Creating pathways to a sustainable future

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Climate adaptation strategies are essential for guiding the adaptation actions of local governments and for moving forward towards sustainability. As the climate changes and extreme events are becoming more frequent all over the world, it is crucial to identify climate impacts on local sectors, and the resultant vulnerabilities in those areas. The designed adaptation strategies will help focus attention on where the key actions might lower the impacts of climate change, and assist local governments to adapt, rather than to react (make corrective actions) when the loss has already taken place.

In this regard it is worth mentioning that preparing for climate change is not a generic process. Whilst climate change impacts differ from area to area, the arrangement of organisations, inter and intra-organisational coordination and methods accessible to the local leadership also vary. Therefore, any adaptation strategy in local government context will need to be designed predominantly for its local circumstances. However, it should encompass four discrete elements; the inclusion of these elements should be construed as indicators of learning and, in turn, build the capacity to adapt successfully. The suggested elements are: (1) establishing the context through leadership, vision and culture for adaptation; (2) setting the foundation for adaptation through innovation and creativity; (3) creating governance related propitious conditions; and (4) developing, implementing, and reviewing area-specific local adaptation actions.

The above mentioned four elements are interrelated. While designing adaptation strategies for local governments (revolving around the above mentioned elements), the emphasis should not be on constant articulation of capacity built, but rather with the underlying learning and institutional factors that help shape adaptive capacity. This approach will provide a pragmatic direction to local governments for starting and strengthening their adaptation actions so as to create pathways to a sustainable future.

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