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Version 1.0

Technical support and guidance to Parties on adaptive capacity assessment

Compilation and analysis of relevant work, approaches, methodologies and applications

Recommended action by the Adaptation Committee

At its thirtieth meeting, the Adaptation Committee may wish to consider the compilation and analysis of relevant work by adaptation-related constituted bodies and the further research on the understanding and application of adaptive capacity assessments, including methodologies, and discuss and identify potential deliverables in this area.

I. Introduction

1. Adaptive capacity is central to adaptation under the Paris Agreement. Article 7, paragraph 1, establishes the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal referred to in Article 2.

2. Adaptive capacity is multidimensional, context-specific and dynamic. Its assessment can help identify capacities and enabling conditions that support adaptation, [1] as well as constraints affecting the ability of systems, institutions and people to respond and adjust to climate change. Approaches to assessing adaptive capacity vary according to purpose, scale, context, available information and the decisions that the assessment is intended to inform.

3. The present note responds to the request of the Adaptation Committee (AC) at its twenty-ninth meeting to compile and analyse relevant work undertaken by adaptation-related constituted bodies and to advance research on the understanding and application of adaptive capacity assessments, including methodologies. It examines conceptual approaches; purposes and applications; methodological approaches and measurement considerations; application across different scales and contexts; relevant work under the UNFCCC; Party-reported experience; and inputs from external experts and entities, with a view to supporting the AC in considering potential areas for further work.

4. The note is an analytical synthesis and does not propose a standardized methodology for adaptive capacity assessment, assess or rank Parties, establish new indicators or reporting requirements, or imply endorsement by the AC of any particular external framework, methodology or tool. Country and methodological examples are illustrative and are used to demonstrate different approaches and applications.

[1] IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Annex II: Glossary, definition of "adaptive capacity". The IPCC defines adaptive capacity as the "ability of systems, institutions, humans and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to respond to consequences."

II. Background

5. At its twenty-sixth meeting (AC26), the Adaptation Committee discussed potential activities in the area of adaptive capacity assessment and decided to continue consideration of possible activities at AC27, as reflected in its flexible workplan for 2025–2027 under workstream 1 on providing technical support and guidance to Parties on adaptation, including on means of implementation. [2]

6. At AC27, the AC continued its consideration of potential activities in this area and agreed to consider the agenda item at its next meeting. At AC28, the AC requested the secretariat to develop a concise concept note clarifying the concept, role and application of adaptive capacity assessments as a starting point for discussion at AC29 and the identification of potential deliverables.[3]

7. At AC29, the AC considered the concept note on the concept, role and application of adaptive capacity assessments. Members highlighted, inter alia, the different understandings and interpretations of adaptive capacity; its context-specific and dynamic nature; the range of approaches, methodologies and indicators used to assess it; challenges relating to indicator relevance and comparability and the availability, consistency and granularity of data; and the importance of understanding how adaptive capacity assessments are applied in policy and decision-making, including adaptation planning, across national, subnational and sectoral contexts.

8. The AC agreed that further clarification, analysis and compilation of existing knowledge would be useful before identifying specific deliverables. It requested the secretariat to compile and analyse relevant work from other adaptation-related constituted bodies and to advance its research on the understanding and application of adaptive capacity assessments, including methodologies, for consideration at AC30.

9. The AC further requested the secretariat to undertake this work on the basis of inputs received from AC members at AC29 and information from different sources, including the State of Adaptation Action by Parties portal, and to take into account inputs from relevant external experts and entities, including through a call for inputs.

10. In response to this request, the present note draws on relevant scientific and technical literature, Party-reported information, existing work under the UNFCCC and inputs from relevant external experts and entities.[4]

III. Understanding adaptive capacity and adaptive capacity assessment

11. The IPCC defines adaptive capacity as the “ability of systems, institutions, humans and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to respond to consequences”. Adaptive capacity is closely related to vulnerability, resilience and adaptation, but these concepts are not interchangeable.

12. While the high-level concept is well established, adaptive capacity may be operationalized differently depending on the system, scale, climate risk and decision context under consideration. Approaches reviewed for this note consider, inter alia, access to resources and assets; institutional and governance capacities; knowledge and information; technology and infrastructure; social and collective capacities; and capabilities related to learning, coordination and decision-making. Some approaches also examine agency, equity

[2] See Adaptation Committee, Flexible workplan of the Adaptation Committee for 2025–2027, FCCC/SB/2024/4, workstream 1, thematic area on adaptive capacity assessment.

[3] See AC29/AA/2A, paragraph 15, and AC29/CN/6, Potential activities in the area of adaptive capacity assessment.

[4] The technical evidence base includes a semi-systematic review of academic and grey literature commissioned for this AC workstream. The review examined approximately 50 sources relevant to adaptive capacity and mapped 18 assessment methodologies, with a comparatively strong representation of applications at local and community scales. The literature-based evidence is complemented by relevant Party-reported information and inputs from external experts and entities.

and access as factors influencing whether available capacities can be mobilized in response to climate risks.

13. Three distinctions are especially important. First, potential capacity is not the same as realized adaptation: assets or institutions may exist without being used. Second, generic capacity (for example income or education) is not always equivalent to climate-specific capacity. Third, aggregate capacity at national or community scale can conceal substantial differences between groups, sectors and locations.

14. For the purposes of this note, an adaptive capacity assessment is understood as a structured process for examining capacities and enabling conditions relevant to the ability of an identified system, institution, population or group to adjust to climate change and its effects. Depending on its purpose, an assessment may establish a baseline, identify strengths and constraints, inform prioritization and planning, examine differentiated capacities, or track changes over time. This working description is used solely for the analytical purposes of this note and does not constitute a standardized UNFCCC definition or methodology.

A. Distinguishing related concepts

Table 1. Distinctions between adaptive capacity and related concepts

Concept	*Working distinction for this paper*	*Implication for assessment*
Adaptive capacity	IPCC definition: ability of systems, institutions, humans and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, take advantage of opportunities or respond to consequences.	Assessment considers capacities and enabling conditions relevant to a defined system, population, risk, scale and decision context.
Vulnerability	The propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected, including sensitivity and lack of capacity to cope and adapt.	Adaptive capacity may be one determinant of vulnerability, but a vulnerability assessment is not automatically an adaptive capacity assessment.
Resilience	The capacity of interconnected social, economic and ecological systems to cope with hazardous events, trends or disturbances while maintaining or reorganizing functions and identity.	Adaptive capacity can contribute to resilience; resilience assessments may incorporate adaptive and transformative capacities.
Adaptation action	The actual process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects.	Having capacity does not guarantee action. Assessment should examine the conditions that translate capacity into implementation.
MEL	Processes for tracking, evaluating and learning from adaptation interventions and systems.	Repeated assessment can support MEL by showing how capacities change and whether they are being mobilized.

IV. Purpose and application of adaptive capacity assessments

15. The practical value of adaptive capacity assessment depends on its connection to a decision. AC29 specifically emphasized the need to understand how such assessments are used in policy and decision-making. Evidence reviewed for this paper suggests six principal functions.

Table 2. Potential decision functions of adaptive capacity assessments

Decision function	*How assessment can contribute*	*Typical outputs*
Diagnosis	Identify strengths, deficits, barriers and enabling conditions.	Capacity profile; institutional/asset map; constraints analysis.
Planning and prioritization	Identify where strengthening capacity is most needed and what types of intervention may be appropriate.	Priority groups/areas; adaptation pathways; investment priorities.
Programme and project design	Match interventions to specific institutional, social, technological or financial constraints.	Theory of change; targeting criteria; capacity-building components.
Resource allocation and support	Support decisions on finance, technology and capacity-building needs.	Needs profile; readiness analysis; support priorities.
Implementation and governance	Clarify roles, coordination gaps, decision rights and institutional capabilities.	Governance map; coordination actions; implementation responsibilities.
Monitoring, evaluation and learning	Track changes in enabling conditions and whether capacity is being mobilized.	Baseline and repeated measures; learning questions; adaptive management triggers.

16. A useful way to position adaptive capacity assessment is within an iterative adaptation cycle comprising climate risk and context analysis; assessment of adaptive capacities and enabling conditions; planning; implementation; monitoring, evaluation and learning; and reassessment. Such a framing moves adaptive capacity assessment beyond a one-off diagnostic exercise and emphasizes its continuing role in identifying capacity gaps and opportunities, informing adaptation priorities and actions, tracking changes in capacity over time, and supporting learning and adjustment as risks, capacities and circumstances evolve.

V. Approaches and methodologies

17. Existing adaptive capacity assessments use diverse methodologies. Diversity is not necessarily a weakness: different approaches answer different questions. The key challenge is to make methodological choices explicit and fit for purpose.

Table 3. Overview of methodological approaches to adaptive capacity assessment

Methodological family	*Core logic*	*Typical use/scale*	*Strengths*	*Key limitations*
Indicator/index-based	Combines selected indicators, often normalized and weighted, to	National to local; comparative screening.	Can support benchmarking and visualization;	Sensitive to indicator selection, weighting and aggregation; risks masking

	summarize capacity.		relatively replicable.	distribution and causal mechanisms.
Livelihood/capital-based	Assesses access to human, social, financial, physical and natural capital and livelihood diversity.	Household/community; agriculture and resource-dependent livelihoods.	Intuitive and useful for identifying resource constraints.	Assets do not necessarily translate into action; institutional and political dynamics may be underrepresented.
Institutional/governance	Examines mandates, coordination, leadership, learning, flexibility, decision processes and access to resources.	Organizations, municipalities, sectors, national systems.	Captures enabling conditions often missed by asset indices.	More qualitative; scoring can be subjective; cross-context comparison is difficult.
Participatory/community-based	Uses workshops, focus groups, participatory mapping, ranking and local knowledge to identify capacities and barriers.	Local/community; subnational.	High contextual relevance; supports ownership and reveals lived experience.	Resource intensive; results can depend on participation quality and facilitation; difficult to scale.
Mixed-method	Combines quantitative indicators with interviews, surveys, participatory and institutional analysis.	Any scale where resources permit.	Balances comparability with context; supports triangulation.	More demanding in skills, time and integration of evidence.
Spatial/geospatial	Maps capacity-related variables using GIS, remote sensing and spatial socioeconomic data.	Urban, regional, national.	Identifies spatial patterns and hotspots; supports targeting.	Constrained by data resolution and proxy validity; may undercapture relational/institutional factors.
Scenario/forward-looking	Explores how capacity could change under socioeconomic and climate futures; may use SSPs or pathways.	National, regional, sectoral.	Makes temporal dynamics and future needs explicit.	High uncertainty; data/model requirements; translating scenarios into local decisions can be difficult.
Social-ecological/system-based	Assesses interacting ecological, social and institutional	Ecosystems, watersheds, coastal systems, multi-sector contexts.	Reflects interconnected risks and systemic capacity.	Methodologically complex; boundaries and indicators can be

	components, feedbacks and cross-scale dependencies.			difficult to define.
Behaviour/agency-oriented	Examines motivation, efficacy, risk perceptions, trust, norms and ability to act.	Household, community, organization.	Directly addresses capacity-action gap.	Less standardized; culturally sensitive; causal interpretation requires care.

B. Method selection: a fit-for-purpose approach

18. The literature reviewed for this note does not identify a single methodology that is universally appropriate across purposes, scales and contexts. Method selection may therefore usefully begin with the decision that the assessment is intended to inform. Before selecting methods or indicators, an assessment can specify, as appropriate: (a) the system and population concerned; (b) relevant climate risks and time horizon; (c) the intended decision or use; (d) the relevant scale or scales; (e) the dimensions of adaptive capacity relevant to the context; and (f) available evidence and feasible forms of stakeholder participation.

19. This sequencing is particularly important because the same indicator can have different meanings in different contexts. For example, income, education or access to technology may contribute to capacity but do not by themselves show whether people can access institutions, exercise agency, coordinate collectively or act under specific climate constraints.

VI. Measurement and methodological considerations

20. Adaptive capacity assessments may use quantitative indicators, qualitative evidence or combinations of the two, depending on purpose, scale, context and available information. The literature reviewed for this note highlights a number of recurrent measurement considerations, including construct validity; context sensitivity; aggregation and weighting; comparability; temporal dynamics; scale mismatch; data availability and continuity; and attribution.

21. These considerations highlight the importance of methodological transparency. Assessment documentation can usefully specify the concept and dimensions being assessed; the rationale for methodological and indicator choices; data sources and limitations; treatment of missing data; normalization, aggregation and weighting choices, where applicable; participation and knowledge inputs; uncertainty; and limits to interpretation and comparability.

22. The discussion in this note concerns methodological considerations for country- and context-specific adaptive capacity assessment. It does not propose indicators for measuring collective progress under the global goal on adaptation. Any future AC work involving indicators would need to build on relevant decisions under the global goal on adaptation, including the Belém Adaptation Indicators, and avoid establishing parallel indicators or reporting requirements.

VII. Application across contexts and scales

23. The available methodological mapping reviewed for this paper found a strong concentration of adaptive capacity assessments at local and community levels, with fewer national applications. This reflects the context-specific character of adaptive capacity and the fact that many determinants of action, livelihoods, social networks, local institutions and access to services, are expressed locally. At the same time, local adaptive capacity is often

enabled or constrained by national and subnational governance, finance, infrastructure and policy.

24. The examples below are drawn from the literature reviewed for this note and are illustrative rather than representative of global or regional adaptive capacity assessment practice. They have been selected to demonstrate different methodological applications and scales and should not be interpreted as assessments or comparisons of national performance.

Table 4. Illustrative applications of adaptive capacity assessment across contexts and scales

Illustrative application	*Scale/context*	*Approach*	*Why it is informative*
Bhutan – Nikachu watershed	Resource-dependent households/community	Livelihood and indicator-based assessment	Illustrates how household assets, livelihood dependence and local conditions can be combined to identify differentiated capacity and practical interventions.
Saint Lucia – Soufrière	Local/community and regional development	Evolutionary adaptive capacity approach	Highlights that adaptive capacity changes over time and is influenced by institutions, learning and development pathways.
Chile – urban adaptive capacity	Urban/built environment	Spatial multi-indicator approach	Demonstrates use of spatial indicators for urban comparison and targeting, while raising questions about weighting and local interpretation.
North Carolina, United States – rural coastal communities	Community/household	Mixed-method, justice and agency-oriented assessment	Shows how adaptive capacity assessment can uncover unequal access, agency and climate-justice dimensions not visible in generic indicators.
Kiribati – whole-of-country planning	National and local linkages	Integrated planning / capacity framing	Illustrates the importance of connecting national planning, community priorities and implementation across scales rather than assessing each level in isolation.
Africa – cross-country index application	Continental/national screening	Composite index	Illustrates the value and limitations of large-scale comparison: useful for broad patterns, but dependent on

			harmonized data and less able to represent local institutional dynamics.

25. The examples are illustrative rather than a representative global sample. A key lesson is that methodological appropriateness changes with scale. Cross-country or national screening may rely more heavily on standardized secondary data; local assessments can incorporate participatory and qualitative evidence; institutional assessments may focus on organizational processes; and sectoral assessments require indicators tied to sector-specific functions and decision cycles.

VIII. Relevant work under the UNFCCC and by adaptation-related constituted bodies

26. AC29 requested an explicit compilation and analysis of relevant work from adaptation-related constituted bodies. The purpose is not to create a catalogue of activities, but to determine what building blocks already exist, where complementarity is possible, and where an AC product could add value without duplication.

Table 5. Relevant work under the UNFCCC and potential complementarity with adaptive capacity assessment

Body/process	*Relevant work*	*Relevance to ACA*	*Potential complementarity*
Adaptation Committee (AC)	Technical papers on data for adaptation; monitoring and evaluation at national/subnational levels; methodologies for assessing adaptation needs; State of Adaptation work.	Directly relevant to data, assessment design, decision use and MEL. Existing products provide principles and examples but not a dedicated multi-context ACA methodology navigator.	Existing work on adaptation data, adaptation needs, MEL and the State of Adaptation Action provides relevant analytical building blocks for considering adaptive capacity assessment.
Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG)	NAP technical guidelines and support to formulation/implementation of NAPs; work on assessing vulnerabilities, risks, gaps and needs.	NAP guidance provides a country-driven planning context in which adaptive capacity can be assessed and strengthened.	The updated NAP technical guidelines provide a country-driven planning and implementation context in which vulnerability, risk, resilience, capacities, enabling conditions and implementation needs can be considered. Future AC work should complement rather than duplicate NAP guidance.
Consultative Group of Experts (CGE)	Technical support and training related to national communications and transparency reporting.	Relevant to data, national capacities, reporting practices and possible use of assessment information.	The CGE provides technical advice and support to developing country Parties for strengthening institutional and technical capacity to

			fulfil reporting obligations under the Convention and Paris Agreement. Relevant complementarity relates primarily to data, institutional capacity and use of information; adaptive capacity assessment should not create additional reporting requirements.
Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB)	Work on capacity-building gaps, needs, coherence and coordination.	Relevant to institutional and human capacities and support needs, although capacity-building needs assessment is broader than climate adaptive capacity assessment.	PCCB work addresses capacity-building gaps and needs, solutions, coherence and coordination. This is relevant to institutional and human capacities but is broader than adaptive capacity assessment.
Warsaw International Mechanism Executive Committee (WIM ExCom)	Work on risk management approaches, knowledge and support related to loss and damage.	Relevant where adaptive capacity interacts with residual risk, limits to adaptation and risk management.	Work on comprehensive risk management, including risk assessment and approaches for managing loss and damage, provides relevant contextual knowledge where adaptive capacity interacts with risk management and limits to adaptation. The distinct mandates on adaptation and loss and damage should be maintained.
Technology Executive Committee / CTCN	Technology needs, enabling environments, technical assistance and technology planning.	Technology access and capability are common adaptive-capacity dimensions.	Work on technology needs, enabling environments, technology planning and technical assistance may provide relevant experience concerning technological and institutional capacities that enable adaptation.

27. The mapping indicates that components relevant to adaptive capacity assessment are addressed across several constituted bodies and UNFCCC processes, generally as part of broader work on adaptation planning and implementation, vulnerability and risk, capacity-

building, technology, data, reporting, monitoring, evaluation and learning, or loss and damage. This points to opportunities for complementarity and knowledge exchange. Any future AC work in this area could build on relevant existing work and focus on areas where the AC can add value within its mandate while avoiding duplication and additional reporting burdens.

IX. Evidence from Parties and external expertise

28. The State of Adaptation Action by Parties (SoA) portal provides a complementary source of evidence on how adaptive capacity and related capacities and enabling conditions are reflected in Party-reported adaptation practice. The country profiles draw on adaptation-relevant national reports and communications submitted by Parties to the UNFCCC and organize information across the iterative adaptation cycle, including climate risk and impact assessment, adaptation planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, means of implementation and cross-cutting considerations.

29. The Party-reported information reviewed for this note illustrates that adaptive capacity may be addressed as an objective or enabling condition for adaptation, including in relation to reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience, without necessarily being assessed through a separate process explicitly labelled an “adaptive capacity assessment”. Relevant information may instead be embedded in vulnerability and risk assessments, NAP processes, sectoral assessments and analyses of institutional, technical, financial, informational and other capacities. This is consistent with the objectives of the NAP process, including reducing vulnerability to climate change by building adaptive capacity and resilience..

30. The Party-reported examples reviewed also illustrate different ways in which adaptive capacity can be operationalized. Bhutan’s NAP seeks to reduce vulnerability by building adaptive capacity and strengthening the enabling environment, while assessments supporting its formulation included sectoral climate risk assessments and a vulnerability assessment mapping adaptive capacity across administrative regions. Nepal’s NAP identifies building the adaptive capacity and resilience of vulnerable natural, social and economic sectors and service providers among its goals, with priorities identified through a participatory process drawing on vulnerability and risk assessment and multi-criteria analysis. Fiji’s NAP illustrates a function-specific application by identifying the capacity to generate, manage, disseminate and use climate information as a component of adaptive capacity and linking it to informed adaptation decision-making.

31. These examples are illustrative and should not be interpreted as a representative assessment of Party practice. They indicate that information relevant to adaptive capacity may be generated through several components of national adaptation processes and that the way adaptive capacity is operationalized depends on the decision context, scale and purpose of the assessment

X. Cross-cutting findings, gaps and opportunities

32. The findings below synthesize the scientific and technical literature, methodological mapping, Party-reported examples and relevant UNFCCC work reviewed in the preceding

sections. They identify recurring considerations emerging from the evidence reviewed for this note and should not be interpreted as universally applicable conclusions across all national or local contexts.[5]

Table 6. Cross-cutting findings and implications from the evidence reviewed

Finding	Implication
1. A common high-level understanding can coexist with context-specific operationalization.	Assessments should make explicit how adaptive capacity is understood and operationalized for the system, scale and decision concerned.
2. Assessment purpose is an important consideration in method selection.	Methodological choices can usefully be linked to the decision being informed, intended users, scale, available evidence and context.
3. A recurrent challenge is balancing comparability and contextual relevance.	More standardized approaches may facilitate comparison, while context-specific and qualitative evidence can improve relevance. Mixed approaches may help address this trade-off.
4. Measured or potential capacity does not necessarily translate into adaptation action.	Available resources and institutions may not be accessible or mobilized. Assessments may therefore consider enabling and constraining institutional, social and behavioural conditions, as appropriate.
5. Data constraints can be technical and institutional.	In addition to availability and granularity, continuity, sharing arrangements, definitions, documentation and governance can affect assessment quality and repeatability.
6. Distribution and participation can influence both assessment results and their interpretation.	Disaggregated and participatory evidence can complement aggregate indicators and help identify differentiated capacities and constraints.
7. Adaptive capacity can operate across interacting scales.	Local capacity may be influenced by national and subnational institutions, finance, infrastructure and policy; scale should therefore be considered explicitly in assessment design.
8. There are opportunities to strengthen links between assessment and adaptation decision-making.	Assessments may provide greater practical value when findings are connected to planning, implementation, support needs and MEL.
9. Relevant UNFCCC work provides multiple building blocks.	Potential AC value added lies in complementing and helping navigate relevant existing knowledge and approaches rather than creating parallel systems.
10. Further AC work, if undertaken, can remain fit for purpose and responsive to identified user needs.	The form of any future product or activity can be determined by the AC on the basis of the evidence, intended users, existing work and available resources.

33. The evidence reviewed indicates that adaptive capacity assessment encompasses a diverse range of approaches applied for different purposes, scales and contexts. The main considerations emerging from the review concern clarity of purpose and concepts, fit-for-purpose method selection, transparent interpretation of indicators and data, attention to scale and differentiated capacities, and the connection between assessment findings and adaptation

[5] See, inter alia, Engle (2011); Juhola and Kruse (2015); Mortreux and Barnett (2017); Mortreux, O'Neill and Barnett (2020); Elrick-Barr, Plummer and Smith (2023); IPCC (2022); and the methodological applications reviewed in this note.

decisions. Existing work under the UNFCCC and in the wider literature provides a substantial knowledge base on which any future AC work could build.

XI. Potential areas for future work by the Adaptation Committee

34. Consistent with AC29 guidance, the options below are presented for consideration rather than as predetermined recommendations. They are differentiated by purpose and can be sequenced or combined.

Table 7. Potential areas for future work by the Adaptation Committee

Option	*Objective*	*Primary users*	*Added value*	*Considerations*
Option A – Practical considerations for adaptive capacity assessment	Provide a concise set of principles and a decision framework for designing fit-for-purpose assessments.	Countries, subnational authorities, practitioners, support providers.	Addresses conceptual and methodological fragmentation without prescribing a universal method.	Could be developed relatively efficiently from the present evidence; should be tested with users.
Option B – Navigator of existing approaches and resources	Organize existing methodologies, approaches and resources by purpose, scale, sector, data requirements and methodological characteristics, without endorsing particular approaches.	Technical practitioners and planners.	Responds directly to difficulty navigating fragmented approaches and tools.	Higher maintenance needs; requires careful criteria and explicit non-endorsement disclaimer.
Option C – Decision-oriented guidance linking assessment to planning and implementation	Show how assessment findings can be translated into priorities, interventions, governance arrangements and support needs.	Policy makers, planners, programme designers.	Directly targets the capacity-action gap highlighted in the evidence and AC29 discussion.	Would benefit strongly from country case evidence and practitioner consultation.
Option D – Focused work on indicators, data and interpretation	Develop practical considerations for selecting indicators, combining quantitative/qualitative evidence, disaggregation and uncertainty.	Assessment teams, national data institutions, planners.	Addresses a prominent AC29 concern and complements existing AC data/MEL work.	Must avoid duplicating GGA indicator processes or creating reporting requirements.
Option E – Targeted thematic or scale-specific work	Develop deeper analysis for selected contexts such as urban systems, local	Context-specific users.	Allows high practical relevance where needs are strongest.	Risk of narrowing too early; should follow evidence of demand and

	adaptation, ecosystems or sectors.			clear selection criteria.
Option F – Expert/practitioner learning process before a product	Convene a focused expert workshop or practitioner exchange to validate gaps and test possible guidance/tool architectures.	AC, constituted bodies, Parties, practitioners, researchers.	Low-regret step where evidence remains heterogeneous; could inform any of Options A–E.	Adds time; should have clearly defined outputs and not become an open-ended consultation.
Option G. No dedicated additional work at this stage	Take note of the findings and continue considering adaptive-capacity-related issues through relevant AC work, as appropriate.		Enables the AC to draw on the analysis without initiating a separate product.	The AC could revisit the area as further Party and practitioner experience becomes available.

35. The potential areas above are not mutually exclusive and could, if the AC so decides, be sequenced or combined. In considering any further work, the AC may wish first to identify the gap or user need it considers most relevant and then determine the appropriate form, scope and level of ambition of a possible activity, taking into account relevant existing work and available resources.

XII. Potential Issues for consideration by the Adaptation Committee

36. The Adaptation Committee may wish to consider the compilation and analysis of relevant work, approaches, methodologies and applications related to adaptive capacity assessment contained in this note and identify potential areas for further work, as appropriate.

Documentation information

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0.1.0	14 September 2026	AC 30 This concept note including possible next steps is for consideration by the AC.

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Annex I

Summary of inputs received on adaptive capacity assessment

1. In response to the request of the Adaptation Committee (AC) at its twenty-ninth meeting, the secretariat invited relevant adaptation-related constituted bodies, organizations and experts to provide concise inputs on their understanding and application of adaptive capacity and approaches used to assess it. The call for inputs was open from 22 August to 4 September 2026. Two inputs were received, from two United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Respondents were invited to provide information on: (a) whether and how the concept of adaptive capacity is used or applied in their work; (b) the definition or understanding of adaptive capacity used, where applicable; and (c) methodologies, approaches, tools or indicators used to assess adaptive capacity.

2. The inputs provide complementary practice-based information on the ways in which adaptive capacity is understood and applied and on methodologies, approaches, tools or indicators used by the responding entities. Given the targeted nature of the call and the number and distribution of responses, the inputs are illustrative and should not be interpreted as a representative assessment of global practice.

3. The inclusion of external inputs in this note does not imply endorsement by the AC of any definition, methodology, approach, indicator or tool described by respondents.

4. The table below summarizes the inputs received. It is intended to provide an overview of relevant experience and does not imply endorsement by the AC of any particular definition, methodology, approach or tool.

Table A-1. Inputs received on adaptive capacity assessment

Respondent	*Application of adaptive capacity*	*Definition or understanding used*	*Methodology, approach, tool or indicators*	*Relevant resource*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	FAO applies the concept of adaptive capacity in supporting the design of climate-resilient agricultural investment projects and plans and in assessing and strengthening the resilience and capacities of agricultural systems, farmers, pastoralists and institutions	FAO reports that its understanding of adaptive capacity in climate-resilient agricultural investment work is based on the IPCC AR6 risk conceptual framework.	Climate Risk Toolbox (CRTB): supports climate-risk screening using climatic, geographical, social and economic geospatial information and considers hazard, exposure, vulnerability and adaptive capacity. SHARP+: digital survey and M&E tool for assessing the climate resilience and adaptive capacities of farmers and pastoralists. Institutional	FAO Climate Risk Toolbox; Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of Climate Resilience of Farmers and Pastoralists (SHARP+); Institutional capacity assessment approach for national adaptation planning in the agriculture sectors.

			capacity assessment approach for national adaptation planning in agriculture: assesses capacities relating to climate information and risk assessment; long-term vision and mandate; planning and implementation; coordination and partnering; and M&E.	
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)	UNDRR applies adaptive capacity within its broader disaster risk reduction and resilience work, including risk assessment and implementation of the Sendai Framework. Its submission describes adaptive capacity as longer-term and forward-looking, multi-scalar and resilience-oriented, while distinguishing it from coping capacity.	UNDRR reports that its adopted disaster-risk-reduction terminology does not contain a specific definition of "adaptive capacity." It instead draws on related definitions of capacity and coping capacity adopted through the UN General Assembly-endorsed terminology associated with the Sendai Framework. Capacity is understood as the strengths, attributes and resources available within an organization, community or society to manage and reduce disaster risks and strengthen resilience.	UNDRR does not report a dedicated adaptive-capacity assessment methodology, but identifies related tools and approaches, including the Comprehensive Risk Management approach; Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities and Climate Resilience Addendum; Recovery Readiness Framework and assessment tool; Resilience Maturity Assessment; DELTA Resilience; Sendai Framework Monitor; and Global Assessment Report. It also refers to its strategic approach to capacity development for implementation	UNDRR Comprehensive Risk Management approach; Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities and Climate Resilience Addendum; Recovery Readiness Framework; Resilience Maturity Assessment; DELTA Resilience; Sendai Framework Monitor; Global Assessment Report; Strategic approach to capacity development for implementation of the Sendai Framework.

of the Sendai Framework.

Annex II

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