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WHAT IS THE ARCC COMPENDIUM?

Climate change vulnerability assessments (CCVAs) help us to understand the extent to which ecological and human systems are likely to be affected by climate change and provide information on sensitivity and exposure to changes in climate as well as the adaptive capacity of systems and populations to withstand these changes.

During the three years of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) African and Latin American Resilience



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to Climate Change (ARCC) program, specialists had an opportunity to explore and discover how best to conduct CCVAs. Their work brought improved science, methods, tools, and shared learning to the adaptation programming of USAID and its partners.

Credibility – the perceived technical quality and adequacy of the findings

Salience – the perceived relevance and timeliness of the information provided

Legitimacy – the level of acceptance of the findings as an accurate reflection of reality

The ARCC assessments—often the first of their kind in the countries in which they were completed—were distinguished by their evidence-based approach to analyses of past, present, and projected future climates. They linked changes in climate to changes in vulnerability, providing a detailed study of the dimensions of vulnerability (exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity). The *Compendium of Lessons Learned from ARCC Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments* summarizes the lessons learned in conducting these assessments.

Among the most important lessons is that a CCVA is both a product and a process. As a product, it is an evidence base for decision making; as a process, it is a research and learning experience that enables—and requires—meaningful dialogue among stakeholders.

ARCC also found that certain characteristics can improve the use of findings from an assessment to inform policy or programming – the "uptake" of the CCVA. Three enabling factors, in particular, lead to uptake—credibility, salience, and legitimacy.

In its scope and character, climate change represents a threat that is unprecedented in human history. For this reason, stakeholders may resist or reject the premise of the CCVA and question its technical quality (credibility), relevance (salience), and even its underlying assumptions (legitimacy).

Knowledge brokers make information more accessible by interpreting the design and findings of the CCVA as well as understanding how they relate to policy and programming.

Champions are credible individuals who can provide a direct link to decision makers—or are decision makers themselves—and are in a position to advocate for use of the information to catalyze change.

Two types of stakeholders—"knowledge brokers" and "champions"—are key to addressing these challenges. By making information more accessible to decision makers and policymakers, effective knowledge brokers can help link the design and findings of a CCVA to policy and programming. Champions are advocates who have a wider role, because they help promote the usefulness and relevance of the CCVA to a range of audiences.

Climate conditions, as well as the political, social, cultural, economic and institutional contexts, vary widely from one country and region to another, as do the available data. This situation means that there is no single way to perform a CCVA. Accordingly, the Compendium provides insights for articulating the goal of an assessment, applying an analytic

framework to define the dimensions of vulnerability, developing research questions, and ensuring appropriate sequencing of activities and cross-analysis among research components. The Compendium also offers insights for assembling a suitable team, conducting climate and institutional analyses, and translating results into recommendations for action.

For climate science to inform policy and programming decisions (i.e., evidence-based policy) and for policy and programming needs to inform climate change research (i.e., policy-relevant science), the first step is to recognize that the climate is changing, and that we all must adapt. CCVAs help to elucidate factors that we will need to consider—the nature and degree of climate change impacts, the people and systems that will be sensitive to those impacts, and the adaptive capacities of those affected. The results from CCVAs can help us evaluate options that may help prevent or mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and increase the resilience of at-risk people and systems by strengthening their capacity to adapt to change.

This brief is a summary of the *Compendium of Lessons Learned from ARCC Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments*, which is available at <http://community.eldis.org/ARCC/>.

EXAMPLES OF ARCC CCVA RESEARCH TOPICS

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| Malawi | Agriculture, surface water, fisheries, and natural resources |
| Dominican Republic | Coastal and natural resources management, fisheries, tourism, and disaster response |
| Uganda | Agriculture, water resources, and livelihoods |