International Platform on Adaptation Metrics

What is Adaptation to Climate Change?

Human activities to date have already caused 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, according to IPCC (Special Report on Climate Change and Land (2019), inducing severe impacts. This includes rising sea level, melting ice, amplified extreme weather events (torrential downpours, powerful storms), heatwaves and droughts, alteration of many ecosystems, crop productivity reduction, pests and diseases favouring, among others.

The IPCC (2014a, p. 1758) defines adaptation to climate change as "The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects". This applies to both human and natural systems.

What are Adaptation Metrics?

"Metrics" refers to a system or standard of measurement. The term is often used interchangeably in the literature with "indicators".

The challenge relates to the complexity and scope of the concept and action on adaptation: adaptive responses to existing or predictable climate change impact concern a wide array of physical and socio-economical actions, that are context-specific, making it problematic and useless to aim for a single global universal metric for adaptation progress.

Many existing indicators (e.g. from the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction or the Sustainable Development Goals) can also be used in the context of adaptation to climate change. The challenge is to find appropriate measurement units that are sufficiently simple, practical, usable and effective and that reflect specifically the progress in adapting to climate change as well as facilitating learning in the context of actionable monitoring and evaluation systems.

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What do we need Adaptation Metrics for?

- Adaptation metrics are essential in order to assess vulnerability, risk, resilience or climate impacts, to track implementation of adaptive responses and to monitor and measure adaptation results.
- Adaptation metrics are required to develop monitoring and evaluation systems to assess implementation progress, effectiveness of responses, and to boost learning processes.
- Adaptation metrics can enhance project efficiency in measuring progress and quantifying limitations.
- Adaptation metrics can help better allocate funding and will determine the potential benefits of adaptation investments. Well defined adaptation metrics are a powerful tool for the advocacy of adaptation projects towards donors.
- Standardized metrics will ease the comparison and aggregation of adaptation results between programs, projects and activities.

Why do we need an International Platform on Adaptation Metrics?

Various publications and reports have been produced in the very recent years addressing metrics for adaptation to climate change, but most of the time as only as a subordinate focus, or referring to specific sectors. There is no dedicated space to convene and focus expertise on the challenges of adaptation metrics.

While the imperative for adaptation has been recognized by the Paris Agreement, there is a well-documented gap between adaptation needs and realized adaptation finance. One of the key barriers over and again acknowledged is the need for a global effort to build consensus on metrics to help governments, businesses, and financial institutions to identify and steer investment.

The creation of the International Platform on Adaptation Metrics (IPAM) is timely to fill this gap, by helping to network all the dedicated institutions and teams working on the subject, to compare results and create synergies, and to advance science, technologies, and practice.

What are IPAM'S origins?

Since CoP22, three international conferences on adaptation metrics have been organized in Morocco. While the first one (Morocco, September 27, 2016) discussed three main approaches (impact on resilience, links to SDGs and sectoral), the two next ones (Morocco, October 6-7, 2017 and October 26-27, 2018) focused on the specific sectors of agriculture, water and cities. Representatives of over a hundred international institutions (think tanks, financial bodies, research institutes, universities, civil society, bilateral and multilateral donors, dedicated funds, UNFCCC and agencies of the UN system) provided their scientific contributions.

An "adaptation metrics and techniques cluster" was created after the third conference (2018) held in Morocco entitled "adaptation metrics & techniques for water, agriculture & cities".

More than forty experts gathered in an international workshop in Salé, Morocco, on November 22nd, 2019, uniting on a mission statement that called for the creation of the International Platform on Adaptation Metrics (IPAM).

Responding to that call, the International Platform on Adaptation Metrics (IPAM) was launched on May 22, 2020.

What is the IPAM vision?

- To attract finance for improved adaptation action, IPAM aims to become an international reference platform for adaptation metrics across scales and sectors, and co-develop metrics and tools going beyond the state of the art to respond to emerging adaptation needs.
- To capitalize on the know-how on adaptation metrics worldwide, IPAM seeks to create synergies among its members to refine and advance concepts in science, governance, management, project monitoring & evaluation, communication, capacity building and climate finance.

What are the objectives of the IPAM?

- Create a space for dialogue to connect experts, practitioners and decision-makers through the organization of events (international conferences, workshops, tutorials, webinars, others).
- Facilitate the co-design of metrics through ex-change and innovation, considering the need for aggregation and comparison.
- Promote capacity building, research exchange and data enhancement, clustering and analysis.
- Develop approaches, instruments, tools and facilities for the effective finance and policy making for climate adaptation.

How is the IPAM structured?

The IPAM was initiated by five founding members :

- The Initiative for the Adaptation of African Agriculture to Climate Change Foundation (based in Morocco)
- The African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (body of the African Union based in Ethiopia and Nigeria)
- The Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3, based in Spain)
- The Higher Ground Foundation (based in the United Kingdom)
- Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P, based in Morocco)

The Secretariat of the IPAM is hosted by the AAA Initiative Foundation.

The IPAM is governed by a Steering Committee and is articulated in four sub-committees at the time of its constituency:

- A sub-committee for "Agriculture", steered by the AAA Initiative Foundation.
- A sub-committee for "Water" steered by the African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC).
- A sub-committee for "Techniques and Tools" steered by The Higher Ground Foundation.
- A sub-committee for "Cities" steered by the Basque Centre for Climate Change (BC3).
- A sub-committee for "Soils" steered by Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P).
- Other specific sub-committees may be created, on subjects such as Ecosystem-based Adaptation, Climate Finance, etc.

Who can join the platform?

Regional or international organizations, research or development institutions, funders, donors, banks, public or private entities can join the IPAM.

New members should adhere to the purpose and to the projects of the IPAM, and be endorsed by the Steering Committee.

Individual experts are welcome to participate in IPAM activities.

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