

Project Briefing

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Key points

- Many national strategies for poverty reduction and development have ignored climate change issues
- Gaps and disconnects between climate adaptation and poverty reduction frameworks undermine efforts to cushion the poverty impact of climate change
- More effort is needed to improve links between climate change adaptation plans and projects, and country-led poverty reduction strategies

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Closing the gap between climate adaptation and poverty reduction frameworks

Martin Prowse, Natasha Grist and Cheikh Sourang

Climate change has joined the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the top of the international development agenda, but national frameworks to reduce poverty and adapt to climate change rarely, if ever, interlink. Most Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and National Development Strategies (NDSs) screened during this review ignore climate change issues almost entirely.

Introduction

There is growing concern that climate change may stymie the modest progress made by many least developed countries (LDCs) on poverty. Under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) represent a policy framework for LDCs to respond to the physical effects of climate change. These have evolved in partial alignment with Poverty Reduction Strategies and National Development Strategies (PRSs/NDSs) – the medium-term policy frameworks for government action on poverty reduction goals. PRSs/NDSs are key reference documents for the aid alignment and harmonisation agenda at country level, facilitating access to grants and concessional lending from development partners.

Integrating these frameworks is critical: not only to ensure that scarce domestic resources are used efficiently, but also to ensure that externally-financed programmes are consistent with core government priorities. It is important, therefore, to take stock of the connections between national climate change and development policies, including NAPAs, PRSs/NDSs, and the strategies of development partners, to pave the way for possible improvements in content and process.

This Briefing summarises preliminary findings from research conducted for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The research has two goals: to assess

the synergies or schisms between national adaptation policy frameworks and PRSs/NDSs, as discussed in this paper; and to assess the extent to which climate change adaptation has been incorporated into IFAD country strategies, which is work in progress.

Background

Efforts to tackle the causes of climate change have received much attention, such as the reduction of energy-related carbon emissions. Current mitigation debates also focus on how reduced deforestation and degradation (REDD) can be included within the UNFCCC.

However, because mitigation measures have been slow and sparse, and the threat of climate change is increasingly severe, adaptation is now also seen as a central strategy to address climate change. Scientists, campaigners and developing country governments are demanding greater focus on, and funding for, adaptation in the most vulnerable countries.

While there has been important work on autonomous strategies (such as community-based adaptation), there is evidence that government-led adaptation will start to play a more influential role. First, analysis of the impacts of climate change is providing clearer estimates of potential sub-national effects, which could inform climate-sensitive responses and amendments to existing development plans. Second, funding flows for adaptation are proliferating (see www.climatefundsupdate.com). Disbursements to date have been small, but are likely to increase in the near future if the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund comes on stream later this year (taking a 2% levy from the Clean Development Mechanism). And third, some developing country governments are investing directly in adaptation measures in response to the immediate threat of climate change.

There is a clear need for additional public spending to complement market-driven adaptation mechanisms, and good reasons why this

could take place within the PRS/NDS process. In many instances the poorest and most vulnerable citizens will be worst affected by climate change. Integrating adaptation measures into PRS/NDS processes could help ensure they are the main beneficiaries of adaptation expenditures. The broader issues of fiscal space and multi-sector policy incentives may also be best addressed through the PRS/NDS process.

One of the best known multilateral funding streams for adaptation is the Least Developed Country Fund (LDCF), managed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). As of March 2009, around \$180 million had been pledged to the LDCF, with around \$40 million disbursed. Created to help the 50 Least Developed Countries cover the additional costs of climate change, the LDCF has supported the completion of NAPAs – the most important national-level policy frameworks for adaptation.

NAPAs aim to ‘communicate priority activities addressing the urgent and immediate [adaptation] needs and concerns of LDCs’ (UNFCCC, 2002). The guidelines for their preparation are based on core principles, including a country-driven and participatory perspective, a multi-disciplinary approach, and the need to dovetail with pre-existing environmental and development strategies, including PRSs/NDSs. By using locally-defined criteria to rank projects suggested by stakeholders, NAPAs prioritise a series of projects to be financed by the LDCF.

To date, 38 NAPAs have been produced, with varying degrees of consultation and engagement with stakeholders and wider civil society. But to what extent are NAPAs contributing to, and consistent with, key national-level frameworks for poverty reduction? And to what extent do PRSs incorporate climate change concerns?

This second question is critical. PRSs originated in response to the failure of much policy conditionality attached to concessional lending by international financial institutions and other donors in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, it is widely accepted that the resulting lack of country ‘ownership’ and stop-go aid flows undermined anti-poverty policy during this era (Booth, 2005). In contrast, new generations of PRSs are prepared every three years or so by country-led teams with stakeholders (including civil society and development partners), and form the basis for donor lending, national development planning and attempts to meet the MDGs. Key instruments of external finance from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, Regional Development Banks, the European Union and most bilateral agencies, are now framed around a country’s PRS. The difference between the new PRSs and the previous ‘Washington Consensus’ aid regime and represents a fundamental shift in how aid is disbursed. But if the PRSs/NDSs overlook the impacts of climate change and possible responses, donor funding and government expenditure may not be directed to interventions that reduce the climate risks faced by the poor.

There is unease about whether NAPAs and PRSPs are integrated. McGray et al (2007) noted that ‘the commonalities between the NAPA and PRSP approaches should have led both to common project proposals and increased resources to key priorities’, but find that this rarely occurred in practice (p.34). Hedger et al (2008) suggested that ‘there has been a general disconnection between NAPAs and PRSPs’, and that the UNFCCC recognised the failure to integrate adaptation into broader poverty reduction frameworks back in 2007 (p. 76) (see also Jallow and Downing, 2008).

More recently, however, Ayers (2009) suggests that NAPA projects submitted to the LDCF include ‘actions that are consistent with national and sectoral development plans’ (p.15). She reviews project proposals from four countries: Bangladesh, Malawi, Bhutan, and Sudan, and concludes with a forthright defence of the NAPA process and project selection. Ayers does not, however, assess if and how PRSs integrate climate change concerns.

The research process

In its first phase, this project reviewed 15 PRSs/NDSs, 11 climate change adaptation policy frameworks (NAPAs or country national communications on climate change if NAPAs were unavailable or not applicable), and 26 results-based IFAD country strategies. Countries were chosen for broad geographical coverage, and to ensure that specific and generic lessons for IFAD could be followed up. Using discourse analysis as our starting point, we assessed how frequently and in what context poverty terms were mentioned in adaptation policy documents; and applied the same analysis to climate change and environment terms in PRSs/NDSs (and IFAD country strategies, which will be discussed in future research outputs). The findings suggest that there is limited substantive integration to date, leaving room for greater integration of the policy frameworks for adaptation and poverty reduction.

Are poverty issues included in NAPAs?

Our screening of national policy frameworks on climate change in 11 countries shows that all engaged with poverty to some extent: on average, each of these frameworks mentioned poverty terms 27 times, with ‘poverty’, ‘disease’ and ‘poverty reduction’ used most frequently. Ten of the 11 national climate change frameworks mentioned a poverty reduction or national development strategy (PRS/NDS), although this was often in passing: on average PRSs were mentioned only twice, and NDSs just once.

This last finding is surprising, given that the GEF stressed the need to integrate NAPAs into existing NDSs, and the UNFCCC (2002) guidelines for NAPAs provide a ten-page annex on ‘integrating adaptation to climate change into national development plans’.

But the degree to which poverty featured in climate change frameworks varied considerably: adaptation-poverty linkages were strongest in

NAPAs from sub-Saharan Africa LDCs – in particular, Tanzania (46 mentions), Mali (45), and Malawi (41) (Box 1) – and weaker in climate change frameworks from other regions. For example, the Moroccan national communication to the UNFCCC referred to poverty issues only six times, and the Brazilian document only nine times.

There are clear questions about the depth to which poverty issues are incorporated into NAPAs, as highly relevant issues, such as spatial distribution of poverty, or its depth, breadth and duration, were never tackled.

There is little indication that the integration of poverty issues has improved over time. Figure 1 shows the frequency of poverty terms (per page) in each NAPA by publication month (using January 2006 as a baseline). The NAPAs reviewed suggest that poverty terms have not been integrated to any greater extent in recent months (the correlation between month and number of poverty terms is -0.05), even though climate change has reached the top of the international policy agenda alongside the MDGs.

Are climate change issues discussed in PRSs?

While NAPAs or their equivalents attempted to engage in poverty issues, our screening of 15 PRSs shows a significant disconnect between poverty and climate change frameworks. The term climate change barely registered in any PRSP or equivalent policy framework. Across 2,500 pages of text, climate change issues were mentioned directly only 63 times, with more than half of these mentions in one document: the Bangladesh PRSP. In three early PRSPs (or national equivalent) – Vietnam, Tanzania and Nicaragua – climate change was not mentioned at all. Across the remaining 11 documents climate change terms were mentioned on average just twice per document. While the Bangladesh PRSP – the one clear success story – contains one climate change term every six pages or so, other PRSPs/NDSs mention climate change only once in every 86 pages.

Figure 2 shows the frequency of climate change terms per page by publication date (with January 2002 as a baseline). This is based on 14 documents (excluding Bangladesh, an extreme outlier). It suggests that climate change terms have not been integrated to a greater extent in recent months (the correlation between month and number of climate change terms is only 0.09).

Because of the lack of climate change terms in early PRSPs/NDSs, we extended our screening to include broader environmental terms. This revealed far greater engagement with issues relating either directly or indirectly to climate change (although they are not framed or perceived as such). Disasters (such as floods and droughts), natural resources, and environmental degradation/sustainability feature prominently in almost all PRSPs/NDSs. For example, the 2006-2007 annual review of Tanzania's National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) makes no mention of climate change, but refers to

Box 1: Good practice in linking NAPAs and Poverty Reduction Strategies

The NAPAs in Tanzania, Mali and Malawi link poverty and adaptation agendas. The Tanzanian NAPA makes a concerted effort to link climate change adaptation to key development concerns – such as food security, reducing morbidity, and increasing agricultural productivity – through linkages with the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP/ Mkukuta-Mkuza), and the National Poverty Eradication Strategy. Given that poverty is highest in rural areas, the NAPA highlights the links between poverty and food security, particularly how changing agro-ecological performance will change patterns of food crop production, trade and purchase across different social groups. This emphasis on increasing agricultural productivity is reflected in projects prioritised in the NAPA, such as improving food security in drought-prone areas and improving water availability to drought-stricken communities. The challenge remains to link the NAPA fully with the NSGRP, including links between NAPA priority projects and the mainstream government/donor funded sector programmes.

In Mali, the multiple references to the Cadre Stratégique pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté (CSCR) suggest substantial adaptation-poverty linkages. Climate change is recognised as one of the main factors in poverty and ill health.

Similarly, the Malawian NAPA highlights not only the impact of climate change on the mainstay of the economy and poor people's livelihoods – agriculture – but also the links that need to be made with key development-policy frameworks: Vision 2020, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Malawi Economic Growth Strategy.

Figure 1: Frequency of poverty terms (per page) by publication date in NAPAs or national climate plans (correlation coefficient of -0.05)

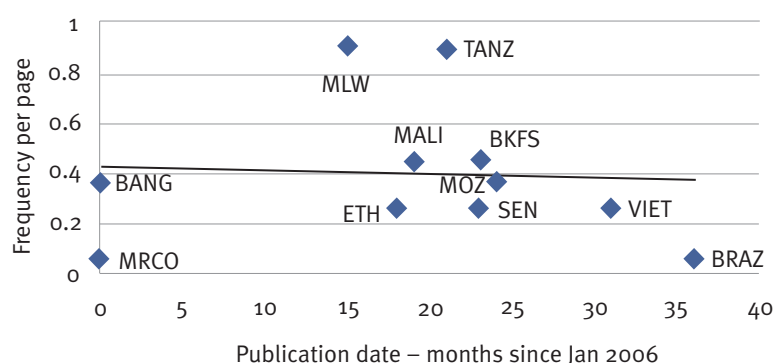
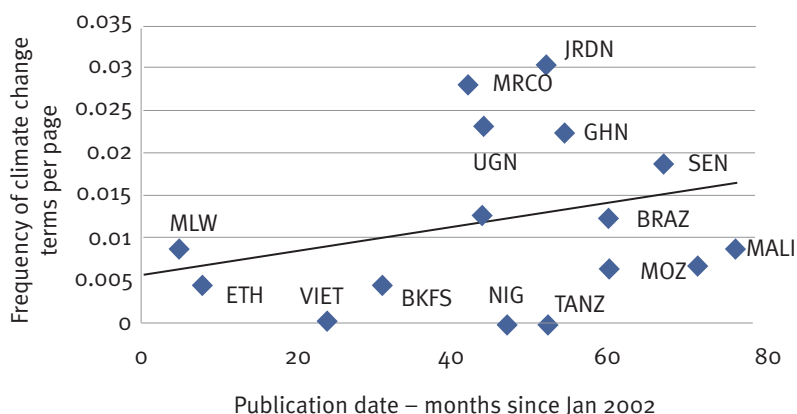


Figure 2: Frequency of climate change terms (per page) by publication date in PRSPs/NDSs (correlation coefficient of 0.09)



environmental risks. Interestingly, the inclusion of broader environmental terms in PRSPs (measured by frequency per page), has not improved in recent months (a comparison similar to Figures 1 and 2 shows a correlation coefficient of -0.48). Our tentative findings suggest no improvement in the disconnect between environment and development.

Conclusion

Although climate change is high on the international development agenda, many national-level policy frameworks for adaptation and poverty reduction appear to run in parallel, despite a desire for more convergence. NAPAs, or other national policy frameworks for climate change, do mention poverty, and show some level of integration with the priorities of national development plans, but this engagement could be greater in most of the documents screened. More importantly, given their vital role in facilitating access to concessional funding, many PRSPs/NDSs have ignored climate change almost entirely (with the notable exception of Bangladesh), and are not increasing their engagement with broader environmental issues.

More research is needed into the processes and contents of national climate change frameworks on the one hand, and poverty reduction or national development strategies on the other, to unearth clues about their disconnect. The experience of PRSPs and observations on the NAPA process suggest possible factors: disciplinary silos or 'stove-piping'; limited communication between relevant ministries; segmented financial flows; limited analytical underpinnings; a lack of synchronisation in stakeholder consultation, the composition of writing teams, and drafting processes; and

inadequate synergy between the relevant thematic working groups involved in country-led processes.

Our tentative findings raise a number of broader questions. What corrective measures can be taken in countries where two national-level policy processes, both claiming stakeholder participation, civil society consultation, and country ownership, have missed each other to an alarming degree? And what are the best routes to channel funding for climate change in order to support the shared concerns about country ownership, mutual accountability, and results-orientation (as outlined in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action)?

The findings suggest that there is room for improved integration of the NAPA and PRS/NDS priorities, in particular in mainstreaming climate change into the PRS process. UNFCCC (2002) guidelines suggest that one way to increase the 'mainstreaming' of NAPAs into development planning is through greater dissemination and implementation with development stakeholders in each country, including the Ministry of Finance, parliament, civil society organisations, and donors. This could highlight tensions and synergies with existing poverty reduction strategies and national development plans and, if framed in the right way, garner support for climate change adaptation measures.

There are several entry points for the mainstreaming of climate change into PRS processes, including: integration of planning frameworks, linking budgets to priorities, evidence-based policy dialogue, and linking innovation to monitoring and learning loops. These were highlighted in a recent IFAD (2009) report on how rural poverty issues could be brought into PRSPs more centrally – similar processes could be applied usefully to climate change.



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Project information:

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