

# CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT in the NDC REVIEW PROCESS

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*A product developed by SLYCAN Trust in partnership with Southern Voices on Adaptation*

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are a key stakeholder in national and international climate processes. They play a crucial role in contributing to bringing ground-level vulnerabilities into decision-making processes, providing technical support and research, advocating for ambitious action, creating awareness, building capacities, and enhancing resilience of the most vulnerable populations.

To ensure that CSOs engage in a consistent and regular manner and enable them to contribute constructively to NDC-related processes at country as well as international level, a number of gaps, needs, challenges, and recommendations have been identified through input gathered from CSO representatives via a survey and five thematic consultations.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Nationally Determined Contributions** form an integral part of the Paris Agreement and are instrumental to achieving its goals of enhancing climate action and sustainable, green, climate-resilient development.
- The UNFCCC process has highlighted the **need for multi-stakeholder driven climate action**, at all levels of activities related to all levels of the NDC and national adaptation plan processes.
- The **engagement of CSOs can be crucial** to advocate for higher ambitions and amplify the voices of the most vulnerable, poor, or marginalised populations.
- However, there are a number of **gaps, needs, and challenges** concerning civil society engagement in the NDC process. These include gaps and needs related to technical capacity, legal and policy frameworks, national processes, lack of coordination and communication mechanisms, lack of access and participation, lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and internal challenges within CSOs.
- The research conducted for the preparation of this policy brief has identified a number of action areas and recommendations to **enhance CSO engagement in the NDCs and other climate-related processes**.

The research identified **key action points that could be adopted by governments (1-5) and civil society organizations (6-8):**

1. **Taking legal and policy interventions** related to stakeholder engagement in climate processes and ensure a participatory structure.
2. **Facilitating CSO engagement in decision-making** and enhance CSO representation in the NDC review.
3. Establishing **communication mechanisms** to share updates on climate action and relevant information.
4. Establishing a **multi-stakeholder driven M&E process** for NDC implementation that measures climate action.
5. Enhancing **financial support** for CSO engagement and developing an accessible, integrated financing model.
6. **Network-building and partnerships for support** for national and local CSOs to engage regularly and effectively in climate-related processes.
7. Facilitating **regional and international exchange** through the creation of forums to share best practices for NDC engagement among CSOs and facilitate collaboration.
8. **Building technical capacity** among CSOs through regular capacity-building sessions.

## The NDC REVIEW PROCESS

In 2015, 196 Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) signed the Paris Agreement with the aim of enhancing climate action and transforming trajectories towards green, climate-resilient, and sustainable development. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) form an integral part of the Paris Agreement and are instrumental to achieving these goals.

Article 3 of the Paris Agreement states: “As nationally determined contributions to the global response to climate change, all Parties are to undertake and communicate ambitious efforts as defined in Articles 4, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 13 with the view to achieving the purpose of this Agreement as set out in Article 2. The efforts of all Parties will represent a progression over time, while recognizing the need to support developing country Parties for the effective implementation of this Agreement.”

Based on the Articles highlighted, it could be deduced that the NDCs may contain as key components thematic areas of mitigation, adaptation, financial support, technology transfer, capacity-building and transparency. However, there are at least 32 parties that have also included a component on loss and damage – addressed in Article 8 of the Paris Agreement – thematic focus into their NDCs, thereby addressing climate change impacts that exceed the limits of preventive adaptation.

The NDCs reflect the parties' ambition for emission reduction in line with the national circumstances and capabilities, as well as measures to address climate risks and vulnerabilities through adaptation and loss and damage related measures. Developing countries also use NDCs to outline their needs for means of implementation such as climate finance, technology and other technical needs related to the implementation of the NDCs.

Guidance related to the NDCs has been negotiated under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) agenda item three and since 2018 under the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA), focusing on the following areas:

- (a) features of nationally determined contributions, as specified in paragraph 26;
- (b) information to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding of nationally determined contributions, as specified in paragraph 28; and
- (c) accounting for Parties' nationally determined contributions, as specified in paragraph 31.

Under the Paris Agreement, Parties are to submit their NDCs every five years (Article 4.9) to the UNFCCC Secretariat, with the next submission of new or updated NDCs due to be submitted by 2020. However, current

NDCs indicate a pathway toward global warming of 3°C or more. To bridge the gap between the Paris Agreement ambitions and current commitments, it is vital to increase climate action and formulate more ambitious long-term goals. The active roles of CSOs in the process remains a vital component to scaling up climate action.

Not all Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) submitted prior to the entry of force of the Paris Agreement specified a five-year cycle. To accommodate this situation, the Paris outcome paragraph 23 of Decision 1/CP.21 calls on Parties with a timeframe of up to 2025 in their INDCs to submit a new NDC by 2020, while paragraph 24 calls on Parties with a timeframe of up to 2030 to update their NDC by 2020.

All NDCs are recorded in the NDC registry, a publicly available online system maintained by the Secretariat. As the modalities and procedures of the public NDC registry are yet to be finalized and still being negotiated, the NDCs that have been communicated are presently registered and available in the interim NDC registry.

In the NDC review process, the Agreement also provides that each Party's successive NDCs will indicate a progression compared to the previous one and an enhancement in ambition, with a reflection of the country's highest possible ambition. Governments will also take stock of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, starting in 2023 and every five years after. This has the purpose of assessing the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of the Agreement and its long-term goals. It will then contribute to informing the preparation of subsequent NDCs which envisage increased ambition and climate action to achieving the long-term goals under the Paris Agreement.

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## CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

The UNFCCC process has highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder driven climate action, which includes the engagement of CSOs, youth, women and gender-based groups, farmer groups and other community-based organizations, academia and research entities, as well as the private sector and other non-party stakeholders into the process.

At COP21 in Paris in 2015, it was agreed that mobilizing stronger and more ambitious climate action by all Parties and non-Party stakeholders is an urgent requirement to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Decision 1/CP.21 recognised the commitments from all actors, including party as well as non-party stakeholders.

Additionally, the UNFCCC Guidelines on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) also highlights the need for multi-stakeholder engagement in the climate adaptation and identifies key stakeholders for engagement. Among these stakeholders, CSOs are highlighted as a key entity to be contributing to the process, at all levels, including the preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation levels. As the NAP activities are expected to align closely with the NDC commitments on climate adaptation at country level, the inclusion of CSOs in the NDC process could be facilitated through the alignment of NDC and NAP activities.

Stakeholder engagement in national climate change processes is vital and allows countries to strive to achieve ambitious, participatory, and inclusive climate action.

Countries' commitments under the Parties Agreement, and the new and updated NDCs of countries should be formulated through a multi-stakeholder driven process, which will ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable are heard and facilitate evidence-based collaborative action to address climate change impacts.

In addition, guidelines of CSO networks such as the Joint Principles for Adaptation developed by Southern Voices on Adaptation (SVA), which focuses on key indicators for measuring successful adaptation actions, provide insights and guidance which could be replicated into activities to be implemented for ensuring effective CSO engagement..

## GAPS, NEEDS, and CHALLENGES

While the engagement and contribution of CSOs to policy processes related to climate change, including the NDC review process, is important, there are multiple factors that can prevent CSO contribution from being efficient and effective.

A survey conducted by SLYCAN Trust in collaboration with SVA with the participation of 40 CSO members of the network and other Southern CSOs indicated that while 82% of the participants were aware of the NDC process at their country level, 90% of them face challenges in engaging in the NDC update and review process.

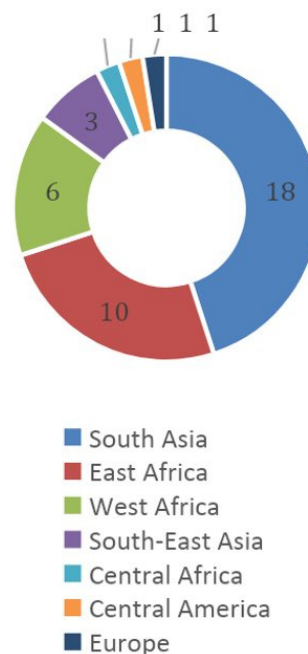
Among the key challenges highlighted by the CSOs are gaps and needs in technical capacity related to the NDC process; lack of access to coordinating institutional bodies and relevant information at the country level on the NDC updating process; restrictions to engage with policy makers due to lack of access to CSOs to decision-making processes; and a lack of awareness on the country-level processes related to the NDC review and update.

The CSOs which indicated their engagement in the process, described the engagement as being through attending sessions where input was sought for NDC review; engagement in policy review processes to which the organisation contributed; technical expertise provision, and through knowledge product development and sharing with the key stakeholders relevant to the NDC review process. Additional consultations conducted with the CSO participants highlighted key gaps and needs faced by CSOs to contribute effectively to the NDC process and participate in other national and international processes.

### CASE STUDY: CSO ENGAGEMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, and NDCs in CAMBODIA

In Cambodia, the NDC partnership engaged with the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) with the aim of enhancing coordination and NDC development efforts of relevant government institutions and CSOs. Through the Technical Working Group for Climate Change (TWG-CC), CSOs in Cambodia are in contact with relevant stakeholders in the NDC review process. However, CSOs do still face challenges in engaging with certain ministries which leaves space for enhancing the engagement of CSO activity in the NDC process, and in general on climate action.

CSO Survey Participants



### CASE STUDY: CSO ENGAGEMENT CONTRIBUTING to GENDER INTEGRATION in NDCs in GHANA

CSOs in Ghana worked with the Ministry of Environment Science and Technology to contribute to ensuring that at least one action point in the NDC focuses on mainstreaming gender into sectoral commitments and actions. A consultancy report in 2018 was made to analyse the agriculture and energy sector of NDCs to see how gender effective they were and to identify gaps in the institutions and policy frameworks to see how Ghana could mainstream gender equality when NDCs are implemented. The report identified that the women in farms were not interested or could not be reached for energy programmes. This suggests that there is a need to increase their interest to engage, contribute, and highlight their expertise, knowledge, and contribution at the ground level, where CSOs could contribute by playing a pro-active role.

## GAPS, NEEDS, and CHALLENGES

- **Gaps and needs related to technical capacity among CSOs, and lack of awareness and technical expertise related to the NDC process:** While CSOs have diverse experience, at times their capacity and technical expertise related to international processes on climate change, such as the UNFCCC process and the NDC process, can be limited. Due to this, CSOs face difficulties in contributing effectively to national decision-making and policy processes such as the ongoing NDC update and review in many countries.
- **Lack of opportunities and need for enhancing the space for CSO engagement in legal or policy frameworks and decision-making processes:** This need is highlighted as a key challenge which leads to CSOs being denied access to climate-related decision-making processes. The lack of or need for legal or policy frameworks makes it difficult to ensure effective coordination among institutions responsible for implementing climate action and those empowered to submit ambitious and transformative NDCs.
- **Lack of laws and processes related to information sharing among stakeholders, including CSOs on climate action and achieving climate targets under international and national commitments:** Among the key gaps identified by the CSOs which hinders their effective engagement in the NDC review process is the lack of access to information. This restricts the ability of CSOs to contribute to ongoing processes, and they remain ignorant of national climate processes, highlighting the need for a system for regular, accountable, and transparent access to information.
- **Lack of participation by key stakeholders in consultations and discussions involving CSOs:** Where access to and participation in discussions and consultation are available, the CSOs have marked the lack of participation of key actors from government entities in these meetings. This is seen as a challenge where CSOs seek to engage constructively and build a conversation with the key authorities that are responsible for the decision-making processes. This is seen as leading to an absence of meaningful engagement and as token participation, which does not allow CSOs to engage directly with those responsible for their country's climate agenda.
- **Lack of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to identify the engagement of CSOs and other stakeholders in the NDC process:** The gaps and challenges in engaging in the NDC review process, as well as the NDC-related activities at country level, are also due to the lack of an accountable monitoring and evaluation process of stakeholder participation. This includes the need for strategies which contribute to effective stakeholder engagement in the NDC process and a system for coordinating such engagement. Ensuring the existence of such strategies and systems will contribute to a structured and coordinated process of key stakeholder engagement and contribute to participatory and inclusive M&E processes.
- **Internal challenges among CSOs such as coordination among different CSO entities, lack of finance which allows for continued engagement in the climate processes:** The CSOs have indicated the challenges related to coordination among CSOs to reach common positions on different aspects of NDC commitments, lack of financial support to engage continuously in the process whereby the CSO representatives are able to provide inputs in a regular manner as well as key gaps and challenges. Additionally, lack of finance to engage in the international discourse has also been highlighted as a key gap, which prevents the CSOs from engaging with the NDC-related processes effectively, due to lack of exposure to international climate-related processes.
- **Lack of notice, and/or lack of time to be able to attend or be prepared when attending discussions and consultations related to the NDC review process:** CSOs have expressed that the invitations, or requests shared with them are not with sufficient time allocated for participating in discussions and consultations, and challenges to prepare to provide technically-sound, evidence-based contributions.

### CASE STUDY: TECHNICAL CSO CONTRIBUTIONS to the NDC PROCESS in SRI LANKA

In Sri Lanka, SLYCAN Trust, a non-profit civil society think tank, engages with the government through technical contributions to the official process. By providing technical support, capacity building, and research, CSOs can engage with government-led processes such as the NDC review. For example, SLYCAN Trust, in collaboration with the Climate Change Secretariat of Sri Lanka, organized a number of workshops with key stakeholders to gather input on the adaptation and loss and damage sectors of Sri Lanka's NDCs. This research was conducted with support from the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) and fed into the government process as well as into the development of a number of policy briefs highlighting sectoral gaps and needs in NDC implementation together with a regional analysis covering Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Under this project and in general, SLYCAN Trust also regularly organises webinars to strengthen capacities of local and international stakeholders and facilitate an exchange of experiences.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The research has identified a number of key recommendations, five of which **target potential actions from governments** to enhance CSO engagement:

- **1. Enacting laws or policies related to stakeholder engagement in the climate processes at national and sub-national processes, as well as strategies for sharing of information and access to decision-making processes for the CSOs:** The need for effective CSO mobilisation and engagement is among the most vital steps to be taken to address the needs for effective engagement of CSOs in the climate policy and decision-making processes. To ensure that the engagement and access is provided in a structured manner, and that the stakeholder engagement and participatory processes are entrenched in policy processes, it is important that clear, transparent, and accountable structures and mechanisms are set up for effective CSO engagement in the decision-making processes. This includes a sufficient timeframe for providing notice for discussions and consultations, and effective communication with CSOs on ongoing activities leaving sufficient time for them to prepare their engagement. Ensuring the ability of CSOs to effectively contribute to national policy-making processes can lead to greater institutional integration and coordination and enhance ongoing national development planning processes, safeguard development gains, and build resilience.
- **2. Taking active measures to engage CSOs in the decision-making, and NDC review-related consultations and meetings:** While processes, laws, and policies need to be enhanced to facilitate wider stakeholder participation, including CSOs, and wider stakeholder mobilisation in decision-making processes related to climate change, it is also important to ensure that the ongoing consultations in 2020, for the review and update of the countries' NDCs include CSO participation. Potential measures to achieve this include a quota for CSO representation at meetings, nomination of CSO focal points, and room for organisational representatives to engage in the NDC process as technical experts, advocates, or evidence-based input providers to contribute to ensuring that grassroots voices are heard.
- **3. Conducting regular sessions in person and through virtual means for sharing updates on climate action:** To address the gaps and needs related to access to information, governments could conduct regular sessions with CSO participation This could be in person meetings, or through a centralised information sharing process - this would include a regular email or newsletter which provides an update on the climate activities conducted, or could be sharing of summary reports related to projects, achieving of targets, and recent data related to NDC-linked activities. This activity in collaboration with CSOs could lead to an enhanced communication process for climate change in the country, which could be improved with a communication strategy related to climate change at national level. CSOs could contribute to increase awareness on the need of ongoing activities targeting climate impacts, and also the key initiatives which contribute to address climate risks and threats.
- **4. Establishing an independent and multi-stakeholder driven, monitoring and evaluation process for NDC-related activities at national and sub-national level:** To address gaps and needs related to CSO engagement, and contributing to and facilitating that the participation processes is accountable and transparent, it is important that an independent monitoring process is set up for activities related to NDCs. This includes the engagement and participation of stakeholders and public in the process, whereby the effective engagement of stakeholders and multi-actors working on climate change action could be measured and evaluated, while ensuring participatory and inclusive action that takes into account the needs of all parties.
- **5. Enhancing financial support needed for CSO engagement in the NDC process:** Accessible financial support on a national and international level is one of the key needs for sustained CSO engagement. To tackle the lack of financial support, governments could allocate resources for climate action through national budgets, establish dedicated and participatory climate change funding mechanisms which provides financial aid to CSOs. Governments could also take steps to encourage private sector investment for multi-actor climate action and create an enabling environment for CSOs to access to financial support for climate action that aligns with national development visions and localised SDG targets and indicators. Providing additional resources to CSOs will allow them to contribute more meaningfully to the NDC process, and enhancing climate action at national and international levels.

The research also identified **three recommendations** that target CSOs directly, showing ways in which they can enhance their engagement and facilitate discussion:

- **6. Network-building and partnerships for support (technical and coordinating) for CSOs to regularly engage and contribute to the climate change processes at national and local levels:** To ensure continued and regular participation and contribution of CSOs to the decision-making processes, including the NDC review process, it is important that CSO entities are equipped to engage with sound technical expertise. National and international networks could provide support for national and local CSOs to be capacitated to engage regularly and effectively in the processes, as well as governments could allocate a small budget for CSOs to be able to continue their contribution to climate-related processes.
- **7. Supporting and facilitating regional and international experience sharing:** Exchanging knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned for

NDC engagement among CSOs on a regional and global level can increase capacities, create synergies, and allow for mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations focusing on specific sectors, aspects, or cross-cutting challenges.

- **8. Building technical capacity among the CSOs at national level to enable them to engage productively in decision-making processes:** The benefits of conducting regular capacity-building sessions based on key thematic areas identified as those with highest need and interest among the CSOs have been highlighted. Among the group of CSOs, the key areas identified include the themes of technical capacity-building related to the alignment of national adaptation planning and NDCs; integration of SDGs into the NDC process; accessing climate finance for the implementation of participatory and inclusive NDCs; and integration of gender into the NDCs.

## CONCLUSION

Through advocacy, outreach, awareness creation, capacity building, technical support, research, resilience-building, and the creation of networks and platforms, CSOs can contribute to and participate in the official process, bring ground-level vulnerabilities into the decision-making process, and take their roles as key stakeholders in this space.

There are a number of gaps and obstacles for CSOs to integrate their activities into the national NDC review process. CSO engagement can be facilitated in a number of ways, for example by building technical capacity among CSOs, enacting laws or policies related to stakeholder engagement in climate processes, taking active measures to engage CSOs in decision-making, conducting regular meetings and communications for sharing updates on climate action, providing technical, coordinating, and

financial support for CSOs, establishing an independent monitoring and evaluation process for NDC-related activities, and addressing the issues of financial support.

The engagement of CSOs in national and international processes related to climate change, such as the NDC review or national adaptation planning, is critical to render these processes inclusive, participatory, and gender responsive and ensure that they address the needs of all members of society. Only through the participation of all stakeholders can NDCs, NAPs, and other climate-related plans be truly effective and address the needs, vulnerabilities, and potentials of society, the economy, and the environment. Facilitating and strengthening the engagement of CSOs is beneficial to everyone and allows for more voices to be heard and be incorporated into local, national, regional, and international decision-making processes.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

This policy brief was a collaborative effort of **SLYCAN Trust** and **Southern Voices on Adaptation** supported by **CARE Denmark**.

It was developed based on data collected through a survey with 39 CSO participants from 19 different countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa, as well as five virtual consultations and webinars organized in collaboration between SLYCAN Trust and Southern Voices on Adaptation in 2020.

For further information regarding the policy brief, kindly contact:

**Vositha Wijenayake**  
Executive Director  
SLYCAN Trust  
(vositha@slycantrust.org)

**Obed Koringo**  
Civil Society Advocacy Coordinator  
CARE Denmark  
(okoringo@careclimatechange.org)

*This policy brief and other relevant knowledge products are available here: <https://slycantrust.org/knowledge-portal/home> and here: <https://careclimatechange.org/climate-learning-and-advocacy-for-resilience-clar/>*