

Summary of Parallel Session 2: Climate Compatible Development at Local Levels

This session included four presentations related to climate and sustainable development linkages at the local level and a brief question and answer session. The research presented overarching views on the role of cities and considered the situation in Ghana, Kenya, and Latin America. More than half the world's population live in urban areas and cities are major emitters of GHG emissions. Cities are at the forefront of climate change and sustainable development and realizing the full vision of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals will demand collective local interventions. However, the rapid pace of development in many urban areas creates additional challenges for addressing climate change and sustainable development.

The concept of integrating both agendas requires a deliberate approach to mainstream climate change into development policy and planning, but there are major challenges to this alignment including: lack of coordination and collaboration; lack of awareness of the local governments; institutional capacity; political will; financial resources; conflicting priorities; and staff turnover. Cities are the major stages where successes and failures will play out and we need to develop a better understanding of how conflicts between climate and sustainable development can be managed, particularly in rapidly growing cities in developing countries. In addition to learning how to strike a balance between climate mitigation, adaptation and maintenance of key ecosystem services there are additional considerations to bear in mind such as ongoing social inequality and informal and formal sector activity.

Companies can also play a major role and there are opportunities for cities and businesses to work together for their mutual benefit as well as to support alignment of climate and sustainable development objectives. Collaboration can lead to new business, revenue growth, more comprehensive operations and, in the future, low-carbon cities. Research has shown that municipal governments which collaborate effectively with companies are better positioned to reduce climate risks.

It will be important moving forward to continue to examine how to create a balance between urbanization and climate action as well as the balance between sectoral priorities. Cities need support in developing integrated planning and policy making approaches. Specifically, guidelines, targeted instruction and technical expertise are needed to support local communities in overcoming some of the challenges of climate compatible development.