

Indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation: overview, available tools, good practices and lessons learned

BACKGROUND

This synopsis highlights the best practices, lessons learned and available tools for the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices (ITKP) for adaptation. The synopsis is drawn from the findings of the following documents prepared under the Nairobi work programme (NWP):

Documents

“Report on the meeting on available tools for the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation, needs of local and indigenous communities and the application of gender-sensitive approaches and tools for adaptation” ([FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.11-2014](#))

Technical paper on “Best practices and available tools for the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation, and the application of gender-sensitive approaches and tools for understanding and assessing impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change” ([FCCC/TP/2013/11-2013](#))

Information source

The meeting was attended by over 60 representatives from Parties, constituted bodies under the Convention, and relevant international and intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as representatives of indigenous communities.

Literature review.

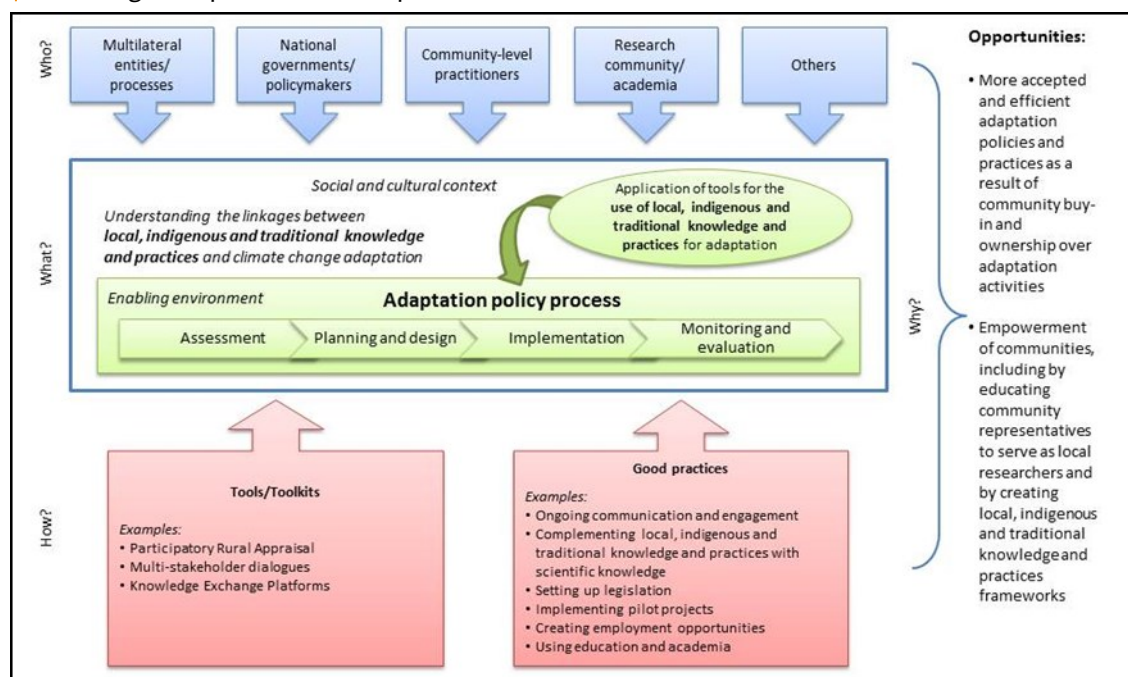
Why use ITKP for adaptation?

- Indigenous and traditional knowledge (ITK) contributes fine-grained, long-term observations about the changing environment:
 - * For example, the inclusion of indigenous and traditional observations and insights can complement modern meteorological observations and help extend the record back in time;
- ITKP helps define the range of options that a community might consider for adaptation, that are appropriate to its ecological and sociocultural environments and in conformity with its priorities, values and worldviews;
- ITKP enhances social cohesion and prevents or reduces inter-community conflicts.

KEY FINDINGS

The table below presents trends and gaps with regard to the use of ITK tools and practices for adaptation, as well as examples of tools and good practices that could contribute to scaling up the use of ITK for adaptation planning and action (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - An overview of key issues discussed in relation to the use of indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices for adaptation



Integrating ITK into an 'actionable' knowledge base

Key principle

- ITK ought to be appreciated in a manner commensurate with modern science.

What does it take?

- Locally appropriate, and economically and socially viable solutions are identified to build the resilience of natural and societal systems.

Which tools or methods can be mobilized?

- Complement modern scientific knowledge, practices and tools with ITKP;
- Recognize ownership and diversity of community knowledge and practices and their evolution over time;
- Ensure that local and indigenous communities and authorities are responsible for validating, mobilizing and sharing local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices;
- Ensure that funding bodies make community engagement a requirement in project design, and a precondition to obtain funding;
- Recognize the relatively long time frame required to build relations, trust and a collaborative environment with local communities and holders of ITK;
- Invest in long-term, cross-generational capacity-building for communities, addressing both climate change and the opportunities offered by ITKP to address its impacts;
- Facilitate community-led rather than community-based research.

Which tools or methods can be mobilized?

- Participatory rural appraisal tools, including participatory assessment and evaluation, participatory mapping and demarcation of protected areas and focus group meetings;
- Knowledge exchange platforms can also facilitate exchanges between communities, scientists and policymakers, to help create awareness and to enhance adaptive capacities;
- In all cases, community-level methods and tools need to go beyond vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning to grasp ITK's overall contribution to sustaining livelihoods and culture;
- Ill-adapted tools may alienate ITK holders and denature their contributions.

What are the major challenges today?

- Limited resources, including finance, technology and capacity;
- Changes in local and indigenous communities themselves through the adoption of modern lifestyles, leading to the discontinuation of intergenerational learning and abandonment of local and traditional practices.

Integrating ITK into adaptation planning at all governance levels

Preconditions

- National and local governments need to be willing and able to engage with local and indigenous communities, and to appreciate and respect the body of traditional knowledge and practices;
- National and local governments need to recognize that ITK has a major role to play beyond the early stages of the adaptation process (i.e. observation and assessment).

What does it take?

- Ensure multi-stakeholder dialogue at both local and national levels, and facilitate ongoing two-way communication;
- Institutionalize the linkages between informal local, indigenous and traditional processes and formal governmental processes, through a transparent coordination mechanism;
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved, at all governance levels;
- Take stock and assess whether and how local communities and holders of local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices are involved in decision-making processes and the development of legislation, and take appropriate subsequent action;
- Engage and involve subnational governments and intermediaries such as NGOs, community and faith-based organizations and universities, and clearly identify their roles in the adaptation process;
- Support relevant organizations in monitoring and evaluating government recognition of local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices so as to ensure accountability;
- Monitoring and evaluation using ITK indicators needs to be built into adaptation projects.

Which tools or methods can be mobilized?

- Mainstream local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices into the national adaptation plan (NAP) process;
- Set up platforms, legislation and protocols to facilitate conflict resolution and to ensure that the rights of indigenous communities (including their intellectual property rights) are respected;
- Through finance/economic instruments, including through earmarking and budget allocations by national governments and donors, ensure the incorporation of local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices in adaptation planning.

Scaling up the integration of ITKP into adaptation planning and action

What is required?

- Implement pilot projects;
- Create employment opportunities, for example through eco- and cultural tourism;
- Use education and academia by integrating local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices into school and university curricula;
- Enhance access to financial and technical support provided by donor entities:
 - * Explore ways of streamlining access to adaptation funding for local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices and reporting requirements for projects;
 - * Improve consistency on issues related to local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices, for example by defining indicators.

What is required?

- Enhance access to financial and technical support, through the UNFCCC process:
 - * Provide guidance to the Adaptation Fund and to the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, in integrating local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices into procedures for monitoring, evaluation and reporting;
 - * Provide organizations with stimuli and a mandate by inviting them to strengthen the consideration of ITKP in their adaptation activities and to share their experiences;
 - * Invite Parties to integrate local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices into adaptation project proposals and NAPs, to provide financial and technical support, to prepare reader-friendly summaries of adaptation work under the Convention and to support strategic stakeholder engagement;
 - * Consider, under the guidance of the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Adaptation Committee, the establishment of a group of experts to support the application of local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices in adaptation and to assess and report on the role of local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices in adaptation, for example through inviting submissions and preparing subsequent reports;
 - * Consider the provision of technical support, for example in identifying good practices in stakeholder engagement or collecting possible indicators.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS FOR ENHANCED KNOWLEDGE SUPPORT

Making knowledge more relevant and accessible

- Supporting the collection and sharing of tools, good practices and lessons learned through:
 - * An inventory of available data collection initiatives, such as the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies;
 - * A publication on ITKP for adaptation, to be produced in all United Nations languages, by the Joint Liaison Group of the three Rio Conventions;
 - * Documentation to raise awareness, including policy briefs on local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices, local narratives and toolkits, using appropriate information and communication technology;
 - * Communities of practice and networks bringing together communities, intermediaries, regional organizations and regional donors, so as to facilitate direct exchanges during field visits, meetings and other events.

Addressing critical knowledge gaps

- Formulating guidelines, procedures and approaches to bring the consideration of local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices into decision-making processes. In relation to impacts, vulnerability and adaptation assessments, it would mean developing:
 - * A range of participatory information and communication technology tools used for vulnerability analyses that encourage the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities;
 - * Methodologies to fully understand the linkages between ITKP and adaptation;
- Establishing regional and/or national observatories incorporating ITKP into forecasting and other similar areas.

For further information, the [Adaptation knowledge portal](#) provides access to:

- Documents [FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.11](#) and [FCCC/TP/2013/11](#);
- Detailed [case studies](#) on ITKP and adaptation planning addressing the needs of local and indigenous communities;
- More information on [tools and methods](#) integrating ITKP;
- [Additional knowledge resources](#).