MAPPING ADAPTATION:
UNTANGLING THE DIVERGENT
INTERPRETATIONS
Starting Point

- There have been sufficient conceptual discussions on adaptation = we know what it means!

- There is no need to delay action further – we must act before it’s too late
Key message 1

- Adaptation is understood by each actor to mean something different
Key message 2

Different interpretations of adaptation can lead to:

- Miscommunication
- Wasted investments
- Maladaptation

→ Increased vulnerability to climate change
Key message 3

- Conceptual discussions on adaptation need to move beyond the basic question ‘what is adaptation’ to instead examine what adaptation means for the relevant actors.
Why does it matter?

Impacts vs. Vulnerability perspective

**Impacts**
- Focus on climate
- Easier to account for
- Fits with institutional set up:
  - Funding
  - UNFCCC

**Vulnerability**
- Recognises other processes
- Emphasises underlying conditions
- Focuses on development
Adaptation ‘trends’

1. Mainstreaming adaptation
2. Measuring effectiveness of adaptation (metrics)
3. Integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation
4. Funding adaptation
5. Adaptation knowledge management
6. Economics of adaptation
7. Cities and adaptation
Example: Aid agencies

- Important actors in putting adaptation on agenda
- Follow UNFCCC framework
- Can also fund outside UNFCCC framework
- Seek measurable interventions
- Affected by time constraints
Example: Development NGOs

- Relatively late on scene
- Link climate change and development — put adaptation in centre
- Need to justify link = dependent on funding trends
- Lack experience with climate change
Mapping Adaptation: Agency

- Motivation/Interests
- Understanding of the Problem
- Defining Adaptation
- Positioning
- Target/Objective
- Funding Source
- Policy Framework
The Scattered Meaning of Adaptation

- Infrastructure
- Institutions
- Policies
- Investment
- Livelihoods
- Services
- Attitudes & values (education)
Concluding Thought

- Shift conceptual discussions on adaptation from attempts to identify one definition to seeking a framework for highlighting the different uses and understandings of it.
Thank you

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