



Simon Anderson

**Principal researcher
Climate Change Group
International Institute for Environment and
Development
Scotland**

“Big innovative projects are not the answer. Creating an environment that enables communities to own and direct adaptation projects — that’s the answer.”

During the International Conference on Evaluating Climate Change and Development, Simon Anderson made it clear that adaptation to climate change and development should go hand in hand. He comments that adaptation has the potential to reach the poorest by moving away from what he calls a “project environment” to an “enabling environment” that removes resource constraints. To create an enabling environment, he says, you have to put resources directly in the hands of people — farmers, fisherfolk, forest dwellers, the urban poor — and let them drive climate change adaptation. Anderson believes that local people and communities should play a leading role in evaluating the progress of their adaptation programs as well.

According to Anderson, adaptation measures largely involve behaviour change and thus should be both feasible and sensitive to the local realities of the communities being targeted. He says, “There is a need to ensure that poverty alleviation is not diluted by adaptation measures that are not right for the community. That’s why we should be including mechanisms that examine whether resource allocation is equitable, both today and for future generations.”

For Anderson, adaptation begins with developing an approach that includes communities in the decision-making process. He emphasizes the need for communities to “own” adaptation and for interventions from outside to join together with “people’s projects.” This increases the likelihood of success and creates projects that can be expanded from the local to the national level.

Anderson is working with others on the development of a method to evaluate and enhance climate adaptive capability (CAC). He is using Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach (which focuses on what a person is able to do rather than the more narrow approach that analyzes only what people do do). Anderson maintains that CAC provides more than just another evaluation technology that works from the outside in; rather it could be used to empower communities to deploy adaptive measures and evaluate the outcomes themselves.

This participatory approach is to be used to measure behaviour change of individuals by assessing why people with the same assets and characteristics make similar or dissimilar adaptive choices. Anderson points out that this is a very important distinction to make when evaluating adaptation, because it “will help us explore and understand adaptive capacity and adaptation options, to expand on them, and to identify the key obstacles to peoples’ capabilities to adapt to climate change as well as what can be done to relieve these obstacles.”

Anderson also stresses the point that more qualitative evaluation and analysis is needed to determine what is really happening on the ground, especially within the many development activities and programs that are not able to measure success quantitatively. “Relying on quantitative findings,” he said, “can sometimes interfere with the ability to see project success, especially when project results have to do with qualitative factors like attitude and behaviour changes among communities.” As a result, Anderson believes that CAC will allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of climate change adaptation. Anderson admits there is a need to develop the capabilities approach much further for the purposes of climate adaptation.

He also points to the links between the new LOCATE method for initiating community-based adaptation and other processes already used widely, such as the process for project identification under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) used in climate change mitigation. If community-based adaptation “can be accomplished by using steps similar to those used in CDM, then we can draw the two approaches together and provide a common language for practitioners, evaluators, researchers, and implementers.” He highlights that, once developed, tried and tested, the adaptation techniques — LOCATE and CAC — will remain in the least developed countries where they originated.

Anderson feels that the opportunities for informal networking and forging connections were among the strongest benefits of the conference. He met many new people and potential partners who he believes will be important to his future adaptation work. Although he had hoped to find others using evaluative frameworks based on the capabilities approach, he commented that a small core group interested in this area was formed, which he believes makes his time at the conference worthwhile.

He does, however, suggest certain changes for the climate change adaptation community, such as making more resources available at the local level through the “demand” rather than the “supply” side and finding ways to deploy them with greater urgency, which he feels will advance climate change evaluation strategy and practice in the future.