

# How can Adaptation Planning be Integrated into Local Development Practice in Nepal?

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## The need for integrating adaptation

While there is broad policy intent in favor of climate change integration into development planning in Nepal, translating it into implementation is fraught with various policy and institutional challenges. These add to confusions on adaptation interventions, which are undergoing through an initial stage of learning without sufficiently building on and developing 'best practices'. Addressing these issues will help programme managers plan, execute and monitor adaptation activities.

This Policy Brief<sup>1</sup> aims to identify critical policy barriers and opportunities for effective integration of climate change adaptation measures into district and local development practices. It also offers suggestions that the government of Nepal and aid-supported programmes can design interventions and rationalize resource allocation in order to achieve more effective climate-resilient development.

## Why to integrate adaptation?

Nepal government and funding agencies recognize the need for integration of climate change issues into development planning practice. An example of this is found in the recent government policies which emphasize climate integration<sup>2</sup> across vertically (local to central levels) and horizontally (various policy sectors). The policies acknowledge that addressing climate change requires actions from several policy sectors-involving government agencies and projects at different levels. Activities undertaken from within a single sector, such as forestry, is inadequate to encompass the range of impacts of climate change. As an example, National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) identifies seven thematic sectors<sup>3</sup> where climate change impacts will be prominent.

Climate change integration entails the idea that climate considerations are adequately included into all relevant government laws, institutions, processes, financing and so on.<sup>4</sup> Integration should also be pursued at sectoral and project levels.<sup>5</sup> OECD also suggests that it is important

## Main messages

- 1 Nepal's climate policy recognizes the need for integrating climate change adaptation into wider development practices. However there is a lack of appropriate institutional mechanism to materialize policies at operational levels.
- 2 Climate change integration at the district and local levels face the challenges related principally to operational planning, institutional basis, determination of technical and financial support and accountability, as well as systemic problems of democratic oversight and plans harmonization across sectors.
- 3 There is a need for the government and aid supported programmes to recognize and build on existing work on adaptation planning, develop guidelines for climate change integration, and set accountability for key agencies.



Photo credit: Multistakeholder Forestry Programme

<sup>1</sup>This policy brief builds on the experiences of the adaptation planning under implementation in over 20 districts under the Multistakeholder Forestry Programme (MSFP) and implemented by several non-governmental organizations in partnership with government agencies. The authors engaged in a series of regional workshops and field visits in 2014. These workshops "Towards Effective Adaptation and Resilience Building: Intensive Knowledge Sharing" were held in five clusters: Dhankuta, Pokhara (which included Terai and Dhaulagiri clusters), Dang, and Surkhet. Each of the workshops was attended by about 35 officials and practitioners working with government agencies and non-government agencies engaged by MSFP. Our field visits also provided some comparative insights on activities of other projects that helped identifying common issues and offer recommendations.

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Environment n.d. Adaptation to climate change: From NAPA to LAPA. Kathmandu: Ministry of Environment.

<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Environment. 2010. National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) to Climate Change. Kathmandu: Ministry of Environment.

<sup>4</sup>Ahmad, Imran Habib. 2009. Climate policy integration: Towards operationalization. DESA Working Paper No. 73. New York: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

<sup>5</sup>OECD. 2009. Integrating climate change adaptation into development cooperation: policy guidance. OECD.

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to attend to a) development planning practice by local governments; b) adjusting local regulatory and service provision; c) adjustment of accountability mechanisms in local government; d) private sector and civil society processes. Adaptation interventions, therefore, require participation of sectors and changes in policies, service provision, accountability and engagement processes.

Climate vulnerability is largely context-specific and local<sup>6</sup> -and hence climate change integration should be pursued in the district and local levels. Indeed, through Climate Change Policy 2011 the government has expressed commitment to invest 80 percentage of climate finance to the local level.<sup>7</sup> The local adaptation plans of action (LAPA) framework also emphasizes the need of integrating adaptation to climate change into local as well as national development processes. The LAPA framework asserts, for example, that "the aim of the LAPA is to integrate climate adaptation activities into local and national development planning processes and to create a situation for climate resilient development."<sup>8</sup>

### Box 1: Some good practices examples and opportunities for adaptation interventions

- Local forestry groups (LFGs including community forest users groups and leasehold forest users groups) are proactive towards integrating climate change adaptation in community adaptation plans (CAPs).
- The LFGs have started allocating funds for CAP implementation and are exploring additional financial resources in addition to the project support.
- Village Forest Coordination Committees (VFCCs) are endorsing LAPA through VDC planning, and, fund is allocated for the same.
- Adaptation support agencies can adopt more participatory planning practice at VDC and community levels.
- Adaptation support agencies perceive that there is now more favorable environment for joint investments. This needs to be nurtured.

Support for adaptation planning at the district and local level has gained momentum since 2011 when Nepal Government endorsed the LAPA framework. Preparation and implementation of the adaptation plans under CAPA/LAPA framework have offered some encouraging examples (Box 1). They also point to some systemic policy and institutional challenges for effective climate integration.

### Challenges at the district and local levels

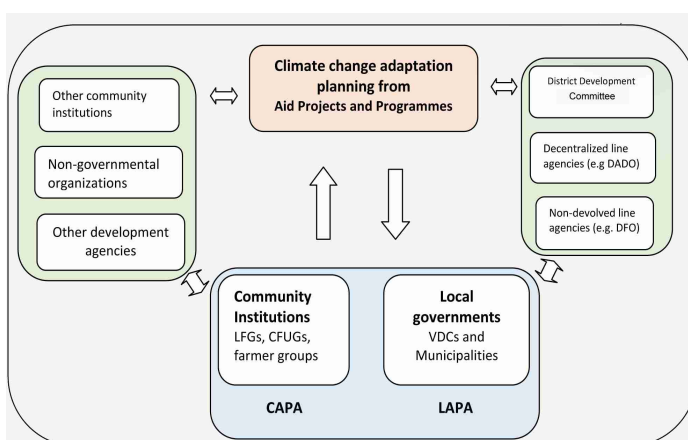
The challenges to climate integration at the district and local level emerge from policy and institutional arrangement. In fact, some initiatives on adaptation at project level are not sufficient to generate lasting impact on vulnerability reduction and climate resilient development. Impacts of climate change encompass many 'sectors'-including agriculture and food security, water resources and energy, climate-induced disasters, forest and biodiversity, public health, urban settlement and infrastructure, and cross-cutting sectors.<sup>9</sup> These sectors exist at different scales and involve government, non-governmental and community actors at different scales. But Nepal's policies lack clarity on how to achieve effective integration. The policies, for example the LAPA framework itself, offer little to

achieve vertical (central-local) and horizontal (cross-sectoral) coordination at the district and local levels. The challenges emerge from the difficulties involved in coordinating planning processes across several actors at district/local levels (see Figure 1).

### Challenge 1. Harmonizing plans across agencies and across scales

A major challenge to achieve effective climate integration is balancing CAPA/LAPA preparation with the planning practice of different agencies and actors whose plans affect adaptation outcomes. Figure 1 shows that CAPAs/LAPAs should be harmonized with planning in non-governmental actors (including community groups other than local forestry groups-LFGs), local NGOs, and development projects on one hand, and DDCs and government line agencies on the other. Indeed, many government agencies and non-governmental actors have formal and informal mandates around the seven sectors that have been recognized in NAPA 2010 to have been impacted from climate change. Some of these sectors are the mandate of 'centralized' line agencies (e.g., district forest offices) and some are devolved line agencies (e.g. district agriculture development offices). The two types operate in distinct manners as to planning, implementation and accountability. The agencies have different actors in their planning, and they have different timings and planning and budgeting cycles.

Figure 1: Integration of adaptation actions requires working with planning practice of several district agencies



Thus the projects/programmes that support climate change adaptation have the challenge to harmonize LAPA/CAPA preparation with the planning of community, VDC, and district level agencies and organizations. For this, they should invest time and resources to work with several government agencies, projects, NGOs and community groups.

### Challenge 2. Lack of democratic representation in local governance

The second major challenge to achieving effective climate integration is the ongoing crisis in local governance in Nepal and proper understanding of the role of local governments vis-à-vis other agencies in climate change adaptation. Nepal's local governance legislation emphasizes the leadership of local governments in development and environmental conservation. Similarly, Environment Friendly Local Governance Framework<sup>10</sup> entrusts adaptation and disaster planning

<sup>6</sup> Agrawal, A. 2010. The role of local institutions in adaptation to climate change. World Bank, DC.

<sup>7</sup> Government of Nepal. 2011. Climate Change Policy, 2011 (Approved by the Government of Nepal on 17 January 2011). Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Environment. 2011. National Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action. Kathmandu: Ministry of Environment.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Environment. 2010. National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) to Climate Change. Kathmandu: Ministry of Environment.

<sup>10</sup> MOFALD. 2013. Environment friendly local governance framework. Kathmandu: Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MOFALD).

## Box 2: The fourteen-step planning process under local governance

The fourteen-step planning process begins with the (1) directives on the budget ceiling for the coming year sent by the NPC and the ministries. DDC officials (2) review the ceilings and organize (3) plan formulation workshops in the local bodies. These workshops discuss the policies, goals and resource availability, including estimates for each VDC. VDCs then convene (4) meetings on programmes to be implemented at the ward/settlement level. The selection of programs occurs at settlement level (5) involving the villagers, user committees and community level organizations. The ward committees meet (6) to discuss local grant requests. VDCs then meet (7) to prioritize programmes, prepare resource estimates and select programmes that can be funded with the VDC budget, those that would need external support are separated for further referral.

The next step involves the Village Council (8). The Council approves the programmes and submits them to the Ilaka (about 5-8 VDCs) level

planning workshop (9). These workshops prioritize sectoral programmes requested by VDCs and municipalities and are forwarded to DDCs. The sectoral committees at DDCs review the recommendations of the Ilakas (10), identify those that can be funded at the district level and those that would need central support and send their recommendations to the Integrated Plan Formulation Committee. This committee reviews the recommendation, prioritizes and submits a draft district development plan to DDC (11). DDC meeting discusses the draft plan along with the guidelines from NPC and other government agencies and identifies programs that can be implemented with local resources and those that need central government support. This draft plan is sent to DDC council (12). The DDC Council approves the final document (13). The plan and programmes approved by the Council are sent to the NPC, MOFALD and sectoral ministries. (14) The approved programmes are included in the Red Book, the official allocation register.

Source: Adapted from The Asia Foundation 2012.<sup>11</sup>

to the leadership of local governments. However, local governance is largely crippled with the lack of elected representatives since 2001 and the DDCs and VDCs are run by centrally appointed civil servants. The planning process for local governments has been envisioned as a rigorous and vertically integrated process (see Box 2). But in the absence of local elections, there is less opportunity for popular participation in local debates and contestation for development planning. Accordingly, district line agencies, projects, and NGOs have little democratic leadership and oversight on their planning and implementation processes.

### Challenge 3. Accountability

Climate change integration in the district and local levels also confronts challenges in operational planning, implementation and accountability. Table 1 identifies these challenges along with their brief description and their consequences, as experienced in district and project settings.

**First**, projects are using different institutional basis for the preparation and approval of adaptation plans. These include, for example, Village Forest Coordination Committee (VFCC), Village Climate Change Coordination Committee (VC4), Agriculture, Forestry and Environment Committee (AFEC) within the VDCs. There is no formal basis to allocate responsibility and demand accountability on adaptation actions. Similarly, it is not entirely clear which of the government agencies are mandated for adaptation at the district and local level. The task is de facto diffused across different agencies. While the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MOFALD) is the lead agency for local development, adaptation initiatives taken from other line ministries such as Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MFSC) are gone largely in parallel. In absence of robust and elected local bodies, coordination and convening function is missing. This situation makes climate change integration a hugely challenging task.

**Second**, climate change integration also confronts the challenge in operational planning. In particular, adaptation planning is seen by local leaders and stakeholders as an opportunity to bring in resource focused on vulnerable areas and localities. Accordingly, some local leaders are motivated to engage in intense political processes to define some localities and social groups as vulnerable in order to prove their case for demanding resource. Project staffs face the difficulty to properly allocate resources in such local competitions. Furthermore, adaptation plans face a challenge

to get harmonized into other plans that have different beginnings and have different scales of space (e.g. wards, VDCs, watershed etc) and time (five years, three years etc). For instance, local bodies have a unique planning cycle that begin at a fixed schedules, while support agencies (including service provider NGOs) have their own time frames for plan development. More effort is thus necessary to work out on how to harmonize scales of time and space in adaptation plan with sectoral plans undertaken by different agencies and community groups.

**Third**, different development agencies provide vastly different scales of financing for the implementation of adaptation plans, and even for the preparation of the plans. This raises expectations amongst beneficiary groups, and, makes jobs of some programme managers more difficult than others.

**Fourth** challenge concerns with having a different and interest based interpretations of adaptation and tracking progress and evaluating outcomes. It was found that aid project personnel have different understandings or interpretations of adaptation and its relationship with development. It is particularly important for those who implement and monitor adaptation, as they would need to track progress by activity headings. Frequently field officials are required to respond to demands for development, which is coopted into the heading of 'adaptation'. It is thus important to orientate across the hierarchy of development organizations. Related to this is the development of appropriate criteria and indicators for monitoring and evaluation of adaptation interventions and their integration into development planning.

**Finally**, there is a challenge of establishing effective coordination between MOFALD, MOSTE and other line ministries to achieve climate change integration. MOSTE/MOFALD hesitate acknowledging the adaptation



Photo credit: Multistakeholder Forestry Programme

<sup>11</sup>The Asia Foundation. 2012. A Guide to Government in Nepal: Structures, Functions and Practices. Kathmandu: The Asia Foundation Nepal.

**Table 1: Main bottlenecks and issues for effective integration at local levels**

Issues	Description	Consequences
<b>1. Institutional basis for planning and support</b>		
a. Confusion on 'planning agent'	Projects are mobilizing different institutional forms for supporting adaptation plan, e.g., VFCC <sup>12</sup> , VC4 <sup>13</sup> , AFEC <sup>14</sup> without clarity on their forward linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ineffective implementation and monitoring due to lack of clear responsibility and accountability of various local institutions on climate change adaptation</li> </ul>
b. Poor coordination among agencies for mobilizing institutions and resources	Unclear specification and understanding of which of government agencies are responsible to (coordinate) support adaptation Tension between 'centralized' and devolved institutional frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Confusion on 'who'</li> <li>● Confusion on allocating resources</li> <li>● Unclear specification of coordinating/convening power, leading to unclear basis for accountability</li> </ul>
<b>2. Planning process</b>		
a. Politics of vulnerability	Locally powerful groups dominate decisions on the identification of vulnerable people and localities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manipulations on targets and priority to address vulnerability</li> </ul>
b. Limited integration in scale: spatial and time scales	Harmonizing plans across spatial scales (community, VDCs to watershed level) and across different time, quality and lengths is hugely challenging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mismatch of planning and support across local government, projects and between and within community institutions</li> </ul>
<b>3. Financial support for CAPA/LAPA</b>		
a. Limited financial support and time frame from projects for implementing LAPA/CAPA	Different development agencies provide vastly different financing for the preparation and implementation of LAPA/CAPA with varied mandates for interventions (broad vs narrowed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project officials find it difficult to manage local expectations</li> </ul>
<b>4. Monitoring and evaluation</b>		
a. Different interpretations of adaptation and its process	Different aid-supported projects and implementers within a project have conflicting interpretations of adaptation process across	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The risk of counting any intervention as 'adaptation'</li> </ul>
b. Unclear criteria and indicators	Projects have confusion about adaptation targets, monitoring indicators and impact assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Difficult to assess investment on adaptation interventions</li> </ul>
<b>5. Inter-departmental conflict</b>		
a. Inter-departmental competition	MOSTE <sup>15</sup> and NCCSP <sup>16</sup> hesitate recognizing CAPA/ LAPA prepared by programmes from other ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create confusion on adaptation support in the fields</li> </ul>

plans prepared by projects established under other ministries, even though the former do not have effective support mechanisms and expertise in the district/local settings. As adaptation plans cross the sectors, they become impractical to anchor into a particular line agency. In many instances, plans have been annexed to community forest operational plans and approved by DFOs, but these plans are not recognized by MOFALD/MOSTE.

## Conclusion and recommendations

A broad policy consensus exists within the government of Nepal and its development partners on the need of integrating issues of climate change into wider development planning practice. Accordingly effort has been underway for over five years to support adaptation planning at local and community levels. So far adaptation planning has been undertaken on a project level, and it is now time to consolidate these efforts across relevant government agencies and other organizations to achieve climate resilient development and reduction in vulnerability. We put forward the following recommendations.

### Recommendations

- 1. Recognize and build on existing good practices of LAPA/CAPA:** MOSTE and MOFALD should recognize the LAPA/CAPA prepared with support from projects under other ministries and approved through community institutions, VDC councils and government line agency. While doing so it is also necessary to devise mechanisms toward their effective integration into local development planning.
- 2. Engage multiple local groups into adaptation planning:** Projects tend to operate with and support specific local institutions (e.g. local forestry groups), but field level integration requires them to mobilize additional social capital to incorporate other aspects of community/local planning.

- 3. Develop guidelines for CC integration:** First of all, MOSTE and other ministries should develop and implement guidelines that provide clear basis for integrating climate change into local development. Accordingly, respective local adaptation project/programme managers should engage with other projects/programmes for harmonizing their intended activities in line with the guidelines.
- 4. Set accountability frameworks for government agencies and other actors:** It is essential to specify institutional arrangements for adaptation planning at VDC and community levels and to assign responsibility to specific district agencies with mandates and resources to coordinate adaptation interventions in the districts.

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