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Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation into National Development Plans and Strategies

Findings summarized in the IPCC/TAR (2001) and supported by the report "Poverty and Climate Change" (2003), indicates that the poorest people in the world are the most vulnerable to impacts of climate change. The need for mainstreaming adaptation into development plans stems from the fact that, there is lack of definitive commitment to climate change adaptation in Africa against the backdrop of projected climate change impacts. Moreover, integrating adaptation in development plans provide good opportunities which are most evident at local levels, .Adaptation mainstreaming can and must take place in two complimentary modes: from the top down, through mainstreaming with traditional national and sectoral policies and policy-making systems, as well as from the bottom up, through mainstreaming with local-level activities, actors and decision making. Each of these mainstreaming modes will involve parallel, albeit scale-specific entry points, enabling factors, actors, etc. In either mode, mainstreaming requires not only integration with the priorities of the most vulnerable people, sectors and systems, but a willingness to make use of appropriate, context-specific mainstreaming opportunities – for example, using the sustainable livelihoods approach to address both poverty and climate change vulnerability among the rural poor. It requires, in short, that the adaptation process seeks out the sources of maladaptation and works to mainstream the necessary adaptation response with relevant existing responses. Working with adequate information and resources (e.g., working through key local entry points, with essential local institutions and actors), adaptation activities can be made relevant and viable through both of these modes.

This paper aims to examine these different mainstreaming modes, casting light on the realities of mainstreaming with specific developing country experiences, both national and local. It aims as well to illuminate some of the distinctive challenges and requirements of both modes, offering some immediate lessons to emerging mainstreaming efforts. Finally, it aims to provide useful observations on the specific ways in which these mainstreaming modes can be constructed to respond most effectively to the adaptation needs of the most vulnerable people, sectors and systems.