

Input by Mr Patrick Pringle, UKCIP (formerly the UK Climate Impacts Programme): An independent perspective from the United Kingdom.

UKCIP is based at the University of Oxford and has supported climate adaptation in the UK and beyond since 1997.

1. Given the diverse set of indicators that currently exist to measure and evaluate adaptation, how can communities, countries and development and adaptation agencies build on a common understanding of success in achieving climate resilience?

The diversity of indicators should be viewed as strength rather than a weakness; it correctly reflects the fact that adaptation takes place within specific and diverse socio-cultural, socio-political and environmental settings and at different spatial scales. Efforts to consolidate this diversity into a list of widely applicable indicators are likely to lead to an over-simplification of what successful adaptation should look like. Instead, it may be more useful to define the common principles and characteristics of successful adaptation, such that coherent, yet context-specific, indicators can be developed. A framework which supports the greater coherence of indicators whilst also supporting diversity would be a useful outcome.

It is also important to remember that there is more to M&E than just quantifiable indicators (though they are valuable). Placing too much emphasis on metrics can mean that we do not really examine why something worked (or not) and we fail to examine unintended and unexpected outcomes fully. The latter is important in an emerging field such as climate adaptation, where innovation often stems from unexpected impacts and outcomes. We must also remember that success means different things to different people and that adaptation responses will reflect alternative ideas of what is desirable and achievable. Consequently there will be no single, universally agreed view of what successful adaptation, or climate resilience, might look like.

2. How can a framework be created that links individual assessments with national level assessments to broaden the focus from the means of achieving outcomes (individual interventions) to the desired end result (countries' becoming less vulnerable and having more adaptive capacity).

These two perspectives (M&E for individual adaptation measures and national level assessments) are both valuable in their own right; we should not assume that the national picture is simply the 'sum of the individual parts'. For example, national level assessments can play a valuable role in examining interdependencies between sectors and regions, revealing vulnerabilities and adaptation synergies which are not evident at the level of the individual intervention. So, yes, a framework which better connects these different levels of assessment is needed but it must recognise that both offer different, and complementary, perspectives regarding adaptation progress. Such a framework needs to draw upon the lessons at programme level but also feedback the broader perspective to ensure it is reflected in future programme design.

The approach taken by the Adaptation Sub-Committee in the UK is useful as they have sought to measure progress at national level by examining specific sectors and themes.

3. How can results from M&E be reported and disseminated so as to ensure that they are fed back into the respective adaptation process but also to allow for lessons learned and good practices identified to be shared with the wider community of adaptation planners and practitioners?

We need to first consider the purpose of our M&E efforts before examining the process of dissemination. Has learning really been placed at the heart of the evaluation process? Too often M&E is concerned only with accountability ('did we do what we said we would do?') and the deeper learning and challenging of our assumptions are not prioritised. Being prepared to learn from our successes and failures and share these lessons is the first step; the modalities of sharing are then more straightforward. The questions I would ask are 'how do we support effective learning through M&E for climate adaptation', then 'how do we create an open environment which encourages learning and sharing M&E results?'

I think that case studies derived from M&E can provide useful inspiration for others, but we now need to be smarter in the ways we categorise the lessons learnt to make them accessible and as relevant to practitioners as possible. For example, collating all lessons on water security projects in East Africa may not be useful even for an organisation dealing with the same issue in a similar location if the barrier to successful adaptation is a governance issue. In this case, lessons from seemingly unrelated programmes which have identified leverage points to influence existing institutions may be far more useful.

We should not only consider how lessons can be shared or disseminated but how they can inform on-going dialogues and exchanges of knowledge. This means developing more discursive, interactive ways of reflecting on the outputs of our M&E efforts. This needs to incorporate reflections on, and learning from, current M&E processes so that we 'get better at learning' and act upon what has been learnt.