

## **Thematic Area: Knowledge Management**

### ***UNDP: Adaptation Learning Mechanism***

#### **Outcomes and impacts of actions**

Adaptation to climate change is a growing priority for development agencies, governments and in particular for vulnerable communities. Recently there has been tremendous attention given to the importance of incorporating climate change adaptation into development planning; however, capacity and awareness are often limited, and experiences have yet to be widely shared. The aim of the Adaptation Learning Mechanism (ALM) is to fill this knowledge gap by providing a global knowledge sharing platform focused on climate change adaptation that accelerates the process of learning through experience.

The ALM is a GEF-funded, Inter-agency, web-based platform that maps good practices, provides relevant technical information, and builds knowledge and networks on climate change adaptation. ALM provides easily accessible country specific information on climate change scenarios and examples of impact assessments, adaptation strategies, programs and projects. In particular, the platform features practical guidance and good practices on adaptation and details of lessons-learned from around the world as contributed by practitioners from the field. The Global Knowledge Platform is implemented by UNDP in cooperation with the GEF, the UNFCCC Secretariat, the World Bank and UNEP.

The ALM has been online since the end of 2007, and is widely used and referenced. It contains 140 country profiles which display national-specific information including NAPAs, National communications, climate change scenarios, impact assessments, and relevant strategies and programmes on low-carbon/adaptation strategies in each country. These country profiles are being reviewed by national partners and UNDP country offices, and national relevant documents, projects, contacts are suggested for inclusion. In addition, case studies at the national and sub-national level are documented, and include multi-media material on local actions of climate change adaptation.

Recently, the ALM has undergone a substantive transformation and to become increasingly interactive, collaborative, and user-centred. A flexible open source content management system (Drupal), allows users to easily access information a powerful search engine, searching by geographic location, thematic area, document type or keyword. Further, the website is more easily navigable with new architecture and allows users to share their knowledge and comments more rapidly and network with other ALM members. ALM is now set-up in a participatory mode that allows user-driven content building to promote a community of practice. Social networking possibilities between members allow partners to communicate and share information across sectors and levels (global, regional, national and local). The ALM also links with other climate change networks to enhance the adaptation community, including AfricaAdapt, Adaptnet, Eldis, wikiADAPT, the World Bank Climate Change Portal, among others.

Through these recent achievements towards knowledge sharing and learning, ALM is supporting global adaptation processes and activities. The platform contributes to the development of practical guidance and guidebooks by drawing on the database of case studies, e.g. UNDP Guidebook on Designing Adaptation Projects, summary papers on good practices and thematic papers on UNDP practice areas. The ALM team has also conducted and participated in a number of conferences, workshops and seminars to encourage knowledge sharing on climate change adaptation and support collaborations and networking between knowledge platforms and stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the support of the ALM on global level adaptation processes, ALM also promotes knowledge learning and sharing on the ground. The platform allows country members to have easy access to the latest vulnerability assessments and national strategy documents relevant to understanding climate change adaptation matters including transfer of technologies. ALM members across UN agencies, national staff and Civil Society Organisations provide a wealth of ongoing project and initiative profiles which provide lessons learned from operations on the ground. The ALM also facilitates social networking between ALM members as a way to access tacit knowledge on integration of adaptation into development planning and implementation. In addition, the ALM has developed, together with the UNDP community-based Adaptation programme, a simple and user-friendly tool to allow communities to develop their own stories on local adaptation practices, which include photos, narration and music. The tool seeks to foster knowledge exchange from the ground and promote community-based adaptation to climate change. The tool also allows local communities to monitor adaptation activities in an interesting and participative way (from conception, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation), and supports efforts to strengthen community mobilization.

In addition to ALM's recent achievements, future work is currently being pursued to enhance knowledge sharing and learning on climate change adaptation. The ALM is currently developing a commonly agreed experience template with GEF implementing agencies and the UNFCCC Secretariat to identify the key areas and questions of learning focus for the next generation of climate change adaptation programs and projects. Further, ALM is actively engaged in piloting a regional knowledge platform in the Pacific which would foster dialogue among adaptation stakeholders, including Governments, UN agencies, Civil Society and the private sector, as a means of enhancing public and private knowledge and commitment to climate change concerns. ALM also plans to facilitate e-discussions on various themes, including agriculture, coastal zone management, and water management to identify and vet good adaptation practices and lessons learned and support information exchange between stakeholders.

### ***Emerging good practices and lessons learned***

Throughout the implementation and development of the ALM, several lessons have emerged which can help to further improve knowledge sharing and learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Conferences, workshops and seminars attended include: UNFCCC-technical workshop on building economic resilience in Egypt (March 09); ALM booth at CSD-17 and participation in inter-agency side event organized by Heifer International "delving the green revolution"; International workshop on Climate Change Guidance and Tools, in Berlin (GTZ, DFID, USAID, World Bank organized, May 2009); UNFCCC "yellow pages" planning meeting during Bonn talks, (June 2009); UNDP regional meeting (June 2009); 1 Climate Stop planning meeting (USAID, NASA and CACHALAC; August 09)

- 1) **Knowledge needs and gaps.** Information must be tailored to specific needs of stakeholders, in order to strengthen adaptation actions and decision-making. As stakeholders work to mainstream climate change adaptation into national programmes and policies, knowledge needs are changing over time and vary depending on the capacity of the national stakeholder involved. The ALM must continue to engage with relevant regional, national and local actors to identify evolving knowledge needs to provide appropriate tools and guidance to respond to apparent gaps.
- 2) **Good practices:** Since adaptation is a relatively new field, the first generation of climate change adaptation is still under implementation, making it difficult to identify operational lessons from projects on the ground. Nonetheless, the ALM conducted survey (2007) identified that examples of good practice (including on transfer of technologies) and lessons learned as one of the most requested knowledge products or services. Practitioners and project implementers need to work towards the identification and dissemination of lessons in the early phases of implementation, as opposed to waiting until implementation is complete several years from now.
- 3) **Coordination between UN, Governments and Civil Society Organisations:** Climate change adaptation is a new area of work for many organisations and thus in many cases the work has concentrated on defining strategies and positioning to capitalize on comparative advantages. Little collaboration and dialogue between UN agencies, governments and Civil Society Organisations has been taking place to decide on a collaborative and integrated effort on climate change adaptation. ALM continues to actively promote a community of practice around climate change adaptation to include all stakeholders, i.e. UN agencies, Government representatives, Civil Society Organizations, Media, local communities, private sector, centres of excellence and other institutions. Working with other existing climate networks, such as AfricaAdapt, AdaptNet, Eldis, wikiADAPT, the World Bank Climate Change Portal, enhanced cooperation among parties will inform the decision making process on change risks, mobilize collaboration and encourage partnerships.
- 4) **Importance of an Inter-agency approach:** The ALM has shown the value of an inter-agency approach to learning. Active participation and involvement of the GEF Implementing Agencies has supported the sharing of lessons learned between different focal areas of the GEF, as well as other thematic areas, and across all relevant stakeholders including the UN, Government and Civil Society Organisations. By incorporating and collaborating among agencies, various practices can be examined and analyzed and a broader scope of lessons can be extracted to support future adaptation practices and decision-making.

### **Emerging opportunities, challenges and further needs**

The ALM contributes to an improved understanding of climate change adaptation and mainstreaming adaptation into development planning. It is expected that the up-scaling of adaptation practices will be increased through participation in a knowledge sharing platform, by learning from past experiences and replicating good practices. The community of practice and knowledge base facilitated by the ALM is expected to grow

and develop, shaped by emerging knowledge needs and opportunities for collaboration. The ALM will continue to support an active community of practice through building national ownership of country profiles and facilitating knowledge sharing and learning on climate change adaptation practices between stakeholders at all levels, from local to global. For 2011-2015 the ALM will pursue an institutional and financial sustainability strategy to scale-up its efforts as a Global Partnership Initiative on Climate Change Adaptation that coordinates and secures committed learning services across stakeholders, focusing on decentralised regional knowledge platforms, national dialogue and learning, and community knowledge networks