



International Conference on Adaptation and Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change in the Asia and Pacific: Integrating Scientific Aspects

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**Understanding and Tackling slow onset impacts of
Climate Change from Kiribati and Small Islands
States perspectives**

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Outline of Presentation

- Introduction- general perceptions of SIS on CC impacts;
- Slow Onset impacts of Climate Change in Kiribati & Vulnerabilities of Kiribati to these slow onset impacts;
- Difficulties/Challenges to manage/adapt to slow onset impacts of Climate Change by small island state (SIS) - Kiribati;
- Level of knowledge about solutions to these impacts and how we can adapt – current adaptation approach to slow onset impacts;
- Conclusion/Recommendations

Introduction

- Living in an atoll with the impacts of climate change especially its slow onset impacts no longer secured, certain and predictable.
- Climate change has evolved as an environmental issue globally but in the case of Kiribati – is not now only a critical development challenge – issue for survivability and sovereign existence;
- Slow onset is perceived to take place in the next 15 - 20 years but in the case of Kiribati it is taking place now – a challenge
- Losses and damages in the face of Climate Change has already been witnessed and will eventually be increased in the near future;
- Our policy position to address climate change is to focus on adaptation – opt for global adaptation supports & support global mitigation effort;



Cont:

- At the government level – the current leadership of the Kiribati is taking a very serious and proactive approach to impact of climate change – lack of knowledge on the extents of slow onset impacts – poses challenges on planning, policy and decision making;
- Given the inevitable limitation of its adaptation effort – perhaps necessitating the urgency of global adoption on the regime governing losses and damages as possible *solutions* to impacts of CC??;
- Adaptation in Kiribati is very costly if possible to ensure our survivability – needs supports/assistance
- Only if all suffering countries esp. SIS/FLS can realize benefits from this Loss and Damage regime – our efforts are worth, have value and meaning to our survivability

Slow Onsets Impacts of CC in Kiribati

- Impacts of CC in Kiribati are manifested mainly in slow onset impacts;
- Slow onset impacts are barely noticed only when threaten basic livelihood – encompass both observed and projected impacts;
- They have multiple/cross sectoral effects – very expensive and requires integrated approach;
- They have devastating and exacerbating effects on wide ranges of an atoll system and livelihoods – coastal erosion, overtopping of sea water onto fragile ground water supply, inundation causing damages to ecosystem especially – agricultural crop systems, drought causing vector – borne diseases and so forth;
- Therefore, understanding slow onset impacts in detail is a challenge – though we have observed their presence;
- Damage our social, environmental, economic and political survivability

Challenges to manage slow onset Climate Change Impacts

- Managing and designing programs/solutions to adapt to these slow onset impacts imposes greater challenges to the government and people of Kiribati;
- They have multi-impacts – requires integrated approach which is not always easy;
- Highest degree of vulnerability to any impacts climate change;
- Lack of assessment capacity, baseline data, knowledge base - knowhow to assess and monitor such impacts;
- Engineering – based adaptations to slow onset are very costly and on which – local capacity constraints;
- Economic and financial constraints, and other competing priorities for immediate socio economic needs;

Level of knowledge to adapt to slow onset impacts

- Knowledge to adapt to obvious slow onset impacts (coastal erosion) exists in Kiribati but limited by feasible option constraints and costs if available;
- Knowledge to adapt to specific slow onset impacts are also limited on the level of understanding on mechanics of such impacts – i.e overtopping (how long it will take before that can really happen, real measurement of sea level);
- Knowledge to adapt is also limited by the lack of data on the loss and damages being caused by CC impacts at the national;
- Knowledge on onset slow impacts at the local community level is still immature and not well-established

Cont: however – our current adaptation approach

- Kiribati had approved its National Framework on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management Plan in early 2013/ end of 2012 respectively;
- Kiribati has just completed its Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan (KJIP) for the CCA Framework and DRM Plan;
- Kiribati has just recently done the Rapid Assessment on Budgetary allocation on CCA and DRM activities 2011-2013;
- House the portfolio on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management within Office of Te Beretitenti for effective coordination purpose;
- Start/Adopt the whole of Island Approach so that interventions from different donors can have more impacts on reduced effects of CC

Cont:

- Establishment of the KNEG – Kiribati National Expert Group consists of all Ministries and Departments, NGOs/NSAs (include faith-based organizations and private sector) to adopt whole of country approach – representation is senior official and policy advisory roles level;
- Setting up of Parliament Standing Committee on CC in 2012;
- Mainstreaming CCA issues into the whole national development system – still ongoing;
- CC issues remain priority in development agenda

How relevant Kiribati/SIS challenges and current efforts to adapt to slow onset impacts to International negotiations on Loss and Damage regime???

- Being the very least contributor to the CC cause but the Front Line State to its negative impacts – the loss and damages in Kiribati and other SIS caused by CC impacts must be made a legitimate issue in the UN system;
- Given the slow onset *adverse* impacts of CC to Kiribati and SIS which beyond adaptation could possibly have survivability implications – the loss and damage regime is crucial;
- The absence of such an international regime which could provide resources to SIS would by all means undermine their efforts to adapt to these negative impacts

Cont:

- The Global Climate Fund should include or able to finance costs of the losses and damages in countries like SIS;
- There is a need for a proper assessment on the losses and damages caused by impacts of climate change to quantify the extent to which slow onset impacts of CC could really compromise survivability and the very existence of small island states like Kiribati;
- The issues of SIS especially Front Line States like Kiribati should be used to provide for the platform on which Loss and Damage arrangement can be designed;
- Issues of SIS with regard to negative impacts which implication to survivability must be remained basis for international negotiations on L&D;

Conclusion remarks

- Kiribati has already suffered from and will continue to face challenges to adapt to slow onset impacts of climate change – worse scenarios – forced migration and displacement of population;
- With its limited resources and many other pressing sustainable development challenges – Kiribati will remain consider CC as its priority in its development plans and policies;
- Given the uncertainty of the global mitigation – our option as frontline states to address impacts of CC – is ADAPTATION;
- But the adaptation that we need to ensure our survivability is beyond our capacity (Financially – Technically) – we need international supports/assistance

Cont:

- Global understanding on Loss and Damage must be established and agreed as soon as possible;
- Scientific approach must consider survivability and human insecurity dimensional implications of CC
- Perhaps SIS whose futures are uncertain – solution could be through the Loss and Damage Regime??? – support institutional arrangement of L&D
- Climate change is a global problem which requires global solution;
- As responsible citizens we have our moral obligation to protect humankind of this planet;
- Kiribati and other SIS need better and secured future.