



Adaptation Communications under Article 7 of the Paris Agreement:

What should they include? And why are they important for informing climate action?

Policy Brief from Southern Voices on Adaptation

Executive Summary

The Adaptation Communication is an important part of the architecture for achieving the mitigation and adaptation goals of the Paris Agreement, and mobilizing sufficient finance flows for climate-resilient development. It also serves as an important mechanism for celebrating and encouraging good practice in national adaptation policy and planning.

Southern Voices for Adaptation, a coalition of civil society organizations from Asia, Africa and Latin America, have developed a benchmark for effective and equitable national adaptation frameworks known as the Joint Principles for Adaptation. These principles provide helpful markers for what countries should include in their Adaptation Communications.

Content: Adaptation Communications should state

- how adaptation will meet the needs of poor and vulnerable segments of the population and strengthen the resilience of local communities and ecosystems;
- how adaptation actions have been planned and implemented with multi-stakeholder engagement;

- what national and local policies that promote adaptation and resilience to climate change are in place;
- what the gaps are between the priority needs for addressing climate change impacts and the human, technical and financial resources available.

Form: Adaptation Communications should

- adopt a common format, to allow the UNFCCC to aggregate data across countries and regions meaningfully;
- be both backward and forward looking, to allow for reflection and planning;
- be of a frequency and timing that links them to the National Determined Contributions and the global stock-takes

We believe that these recommendations are consistent with the intent enshrined in the Paris Agreement that a country's Adaptation Communication "include its priorities, implementation and support needs, plans and actions, without creating any additional burden for developing country Parties."

Introduction

Under the Paris Agreement Article 7, governments agreed to establish the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with a view to contributing to sustainable development and ensuring an adequate adaptation response in the context of the temperature goal.

In the Paris Agreement the aim to keep the global average temperature increase to well below 2°C – and even better at 1.5°C – is closely interlinked with the global goal on adaptation, and with the need to mobilize sufficient finance flows for a climate resilient-development.

For the success of the Agreement it is key to keep track of progress in all areas – both regarding the temperature goal and the global adaptation goal, and governments are to submit periodically **an adaptation communication** to be recorded in a registry by the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC.

The Paris Agreement is not specific about the form and content of the adaptation communication. This policy brief presents the views of the Southern Voices on Adaptation coalition on what the adaptation communication should include. It forms the basis of a submission made to the UNFCCC as an input to the discussions and negotiations during the May UNFCCC intersessional meeting under the APA.

Our proposals are based on the experiences and recommendations from civil society climate advocates in developing countries across the world – Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Kenya, Malawi, Ghana, Nicaragua and Guatemala – and on the Joint Principles for Adaptation¹, our benchmark for effective and equitable national frameworks for climate change adaptation..

We encourage Parties and observers to engage in the discussion on the adaptation communications – and hope you will refer to them while participating in the workshop on Adaptation Communications.

Role and Purpose of Adaptation Communications

Collectively the Adaptation Communications from each country will help promote joint action under the Paris Agreement by providing an overview of:

- The challenges country by country in responding to the impacts of climate change and pursuing climate resilient development;
- The efforts and initiatives already planned or implemented at national, sub-national and regional (cross-country) levels, including the finance, technical and human resources mobilised locally and from external sources;
- Lessons learnt relevant for sharing with other countries and actors of challenges, including success stories of adaptation as well as failures in addressing climate change;
- The gaps between the needs and the human, technical and financial resources available.
- The extent that adaptation has been formalised in national and local adaptation planning, as well as UNFCCC instruments such as National Adaptation Plans, and Nationally Determined Contributions.

It is important that the adaptation communications have a uniform structure that will allow the UNFCCC secretariat to provide an overview across the many national communications and, to the extent possible, to arrive at aggregate analyses of both the progress achieved as well as the gaps remaining.

¹ The JPA are formally recognised by the Least Developed Countries' Expert Group (LEG) as supplementary material.

Photo: ©CARE Ghana, Adaptation Learning Programme

JPA PRINCIPLE E.
The resilience of groups who are most vulnerable to climate change is promoted

JPA PRINCIPLE D.
Local adaptation plans are developed through approaches that build resilience of communities and ecosystems

JPA PRINCIPLE A.
The formulation, implementation and monitoring of adaptation policies and plans is participatory and inclusive

JPA PRINCIPLE B.
Funds for adaptation are utilised efficiently, and managed transparently and with integrity

JPA PRINCIPLE F.
There is appropriate investment in the building of skills and capacities for adaptation, as well as in physical infrastructure

In order to meet these purposes, Southern Voices on Adaptation recommends that the adaptation communications:

1. Identify the needs of poor and vulnerable segments of the population and highlight how adaptation actions will strengthen the resilience of local communities and ecosystems.

National communications on adaptation should focus on the realities faced by local people and vulnerable groups in how they address adaptation planning, implementation, monitoring and review. The communications should:

- Identify the most vulnerable groups and how they are affected by climate change, including different groups of women, men, boys and girls, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, both in urban and rural settings.
- Highlight how adaptation plans and initiatives target the vulnerable groups and local communities to develop adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change, including gender sensitive approaches and through possible social protection or insurance initiatives.
- Identify the processes in place to help vulnerable groups get access to climate information and to involve them in decision-making.

2. Include information on multi-stakeholder engagement in planning and implementation of adaptation actions.

To be effective and equitable, adaptation planning and implementation must engage multiple actors at all dimensions affected by climate change – in defining the options and priorities. Therefore the adaptation communication should account for:

- How multiple stakeholders are included in planning and implementation.
- How engagement with stakeholders and local communities, and indigenous peoples follow the emerging principles on climate change adaptation good practice².
- How the local communities and their structures are engaged and strengthened through increased awareness and education and by publicizing plans and policies in ways local people can understand and engage with.

3. Provide transparent information on resource availability for adaptation actions, and funding allocation and needs for adaptation activities at the country and local levels.

In order to maintain transparency and accountability of adaptation actions, it is necessary that countries provide information on which adaptation actions have been initiated at country level, the manner in which funding allocations have been invested, and how they have reached and benefited the communities and groups affected by climate change. If feasible, we suggest the information provided on adaptation investments include the following specifications and breakdowns:

- Public funding and private investments provided from national / international sources, with breakdown by geographical region, sector, ecosystem as relevant
- Indicators measuring the expected results / coverage of the investment
- The share of finance for adaptation allocated for and/or spent by local level actions and local communities³
- The share allocated to physical infrastructure as well as to building skills and capacities, including institutional development and awareness raising.

4. Provide information on relevant national and local policies that promote adaptation and resilience to climate change

Many countries will be amending existing policies, or introducing new ones such as National Adaptation Plans, to address their adaptation needs.

Information on policy amendments, and introduction of new policies and laws for the implementation of adaptation actions should be included in the adaptation communications. In particular, it is important to include the information on:

² including those agreed in paragraph 7.5 of the Paris Agreement.

³ The recommendation in the Kathmandu Declaration on Financing local adaptation to climate change from April 2014 is that at least 50% of adaptation funding should go to the local level, see: <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G03787.pdf>

- How adaptation as planned in NAPs, NDCs and other related initiatives are coordinated with each other and to other policy and administrative frameworks to ensure coherence, including between and between disaster risk reduction and adaptation initiatives and initiatives promoting the sustainable development goals.
- How local adaptation plans by communities and sub-national authorities are funded and guided by mechanisms to ensure coherence with national adaptation policies
- The availability of environmental and social safeguards against negative impacts and maladaptation, and mechanisms for expressing grievances and seeking redress

5. Outline the adaptation gaps⁴ – between the nationally determined priorities and needs to address climate change impacts and the human, technical and financial resources available.

To inform the subsequent global stock takes, the adaptation communication must include an assessment of the challenges from a country perspective in building adaptive capacity of the society to protect its citizens, ecosystems and infrastructure against the impacts of climate change. This may include:

- An analysis of the gaps in terms of human, technical, and financial resources in addressing the challenge of climate change,
- Research needs prepare climate projections to estimate impact of climate change under alternative scenarios.
- Reference to evidence of situations and scenarios where the impacts of climate change go beyond what can be managed and reduced through adaptation, such as voluntary or involuntary displacement/migration and irreversible ecosystem loss. This will support interlinkage between the national adaptation efforts and reporting for the Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage.

6. Are both backward and forward looking, with a frequency linking the NDCs and the global stock-takes

Adaptation communications need to reflect the country's cycle of reviewing climate actions and putting forward new or revised proposals and contributions. In principle, this could be the 5-year cycle of NDCs. It is also important, however, to include information that allow for an assessment of the progress achieved as an input for the Global Stocktakes, so the adaptation communications must include both forward and backward looking elements.

However, the communications should not create burdens on developing countries through submissions that require a high amount of human resources for development, and these countries need to be facilitated and supported in developing the adaptation communications to the UNFCCC. It is necessary that the communication format is in place for this purpose.

Conclusion

We encourage Parties and observers to engage in the discussion on the adaptation communications⁵ – and hope you will be inspired by this policy brief and the Joint Principles for Adaptation⁶ from which it draws. Please do not hesitate to contact SVA regional facilitators or partner networks for further information.

4 <http://web.unep.org/adaptationgapreport/sites/unep.org.adaptationgapreport/files/documents/agr2016.pdf>

See UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2016 p 2

5 <http://www4.unfccc.int/submissions/SitePages/sessions.aspx> Item 4, Further guidance in relation to the adaptation communication, including, inter alia, as a component of nationally determined contributions, referred to in Article 7, paragraphs 10 and 11, of the PA

6 The Joint Principles of Adaptation and our experiences from using them are available at www.southernvoices.net.

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