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INTRODUCTION

Mainstreaming community-based adaptation into national and local planning

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Community-based adaptation (CBA) to climate change can be defined as 'a community-led process, based on communities' priorities, needs, knowledge, and capacities, which should empower people to plan for and cope with the impacts of climate change' (Reid, Cannon, Berger, Alam, & Milligan, 2009). Early CBA initiatives were generally implemented by non-government organizations, and operated primarily at the local level. Emphasis was placed on applying 'bottom-up' participatory processes to identify the climate change problem and appropriate local responses to this problem (Ayers & Forsyth, 2009).

As realization grew about the scale of the problems humanity will face as a result of climate change, it became clear that small localized stand-alone initiatives were not enough to respond to the challenges (Reid, 2014; Schipper, Ayers, Reid, Huq, & Rahman, 2014). Dodman and Mitlin (2013) argued that while CBA was strong on emphasizing participatory processes, insufficient attention was given to building up links with political structures above the level of the settlement. Others stressed that many climate change impacts could not be managed through local adaptation, and that the multiple causes of vulnerability included market or service access or good governance beyond the project level (Dixit, McGray, Gonzales, & Desmond, 2012; Ensor & Berger, 2009).

Increasingly, larger multilateral and bilateral agencies, national governments, and representatives from major government and non-government agencies were taking an interest in CBA and starting to implement larger scale programmes. Early international CBA conferences run by the International Institute for Environment and Development, the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, and local partner organizations, were dominated by non-government organizations that pioneered much of the early CBA work. The theme of the fifth international CBA conference held in 2011, however, was 'Scaling Up: Beyond Pilots' reflecting a growing interest in scaling up CBA activities. The range of stakeholders attending was also much broader than at earlier conferences (Haider & Rabbani, 2011).

Whilst non-government organizations have done much to promote learning on CBA and implement activities at the grassroots level, stronger engagement with a wider group of stakeholders, particularly governments, provides opportunities to move away from isolated pilot projects and integrate CBA into levels of policy and planning to an extent that non-government organizations could not do (Huq & Ayers, 2008; Pelling, 2011; UNDP/UNEP, 2011). Klein, Schipper, and Dessai (2005) argue that mainstreaming adaptation into local, regional and national government structures and processes in this way is more sustainable, effective and efficient than designing and managing policies separately from ongoing activities. It may also protect adaptation activities from stakeholders who see them as a threat or do not support their aims, and help avoid conflict with existing policies (Lebel et al., 2012).

Experience from a number of programmes such as the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme executed by the United Nations Development Programme was providing evidence that CBA initiatives could operate at scale, for example, through mainstreaming into broader government and non-government policy and planning processes. Operating at scale can lead to tensions and challenges, for example, government structures are notoriously slow to take action and respond to local needs and many have a very chequered history of responding to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. But experience has shown that it is possible for CBA to remain centred on the priorities and processes chosen by the community but not necessarily limited to work implemented at the level of the community (Reid & Schipper, 2014).

Arguably the best practical example of mainstreaming CBA into broader planning processes is provided by Nepal. In 2011, the Nepalese government adopted Local Adaptation Plans of Action as the official framework for

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national adaptation planning (Government of Nepal, 2011). The Government of Nepal had realized that most climate change impacts were felt at the local level, and that there was a disconnect between local and national level planning (namely the National Adaptation Programme of Action) on how best to respond to climate change. The country's long history of community forestry provided a precedent on which to base the work that followed, and policies such as the Decentralisation Act of 1982 provided a supportive legislative framework in which to cluster bottom-up natural resource management and development activities and hence mainstream local adaptation actions into national level planning.

The seventh international CBA conference in 2013 explored the bottlenecks and challenges associated with the theme of systematically 'Mainstreaming CBA into National and Local Planning'. For example, participants identified a need for better integration of CBA with disaster preparedness activities, including early warnings and disaster risk reduction activities. A significant cohort of government representatives attended and shared experiences of mainstreaming CBA into government programmes from The Gambia, Kenya, Bangladesh and Cambodia (Reid et al., 2013). It became clear that whilst core ministries of planning and finance are increasingly becoming involved, countries are finding their own ways of developing strategies to address the impacts of climate change on national development. Trajectories have different starting points and pathways.

The papers published in this special issue have all emerged from presentations made and ideas shared at this seventh international CBA conference. Some address the issue of mainstreaming CBA into government policy and planning processes, for example, at national levels in Bangladesh and Nepal, or at the level of the city or a specific sector such as agriculture. Others look at how gender and children's issues should be better mainstreamed into adaptation planning, including CBA. And others provide examples of how tools can be applied, and finance delivered for effective mainstreaming.

Many CBA practitioners are based in non-government organizations, and increasingly government agencies, where it is difficult to dedicate much time to publishing work in academic journals. This means that much of their knowledge and experience is not shared as widely as it could be. This special issue has channelled support provided by the UK Government's Department for International Development to help some of these practitioners develop papers of a high enough standard to merit publication, and hence share their knowledge more widely.

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