, policy and planning, and projects and programmes.

PARTNERS' VIEW

The initiative provides the project partners an opportunity to analyse planning process for climate resilient development are at place and formulate a judgment in deciding the best possible way to address climate change challenges. It also creates a good platform to articulate those practices considering the country context

Mousumi Pervin
Poverty Environment and Climate Mainstreaming (PECM) project of the Bangladesh Government

IIED CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP

Working in collaboration with partner organisations and individuals in developing countries, the Climate Change Group has been leading the field on adaptation to climate change issues.

are relevant to their plans and decide what actions to take. Mainstreaming that uses the country's own systems and capacities is more pragmatic, context-specific and simpler than constructing a planning programme to donor specifications. It targets changes strategically and could get started immediately. The group in Dar es Salaam called it 'main-streamlining'.

Three building blocks

The concept of main-streamlining is linked with a framework for climate mainstreaming that is being prepared by the same group of government officials. Known as the GO group, they first met at a course facilitated by IIED staff at ICCCAD in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In the ICCCAD course they drew on their diverse backgrounds in government – local and national levels, and 'central' ministries such as finance and planning as well as 'line' ministries such as environment, agriculture and water – to reflect on their countries' experiences and needs around mainstreaming climate change. Based on these discussions, they identified three building blocks for successful mainstreaming: an enabling environment, policies and planning, and projects and programmes.

The enabling environment for mainstreaming includes political will to make climate policy and information services to guide it. Political will may be evident in high-profile bodies such as the Cabinet Review Committee on climate change led by the prime minister of Bangladesh. The second block, planning and policy, includes the policy frameworks being established in countries such as Kenya and Bangladesh, together with institutional arrangements and finance mechanisms. The projects and programmes block

takes mainstreaming to the project level. The three blocks are non-hierarchical and non-sequential; in some cases, strategic planning led by technocrats may come before high-level political will, or a country may be pursuing important development goals mainly through individual projects.

Towards a community of practice

Creating this framework helped the GO group compare progress and barriers in different countries. It highlights ongoing trends – climate change information is increasingly coming from in-country analysts rather than international sources, for example – along with challenges like knowledge gaps, lack of project funds and gaps in political support. Although the framework is more descriptive than prescriptive, other countries may be able to adopt or adapt it to clarify and guide climate mainstreaming efforts.

ICCCAD and IIED will facilitate another meeting of the GO group this April in Dhaka at the 7th Annual Community-Based Adaptation conference. IIED also plans to repeat the ICCCAD course on main-streamlining so that the group can gather annually and expand. The meetings will help a fully fledged community of practice to grow.

This way of working with the GO group reflects the principles that the group has expressed. We ask officials to assess their experience, assets and needs, and offer support that catalyses their own efforts to gain greater understanding and capability. Focusing on countries' existing resources and goals provides a sense of ownership – and a ready starting point for work to evolve that is both innovative and country-relevant. It is this type of approach that could

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