

Scaling Up Health Adaptation Measures to Meet the Climate Change Challenge in the Americas

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Session 1: Introduction – Health Adaptation in the Face of a Rapidly Warming World

This foundational session builds the critical case for why scaling up health adaptation is not just beneficial but absolutely necessary for health system survival. Participants will explore the emerging and unprecedented threats that climate change poses to individuals, health systems and broader health determinants, moving beyond traditional single-hazard thinking to understand compounding, cascading, and cumulative climate impacts. The session examines how these newer types of threats create systemic vulnerabilities that require innovative approaches to build on current health system preparedness and response efforts.

Learning Objectives:

- Articulate the urgency of scaling up health adaptation in response to accelerating climate risks and their disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations
- Identify and analyze newer types of climate threats including compounding events, cascading failures, and cumulative stressors that challenge traditional health system responses
- Evaluate the economic and operational impacts of climate change on health systems, such as effects on healthcare staff, infrastructure, and service delivery
- Recognize the limitations of reactive and incremental adaptation approaches in addressing severe climate impacts

Session 2: Why a Pilot is Not Enough: The Challenge for Health Authorities in Scaling-up Adaptation

This session introduces and defines the concept of successful scaling-up, moving participants beyond the pilot project approach that has characterized many health adaptation efforts to date. Participants will explore what transformational scaling-up looks like in practice, examining the gap between isolated adaptation initiatives and system-wide climate resilience, and understand the role of incremental adaptations to a larger more transformative strategy. The session addresses the institutional, financial, and political challenges that prevent health authorities from moving from demonstration projects to comprehensive adaptation planning and implementation.

Learning Objectives:

- Define and distinguish between reactive, incremental, and transformational adaptation efforts and the relationship to scaling up action
- Identify characteristics of successful large-scale health adaptation implementation across different jurisdictions and governance structures
- Analyze barriers that prevent health authorities from moving beyond pilot projects to system-wide adaptation and suggest solutions

Session 3: Approaches to Scaling-up Health Adaptation: Part 1

This session focuses on the foundational pillars of the proposed (draft) scaling-up framework: vulnerability and adaptation assessments (V&As) and the complex task of mainstreaming climate considerations into the wide range of health sector operations. Participants will explore how V&As can serve as catalysts for broader adaptation action, but will also confront the practical challenges of integrating climate information and considerations into existing bureaucratic structures, competing policy priorities, and resource-constrained environments. The session explores the gap to be bridged between mainstreaming aspirations and implementation realities, including resistance from within health systems, the challenge of translating climate science into information that can be actioned by policy makers, and the need to work within existing institutional incentives and constraints.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the key components of vulnerability and adaptation assessments that make them useful for scaling-up adaptation efforts versus those that limit their impact
- Identify 2-3 realistic entry points within their own organization where climate information and considerations, including from V&As, could potentially be integrated into existing programs to scale-up preparedness efforts
- Describe common sources of institutional resistance to mainstreaming climate considerations and offer solutions for addressing existing barriers

Session 4: Approaches to Scaling-up Health Adaptation: Part 2

Building on Session 3, this session explores the acceleration and monitoring pillars of the scaling-up framework. Participants will learn strategies for rapidly expanding successful pilot initiatives, empowering individuals and communities, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems. The session addresses how to move from proof-of-concept to widespread health system implementation while maintaining quality and effectiveness, and how to measure progress toward climate-resilient health systems.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key factors that determine whether pilot projects can be successfully scaled up and use them for planning future adaptation projects
- Recognize examples of community empowerment approaches that have supported rapid scaling-up of health adaptation efforts and understand their basic principles
- Understand the purpose and benefits of monitoring and evaluation activities to support scaling-up efforts and identify 2-3 types of indicators that could track progress in their context
- Describe the concept of adaptive management and why feedback mechanisms are important for scaling-up efforts

Session 5: Listen and Learn 1: Share Your Experience with Scaling-up Health Adaptation

This interactive session creates space for participants to share their experiences, challenges, and innovations in health adaptation scaling-up efforts. Through facilitated discussion and real-time polling, participants will contribute to a collective understanding of what works, what doesn't, and what gaps remain in scaling-up health adaptation across the Americas. The session will generate insights that inform both immediate course discussions and longer-term adaptation strategies.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify common challenges and solutions across different jurisdictions and health system contexts
- Recognize opportunities for cross-jurisdictional learning and collaboration in scaling up health adaptation efforts
- Contribute to collective knowledge about effective approaches to health adaptation scaling-up

Session 6: Challenges in Communicating Scaling-up Efforts

This session focuses on strategic communication approaches that support and accelerate health adaptation scaling-up efforts. Participants will learn how to develop compelling narratives for different audiences, create communication strategies that build support for scaling-up investments and action, and use communication tools to coordinate complex multi-partner scaling-up initiatives. The session addresses both internal health system communication and external advocacy and engagement.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop targeted messaging strategies for different stakeholder audiences to build support for health adaptation scaling-up
- Design advocacy approaches that generate political and financial support for large-scale health adaptation investments
- Utilize communication tools to maintain momentum and accountability across extended scaling-up timeline.

Session 7: Different Countries, Different Challenges: What We Can Learn From Others

This session explores how unique circumstances across different countries and subnational health authorities create both challenges and opportunities for scaling-up health adaptation. Participants will examine how factors such as federal versus unitary governance structures, small island developing states characteristics, remote and rural contexts, and varying economic conditions influence scaling-up strategies. The session emphasizes adaptive approaches that account for diverse political, geographical, and institutional contexts.

Learning Objectives:

- Analyze how governance structures (federal, unitary, decentralized) affect health adaptation scaling-up strategies and implementation
- Adapt scaling-up approaches to unique geographical and jurisdictional contexts including small island states and remote areas
- Leverage international networks and mechanisms such as ATACH to support national and subnational scaling-up efforts
- Design cross-jurisdictional collaboration mechanisms that account for different political and institutional contexts

Session 8: Scaling-up Health Adaptation - Leaving No One Behind

This session addresses the critical imperative of ensuring that health adaptation efforts actively promote inclusion and health equity rather than inadvertently reinforcing existing disparities. Participants will explore how to design and implement scaling-up processes that prioritize the needs of vulnerable populations, engage diverse community voices meaningfully in adaptation planning, and ensure that rapid scaling doesn't compromise equity commitments. The session emphasizes Indigenous-led approaches and community-driven adaptation as essential elements of effective scaling-up.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key principles of inclusive scaling-up and recognize how poorly planned or implemented adaptation efforts can inadvertently worsen health disparities
- Distinguish between tokenistic consultation and meaningful engagement approaches when working with diverse communities

- Understand the importance of Indigenous-led health adaptation and recognize basic principles for respectful collaboration with Indigenous communities
- Recognize warning signs that adaptation initiatives may be having inequitable impacts and understand the opportunities through V&As and monitoring and surveillance to make course corrections.

Session 9: Listen and Learn 2: Applications and Gaps in Current Tools and Guidance

This interactive session creates space for participants to share their experiences, challenges, and innovations in health adaptation scaling-up efforts. Through facilitated discussion and real-time polling, participants will contribute to a collective understanding of how existing information and guidance can aid organizations and institutions in scaling up and identify gaps for future tool development. Participants will learn how to strategically use resources such as WHO toolkits, vulnerability assessment guidance, and health system strengthening frameworks to accelerate their adaptation efforts. The session emphasizes practical application, helping participants determine which tools to use first, when to apply different approaches, and how to combine multiple resources effectively.

Learning Objectives:

- Navigate and select appropriate existing tools and frameworks for their specific scaling-up context and needs, including as they engage with a range of partners
- Sequence the application of different guidance documents and tools for maximum effectiveness in scaling-up efforts
- Identify frameworks that can be adapted to specific jurisdictional, cultural, and health system contexts
- Access and utilize international support mechanisms and networks for health adaptation efforts

Session 10: Scaling Up and Down: Partnerships to Protect Health

This session examines the critical partnerships within and outside the health sector that are essential for successful scaling-up health adaptation efforts. Participants will explore how to build effective collaborations between government health authorities and civil society organizations, how to leverage local leadership and community capacity, and how to create mutually beneficial partnerships that strengthen both scaling-up efforts and community resilience. The session addresses the reciprocal relationship between what civil society partners need from governments and what governments need from community partners.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe partnership strategies that effectively engage civil society, non-governmental organizations, and community groups in scaling-up efforts
- Support and leverage local leadership to drive health adaptation scaling-up from the community level
- Create reciprocal support mechanisms where government and civil society partners mutually strengthen each other's capacity for health adaptation
- Design collaboration frameworks that maintain momentum and accountability across diverse partner organizations

Session 11: Building Resilient and Low Carbon Health Systems: Synergies and Challenges

This session addresses the complex challenge of simultaneously scaling-up health adaptation efforts while transitioning to low-carbon health system operations. Participants will explore synergies between climate resilience and decarbonization efforts, strategies for managing potential trade-offs, and approaches for accelerating both adaptation and mitigation within health systems. The session includes examination of education and training programs for health professionals as critical infrastructure for both resilience and emissions reduction.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify and leverage synergies between health system climate resilience and decarbonization efforts
- Develop integrated strategies that rapidly advance both adaptation and mitigation goals within health systems

- Identify education and training programs that build health professional capacity for both climate resilience and low-carbon operations
- Create implementation pathways that manage trade-offs and maximize co-benefits between adaptation and mitigation efforts

CONTACT: irene.torres@dir.iai.int