

National adaptation funding: ways forward for the poorest countries

Rising sea levels, shifting rainfall and other impacts of climate change present a huge risk to some of the world's poorest countries. Faced with such challenges, many LDCs or Least Developed Countries have found themselves juggling the need to adapt to climate impacts with other essential concerns. In 2001, LDCs began to develop National Adaptation Programmes of Action or NAPAs to identify their most urgent and immediate adaptation needs. Since then, 39 of them have gone through this rigorous process, but only a handful of the projects they identified have been submitted for funding. Even fewer have been accepted for implementation. To avoid wasting the massive investment in NAPAs so far, it is key for richer nations to give NAPAs the fiscal and institutional support they need.

The value of NAPAs: a response to urgent, immediate needs

Among the world's poorest nations – known as the LDCs or Least Developed Countries – 48 are party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and have created or are working on National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) as a response to climate

impacts (see Backstory). The value of the NAPAs already developed is that they respond to urgent and immediate adaptation needs, give priority to the most vulnerable communities, and seek to influence and facilitate wider institutional capacities on adaptation.

The projects outlined in NAPAs are small-scale and limited in scope, but are potentially effective solutions

Policy pointers

- **Long-term action on climate change** is essential, but the post-2012 climate regime must take into account the urgent and immediate needs of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) already identified in their National Adaptation Programmes of Action.
- **To avoid wasting investment** in NAPAs, richer nations under the UN climate convention should allocate up to US\$2 billion over the next five years to realise all NAPA projects.
- **The LDCs must begin to** carry out their priority NAPA projects as soon as possible.

Backstory

The seventh Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held at Marrakech in 2001. The Marrakech Accords that emerged from this process included three funds relevant to adaptation.

One, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), was set up to support the 48 of the world's poorest and most vulnerable nations who are party to the UNFCCC in adapting to climate change impacts such as erratic rainfall or sea level rise. The LDCF is run by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), an international partnership that funds environmental projects in developing countries.

Initially, the LDCF was used to fund the design of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) – plans that identify the most 'urgent and immediate'

adaptation needs in the LDCs, and priority activities to address those needs. To develop their NAPAs, LDCs were allocated US\$200,000 each from the fund. To date, 39 LDCs¹ have submitted NAPAs to the UNFCCC, and the rest are due to be completed soon. Each NAPA contains a list of prioritised projects that address urgent adaptation needs in areas such as agriculture, water management and coastal zone protection. The total cost of all projects included in the completed NAPAs is US\$1.6 billion.

Once NAPAs are completed, LDCs can begin the process of developing funding proposals for some NAPA projects. Twenty-four countries have so far submitted such NAPA implementation projects to the GEF for funding from the LDCF, Bhutan being the first. The projects range from community-based risk reduction interventions through to national and local-level capacity building initiatives, and address climate challenges in coastal zones, disaster risk management, food security, water resource management, health and ecosystems.

to building adaptive capacity in some of today's most vulnerable communities. The NAPA process itself is country-owned and designed with detailed consultation among stakeholders, and so is consistent with national development strategies. NAPAs therefore already have national support, and have undergone a fully participatory 'diagnostic' and design process.

However, one of the deficiencies of NAPAs is that they only give guidance on identifying project concepts. They do not cover how to turn a concept for a project into a fully developed project proposal that would enable quick access to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and other funding operated by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for actual rollout.

A contributing problem is that the initial funding for NAPA design did not include resources for this stage of project preparation. So the progress of many NAPAs has been stalled, and the likelihood of realising a number of NAPA projects is low.

The need for funding and proposed action

NAPAs were supposed to be a means of identifying the most 'urgent and immediate' adaptation needs in the LDCs. That has happened. NAPAs were also supposed to be country-driven processes developed with multi-stakeholder participation. They have been.

The amount of funding available in the LDCF is inadequate, however. NAPA projects need fiscal

and institutional support to be implemented, to ensure that investment in them so far is not wasted but rather built upon – not just in terms of realising the NAPAs themselves, but for wider strategic national adaptation planning.

Certain steps are therefore warranted. The first is that Annex 1 countries under the UNFCCC – industrialised nations primarily in the North – allocate up to US\$2 billion over the next five years to cover the implementation of NAPAs in the 48 LDCs. The second is that each LDC be allowed to start putting into practice their own priority NAPA projects as soon as possible.

It is key that negotiations regarding the post-2012 climate regime take account of the fact that climate change impacts are already being felt, and that urgent and immediate adaptation priorities in the most vulnerable countries must be met. Long-term action on climate change is essential, but it is important for this to be coupled with substantial action on adaptation for the most vulnerable in the near term.

NAPAs have clearly identified the needed adaptation action in the poorest countries. Funding the full development and implementation of NAPA projects pinpointed as urgent and immediate is a clear starting point.

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Notes

■ ¹ The 39 LDCs that have submitted NAPAs to the UNFCCC are Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde (not an LDC since 2007), Central African Republic, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Sudan, Tanzania, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu and Zambia.

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