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National communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention

Work of the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications

from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention

Progress report on the work of the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention: report on the hands-on training workshop for the Asia and Pacific region on vulnerability and adaptation assessment

Note by the secretariat*

Summary

The Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE) conducted a hands-on training workshop for the Asia and Pacific region on vulnerability and adaptation assessment in Vientiane, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, from 8 to 12 October 2012. This report outlines the proceedings of the workshop and summarizes the feedback and recommendations from the participants relating to the updated CGE training materials on vulnerability and adaptation assessment, and the financial, technical and institutional issues in the context of national communication preparation.

* This document was submitted after the due date in order to include the summary of the proceedings and discussions that took place at the hands-on training workshop for the Asia and Pacific region on vulnerability and adaptation assessment, held from 8 to 12 October 2012.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by decision 5/CP.15, reconstituted the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE) for the period 2010–2012 in order to improve the process of, and preparation of, national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties).
2. The terms of reference of the CGE stipulate that the CGE, in fulfilling its mandate, shall provide technical assistance to non-Annex I Parties on, inter alia, vulnerability and adaptation assessment, with a view to improving the accuracy, consistency and transparency of information in their national communications.
3. The terms of reference of the CGE are operationalized through its work programme for 2010–2012 developed at its 1st meeting, held in March 2010. The work programme was welcomed and taken note of by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at its thirty-second session.¹
4. In accordance with its work programme referred to in paragraph 3 above, the CGE, with the assistance of the secretariat, held a hands-on training workshop for the Asia and Pacific region on vulnerability and adaptation assessment in Vientiane, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, from 8 to 12 October 2012, with a view to enhancing the capacity of national experts from the region involved in the process of, and preparation of, national communications.
5. By decision 5/CP.15, the COP requested the secretariat to facilitate the work of the CGE by organizing meetings and workshops and compiling reports of its meetings and workshops for consideration by the SBI.

B. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

6. The SBI, having considered this report, may wish to note the recommendations of the workshop participants and provide further guidance to the CGE on the provision of technical assistance to non-Annex I Parties on vulnerability and adaptation assessment.

II. Proceedings of the workshop

A. Opening of the workshop

7. The hands-on training workshop for the Asia and Pacific region on vulnerability and adaptation assessment was hosted by the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic from 8 to 12 October 2012.
8. Mr. Xayaveth Vixay, Director General of the Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, delivered the opening remarks. He welcomed the participants to the country. He outlined the government's seventh national socioeconomic development plan for 2011–2015, which outlines the country's goal of developing the economy and reducing poverty, with a linkage

¹ FCCC/SBI/2010/10, paragraph 21.

to environmental protection. He also informed the workshop of the country's strategy on climate change, which was launched in 2010 and recognizes the high vulnerability of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to climate change, the anticipated adverse environmental and socioeconomic consequences, especially to the poor and the most vulnerable, and the need for strengthening capacity to adapt to climate change and its impacts. With regard to adaption, he indicated that the focus will be on making the key sectors, including agriculture, water resources and forestry, more climate resilient, enhancing knowledge and awareness on climate change, enforcing the conservation of national protected areas and building reliable early warning systems.

9. Ms. Ruleta Camacho (Antigua and Barbuda), Chair of the CGE, thanked the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for hosting the workshop, welcomed the participants and outlined the workshop objectives. A representative of the secretariat provided a brief overview of the organization of the workshop.

10. The objectives of the workshop were the following:

(a) To build the capacity of national experts from non-Annex I Parties in the Asia and Pacific region in conducting vulnerability and adaptation assessments, which are reported under the Convention as part of the national communications;

(b) To seek and generate feedback on the draft updated CGE training materials on vulnerability and adaptation assessment, with a view to improving them further;

(c) To serve as a platform for the exchange of views among Parties and with experts and prospective bilateral and multilateral donors.

11. A total of 37 national experts from 31 non-Annex I Parties in the Asia and Pacific region and from Eastern Europe,² six members of the CGE and a representative of the United Nations Environment Programme attended the workshop.

12. The workshop was held with a financial contribution from the European Union.

13. An average of 23 participants per day representing non-Annex I Parties in the Asia and Pacific region and from Eastern Europe participated in the workshop through videoconferencing (WebEx).

B. Organization of the workshop

14. The hands-on training workshop, which was conducted over five days, comprised seven sessions, as follows:

(a) The first session consisted of country presentations in which representatives of five countries from the region presented their experiences in conducting vulnerability and adaptation assessments in the context of the preparation of their national communications, highlighting their experiences and challenges;

(b) The second session covered an introduction to the vulnerability and adaptation framework, including institutional arrangements for conducting vulnerability and adaptation assessments on a sustainable basis. The session also covered how countries

² Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

can plan for their vulnerability and adaptation assessment and select an appropriate and practical framework for the assessment;

(c) The third session was dedicated to climate change and socioeconomic scenarios, in which the participants were introduced to key concepts, the general steps involved in generating climate change and socioeconomic scenarios, and some of the commonly used and available methods, tools and associated data;

(d) The fourth and fifth sessions consisted of two sessions conducted in parallel and included sectoral vulnerability and adaptation assessments covering water resources, human health, agriculture and coastal resources;

(e) The sixth session covered cross-sectoral and multisectoral integration and the presentation of methods and results in national communications;

(f) The final session was an interactive discussion held on the national communication process. The workshop participants also provided recommendations on possible ways to further enhance the organization of future regional workshops.

15. The training, which included hands-on practical sessions, was conducted by resource persons and CGE members using the updated CGE training materials.³

III. Summary of presentations

A. Country presentations

16. Representatives of Cook Islands, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mongolia and Republic of Moldova presented brief overviews of information on vulnerability and adaptation assessment reported in their latest national communications and work related to the various adaptation measures within their countries. The participants also outlined institutional arrangements to undertake vulnerability and adaptation assessments, including lessons learned, best practices and the way forward. That was followed by a question and answer session in which other participants also shared their national experiences.

B. Vulnerability and adaptation framework

17. The participants were introduced to the various terms, definitions and concepts used when conducting a vulnerability and adaption assessment, as those terminologies are used differently by different stakeholders. The participants were also informed on how to identify the various options that can be taken into consideration when undertaking a vulnerability and adaptation assessment.

18. In addition, the participants were introduced to how non-Annex I Parties could effectively build up a comprehensive and sustainable national institutional arrangement specifically targeting vulnerability and adaptation assessment. Planning of vulnerability and adaptation assessments, including analysing data availability, and the key steps required to successfully plan for, and deliver, the vulnerability and adaptation component of national communications, were covered.

³ The current CGE training materials, available on the UNFCCC website at <http://unfccc.int/national_reports/non-annex_i_natcom/training_material/methodological_documents/items/349.php>, are being updated.

19. The usefulness of frameworks for examining the potential impacts of climate change and adaptation measures was covered in the second session. While the use of frameworks is not mandatory for vulnerability and adaptation assessments, they do provide consistency and transparency across the sectors. Available and published vulnerability and adaptation frameworks serve as a useful baseline for the development of tailored frameworks that draw on the conceptual underpinnings of a particular framework suitable for the country's specific circumstances. Outlines of some of the widely used vulnerability and adaptation frameworks were provided.

C. Vulnerability and adaptation assessment scenarios

20. The third session provided an overview of common models and outputs available for modelling climate change and socioeconomic scenarios, and examples of those outputs and possible approaches for customizing them to suit user demand were given.

1. Baseline socioeconomic scenarios

21. The segment on socioeconomic scenarios covered the following areas: the definition of baseline socioeconomic scenarios; the utility of having those scenarios; and the supporting information that is available for baseline socioeconomic scenarios. The participants were introduced to the recommended key steps required for the development of socioeconomic scenarios, including information on the data required to develop the scenarios.

22. The presentation further covered the design, development and application of baseline socioeconomic scenarios for use in vulnerability and adaptation assessments, which are important for identifying appropriate adaptation measures. The participants were introduced to future directions in climate change scenario development, such as the use of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's new scenarios on representative concentration pathways calculations and data.

2. Climate change scenarios

23. The segment on climate change scenarios included a general overview of the evolution of climate change models, including general circulation models and regional climate models, and their corresponding advantages and limitations. That included literature on the definition and types of climate change scenarios and the steps required to develop them using regional climate models and other statistical tools. The participants also engaged in exercises accessing data on different climate variables, such as using the ClimateWizard⁴ and the Climate Explorer,⁵ which are research tools used to investigate the climate, and in analysing and interpreting data.

D. Sectoral training sessions

24. The sectoral training sessions included presentations on an overview of drivers, potential climate change impacts and adaptation measures. Various sector-specific methods, tools and data requirements were also covered.

⁴ The tool is available at <<http://www.climatewizard.org/>>.

⁵ The tool is available at <<http://climexp.knmi.nl/start.cgi?id=someone@somewhere>>.

1. Human health

25. The segment on the human health sector covered a number of topics, including the following: mapping of climate change and human health; human health impacts from environmental changes; predictive tools for the future for assessing human health vulnerability to climate change, such as the health impact assessment process; methods to determine the current burden of climate-sensitive diseases; adaptation options for malaria; and global projections of health impacts.

26. The participants engaged in interactive exercises determining priority themes for human health in their national communications, key climate change impact drivers for human health, current population profiles and potential vulnerabilities of people to climate change, impacts of different climate variables and specific vulnerabilities for each of the climate variables, and coping capacity. The participants also engaged in exercises undertaking human risk assessment and adaptation planning for human health.

2. Water resources

27. The segment on water resources covered the potential impacts of climate change on the availability and quality of water and how to assess those impacts. It also included understanding stakeholder analysis and the potential influence stakeholders have on the water sector and on water planning and outlining an assessment case study for a hands-on exercise using a hypothetical river basin. The participants were also presented with a case study of the challenges faced by communities owing to the flow decline of the Amu Darya, a major river in Central Asia.

28. The trainer held demonstrations and conducted hands-on exercises using the Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) model, in which the participants gained first-hand experience of setting up and running WEAP by undertaking a case study on a hypothetical river basin in Central Asia. The model takes into account critical factors, such as the biophysical, socioeconomic and institutional and policy factors that influence the quantity and quality of, and demand for, water, the key stakeholders and the nature and extent of water vulnerability.

3. Coastal resources

29. The presentation on coastal resources covered the drivers, including El Niño/La Niña/Southern Oscillation (ENSO), and potential impacts of climate change on coastal zones. It also covered non-climatic drivers and uncertainty in local predictions, overview of coastal vulnerability, rapid screening assessment, adaptation options in climate-sensitive coastal zones and ENSO-based adaptation schemes. The participants were informed about commonly used tools and data that are freely available.

30. The participants engaged in an interactive exercise identifying key priority themes for coastal zone impact assessment, key climate change impact drivers on the coastal zone and available adaptation options. The participants also engaged in exercises using available web-based resources to generate tidal predictions, understand the basics of El Niño/La Niña and analyse different climatic variables, such as sea surface temperature, wind and precipitation, and their correlation to ENSO events.

4. Agriculture

31. The key objectives of the sectoral training on agriculture were the following: to introduce the participants to climate change impacts on agriculture and food security and the global trends in agriculture, including the main reasons for concern; and to discuss the tools, models and processes available and used commonly for impact assessment in the agriculture sector.

32. The trainer held demonstrations on using the Decision Support System for Agrotechnology Transfer (DSSAT), one of the tools for modelling the agriculture sector. The model can be used with various crops, such as maize and wheat, to assist various stakeholders, including researchers and farmers, in conducting sensitivity analyses, developing seasonal strategies and understanding crop rotation. The participants engaged in a practical application of DSSAT to estimate the statistical functions of yield response for some crops in their countries in order to evaluate climate change effects on the crops and to determine adaptation measures, such as changes in management in order to improve yield under various climate change scenarios.

33. The participants were also introduced to process-based models and their practical applications, including some commonly used statistical models based on the estimation of statistical functions of yield response.

E. Integration and communication

34. The sixth session focused on reporting requirements for national communications from non-Annex I Parties under the Convention and the way in which information related to vulnerability and adaptation assessment could be effectively communicated in national communications. The participants were informed about various ways in which information can be sourced from various sectors and integrated in vulnerability and adaptation assessments. An interactive, facilitated discussion to exchange views among the participants, and sharing of experiences with the resource persons, followed the presentation.

1. Integration

35. The presentation on integration highlighted the importance of integration both across and within the sectors in the framework of vulnerability and adaptation assessment. Impacts in one sector can adversely or positively affect another sector. Cross-sectoral and multisectoral integration is important in linking related sectors. The presentation also focused on recognizing the relevance of options for integration both across and within the sectors in the framework of vulnerability and adaptation assessment. It included methods and examples of ranking vulnerabilities and adaptation options across the sectors, which is an essential element in prioritizing adaptation options.

2. Communication

36. The presentation on communication provided an overview of relevant provisions under the Convention on reporting information on vulnerability and adaptation from non-Annex I Parties as a part of their national communications. The segment also addressed general guidance, and gave some examples, on how to effectively present the results of the vulnerability and adaptation assessment, taking into account the target audience of the report.

IV. Feedback and recommendations

37. During the final session, the participants identified a number of key points that they had learned at the workshop.

A. Participants' feedback

38. During the workshop, daily feedback was sourced from the workshop participants in order to gather their views on the substantive contents that were covered each day. In addition, an online survey was conducted after the workshop, which was also open to those who participated remotely. A total of 34 participants responded to the online survey. Their responses are summarized below.

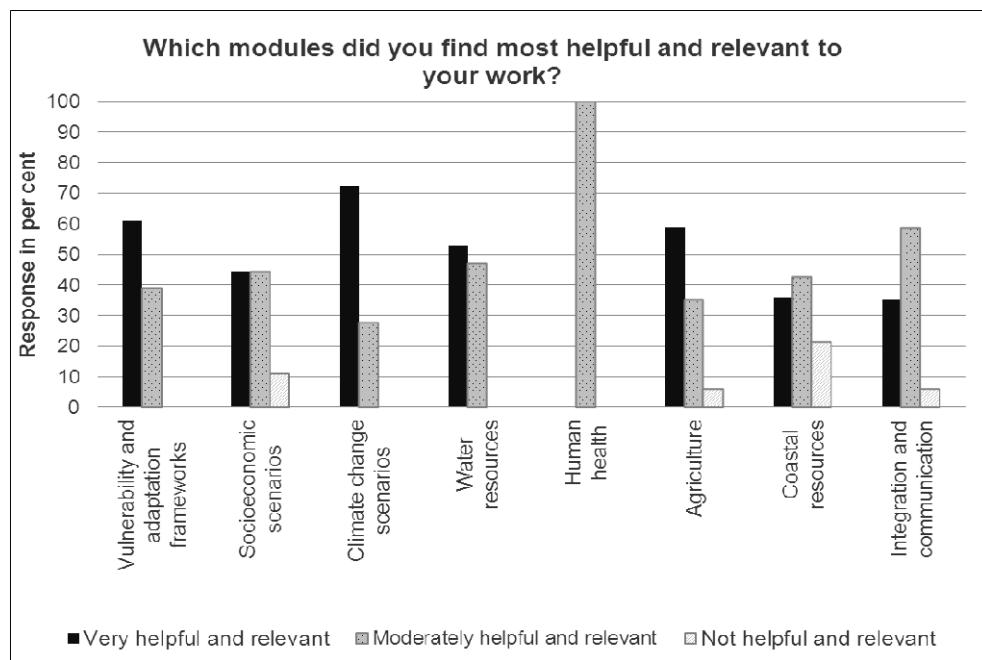
39. Overall, the participants expressed that the hands-on training workshop met their expectations and welcomed the diversified nature of the workshop. They also highlighted the following as some of the most useful aspects of the training:

- (a) Sharing of country experiences in the conduct of vulnerability and adaptation assessments;
- (b) The enriching references to and materials on vulnerability and adaptation assessments, including the open source software used in adaptation modelling;
- (c) The practical application of models and the update on the improvements in the modelling process and their application, including the interpretation of results for policymaking;
- (d) The various adaptation strategies that can be used based on the results of modelling used for the various sectors, such as agriculture, water, health and coastal resources;
- (e) The assessment of vulnerability impacts for economic and social impacts from climate change and the development of appropriate adaptation measures that include policy measures;
- (f) The approach to and explanations of basic frameworks used in the national communication process, which can be adjusted depending on the country's circumstances;
- (g) Understanding the consideration of various approaches for national communications, including the consideration of the bottom-up and top-down approaches;
- (h) The approach to derive and develop socioeconomic scenarios using national planning plans as a baseline and their application;
- (i) Adaptation options and general information on cross-sectoral and multisectoral integration and the ranking of priorities in adaptation;
- (j) The method to report adaptation results and how to effectively communicate those results to various stakeholders.

40. Most participants found the overall approach and content of the hands-on training workshop to be useful and relevant to their work or practice, as is evident from the results of the survey (see the figure below).

41. The participants also engaged in discussions relating to institutional, technical and financial aspects of the preparation of their national communications. In that context, the participants shared their national experiences, lessons learned, good practices and difficulties that they continue to face in preparing their national communications. Most participants highlighted the need for a longer training workshop to allocate additional time for the hands-on training exercise and to ensure that experts attend each sectoral training.

Compilation of evaluation responses provided by the participants of the workshop on vulnerability and adaptation assessment for the Asia and Pacific region



42. The participants made the following recommendations for future hands-on training workshops on vulnerability and adaptation assessment:

- (a) The presentations should be enriched with more lessons learned, challenges and best practices;
- (b) The visual presentations should be improved by including more graphical references and case studies with concrete real-life examples;
- (c) More emphasis should be put on the explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of each method or model and on the limitations of the downscaling projections of several countries;
- (d) Additional time should be allocated for practical group exercises and less time should be allocated for general theory;
- (e) There should be more in-depth focused training on specific tools or models, such as the WEAP and DSSAT models;
- (f) There should be additional training on how modelling results can be used to inform policymakers and on how to make a clear connection with adaptation strategies.

B. Conclusion

43. The participants were appreciative of the training course and thanked the CGE and the secretariat for organizing the workshop and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the people of the country for the warm welcome accorded to them and for hosting the workshop and providing the excellent facilities. The participants also thanked the European Union for funding the workshop.