Indigenous and local knowledge in adaptation policies

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Key messages

- National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) give African States the opportunity to mobilize different knowledge systems.

- Ecosystems-based adaptation (EbA) takes place in situ, and is based on the capacities, techniques and knowledge of local populations who have a close relationship with nature. As a coping strategy in drylands and areas of uncertain rainfall, pastoralism is a form of EbA.

- In the context of climate change, the mobilization of the ‘best available knowledge’, facilitated through the interaction between different knowledge systems, may improve climate resilience and effective adaptation.

- A dialogue platform for different knowledge systems is needed, potentially by establishing multistakeholder international and national platforms for facilitating exchanges between holders of different knowledge systems.

Introduction

- Though climate change is primarily atmospheric, it is experienced locally and causes specific and sometimes unpredictable changes in biodiversity and ecosystems locally. Adaptation, both natural and human, happens at this local scale as a response to climate change impacts.

- Over generations, pastoralists have developed a diverse and complex knowledge system that allows them to predict the weather and climate of the coming seasons, in spite of the challenges posed by climate change. It is an exceptional resource for monitoring climate impacts and guiding adaptation.

- The synergies between science and local and indigenous knowledge require national policy support to ensure effective adaptation policy planning, information flow, accurate data and decision making. Best possible solutions can be achieved which are socially, ecologically and economically sustainable.

Key concepts

- **INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE**

  “Dynamic bodies of integrated, holistic, social and ecological knowledge, practices and beliefs pertaining to the relationship of living beings, including people, with one another and with their environments. Indigenous and local knowledge is grounded in territory, is highly diverse and is continuously evolving...”

- **ADAPTATION**

  The IPCC defines adaptation as the “initiatives and measures to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects”. The Cancun Adaptation Framework and the Paris Agreement, Article 7.5, recognized that adaptation actions should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems.
The project ‘Knowing our changing climate in Africa’ worked with pastoral communities in 6 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda), to document pastoralists’ knowledge with a view to promoting its consideration in the fight against climate change.

This transdisciplinary research project explores how a constructive dialogue between science and indigenous knowledge can facilitate the mobilization of the best available knowledge for the development of adaptation actions and policies.

As part of the project, an analysis was done of NAPs and/or NAPAs, to examine commitments to consultation with local communities and the inclusion of their knowledge.

International Multilateral Instruments and Agreements for Adaptation:

- 2001 National Adaptation Program of Action.
- 2010 Cancun Framework of Adaptation.
- 2010 National Adaptation Plans.
- 2013 Nairobi Work Program on Climate Change Impacts and Vulnerability and Adaptation.
- 2015 Paris Agreement.
- 2015 Planned National Planned Contributions.
- 2016 Sustainable Development Goals.

CASE STUDY
Adaptation policies in Burkina Faso:

Burkina Faso is an interesting case study because of its large number of adaptation policies:

- 1995 Interministerial Committee for the Implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and ratification of the UNFCCC.
- 2008 National Appropriate Mitigation Action Framework.
- 2014 National Adaptation Plan (NAP).
- 2015 Intended Nationally Determined Contributions.
- 2001 and 2015 Communications on Climate Change.

The NAP and NAPA were carried out in consultation with local stakeholders including pastoralists. National priorities - agriculture, water, livestock, biodiversity and forestry - are aligned with the priorities of Burkinabe pastoralists. Out of 12 NAPA projects, 2 concern pastoralist communities.

Findings

- All the project partner countries have developed NAPs and/or NAPAs, with the objective of consultation with local communities.
- Some recognize the importance of pastoral knowledge or practices. Uganda has elected to promote indigenous knowledge as one of its seven national priorities for adaptation.
- There is an awareness of the potential of knowledge co-production, however there were no clear cases of successful co-production.
- The interaction between indigenous knowledge and meteorology could provide:
  - Downscaling of seasonal forecasts;
  - Forecasting at different temporal scales;
  - Monitoring of climate sensitive biodiversity;
  - Landscape modelling to help with forecasting and assessing vulnerabilities;
  - Better understanding of micro-climates.

- Including different knowledge systems in adaptation policies would allow:
  - Better knowledge of the effects of climate change;
  - A reduction in conflicts related to the use of natural resources;
  - Development of adaptation techniques in priority sectors in Africa: livestock, agriculture and natural resource management;
  - Recognition and empowerment of pastoral populations considered vulnerable today, especially women.

**“Knowing Our Changing Climate in Africa” is a science-policy dialogue project initiated by UNESCO’s Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme.**

The project mobilizes indigenous and local knowledge on weather and climate. It uses dialogue between pastoralist communities and climate scientists to mobilise best available knowledge for adaptation. The project supports participatory research and dialogue between climate experts, pastoralists and scientists at regional and international science and policy forums.

The goal is improved human and environmental resilience. The project was conducted with Kenya and Least Developed Countries (LDC) including Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. Technical partnerships included the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and national, regional and international meteorological agencies.

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