

Participatory toolboxes for climate-smart water management

The projected bio-geophysical and social impacts of climate change compound the complex challenges that regions and municipalities already face. Assessing what areas, societal groups or sectors that are most vulnerable and in what way, are the first steps for improving present and future water resource management. Researchers at the Centre for Climate Science and Policy Research in collaboration with communities and organizations in Sweden, South Africa and the Baltic Sea Region countries have developed different versions of a participatory toolbox to guide groups to create integrated vulnerability assessments across three dimensions: exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity. Within the toolbox, a sequence of participatory exercises leads the groups through a structured analysis of vulnerability including mapping of climatic and socio-economic stressors, sensitive actors and areas, and assessing present capacities to adapt to various water related changes. The process culminates in a concrete action plan outlining relevant adaptation measures and steps for implementation including delegation of responsibility and realistic time plans. The toolbox is presently being locally adapted for the urban context in the cities of Cochabamba, Bolivia and Kota, India.

The modification and use of the toolbox for different contexts and processes is highly dependent on the point of departure and purpose of the participating groups, the state of present work with climate-change related water issues, their time commitment and their expectations of where the process can take them. These experiences have led us to a fluid toolbox where the core contents remain but are reshaped and packaged into a form that suits the time, space, experience and audience in each case. This paper will describe and reflect on our experiences and future aims of the toolbox work, specifically addressing issues regarding process design and –facilitation, tracing futures, mapping and sorting out critical elements, and establishing a platform for systematic assessment of experience and knowledge.