



Making an adaptation network work for Africa

This year, the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA) program approved a second two-year phase for AfricaAdapt, the successful knowledge-sharing initiative. In its first phase, AfricaAdapt established itself as a bilingual pan-African network with around 1000 registered members — 80% of whom are in Africa. The network has proven to be a capable intermediary, increasing the flow of knowledge among researchers, policymakers, and civil society organizations from the many different sectors and disciplines in Africa that are working on adaptation.

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The network began with Knowledge Sharing for Climate Change Adaptation in Africa, a project led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in partnership with three African organizations: ENDA, an international NGO based in Senegal; the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), a pan-African organization based in Ghana; and the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), a regional climate information organization based in Kenya. AfricaAdapt recruited and built a strong cadre of knowledge sharing



Lessons learned

- **For effective implementation, structure governance of the network around the respective strengths of the core partners and the need to work through consensus.**
- **Balance face-to-face meetings with the network's online presence to ensure connectedness on the ground.**
- **Strengthen existing partnerships while expanding network links for added reach and participation.**

officers (KSOs), housed in each of these partner organizations, and convinced over 125 diverse institutions of the value of sharing their climate change knowledge on the network website. AfricaAdapt also launched a highly successful small grants fund that to date has supported 15 innovative projects on engaging hard-to-reach groups. The network publishes newsletters; helped launch a new magazine, *JotoAfrika*; has hosted a series of successful “meet and greet” gatherings at the national and community level; and at year's end, hosted its first continent-wide symposium.

AfricaAdapt's second phase has been shaped in key ways by the lessons and experience of phase 1. The network underwent assessment by Measure Africa (an organization that provides monitoring, evaluation, and research services), conducted online user surveys, and used web analytics to monitor online engagement. The results of an external evaluation are expected early in the new year. In phase 2,



AfricaAdapt Symposium 2011, held at UNECA's headquarters in Addis Ababa, drew nearly 200 participants from across Africa and beyond.
Photo courtesy of AfricaAdapt

AfricaAdapt will strengthen its mission of enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change by better facilitating knowledge sharing, bringing disconnected stakeholders together. The network will deepen a culture of knowledge sharing on the continent and will raise the profile of African knowledge and research. Based on learning so far, phase 2 will continue its focus on practical knowledge-sharing activities, but aims for an improved governance structure, wider geographic reach, and enhanced outcome-based monitoring and evaluation.

Improving structure and governance for African leadership on knowledge sharing

In its second phase, AfricaAdapt is now led by ENDA, which began to take on this role in the latter stages of the project's first phase. Consistent with CCAA's goal of strengthening African leadership in addressing climate change adaptation, the transition took place under an agreed plan to see knowledge-sharing capacity and leadership transferred to African partners. Such a shift, which does not take place without some tensions, required careful attention to the strengths and particular competencies of each core partner.

In phase 2, governance of the network will be structured around the principles of consensus building and participatory management. A carefully crafted handover strategy emphasized continuity and capacity building at ENDA. A more vertical management structure, with clearer roles and lines of responsibility, is planned, with senior management being more involved for support and monitoring. Direction of phase 2 is provided by a program manager and network coordinator based at ENDA, and a senior management group comprised of one representative from each partner organization, along with the program manager, network coordinator, and KSOs from each partner organization. An advisory board, representing end-users, other stakeholders, and donors, will meet twice a year to provide input on user needs. In this second phase, IDS will provide mentoring and capacity building for KSOs and will assist ENDA with network communications support.

In phase 2, governance of the network will build on consensus and participatory management.



Balancing online activities with offline engagement

Even though African Internet use is exploding, offline opportunities for information exchange and interaction are essential. The face-to-face “meet and greet” gatherings that AfricaAdapt organized to build a bridge between local and national counterparts working on adaptation were highly effective. More energy will be devoted in this next phase to creating such communications spaces for enabling effective sharing and exchange between groups, and promoting the overall value of knowledge sharing. Events will range from topical “meet and greets” to knowledge exchange fairs involving participants from several countries and major continent-wide events.

The AfricaAdapt Innovation Fund, which played an important role in supporting engagement of hard-to-reach groups, will be extended into phase 2. Grants for an additional dozen or so innovative communications-focused projects are expected. Innovation in communication will be further supported by a community radio strategy targeting the medium that is most widely accessible to vulnerable communities.

The AfricaAdapt network will redesign its current web platform to provide a simpler user interface to make it easier to contribute and access online materials. The updated platform will feature resource guides on different aspects



In partnership with community radio networks, AfricaAdapt co-hosted climate change training for broadcasters in Ghana in October 2010. Photo courtesy of AfricaAdapt

of knowledge sharing, as well as basic knowledge materials on climate change and variability in Africa and how to communicate risk. Online discussion channels will allow for interaction on major climate change issues.

Face-to-face gatherings proved highly effective in linking local and national counterparts. More are planned.

To address the challenge of participation during this second phase, AfricaAdapt will encourage members to go beyond opening and updating online profiles, inviting them to interact and exchange on topics of their choice and to inform others about the existence of AfricaAdapt to actively build the network. Members will also be encouraged to lead some activities. For example, “meet and greets” will go out for tender for network members to host, thereby mobilizing them and strengthening network buy-in.

Strengthening links to other networks

In its first phase, AfricaAdapt built on existing knowledge networks in Africa, as reflected in its core partners. ICPAC, for example, is mandated to provide climate information and technical support for member states of the East African Intergovernmental Authority for Development, while FARA serves as a pan-African resource and forum on agricultural research. The network also recognized the importance of linking with external groups and intermediaries that could further build a culture of communication on adaptation. AfricaAdapt supported the participation of journalists in the 15th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Convention so they could report on the conference in their national languages; the network also established links to the community radio network AMARC-Africa. In hosting its first Africa-wide knowledge symposium in March 2011, AfricaAdapt partnered with the new Africa Climate Policy Centre and the Climate and Development Knowledge Network.



AfricaAdapt Knowledge Sharing Officers Binetou Diagné (l.) and Jacqueline Nnam (r.) *Photo courtesy of AfricaAdapt*

Since 2009, AfricaAdapt has been mapping the principal adaptation actors in Africa and building a geographic database. As well as collaborating with the growing number of climate change–focused initiatives in Africa, the network will continue to link with and learn from global initiatives such as WeAdapt; the United Nations Development Programme’s Adaptation Learning Mechanism; and the IDS Knowledge Services program, KM4DEV.

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Geographically, the network plans to strengthen its reach and participation base in South, southern, and North Africa, where it became apparent in phase 1 that AfricaAdapt is not as well

known. Network membership and calls for applications to the Innovation Fund have been stronger in East and West Africa. The network plans to build on the institutional links of existing partners and their networks in underrepresented regions, as hubs through which activities such as regional “meet and greets” and knowledge exchange fairs could be facilitated.

Expected results of phase 2

Even as it enters its second phase, AfricaAdapt is looking beyond the two-year horizon to establishing a long-standing sustainable and useful network for exchange. Building on the considerable strengths already demonstrated, it aims to be

- African-led, with a managing partnership consisting entirely of African organizations;
- Africa’s pre-eminent convenor of English and French adaptation knowledge-sharing events;
- a leading provider of African adaptation research and local knowledge to African policymakers, and a key broker between researchers, policymakers and decision-makers, community-based organizations, and vulnerable communities;
- a hub for stimulating innovation in knowledge-sharing practices, through the Knowledge Sharing Innovation Fund and its own creative use of web 2.0 tools;
- a strong voice for African adaptation knowledge, particularly in relation to the Nairobi Programme of Work on Adaptation; and
- a source of knowledge on best practices in adaptation knowledge sharing.



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