



Putting national adaptation planning into practice

How countries can make use of the National Adaptation Plan Process after Durban

Background

Climate change and the need for adaptation are increasingly gaining acceptance in both developed and developing countries, and especially in Least Development Countries (LDCs). In 2001 the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) released a decision calling for Least Developed Countries to develop **National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs)**. These aimed at identifying the need for urgent and immediate needs for climate change adaptation and most LDCs have already elaborated such NAPAs.

What are National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)?

Due to the long-term nature of climate change and its impacts, it is necessary to also consider medium- and long-term adaptation needs. Therefore, to complement the short-term focus of NAPAs, a process was established in 2010 as part of the Cancún Adaptation Framework to **support all developing countries, and especially LDCs, in identifying the medium- and long-term adaptation needs** by formulating and implementing **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)**. At the Conference of Parties in Durban in December 2011, a decision on NAPs was adopted addressing their formulation, implementation, financing.

The UNFCCC NAP process is designed specifically for **LDCs**, but invites **all developing countries** to follow the developed guidance. It assists developing countries in assessing their climate vulnerabilities, building adaptive capacity and resilience and mainstreaming adaptation to climate change risks into all general and sector-specific development planning. This support can be in the form of technical guidelines, workshops, expert meetings, and regional exchange.

How do NAPs relate to existing national adaptation strategies?

The guidelines for formulating NAPs are not strict prescriptions, but **general proposals and recommendations** for what should be a country-driven process. The NAP process acknowledges that many countries have already started adaptation planning processes which should be strengthened rather than replaced by new prescriptions. Therefore, it is left open for countries to decide on how best to adopt the NAP process, including whether to create a stand-alone National Adaptation Plan based on the NAP guidelines or to incorporate adaptation needs and actions into existing climate change or development strategies.

Why should developing countries engage in the NAP process?

- The NAP process can become a powerful policy instrument for **facilitating the paradigm shift towards climate resilient development**. Effectiveness of individual domestic adaptation activities is expected to be enhanced by providing a comprehensive national policy framework for coordination, mainstreaming, implementation, monitoring and review.
- Countries will gain access to **adaptation experiences and lessons learnt within the international community** and share their own experience.
- Demonstrating a coherent, integrated approach to adaptation is expected to provide countries with a good basis to **mobilise international support for adaptation**.

Key messages

In 2010 the UNFCCC launched a process to **support all developing countries, and especially LDCs**, in identifying their medium- and long-term adaptation needs by formulating and implementing **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)**.

The NAP process provides guidance to help developing countries assess **their vulnerabilities, build adaptive capacity and mainstream adaptation** to climate change risks into all general and sector-specific development planning.

The guidelines for formulating NAPs are not strict prescriptions, but **general recommendations**. NAPs are voluntary. It is left open for countries to decide whether to create a stand-alone NAP or incorporate the recommendations in existing strategies.

Countries are encouraged to **communicate to the UNFCCC** how they have considered the NAP recommendations in their national adaptation process.

The NAP process can become a powerful policy instrument for **facilitating the paradigm shift towards climate resilient development**.

Demonstrating that a country is tackling adaptation in a coherent, integrated manner as suggested by the NAP process can act as a **basis for mobilising international support** for adaptation efforts.



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Roles and responsibilities

Developing Countries

Developing countries are asked to report in their National Communications to the UNFCCC on the steps they have taken as part of their NAP processes as well as on any support they have received in the process. That means they do not have to submit a separate document to the UNFCCC, but report through their National Communications how the NAP process was integrated into their development planning.

Developed countries and bi-/ multilateral organisations

The UNFCCC has urged developed countries to provide developing countries with technical support, including capacity development and the identification of adaptation measures, for the development of NAPs. For LDCs the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) plays an important role in this respect. In addition, developed countries were also urged to mobilise financial support for the NAP process through bilateral and multilateral agencies, including the Least Development Country Fund.

Content of the initial NAP guidelines

The initial guidelines for the formulation of NAPs, which were decided in Durban, touch on:

- laying the groundwork and addressing information gaps
- NAP formulation
- implementation strategies
- reporting, monitoring and review of NAPs.

With respect to **laying the groundwork and addressing gaps**, it is recommended that countries (a) identify and assess institutional arrangements, programmes, policies and capacities for overall coordination, (b) assess existing climate change information including impacts, vulnerability and measures taken and (c) assess development needs.

To identify specific needs, options and priorities in the **NAP formulation**, the following activities are proposed (a) the design of plans, policies and programmes to address the gaps and needs

identified with the first activities, (b) the assessment of medium and long-term adaptation needs, (c) activities to integrate climate change adaptation into national and regional development planning, (d) stakeholder consultations, (e) communication, awareness-raising and education.

Further recommendations focus on the **implementation strategies** which could include (a) a prioritisation of climate change risks and vulnerability work, (b) strengthening institutional and legal framework to enable adaptation, (c) trainings on the regional and sectoral level, (d) publication of information on the NAP process, (e) and involvement of other international initiatives to create and supplement NAPs.

Concerning **reporting, monitoring and review of NAPs**, countries are encouraged to make regular reviews (a) to address inefficiencies by taking into account lessons learnt and scientific results of climate change adaptation measures and (b) to provide information in their national communications on the progress made. These activities should be included in national strategies and plans.

Conclusion and next steps

Climate vulnerability and adaptation options must be considered at different scales and for all planning horizons (both short- and long-term) if mainstreaming of climate change adaptation is to be successful. While many countries have already started national adaptation planning processes – e.g. dedicated climate change or adaptation strategies, mainstreaming efforts – the UNFCCC NAP process adds political momentum and recognition to national adaptation processes. In December 2012 the detailed LEG Technical Guidelines have been published that specify the process from its initiation to its implementation and monitoring. In addition, at the level of the UNFCCC countries further support measures and initiatives have been developed and implemented. One example is the SNAP tool developed by GIZ that specifically supports the stock-taking/ Element A of the NAP process. Developing countries are encouraged to continue with their national adaptation planning, taking advantage of support provided by the NAP process where appropriate.

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