

# EVENT REPORT



## Climate Adaptation Dialogue

---

30<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Organized By:



## Event Details

Name of the event:	Climate Adaptation Dialogue
Date:	30 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
Venue:	Dhokaima Cafe, Patan Dhoka
Time:	8:30 to 13:00
Organizers:	Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS)
Speakers:	Keynote presenter: Dr. Madhav Karki Presenters: Man Bahadur BK, Bal Krishna Jamarkattel, Binod Gyawali
Number of Participants:	25

## Contents

1. Context	1
2. Opening thoughts and remarks	1
3. Presentations	2
3.1 Keynote Presentation: Dr. Madhav Karki, Member of EP & CCM National Council & Distinguished Fellow, CGED-Nepal	2
3.2 Presentation 1: Man Bahadur BK, Deputy Team Leader, NCCSP	3
3.3 Presentation 2: Bal Krishna Jamarkattel, UNICEF	4
3.4 Presentation 3: Binod Gyawali, District Project Coordinator	4
4. Open Dialogue	5
4.1 Detailed Discussion	5
4.2 Summary of the Discussion	8
5. Conclusion	10
6. Acknowledgements	10
ANNEX 1 List of Participants	11
ANNEX 2 Photos	12

## 1. Context

Nepal, as a country that is exceptionally vulnerable to climate change and is already experiencing temperature changes at a higher rate than the global average, is set to see millions of Nepalis at risk. The increasing impact of climate change is already presenting a slew of problems to many Nepalis in agricultural production, strained water resources, and loss of forest and biodiversity. In addition to these issues, the inability or unwillingness of leaders to champion climate change as a threat is expected to amplify the impact.

Nepal has been active in designing and planning a variety of donor-funded interventions and adaptation policies to address the impacts of climate change, such as through the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) and the Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPA). However, the extent to which these adaptation interventions are addressing local vulnerabilities has been an issue that is increasingly drawing attention. These critiques suggest Nepal's adaptation strategies tend to be reactive and unplanned, and poorly embedded in existing political priorities, resulting in ineffective adaptation and even maladaptation outcomes.

In the face of these concerns, on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2022, Southasia Institute for Advanced Studies organized a climate adaptation dialogue as a part of current engagement with climate adaptation policies under the project 'Governing climate-resilient futures: Gender, justice and conflict resolution in resource management'.

The dialogue was largely centered around the following questions:

1. What are the ongoing adaptation policies and practices in Nepal?
2. What is Nepal's current position and priority in the global climate adaptation discourse?
3. How are the adaptation programs being implemented and what are their challenges and reflection in local-level adaptation?
4. What are the key areas for future research?

## 2. Opening thoughts and remarks

The dialogue opened with the event introduction and objective sharing by Gyanu Maskey (SIAS) followed by the participants' introduction. Prof. Andrea Nightingale (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU) and Dr. Hemant Ojha (Institute for Study and Development Worldwide IFSD) shared opening remarks on the present state of adaptation efforts in Nepal. Dr. Nightingale remarked on how globally, adaptation tends to take a backseat in conversations about climate change, compared to the emphasis placed on biophysical impacts and mitigation. Dr. Nightingale also pointed out the predominantly international donor-funded nature of current adaptation

efforts in Nepal. She mentioned separating out the response to climate to the wider sociopolitical context is basically impossible so there is a need to debate on understanding such linkages and to push back a little on the global conversation which is trying to demonstrate the effects on the climate impacts alone. Dr. Ojha stressed how internationally-led interventions lack the element of adaptation. Also, the disjuncture on the landing of adaptation ideas is prevalent in Nepal, so the overarching question should be on the ways of ensuring how local institutions and policy at different levels really take a broad view of climate risk in the very first place. As long as our planners and decision-makers continue to see climate risk as mainly or purely a biophysical phenomenon, other dimensions of risk, vulnerability, and exclusion will be missed. He emphasized how local governments need to think beyond interventions in terms of short-term infrastructure projects, and how local governments can be enabled to make this shift to thinking about longer-term risks and vulnerabilities. He raised questions on the ways adaptation and development could be integrated at the local level by putting local people, women, and the most vulnerable in front. Also acknowledging the biophysical dimension of climate change, both of them emphasized the lacking recognition of the sociopolitical roots of vulnerability. Importantly, both Dr. Nightingale and Dr. Ojha emphasized the necessity to re-envision community action in the face of other socioeconomic and cultural constraints.

### 3. Presentations

#### 3.1 Keynote Presentation: Dr. Madhav Karki, Member of EP & CCM National Council & Distinguished Fellow, CGED-Nepal

##### ***Building Climate Resilient Communities and Socio-ecological Production Systems***

In the face of adaptation strategies that have not adequately managed to address vulnerabilities, Dr. Karki reflected on the need for *Transformative Adaptation (TA)* interventions focused on addressing the root causes of vulnerability to climate change.

Some key points from the presentation:

- Rather than measures that seek to preserve old, failing systems, Transformative Adaptation is focused on radically rethinking systems for adaptation at a transformative scale.
- Transformative Adaptation (TA) fills in adaptation gaps and deficiencies and scales up implementation with decisions that are made by networks, rather than individuals.
- TA strategies as defined by system scale changes work at a landscape level rather than project scale visions that address issues incrementally and individually.

- By shifting adaptation from science issues to governance issues and from a problem-solving approach to a learning and co-production approach, transformative adaptation can lead to informed decision-making and enabling governance.
- Especially in the Nepali context, this translates to a need for a transformation in LAPA, which has outlived its utility and needs to be transformed.
- TAs will need to focus on the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities that make climate change a threat for Nepalis, and also address issues in governance, as we have two different ministries governing disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts.
- At present there is no conversation among different government levels, but under TA, government efforts must be collaborative. These strategies should also assess and address moving targets while accepting anticipatory changes in priorities.

Dr. Karki also emphasized that we must continue to think about who will drive TA, and who it will be for will it also be donor-driven? There are lessons to be learned from the LAPA framework so that ownership of TA is not donor-driven, and there is no overcrowding of frameworks coming from both donor organizations and local-level efforts. There must be a co-production effort that will bring together diverse interests to decide what the adaptation visions will be.

Following the keynote presentation, there were three presentations by climate adaptation experts:

### **3.2 Presentation 1: Man Bahadur BK, Deputy Team Leader, NCCSP**

#### ***Locally Led Adaptation in Nepal: Learning from Nepal Climate Change Support Program- 2***

Mr. BK reflected on project outcomes from NCCSP-2, focusing on locally-led innovative approaches in Karnali, as it is the most vulnerable province. The project is running in its 4<sup>th</sup> year and has implemented many schemes so far, such as supporting local governments in formulating LAPAs. Given the context of COVID-19, the project also drew focus to green jobs, nutritional security, and hygiene. The schemes focused particularly on providing effective service to marginal and socially excluded women's groups.

Some key points from the presentation:

- There tended to be different understandings of LAPA among various stakeholders, and the formation process was not mainstreamed.
- There is a lack of harmonization among federal, provincial, and local governments, as well as institutional arrangements for adaptation.
- There was an overcrowding of various plans at the local level with the same content.

- There are opportunities to scale up LAPA formulation to other municipalities, to mainstream LAPA formulation to sectors beyond local governments, and to harmonize policy between different institutional bodies.

### 3.3 Presentation 2: Bal Krishna Jamarkattel, UNICEF

#### ***Adaptation Planning and Implementation in Nepal***

Mr. Jamarkattel presented on Adaptation and planning through the LFP (Livelihood Forestry Program). While the LFP spans many regions of the country, Mr. Jamarkattel focused particularly on the Terai where he led the preparation of guidelines and templates for adaptation and planning, working at both the VDC level and community level to initiate LAPA planning.

Some key points from the presentation are as follows:

- The program helped in mainstreaming LAPA across the different levels of governance and community it was engaged with.
- It helped develop a system of participatory planning as well as a legal framework for adaptation initiatives, both of which were lacking before the program was initiated.
- The program also focused on responding to short-term impact-urgent policies and supported capacity building.
- A major challenge was that planning for adaptation was extremely contingent on whether or not there was already a project in function, and none of the planned programs were transboundary.
- It was also noted that targeting strategies need to be sharpened, as the most vulnerable people cannot be reached or supported by general targeting.
- Risk-informed adaptation planning before mainstreaming as well as local ownership and institutionalization of plans and policies will result in better outcomes in the future.

### 3.4 Presentation 3: Binod Gyawali, District Project Coordinator

#### ***Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA): An implementation Experience from Adaptation for Smallholders in Hilly Areas (ASHA) Project***

Mr. Gyawali shared some experiences in LAPA implementation from the ASHA project (Adaptation for Smallholders in Hilly Areas project), designed to support vulnerable smallholders to build climate resilience through grant disbursements. The project which was initiated in 2015 and will close in 2023, is focused on 7 districts across 2 provinces and has emphasized vulnerable

household and community identification while enhancing LAPA and examining biophysical conditions.

Some key points from the presentation are as follows:

- The program directly benefited 100,000 households that were given \$25 each to reduce adaptation vulnerabilities, introduce climate-proofing and develop profitable products and community infrastructures.
- Solar home systems were introduced that significantly reduced GHG emissions, and agricultural and livestock programs were introduced, directly benefiting 14,000 households.
- GIS mapping was also used to identify which households needed grants, and the process overall also incorporated a mix of local and scientific knowledge.
- Major advantages to the design of the program were the low cost of the grant, as well as the easy grant process.
- Insufficient funding and inadequate institutional arrangements for the LAPA/adaptation planning process are the major hindrances to efficient climate adaptation in Nepal.
- Similarly, lacking capacity of local government institutions and service providers has been limiting effective adaptation to climate change.

## 4. Open Dialogue

The focused presentations were followed by an open dialogue moderated by Dr. Dil Khatri, Executive Director of SIAS. Participants were invited to share their thoughts on adaptation measures in Nepal while also raising questions and further discussing points brought up earlier in the session.

### 4.1 Detailed Discussion

The open dialogue was kicked off by a point raised by Advocate **Jony Mainali**, who pointed out the major reason for failure in the implementation of adaptation strategies: a gap between structural and functional levels. She explained the existing structural challenges in the constitution, due to the jurisdictional division between 3 government levels; while the constitution does not have provisions for local and provincial level governments. There are legal provisions for local governments to act on adaptation interventions. However, local governments tend to refer first to the constitution, and seeing a lack of provision for them to act, do not see adaptation as their obligation. This continues to encourage shifting of obligation. This reflects a political gap; there is no political buy-in for adaptation at all 3 levels, which desperately needs to



be addressed. In that situation, she raised the concern ‘how do we incentivize political prioritization of adaptation’?

Advocate Mainali suggested three measures that can address this gap. a) Constitution can be amended to lend a more active role to local governments in adaptation interventions. b) For implementation and practice; local government needs to assert rights even when not constitutional and c) Local governments can take issues to court when necessary.

**Mr. Raju Pandit Chhetri** argued that ministers and authorities do indeed recognize climate change and adaptation as a political issue, for it is the council of ministers who are responsible for endorsing policies. However, he argued while there is some political engagement with vulnerability, the question of who determines who is vulnerable and who is not is equally important. Also important, he argued if the people who are labeled as vulnerable see themselves as such; such categorizations are matters deeply entangled with issues of agency. He also highlighted the interrelation between inequalities and climate change that make climate change a political issue, which in turn makes it all the more crucial to politicize climate action. He pointed out that we must face the realities of the limitations to all of the work that has already been done, especially given how none of the local governments have adaptation plans without donor support, and how adaptation plans are never renewed once the donor support comes to an end. This points to a lack of resources in tackling vulnerability, including the non-climatic roots of vulnerability such as socioeconomic inequality. Cumulatively, there is an urgent need for political action and also a need to address differential vulnerabilities so that adaptation strategies do not continue to take the form of only developmental projects.

**Dr. Nightingale** further discussed how it is absolutely possible and in fact, a major opportunity for politicians to see climate change as a political opportunity, not only to be globally recognized for taking action but also to draw funding. Dr. Nightingale highlighted how some of the reluctance in addressing adaptation as a political issue regarding inequalities is deeply uncomfortable work since addressing vulnerabilities threatens the hierarchies of the status quo, and the work of undoing such hierarchies is challenging and uncomfortable.

**Mr. Kushal Gurung** brought an entrepreneurial perspective to the challenges in adaptation and mitigation efforts, pointing out how the economic benefits of importing petroleum have led the government to subsidize it, which makes it difficult for biogas to take off as a sustainable alternative. Thus, more challenging work remains in convincing the government and consumers, and industrialists to make a switch to sustainable alternatives in the face of economic challenges. There is also a need to convince consumers and authorities that it is not only a matter of costs but also an intergenerational issue.



**Mr. Thakur Chauhan** pointed out that in politicizing adaptation as a concern, we must account for the voter perspective that politicians have during campaigning. There are efforts to satisfy all voters as all votes are considered valuable, so there is a need to not alienate both less vulnerable and highly vulnerable voters. This leads to very general commitments that are hard to bring to fruition. Mr. Chauhan suggested making economic commitments for terms more explicit to address this issue.

**Dr. Manohara Khadka** contributed to the dialogue by emphasizing the need to consider inclusive representation of participants and panelist in dialogues. Connecting to the key presentation, she pointed out how knowledge must be co-created as we move forward. The process of creating knowledge should also be transformative, interdisciplinary, and inclusive. This also points to a need to break structural silos (forestry, water, and so on); such silos can work as a nexus instead to implement adaptations.

**Mr. Sushant Acharya** pointed out the example of how in 2006, Mustang was entitled a LAPA district in hopes of drawing attention and funding, while also acting as a catalyst for action. He also concurred with previous contributors on the need to consider the resources and knowledge we have to reframe how we think of adaptation. He suggested pulling more focus to local knowledge and technology, as well as real practices of adaptation, which have been missing so far.

**Mr. Sunil Acharya** built upon this by suggesting how we can use past experience and knowledge to reframe and guide how we think of future policies. He pointed out that more than 50% of the budget for adaptation efforts is donor-funded. Since they already have their own frameworks, how can we integrate our knowledge and experience into this? Similarly, he contended, we cannot have climate change politicized without linking it to development, by considering social needs and meeting incremental needs to meet adaptation costs.

**Dr. Harry Fischer** added to the discussion by stating that we must define what we mean by participation- is it getting people to participate in implementation, or getting people to agree on what they want and need? This can enable conditions for bottom-up mobilization. Participation can also be working with people to expand their horizons of what they think is to be done and initiating real transformative change that allows people to speak for themselves.

**Mr. Ajaya Dixit** shared his own experience in the dialogue and highlighted that all of the climate adaptation practices in Nepal have to move beyond the concept of climate awareness and work for robust transformative changes. “The deep institutional culture that Nepal has been following

for decades has to be rethought”, he said. Lack of strategic thinking and informed planning has been the major cause of maladaptation in Nepal. He also shared some thoughts drawing from his work analyzing over 50 years of meeting minutes between Nepali and Indian authorities regarding small transboundary rivers, and what can be done about flooding. He reflected that every year showed repetitive and reductionist engineering thinking that excluded issues of livelihood, while only considering embankment. This deep focus on infrastructure and little else clouded critical approaches that can be taken on the way forward. He suggested intensive audits of past investments in infrastructure projects and critical examination of whether they have actually contributed to adaptation and mitigation. This, Mr. Dixit, suggested can ensure investment is not maladaptive. He reiterated the need to think according to our landscape and the understanding of the institutional culture and changing science, and planning beyond infrastructural solutions and ensure infrastructure is not leading to maladaptation.

**Dr. Hemant Ojha** brought the open dialogue to a close by reflecting on reflexivity: where are the producers of knowledge located in the political economy, and who claims knowledge? How can we mitigate problems of conventional development? He emphasized how we must consider how we have come to a dialogue, and how such conversations can be continued and sustained in the future.

## 4.2 Summary of the Discussion

The above discussions are summarized in key points below:

- ***Risk of failure to address the vulnerability***

For climate adaptation interventions to reach the vulnerable population and for them to benefit, it is important to rethink questions such as: who is vulnerable, and who determines who is vulnerable? Are people we think vulnerable really vulnerable? In all adaptation work, there is a lack of recognition of the social roots of vulnerability. The scope of research lies in translating vulnerability into action.

Repeated development interventions trying to address only the bio-physical hazards and not addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability cannot be effective in lifting people from vulnerability. Similarly, adaptation plans from donor support take into consideration the climate impacts as a result of climatic as well as socio-ecological and political reasons conceptually but there is a capacity gap in translating thoughts at the activity level planning (to address vulnerability). Hence, it is important to think about how to overcome challenges in practice and a broader framework of policies to address the vulnerability. While the social intervention approach can be helpful in understanding vulnerability, we also need to revisit the LAPA framework to explore the efficiency of the framework to address the vulnerability.

### ***Climate adaptation needs transformation***

Business as usual in climate adaptation is not adequate. Dynamic climate adaptation planning needs transformative change beyond incremental changes which has the potential of reducing the root causes of multi-dimensional vulnerability. Transformative change underpins SDG. So, re-thinking is needed as to: who is the transformation for? who will drive this transformation? For instance, LAPA is widely recognized globally but who owns this? More than two-thirds of the municipality is not aware of the framework and its value in integrating it into development frameworks. Donors are found to be helping in transformative change but initially, it needs to be figured out what real transformative change might be.

### ***Politicizing climate change***

Environment and climate change have been a political agenda but we cannot have climate change politicized without linking it to socioeconomic issues, linking development and adaptation needs. Climate change is in political discourse but not enough for climate adaptation. Hence, climate adaptation needs to be brought as a political priority. It is also important to think through the different political leaders' perspectives. Political leaders want to show tangible benefits to all the voters not limiting their focus to the most vulnerable. It will be interesting to know why the political leaders are not interested in climate change adaptation though this sector has huge potential to capture the resources. Also, economic benefits at the end of the interventions to the community people as well as the political leaders are important.

### ***Scope of research to policymakers and donors***

It is important to identify and utilize the network of this climate group and critical knowledge from research with policymakers. Who are we and what is politics itself that connects this group? How can the alliance of critical knowledge be built and engaged in process of politics for transformation? The LAPA framework has already been drafted. But evidence-based critical research can be helpful to inform the government and donors. Hence, there is space to link research to the donor framework. More importantly, how to ensure political will to engage in climate adaptation- political economy analysis can be a part of the research. These studies will then help address the constraints and challenges in national-level policies as these are the original policies (as NAPA 2010) that provide reference to local-level adaptation.

### ***Moving beyond boundaries and sectors***

The nexus approach can address the sectoral silos and it is important to be critical of ourselves in the knowledge-creation process as this process also needs to be transformative and inclusive. The climate sector being multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral, nexus approach can address the

sectoral silos. Solution-oriented research is important. Moreover, the climate crisis spans beyond political spaces, hence collaboration beyond political boundaries is a necessity.

### ***Action for now or for the future?***

Our economy is fossil-fuel driven and it is difficult to convince beneficiaries on adopting low-carbon solutions such as biogas and organic fertilizers competing with LPG gas and chemical fertilizers. A carbon tax is better but who will do that needs rethinking.

## **5. Conclusion**

The dialogue concluded with remarks from Prof. Andrea Nightingale and Dr. Hemant Ojha. Prof. Nightingale reinforced the discussion around the lack of political will and highlighted the need to focus on how can it be generated. The discussion agreed that adaptation planning needs deep political concern and transformative changes beyond incremental changes to be able to address the risk of failure of addressing the root causes of vulnerability of the real vulnerable communities. Further, Dr. Ojha reflected on the need for reflectivity on knowledge producers' location in the political economy and sustaining the team of climate networks in the future. The climate adaptation dialogue discussions centered broadly on the role of knowledge production necessary to lead future adaptation efforts, the need for bottom-up mobilization and participation in decision-making and implementation efforts for future adaptation interventions, and the necessity to curb dependence on donor-driven policies and interventions.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the key presenters and all the participants of the meeting for their valuable time and participation and contribution to a lively and fruitful discussion.

**- Report compiled by:** Anisha Joshi, Gyanu Maskey and Monika Giri (SIAS)

## ANNEX 1 List of Participants

S.N.	NAME	AFFILIATION	Email
1	Jony Mainali		<a href="mailto:jonymainaly@gmail.com">jonymainaly@gmail.com</a>
2	Sunil Acharya	Oxfam in Asia	<a href="mailto:Sunil.Acharya@oxfam.org">Sunil.Acharya@oxfam.org</a>
3	Raju Pandit Chhetri	PRC Nepal	<a href="mailto:raju@prc.org.np">raju@prc.org.np</a>
4	Kushal Gurung	Windpower Nepal	<a href="mailto:Kushal@windpowernepal.com">Kushal@windpowernepal.com</a>
5	Anisha Joshi		<a href="mailto:anisha.joshi@dukckunshan.edu.cn">anisha.joshi@dukckunshan.edu.cn</a>
6	Manohar Khadka	IWMI	<a href="mailto:m.khadka@cgiar.org">m.khadka@cgiar.org</a>
7	Thakur P. Chauhan	FAO Nepal	<a href="mailto:thakur.chauhan@fao.org">thakur.chauhan@fao.org</a>
8	Dev Raj Gautam		<a href="mailto:gdev.sagarmatha@gmail.com">gdev.sagarmatha@gmail.com</a>
9	Man Badahur B.K.	NCCSP2	<a href="mailto:mbbk55@gmail.com">mbbk55@gmail.com</a>
10	Basanta Paudel	The World Bank	<a href="mailto:bpaudel@worldbank.org">bpaudel@worldbank.org</a>
11	Madhav Karki	CGED	<a href="mailto:karki.madhav@gmail.com">karki.madhav@gmail.com</a>
12	Bal krishna Jamarkattel	UNICEF	<a href="mailto:jkbalkrishna@gmail.com">jkbalkrishna@gmail.com</a>
13	Dil khatri	SIAS	<a href="mailto:dil@sias-southasia.org">dil@sias-southasia.org</a>
14	Gyanu Maskey	SIAS	<a href="mailto:gyanu@sias.southasia.org">gyanu@sias.southasia.org</a>
15	Andrea Nightingale	SLU	<a href="mailto:a.j.nightingale@sosgeo.uio.no">a.j.nightingale@sosgeo.uio.no</a>
16	Lalmani Wagle	NWCF	<a href="mailto:wlalmani@gmail.com">wlalmani@gmail.com</a>
17	Harry Fisher	SLU	<a href="mailto:harryfisher@slu.se">harryfisher@slu.se</a>
18	Parbati Pandey	SIAS	<a href="mailto:parbati@sias.southasia.org">parbati@sias.southasia.org</a>
19	Binod Gyawali	ASHA Project	<a href="mailto:binodridi@gmial.com">binodridi@gmial.com</a>
20	Jagadish Bhatta	DCA	<a href="mailto:bhattajagadish08@gmail.com">bhattajagadish08@gmail.com</a>
21	Popular Gentle	CSU	<a href="mailto:pgentle@csu.edu.au">pgentle@csu.edu.au</a>
22	Sushant Acharya	SIAS	<a href="mailto:sushant@sias.southasia.com">sushant@sias.southasia.com</a>
23	Ajaya Dixit	ICET Nepal	<a href="mailto:ajayadixitpani@gmail.com">ajayadixitpani@gmail.com</a>
24	Monika Giri	SIAS	<a href="mailto:monikagiri.mg@gmail.com">monikagiri.mg@gmail.com</a>
25	Pradip Dhakal	SIAS	<a href="mailto:pradip@sias-southasia.org">pradip@sias-southasia.org</a>

## ANNEX 2 Photos





