

Catalysing a global agenda on adaptation to climate change: exploring transboundary risks and opportunities in the Asia Pacific region

Background

The concept of adaptation as a ‘global challenge’ – as recognised by and articulated in the Paris Agreement – is not getting the attention it warrants in international climate negotiations. Until recently, adaptation has been framed almost exclusively as a national-to-local concern, while the broader international dimension of climate risk has received very little attention in negotiations and pragmatic planning for adaptation. Yet the costs and benefits of successful – and unsuccessful – adaptation are likely to be shared across borders. Countries may rely on natural resources that cross national boundaries, while global supply and value chains mean one country’s adaptation efforts can affect another country’s resilience many thousands of miles away. The potential for various climate change impacts to undermine human security and possibly contribute to increased migration, regional tensions and conflict also raises concerns about changing transboundary risks that need to be addressed through international cooperation. In an increasingly globalised world, we need to understand how climate change and adaptation will affect our interdependent relationships and discuss appropriate measures and responses.

2018 presents an opportune moment for change. As developing countries request support to develop and implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and Parties are tasked with tracking their adaptation progress under the Global Stocktake, there is a need for a clear and unified approach that includes adequate provisions for adaptation in the face of transboundary risks. Further research and analysis of cross-border risks is urgently required to inform the development of the Adaptation Communications and the adaptation framework under the Convention. There are also opportunities to ensure the guidance on NAPs includes references to transboundary impacts, while countries could be encouraged to articulate requirements for multilateral cooperation within their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to address transboundary issues.

Without such visibility, collaboration, research and analysis, there is a significant chance that transboundary climate risks will remain ‘un-governed’, and opportunities to build on the momentum of the Paris Agreement – in order to achieve the global goal on adaptation – will be missed.

Event/session proposal

This session will explore the transboundary risks that result from both the impacts of climate change and the effects of adaptation (positive and negative). It will draw on case studies from within and across the Asia Pacific region, to provide an impetus for increased regional – and subsequently global – action and cooperation.

The session will aim to:

- Critically reflect on the state of knowledge on transboundary climate risks and the transboundary consequences of adaptation (both planned and unintended) and build a common understanding among the target audience of adaptation as a global challenge.
- Highlight examples and case studies of transboundary risks within the Asia Pacific region, and the broader inputs and measures required to move this agenda forward, including the benefits to national-level actors.
- Encourage shared learning on relevant cross-border initiatives, projects and platforms within the region, to highlight the incentives that could be harnessed to better account for transboundary climate risk (across sectors, geographies and communities) and illustrate possible/appropriate policy responses.
- Assess subsequent actions, roles and responsibilities (for different actors within policy and practice) and concrete opportunities to bring such grounded evidence to bear in the UNFCCC negotiations and/or other legal frameworks/conventions (highlighting common agendas and promoting policy coherence).

The session will form part of a larger work programme which aims to build a common agenda between researchers, adaptation experts and policy advisors that will ultimately strengthen analysis, ambition and alignment on global adaptation within the UNFCCC policy process and beyond, catalysing action ahead of and during COP24, and promoting cooperation and coherence on transboundary risk across countries, sectors and frameworks.

Tentative Agenda and Speakers

Introduction by Session Chair: Welcoming and highlighting why the issue is of importance in the Asian context (Ms. Rebecca Nadin, ODI or Niall O'Connor, SEI Bangkok)

Presentations

1. Ms. Rebecca Nadin: International context of Transboundary Climate Impacts. What do we already know? What are the gaps?
2. Dr Prabhakar Sivapuram, IGES: Wider regional transboundary context of climate change impacts and implications on development for Asia and the Pacific Region.

Panel members

1. Minister for Climate Change Pakistan
2. Senior Official from Government of Singapore
3. David Molden, ICIMOD
4. Lifeng Li, Coordinator, Support Programmes (Readiness, NAPs, PPF, and Sustainability), Green Climate Fund

Q&A: Audience Q&A and discussion

Wrap up and closing remarks