



Key Adaptation Concepts and Terms

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Goal of the analysis

- Bring attention to a wide range of definitions of the same terms related to adaptation
- Facilitate consensus on usage of the key adaptation terms
- Encourage formal definition of some terms that are widely used but not yet defined

Method of the analysis

- For each term/concept various definitions have been found in literature
- The key differences have been identified and analysis has been conducted of possible implications for policy-makers
- The focus has been on definitions that seem most important in the international discussion on adaptation to climate change.
 - ◆ adaptation
 - ◆ adaptation assessment
 - ◆ adaptation benefits
 - ◆ adaptation baseline
 - ◆ adaptation costs
 - ◆ adaptive capacity
 - ◆ adaptation method
 - ◆ adaptation measure
 - ◆ adaptation technology
 - ◆ climate change
 - ◆ critical threshold
 - ◆ coping range
 - ◆ coping capacity
 - ◆ disaster
 - ◆ extreme weather event
 - ◆ mainstreaming
 - ◆ resilience
 - ◆ sensitivity
 - ◆ vulnerability

Example

- **Adaptation** - *Practical steps to protect countries and communities from the likely disruption and damage that will result from effects of climate change. For example, flood walls should be built and in numerous cases it is probably advisable to move human settlements out of flood plains and other low-lying areas...* (Website of the UNFCCC Secretariat)
- **Adaptation** - *Adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities. Various types of adaptation can be distinguished, including anticipatory and reactive adaptation, private and public adaptation, and autonomous and planned adaptation* (IPCC TAR, 2001)
- **Adaptation** is a process by which strategies to moderate, cope with and take advantage of the consequences of climatic events are enhanced, developed, and implemented. (UNDP, 2005)
- **Adaptation** – *The process or outcome of a process that leads to a reduction in harm or risk of harm, or realisation of benefits associated with climate variability and climate change.* (UK CIP, 2003)

Conclusions

- Definitions vary across institutions and different groups of stakeholders
- Terms that have policy implications may warrant special attention in the review of the Fourth Assessment report (AR4) of the IPCC
- Some terms and concepts are not defined either by the IPCC or the UNFCCC. If deemed necessary a cooperative effort between the UNFCCC and IPCC could aim to clarify such terms and concepts
- In some cases precise definitions may not be desirable until more information is available
- It would be helpful if the adaptation community used either the existing definitions provided by the IPCC or, in some cases, those provided by the UNFCCC