

World Sustainable Development Summit 2016

Background Note for Thematic track on “Linking Climate Risks to Policy and Practice –Sharing Experiences and Approach for Research Uptake”

Climate change is perverse. The impacts arising out of climate change have spatial variations. The geographical vastness India exhibits also gives rise to multiplicity in impacts due to climate change. From the coasts to the semi-arids to the mountain ecosystems, impacts due to climate change across these regions vary. For instance, climate change (heavy precipitation and subsequent landslides, decreased rainfall and sea level rise) affects crop-yields affecting incomes. In certain cases people unable to cope with the situation have migrated and shifted their livelihoods for sustenance. This in-turn can lead to socio-cultural complexities within societies and might alter their vulnerabilities. In this very case, though the impacts arising out of climate change are different, they all lead to a similar outcome. This reiterates the earlier premise: biophysical impacts from climate change might be different, but they can lead to similar socio-economic aberrations.

To address these similar patterns of distress, regional studies, informing policies across scales, are needed. The effectiveness of influencing policies would be enhanced when multiple regional studies try to sieve for commonalities in distress patterns across scales and try to address them collectively. Such an approach would eventually lead to an effective and collective way of enabling research into use across domains and scales. Given the quasi-federal system of governance in India, such an approach is more appropriate since certain policy decisions rest at the national level, hence the need for a collective force to influence policy is further justified. It is in this context that this thematic track would like to explore the need for and the way to achieve a common goal setting in informing policies from climate change research across various ecosystems in India. It aims to focus on the need for cross-scalar policy integration to enable effective action against socio-economic stressors arising out of multi-scalar impacts of climate change.

To enable this, The Energy and Resources Institute, Indian Institute for Human Settlements and Jadavpur University are together engaged in a collaborative national study which is part of a larger programme (Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia) on adaptation to climate change. As part of this collaborative study the team at these institutes, working on issues relating to climate change vulnerability and adaptation in three distinct hotspots, namely, semi-arid regions, the deltas and the Himalayan river basins, are trying to develop and implement a research into use plan to assist in improving the impact of their individual research into shaping (collective) policy making. This thematic track would include an overarching presentation sharing how the research under CARIIAA aims to ensure uptake in policy and practice. Thereafter, invited panelists holding key positions in public policy making will be requested to share their thoughts on research integration into policy and planning through a sharing of their experiences and ideas on approaches that can be considered or undertaken.

The Thematic Track will be a 2-hour session focusing on “Key risks of climate change and challenges for policy-making in India”. The session will include an overarching presentation and panel discussion centred around this theme. The discussion would focus around key questions pertaining to:

1. What are the key issues that study areas are currently faced with? How is climate change expected to affect these issues? What will be the priority risks and vulnerabilities in the future?
2. Who are the primary stakeholders likely to be affected by climate change impacts?
3. Taking into consideration the common barriers of adaptation (lack of costs, unavailable technology etc.), what adaptation measures will be most effective in increasing climate resilience in these areas?

Suggested questions for panel discussion are:

1. What policies/schemes are currently in place to help increase climate resilience in the future? Is there a mismatch between existing policies and what is required for effective implementation of adaptation measures?
2. What are the effective strategies required to translate scientific knowledge into policy-relevant information?