

Toward climate-responsive evaluation of food security initiatives: An assessment of UN evaluation reports from 2014 to 2018



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Background

Considering the current and future impacts of climate change on sustainable development, scholars and practitioners have called for the consideration of climate change in all international development evaluations^{1,2}. Evaluation is one of the core instruments for supporting UN programs and policies; however, it is unclear how climate change is integrated into UN evaluation functions, particularly of food security initiatives.

In this context, a key question is:

To what extent is climate change considered in UN food security evaluations?



To answer this question, we conducted a synthesis and assessment of UN evaluation reports.

Methods



We searched the UN Evaluation Group database using the search term 'food'. We restricted the timeframe to the past five years (2014-2018).



Titles and summaries of reports were screened for relevance according to *a priori* inclusion criteria. Screening was conducted by two independent reviewers.



A charting form was developed to collect key characteristics of reports (e.g. year, region, food security pathway). We assessed climate change integration based on three criteria:

- evaluation scope: climate change was mentioned in the introduction and questions (*max 2 points*);
- evaluation approach: climate change was mentioned in the methodology (*max 1 point*); and,
- evaluation results: climate change was mentioned in the findings, conclusions, and recommendations (*max 3 points*).

We calculated average integration scores of characteristics to facilitate comparison.

Results



Characteristics of the **54** evaluation studies included in our assessment:

Produced by: FAO (61%), WFP (26%), UNDP (13%)
 Year published: 2017 (30%), 2014 (26%), 2016 (22%), 2018 (15%), 2015 (7%)
 Geographic region: Africa (59%), Asia (39%), North America (7%), South America (6%), Australia / Oceania (4%)
 Methods: Qualitative (59%), mixed qualitative and quantitative (41%)
 Food security pathway: Capacity building (100%), market access (43%), climate resilience (35%), infrastructure (32%), food production (30%), food access (28%)
 Climate change focus: Explicit adaptation (37%), implicit adaptation (20%), climate impacts (15%), both adaptation and mitigation (11%), did not consider climate (17%)

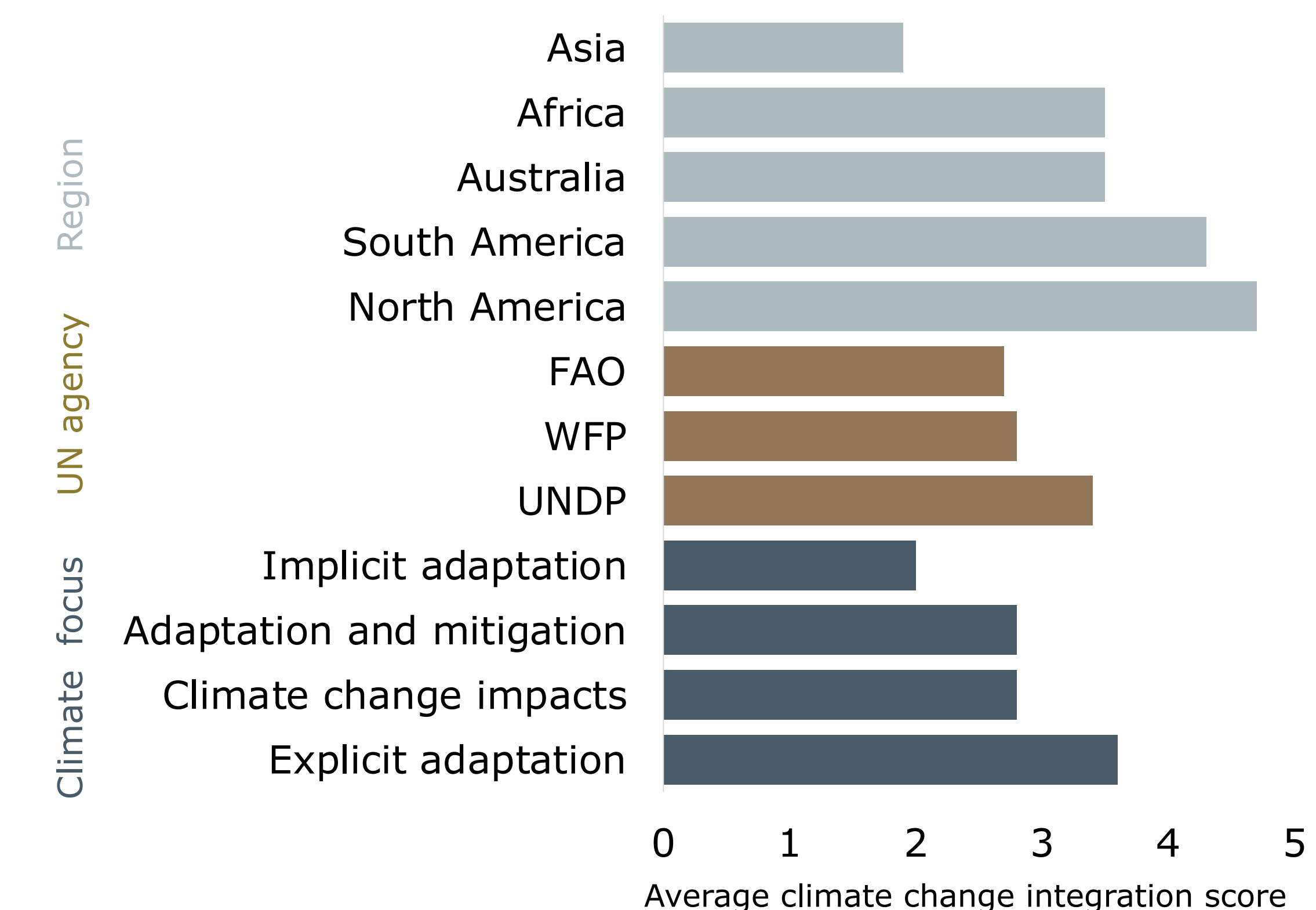
Of the **45** evaluation studies that considered climate change, we classified:



53% as low integration*
 24% as moderate integration
 22% as high integration

*The max points is 6; low integration is 1-2 points, moderate is 3-4 points, and high is 5-6 points.

The extent of climate change integration in UN evaluation studies differs between regions, UN agencies, and type of climate action.



Discussion

Our assessment suggests that although adaptation is frequently considered in UN food security initiatives, most evaluations do not fully integrate climate change in evaluation processes.

Examining climate change integration across characteristics (e.g. region) enhances our understanding of different approaches to evaluating food security initiatives in the context of climate change.

Implications

Climate change will continue to add pressure to food security initiatives. New ways of evaluating, learning from, and adapting food security initiatives are needed.

Next steps

Our next step is to analyze factors that hinder / enable the integration of climate change in food security evaluations. In doing so, we hope to provide insights into how evaluators and partners can work together toward enhanced food security in the context of climate change.

References:

¹ Uitto JI, Puri J, van den Berg, RD (2017). *Evaluating Climate Action for Sustainable Development*. Cham, Switzerland. Springer.
² FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2018). *The state of food security and nutrition in the world*. Rome, Italy. FAO.

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