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Climate Change Adaptation: the case of Kiribati

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The purpose of this paper will be to examine how climate change as an issue has been integrated into existing development practice in Kiribati, and argues that successful integration of climate change adaptation and mitigation into existing development practice will involve mainstreaming as well as improved coordination between multilateral and bilateral organisations and states. This is because climate change is a central issue that affects many areas of development, and should therefore not be seen as simply another environmental issue. At the same time, its broad impact means that it is susceptible to being addressed in a duplicative and inconsistent manner both within and across institutions. The case of adaptation to climate change in Kiribati will be examined in detail, and it will be shown that at the national level, the integration of adaptation into the overall development framework is quite comprehensive. Furthermore, the integration of the World Bank and United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change's adaptation programmes for Kiribati is a positive example of how institutions can coordinate their efforts. However, the specific circumstances of this case may mean translating these successes into other development contexts may be difficult.

Sustainable development and the emerging climate change agenda

Sustainable development as a concept has been around in the field of development now for at least two decades. The most widely accepted definition of the term came from the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report which states that sustainable development is “progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Holden & Linnerud elaborate on this concept, arguing that the concept of sustainable development contains three core principles: ecological sustainability, intra- and inter- generational equity, and satisfying basic needs (Holden & Linnerud 2007:175). Of course, these principles can be interpreted in many different ways- for example, how do we determine what basic needs are, both qualitatively and quantitatively? Nevertheless, they provide a good starting point for understanding the concept of sustainable development.

Another useful way of understanding sustainable development is offered by Munasinghe and Swart who use the model of a triangle whose sides are social, economic and environmental (Munasinghe and Swart 2005:101). All three sides are inter-related, meaning that a change in one aspect will usually result in changes to the other aspects. Applying Holden & Linnerud's core principles outlined above, climate change can be seen as a sustainable development issue as its potential impacts threaten ecological sustainability on a global scale, emitting greenhouse gases is an issue of inter- and intra-generational equity, and the energy sources that cause climate change are a basic human need, while at the same time the emissions they cause will impact on other basic human needs such as the availability of fresh water and

food security. It also relates to the three sides of Munasinghe and Swart's triangle- growth in greenhouse gas emissions are closely related to economic growth, the projected impacts of climate change will adversely affect the environment, and social relationships are likely to be strained by these impacts.

One of the benefits of the sustainable development approach is that it takes a holistic view of development, instead of compartmentalising each aspect. Climate change, by its nature, is not an issue that can be compartmentalised or viewed simply as an environmental issue, as it affects virtually every aspect of development. Climate change is relevant to diverse areas such as energy, agriculture, water and transport. However, an inherent difficulty in integrating climate change policy into existing development frameworks is that it has two main related but separate aspects: mitigation of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change and adaptation to the effects of climate change which cannot be avoided (Lecocq & Shalizi 2007:4). For example, in the area of agriculture, adaptation will be necessary in many areas to deal with reduced water resources or increased climate variability, and mitigation will also be necessary to reduce the emissions produced by fertilisers and livestock.

The extent to which mitigation and adaptation will be necessary will vary for each developing country according to its own unique circumstances. For example, many least-developed countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change whilst not contributing much at all to the problem, and for them adaptation will be the primary focus (Huq et al 2004:27; Wijkman 2008:53). Others, such as in the Sahel region of Africa, will require assistance to adapt at the same time that they need to overcome energy poverty in order to improve living standards and economic growth, and therefore mitigation policies will also be necessary. However, approaches to climate change will often only target one of these aspects, or even a particular issue of one of these aspects, which means a comprehensive treatment of the issue becomes more difficult. Unfortunately, without a coherent approach, the integration of adaptation in some areas of development policy may be undermined by a lack of integration of mitigation in other policy areas (Newell 2004:124). What makes it more difficult is that both have been somewhat proscribed topics in the past for developing countries; mitigation, because developing countries are not expected to bear this burden until developed countries have made an equitable initial effort, and adaptation because the mitigation efforts were supposed to be sufficient to avoid the need for adaptive measures (Munasinghe & Swart 2005:258-259).

Adaptation will likely be easier to integrate into existing development frameworks, as “most ways of enhancing adaptive capacity are, in fact, ways of promoting development and equity” (Munasinghe & Swart 2005:188). However, it is important to note that whilst there is a considerable overlap between poverty reduction and reducing vulnerability to climate change, they are not “identical problems that are automatically addressed together” (Eriksen & O'Brien 2007: 338). In contrast, mitigation in developing countries has often been viewed as something that will detract from development or is not compatible with it, as economic growth and improved living standards

have traditionally been linked with increased energy consumption and subsequently increased per capita greenhouse gas emissions. This paper will focus on adaptation, as it will be instructive to see how successful the attempts to integrate the 'easier' of the two aspects of climate change policy have been.

Integrating climate change into development frameworks: multilateral, bilateral, national and regional approaches

The integration of climate change policy into development policy is an area that is receiving increased attention. In 2003, a report on mainstreaming adaptation to climate change was released by a group of multilateral and bilateral donors including the World Bank (Sperling 2003). On April 4 2006, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which represents the major aid donor countries, made a 'Declaration on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation'. The Declaration recognises that "adaptation to climate change is not a 'stand alone' agenda" and that "responses to climate change should be co-ordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner"(OECD 2006:5-6). Therefore, this is an issue that the major donor countries are beginning to take seriously. Of course, a declaration of intent is only an initial step and needs to be followed through with real change at the level of practical implementation.

One of the problems faced with the practical integration of action on climate change into existing development practice is the issue of 'agenda fatigue'; there are so many issues that are being 'mainstreamed' that it leads to a crowded and complex development framework (Kok et al 2008:105). Mainstreaming action on climate change has to "compete with interventions to address other important issues such as indebtedness, HIV/AIDS, increasing urban poverty, macroeconomic instability, and increasing inequality" (Sperling 2003:31). Unfortunately, climate change is an issue that is multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral (World Bank 2008a) so there is not much option but to centrally integrate it into development planning. Newell explains it well by saying: "what this means is not viewing climate change as an isolated problem, but rather as a product of a whole series of policy choices about economic and energy strategy that need to be revised to ensure minimal impact on climate change" (Newell 2004:121).

Volkery et al argue that due to its multifarious nature climate change needs to be centrally integrated into existing development policy frameworks. At the national level, their analysis of sustainable development policy in 19 countries found that in the majority of cases steps had been taken to ensure climate change does occupy a central position in government decision making-structures (Volkery et al 2006). Urwin and Jordan also call for central integration, arguing for the "need to view climate change as [a] cross-cutting issue, rather than simply as an 'environmental' one" and for placing responsibility for climate change in a central policy agency such as the Cabinet Office in the UK (Urwin & Jordan 2008:188).

This trend to view climate change as an environmental issue is particularly relevant to adaptation, as traditionally there has been a focus on the physical impacts of climate change and hence on risk reduction and management. Whilst this is necessary, it lacks a focus on the social and economic effects of climate change on development (Van Alst et al 2008:167), and therefore referring back to the model of sustainable development developed by Munsinghe and Swart the triangle is unbalanced, being skewed towards the environmental side. Eriksen and O'Brien reinforce this by arguing that the treatment of adaptation as an environmental issue represents an institutional barrier to the achievement of sustainable development outcomes (Eriksen & O'Brien 2007:349).

A related issue to this is the potential for the fragmentation and proliferation of aid sources within countries. This occurs when there is a lack of harmonisation and coordination of donor efforts (Greene 2004). Another way to understand it is that horizontal policy harmonization needs to be promoted amongst donors as well as between government agencies. The number of aid donors has been steadily increasing over the past decade, without a concurrent increase in aid levels, which adds to the transaction costs of development (Acharya et al 2004:2). The average number of donors operating in any developing country is 23 (Knack & Rahman 2004:1). While this is not an easy problem to overcome, suggestions for dealing with it include cooperation between donors where donors take on different responsibilities or focus on certain aspects of a development issue (Knack & Rahman 2004:26).

The potential for harmonisation of efforts to deal with climate change is promising, as it is a relatively new issue in development. Therefore, it is possible that a more coordinated approach can be adopted up front (Greene 2004). However, the growth in established and proposed climate change funds in the past few years, and the number of organisations that take an active interest in the issue, may undermine this potential. As well as ensuring horizontal policy coordination within national governments and between donors, it is necessary to foster vertical policy coordination (Urwin & Jordon 2008). This includes not only between different levels of government within a country, but with supra-national institutions such as aid agencies. There needs to be a recognition of the capabilities and strengths of the different levels of government and an attempt to reconcile top-down approaches that should focus on facilitation with bottom-up approaches that focus on implementation (Kantha 2008:80). This includes the utilisation of participatory and community-led approaches (Van Alst et al 2008).

Another obstacle that impedes the integration of development and climate change policies is the belief that addressing climate change will further strain the limited resources available for development activities (Klein 2006:5; Metz & Kok 2008:99-100). Whilst funding for climate change policies is expected to be 'new and additional' to existing Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows, the lack of progress that has been demonstrated in meeting the Monterrey goals for development funding throws into question the ability of donors to deliver such new and additional funds (Muller 2008:7-8).

Multilateral Institutions: the World Bank and UNFCCC

At the multilateral level, there are a number of institutions that deal with development and climate change. For the purposes of brevity, this paper will focus on the World Bank and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as they are arguably the two largest institutions involved and have the broadest global impact.

The World Bank is currently reviewing its overall approach to climate change. Over the last year, it has been undertaking public consultations on its approach and in October 2008 produced a draft of its proposed Strategic Framework on Climate Change and Development. A large focus of the framework is on mobilising the increased funding that will be necessary as well as on the methods that will be used for funding dispersal. The way in which it will contribute to providing these additional funds is through its newly established Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) which are being set up with the regional development banks such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (World Bank 2008b:1). One of the CIFs, the Strategic Climate Fund, will be focused on adaptation efforts in a few highly vulnerable countries. There is a recognition that introducing these additional funding sources could lead to duplication of efforts, and therefore “a key feature of CIFs programming will be engagement by the [multilateral development banks] at the country level with UN and bilateral development and investment agencies, with a view to mobilizing co-financing and ensuring harmonized policy support” (World Bank 2008b:3). In addition to the considerable focus on funding, the Strategic Framework also outlines how it will aim to further mainstream climate change into its work. Efforts will be made to integrate action on climate change into its Country Assistance Strategies at the country level, as well as to integrate it at the project level into projects in five key areas: agriculture, water, energy, transport and urban (World Bank 2008a:23).

The World Bank has been criticised for the lack of consistency in its past approaches to climate change. The World Resources Institute examined World Bank energy projects and found that in 60 percent of projects there was no consideration of climate change at all (World Resources Institute 2008:2). Newell points out that the World Bank has invested far more on fossil-fuel heavy projects than on investments in areas such as renewable energy and that “the ecological spillovers from existing policies are not currently internalised” (Newell 2004:122). Despite a lack of comprehensive integration of climate change across World Bank’s activities up until the present, it has implemented specific adaptation projects such as the Kiribati Adaptation Plan, which is now in its second phase, and which will be discussed in detail further on. Investment in renewable energy infrastructure has been one of the main ways in which the World Bank has promoted mitigation.

The UNFCCC is the principle multilateral agreement on climate change, and 192 countries are Parties to the treaty. Although it is not a traditional aid donor and the agreement has several purposes, one of the key principles of the agreement is a commitment to sustainable development. In addition, whilst mitigation efforts have enjoyed precedence at negotiations in past years,

there is a growing focus on assisting developing countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change. One of the key ways in which this has been achieved is the adoption of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to identify and fund their immediate adaptation needs. The UNFCCC provides funding for the creation of NAPAs through its Least Developed Countries Fund. The UNFCCC also operates a Special Climate Change Fund, and a new Adaptation Fund has just been created under the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC which is funded through a levy on Clean Development Mechanism related carbon-trading. The World Bank and UNFCCC are connected through the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which is an organisation set up for the purposes of administering grants related to various multilateral environmental agreements. The GEF is administered by the World Bank, and the UNFCCC funds outlined above are delivered through the GEF (although the Adaptation Fund will be administered by a separate board).

Bilateral Institutions: AusAID

Climate change is one of three priority areas under AusAID's environmental strategy which was released in 2006, along with water and environmental governance. The environmental strategy recognises that "environmental degradation and declining resource security are threatening the cornerstones of development – economic growth and poverty reduction" in the Asia-Pacific region (AusAID 2007:1). The three main aspects of its climate change policy that form part of the environmental strategy are aiding mitigation in industrialising developing countries, mitigation through avoided deforestation, and adaptation in the Pacific. There is not a strong focus on environmental issues in AusAID's Pacific Island Strategy 2004-2009. It mentions sustainable development only in passing, and does not mention climate change at all (AusAID 2004). However, the Pacific Islands Strategy does consider the issue of aid harmonisation and collaboration between donors. The strategy points out that the small number of donors in the region means that such harmonisation and collaboration is achievable, which will be discussed in further detail below.

Development and climate change in Kiribati

Kiribati has been chosen as the case study in this paper because it will be one of the countries most affected by climate change (Global Environment Fund 2006:2), and it has also been one of the most vocal about the action that needs to be taken to mitigate those effects. It may already be too late to ensure sustainable development for all Kiribati residents- in June 2008, President Anote Tong of Kiribati visited Australia and asked the Australian prime minister, Kevin Rudd, to consider taking his citizens in as skilled migrants now rather than as climate refugees in the future (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2008). Kiribati is also already experiencing some of the effects of climate change, with a survey of Kiribati citizens (known as I-Kiribati) finding that the four observed major changes taking place are diminishing fish stocks, coastal erosion, increased and more intense sunlight and sea level rise (Republic of Kiribati 2007:14).

Climate change has the potential to adversely affect many areas of development in Kiribati. It shares the characteristics of many other small island developing states which “limit [their] capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change” and make them particularly vulnerable to its impacts (Munasinghe & Swart 2005:258). For example, increasing storm surges can reduce the quality of groundwater lenses from which I-Kiribati source their potable water, which is already a limited resource. In addition, the majority of land in Kiribati is only 3 to 4 metres above sea level so the country is particularly susceptible to coastal erosion from sea level rise. The physical vulnerability is closely related to social vulnerability, as only about 10 per cent of the population is employed in the cash economy, which means that many families and communities are heavily dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods (Republic of Kiribati 2003).

The potentially devastating impacts of climate change are additional to the existing development challenges that Kiribati faces. It is officially classified as a least developed country (LDC) and according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) ranks 129 on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index and 11 out of 14 Pacific Island countries (Asian Development Bank 2006:10). It is facing increasing population pressures, particularly on the main island of South Tarawa, and the population is set to increase by 55 per cent by 2025 (World Bank 2006:1). This will place added pressures on natural resources and institutional capacity, and past experience indicate that there is limited capacity for internal resettlement (Republic of Kiribati 2007:6). As noted above, the government of Kiribati recognises climate change as a serious problem. Evidence of the government's commitment to integrating adaptation to climate change into development policy can be seen in the National Development Strategy (NDS) for 2004-07 (The NDA for 2008-2011 is still under development). The NDS is one of the Government's three key policy documents, along with the budget and the Ministry Operational Plans (MOPs) of the individual ministries. The NDS consists of six key policy areas, and whilst adapting to climate change is not one of them, it is identified as a key issue in two of the six key policy areas, namely economic growth and sustainable use of physical resources. Therefore, the Kiribati Government focuses its climate change efforts on promoting adaptation mainstreaming so that damage to economic growth is minimised and to ensure that natural resource management is not maladaptive.

The Government of Kiribati has also outlined a Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Strategy which has the following objectives:

- Kiribati should be mentally, physically and financially well prepared to deal with whatever climatic trends and events the future may hold;
- this should be achieved through a nationally co-ordinated, participation based adaptation programme carried out by official and private agencies; and
- external financial assistance should be obtained to meet the costs of the national adaptation programme (Republic of Kiribati 2007:6).

Therefore, while they are committed to action on climate change, they recognise the need for assistance from foreign sources to achieve their goals. The main projects that aim to do this are outlined below.

Kiribati Adaptation Plan

The main programme that is being implemented in Kiribati to deal with the projected impacts of climate change is the World Bank's Kiribati Adaptation Plan (KAP). KAP Phase I was originally implemented in 2003, and Phase II began in 2006. A proposed Phase III is scheduled to commence in 2009. KAP was the first World Bank adaptation pilot program in the East Asia and Pacific region (World Bank 2006:3). Kiribati was chosen for the pilot program due to its "combination of LDC and small island status, extreme vulnerability and good progress in mainstreaming" (World Bank 2006:3).

The primary components of the KAP are:

- (1) policy, planning and information,
- (2) land use, physical structures, and ecosystems,
- (3) freshwater resources,
- (4) capacity at island and community level and
- (5) project management (World Bank 2006:6-7).

In regards to the first component, the focus is on policy coordination and mainstreaming across the Government of Kiribati. The principle means for achieving this is the establishment of the Strategic National Policy and Risk Assessment Unit (SNPRA Unit) in the office of Te Berititenti (the office of the President). This means that adaptation to climate change has been moved away from its technically-oriented beginnings in the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture Development (MELAD) towards a more comprehensive whole-of-government approach (World Bank 2007:9). This unit will be the central point for adaptation policy within the Kiribati Government, and it is anticipated that once established it will "also host and/or compel regular sector donor consultation, collaboration and coordination" (Global Environment Facility 2004:17). In addition, emphasis is placed on mainstreaming adaptation considerations into Ministry Operational Plans. The first component also includes improving climate monitoring and meteorological services.

This focus on integrating adaptation to climate change into the work of central government ministries is complemented by component four, which seeks to build the capacity of individual island communities to adapt to climate change. As Kiribati consists of 33 atolls and reef islands stretching over approximately 5000km of the Pacific Ocean, it is necessary to focus on the specific needs of I-Kiribati and the natural environments that they inhabit. This component will work closely with communities through NGOs and churches to implement small scale Outer-Island adaptation investments (World Bank 2006:18). Components two and three focus on some of the actual adaptation measures that need to be taken. This includes updating coastal infrastructure and improving water resource management to reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts. Therefore, their focus is on implementing adaptive

responses rather than building adaptive capacity like components one and four (Kartha 2008:78). Through the different components, KAP is intended to provide a basis for long term adaptation planning and integration. It can be seen that the structure of KAP broadly reflects the Kiribati Government's NDS and Climate Change Adaptation Policy in its focus on policy integration and sustainable management of natural resources.

National Adaptation Plan of Action

The NAPA has a different focus to the KAP, as it is intended to identify the urgent and immediate adaptation needs of Kiribati over a three year period. The NAPA is funded through the UNFCCC's Least Developed Country Fund, with indicative project costs amounting to approximately \$16 million dollars (Republic of Kiribati 2007:2). This includes several sub projects including water resource adaptation, coastal zone management and climate monitoring. As it concerns more pressing adaptation needs, there is more of a focus on natural resource management and reducing vulnerability rather than integration and mainstreaming. For example, the NAPA sub project on water resource management will focus on constructing or repairing wells that are needed immediately, while the KAP will focus on developing a long term whole-of-government plan for water resource management. However, these individual activities under the NAPA will still be integrated into the MOPs of the Ministries that implement them. A further distinction between the NAPA and the KAP is that coordination of the NAPA is the responsibility of the environment ministry MELAD rather than the President's office as for the KAP.

Therefore, the KAP and the NAPA perform different but complimentary functions concerning adaptation to climate change in Kiribati. Whilst there are overlapping project areas, such as the improvement of meteorological services, the temporal delineation between the projects as well as close collaboration avoids the risk of duplication. This is further reinforced by the fact that they are overseen by the same governance structure, the National Adaptation Steering Committee (NASC). This structure allows for information sharing and therefore allows for better coordination of activities. AusAID is also involved in mainstreaming adaptation to climate change in Kiribati through its contribution to the KAP. AusAID provides funds specifically for Component 3 of the KAP, which deals with freshwater resources. However, it has recently announced the Adaptation to Climate Change Initiative which will deliver \$150 million over the next three years for adaptation activities in the Pacific. It remains to be seen whether or not any of this funding will be delivered to Kiribati, and if so, whether or not it will be used in coordinated activities with other aid donors as has been the case with its contribution to the KAP.

The ADB has also been involved in KAP through their Sanitation, Public Health and Environment Improvement program (SAPHE). This project focused on improving water supply, water resource management and sanitation (Asian Development Bank 2006:12). Although it has now been completed, SAPHE was integrated with KAP phase I, and component 3 of KAP II that AusAID funds draws on the experiences of SAPHE and can be considered as an extension of its work (World Bank 2006:8).

From the above, it can be seen that the mainstreaming of adaptation to climate change into existing development frameworks in Kiribati is being undertaken in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner. In terms of donor harmonisation, many of the major donors working in Kiribati have coordinated their efforts in this field, meaning the problems of aid fragmentation and proliferation are not a concern. Furthermore, the work undertaken by the donor agencies is closely aligned with the Government of Kiribati's own objectives outlined in their National Development Strategy. Consideration is also given to harmonising top-down and bottom-up approaches to adaptation and to maximising participation. In regards to horizontal policy integration, this is being promoted through component I of the KAP with creation of a central climate change policy unit and the integration of climate change adaptation into MOPs. The institutional relationships between those involved in mainstreaming adaptation are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

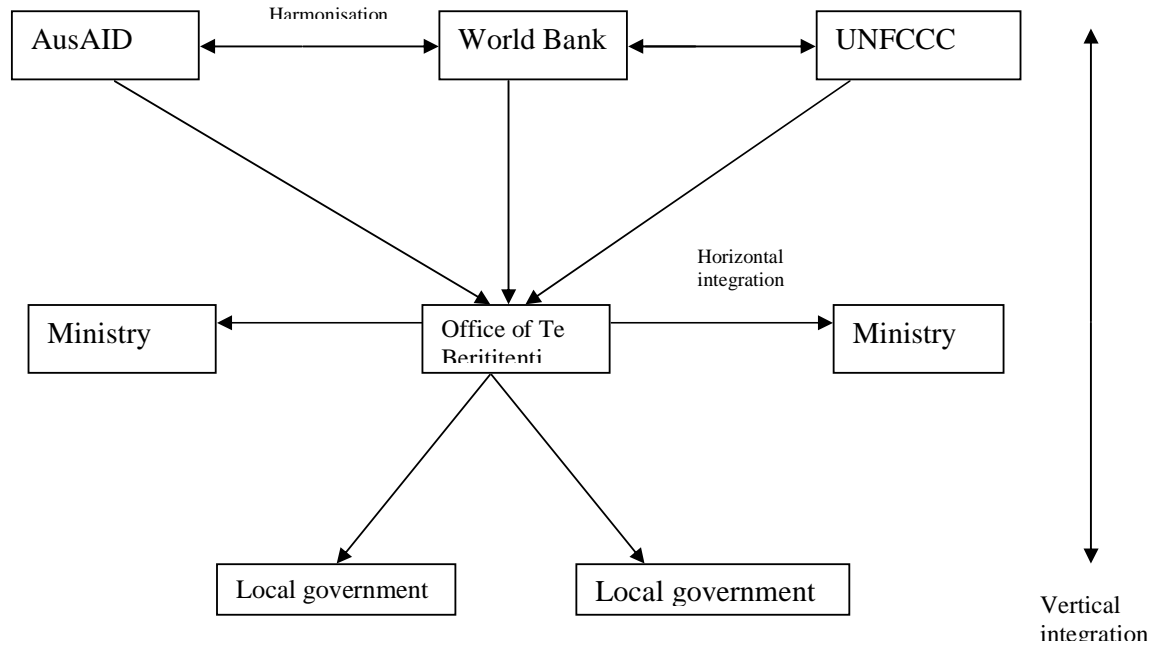


Figure 1: Relationships between different actors in Kiribati involved in adaptation to climate change

Applying the lessons learnt from Kiribati

The successful design of the various adaptation policies in Kiribati in terms of mainstreaming and harmonisation appear to bode well for the wide-scale integration of climate change policies into existing development practice. However, it is not immediately clear how well the experience of Kiribati will translate into other contexts. As noted above, the KAP was chosen as a pilot project by the World Bank because of its vulnerability to climate change, its existing commitment to mainstreaming and the fact that it is a LDC and a

small island developing state. The creation of the NAPA for Kiribati occurred for similar reasons. These factors mean that the case for integrating adaptation to climate change into existing development policies and programs is obvious and makes efforts to do so easier. However, in other countries the threat may not be so evident and therefore the necessity of integrating adaptation measures may not seem so pressing. Furthermore, there will likely be less 'no regrets' adaptation measures available and mitigation measures may play a larger role, further complicating integration efforts.

Another reason for the successful integration of adaptation to climate change in the case of Kiribati is that the risk of donor fragmentation and proliferation is low, due to Kiribati being a small country with a select number of donors. Instead, the opportunities for collaboration and harmonisation of efforts are maximised. Again, in many countries this may not be the case and therefore harmonisation will be more difficult to achieve. Therefore, the lessons learnt in Kiribati will translate easiest into similar contexts, such as other small island LDCs in the Pacific.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper has shown that in Kiribati, the integration of adaptation to climate change into existing development frameworks has been relatively successful. This is primarily due to the commitment of the Kiribati Government to mainstreaming and the harmonisation of efforts between the UNFCCC and the World Bank on the KAP and the NAPA, which are the two multilateral institutions with the most interest and expertise in this area. Their delineation of focus areas into immediate and long-term adaptation needs enabled them to work together without doubling up on work. In addition, the integration of AusAID and ADB funding into the KAP through their involvement in specific sub-projects has further reduced the potential negative affects that arise from aid proliferation and fragmentation. It demonstrates that mainstreaming of new issues into existing development frameworks can be done well as long as co-ordination and collaboration between actors are optimised.

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