



The RCCP Approach to Climate Change Adaptation

The Regional Climate Change Programme (RCCP) plays a facilitation and technical assistance role in building the region’s adaptive capacity, strengthening the evidence for adaptation, and partnering with institutional structures to strengthen the region’s climate finance absorptive capacity.

Mitigation or Adaptation?

Responses to climate change are generally understood in terms of mitigation or adaptation. Mitigation refers to those efforts that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit temperature rise and related impacts. Adaptation refers to those actions aimed at reducing the impacts of global warming on a system, community or geographic location.

In Africa, where 70% of agriculture is rain-fed, global temperature increases are experienced more intensely, even though the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is a fraction of the global problem. Climate change is an additional stress factor where adaptive capacity and resilience to climate variability is inherently low. This is the case in Southern Africa, generally because of inadequate socioeconomic development, the high prevalence of disease, inadequate resources, low institutional strength and poor governance. Responses to climate change are primarily adaptive but very few systems and communities have the resilience required to cope.

Multilateral negotiations on how to limit the extent of the problem, and how to compensate vulnerable regions for related responses, are ongoing. Whatever solution is eventually implemented, vulnerable populations such as those in Africa have no option but to accept that they are already living in a changing climate. The region needs to build resilience and strengthen adaptive capacity—now.

Strategies for Adaptation

Coherent strategies for adaptation and climate resilience are critical if Southern Africa is to achieve its development objectives in a changing climate. A science-policy-institutional-finance platform is required to enhance the likelihood of success. Evidence for action should be compelling, but equally important is evidence that the necessary institutional arrangements and governance required to ensure financing of the identified action is in place.

The Regional Climate Change Programme (RCCP) facilitates this platform in Southern Africa with a view to ensuring that the region

- is well positioned to implement and finance adaptation strategies
- is able to strengthen its adaptive capacity and
- is able to build resilience.

The role of science in building the evidence

A multidisciplinary and integrated approach to science is critical if the region is to build a robust evidence base that can result in domestic policy improvement, international and local action and effective resource allocation. Before we can attempt to solve any problem, science-based research must be undertaken to gain evidence of its nature, extent and seriousness, what it will cost to fix, and why it should be prioritised over other problems.

Science-based research that is able to adequately analyse climate-sectoral interactions within the development context, requires an holistic, systems-based approach. Multi-criteria analysis is required to generate appropriate responses and thereby ensure that robust evidence is used as a basis for the adaptation strategy.

Systems-based methods of evidence building

The RCCP is developing and documenting systems-based methods for building the evidence necessary for the preparation of relevant transboundary adaptation responses in Southern Africa.

The approach is based on two strategies developed from case studies (see Table 1). The participation of both scientists and stakeholders in the research and research outcomes is a necessary condition for responding to the highly complex socio-economic and environmental systems.

Financing Adaptation

To have impact, adaptation strategies need to move beyond evidence to implementation. Central to implementation – and its successful financing – is the existence of appropriate institutional arrangements and governance structures.

Southern Africa's climate finance absorptive capacity is low. It is also clear that the money available is insufficient. Successful climate fund applications will need to be highly competitive: strong evidence for action must be accompanied by coherent and compliant institutional and governance structures.

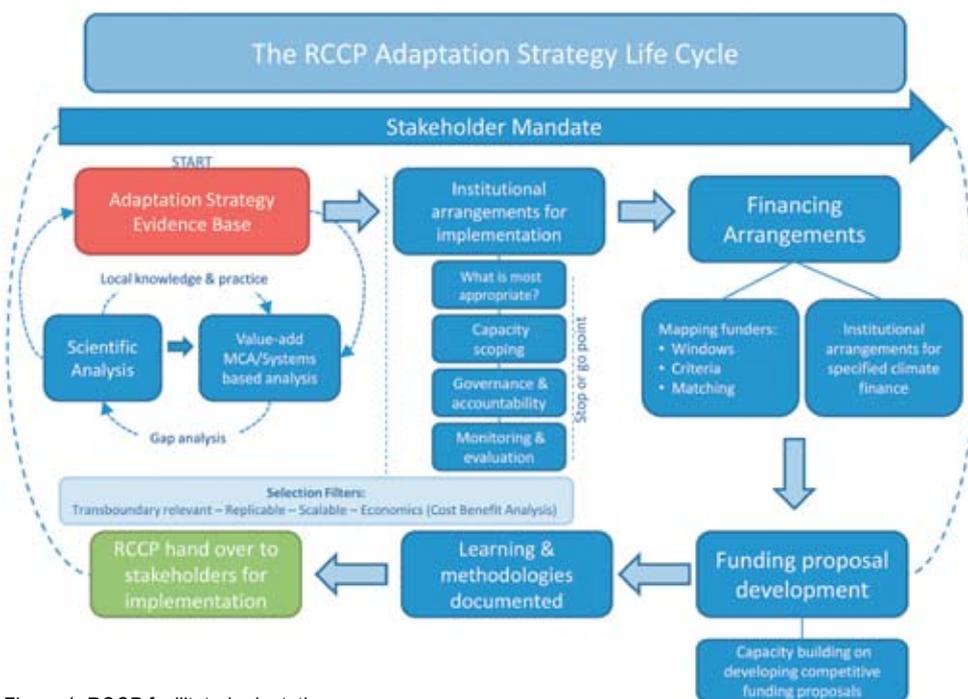


Figure 1: RCCP facilitated adaptation responses

Three components

The RCCP's facilitation role in the finance pillar of the science-policy-institutional-finance platform is underpinned by:

- i) strengthening institutional arrangements for climate finance;
- ii) analysing potential funders and funds (domestic and international) of adaptation strategies and their criteria; and
- iii) building capacity within the relevant institutions and agencies on developing competitive funding proposals.

A mandate for adaptation

In order to develop and implement an adaptation response, a mandate that is owned and bought into by all stakeholders is pivotal. For example, a shared river basin-wide adaptation strategy is unlikely to be successfully implemented if the sovereign interests of each riparian state are not identified and understood.

The evidence base is as necessary to securing the mandate and stakeholder buy-in as it is to underpinning a competitive funding proposal.

Potential adaptation strategies (see table 1) are based on a combination of the RCCP and regionally developed scientific evidence, and the outcomes of related stakeholder engagement policies.

Potential Adaptation Strategies for Southern Africa

A preliminary assessment of priority solutions for the region has been undertaken. The RCCP's informative science includes, *inter alia*:

- transboundary water assessment (TBWA),
- the impacts of climate change on the region's ability to achieve the MDGs
- analyses of food security and the region's most vulnerable locations and systems (Hot Spot Analysis)
- risk and vulnerability hotspot mapping.

(These publications can be found at www.rccp.org.za.)

Table 1: potential RCCP-facilitated adaptation strategies

Adaptation	Location	Evidence base
Payment for ecosystem services (PES)	Okavango River Basin	TBWA; engagement with OKACOM; identified need to preserve this valuable regional eco-system
Climate resilient benefit sharing and development planning	Zambezi River Basin	TBWA; SADC Water engagement; Hot Spot Analysis; competition for resources such as water for energy, for production and for mining expansion and livelihoods across 8 riparian states
Health systems strengthening in climate disaster areas where human health is negatively impacted by compromised water supply	Southern Mozambique	Government of Mozambique (GoM,INGC) research; Hot Spot Analysis; TBWA; engagement with the GoM; impacts of the 2002 and 2007 floods
Strengthening market access and trade regimes to secure food in climate impacted areas	Malawi	Hot spot analysis; Food Security and Climate Change Analysis; MDG study; Vulnerability Assessment (2007) in Malawi; Regional Hunger & Vulnerability Programme (RHVP) household-level vulnerability mapping and analysis. Key issues include population density and pressures, land use and chronic food insecurity

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