

# **Consolidating learning of local and community based adaptation Planning: Implications for Adaptation Policy and Practice<sup>1</sup>**

## **Context**

Nepal is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world due to its fragile, climate sensitive ecosystems and socio-economic circumstances. Every year there are an increasing number of households impacted by climate extremes such as flooding, drought and landslides. Millions of people already face problems like acute shortage of water, food and basic services due to climate extremes.

The country's priorities lie in facilitating communities to better adapt to climate variability/change and safeguard its development. Nepal has adopted a multi-stakeholder led NAPA process, which is regarded as highly participatory, inclusive, flexible and responsive. Government of Nepal took a strongly community-centric approach by designing and piloting Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA). The LAPA framework is now endorsed by the Government of Nepal to operationalize NAPA and its climate change policy.

Along with the government, international/national non-government organizations are also engaged in developing and testing tools and mechanisms for strengthening community adaptation practices. Amongst others, Livelihood and Forestry Programme (LFP<sup>2</sup>) and later the Interim Forestry Project (IFP<sup>3</sup>) both implemented by Rupantaran Nepal, promoted the concept of community based adaptation planning in order to pave the way for a process and mechanism for targeting and reaching the most vulnerable households and communities. The community adaptation plan (CAP) is a grass-roots level plan prepared by the most vulnerable households and communities identified in the LAPA. CAP provides a strong basis and means for LAPA to be implemented and addresses the adaptation needs of the most vulnerable households.

## **Status of adaptation planning**

Rupantaran Nepal, first through LFP and then continuing in IFP, initially facilitated the vulnerability assessment and mapping of 3 districts of the Mid-Western Region (Dang, Rukum and Pyuthan). Rupantaran Nepal has until now, facilitated the preparation of more than 298 Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA) and 1,468 Community Adaptation Plan (CAP) covering 15 districts of Nepal and involving more than 2.73 million people. Of the target households, more than half are climate vulnerable households comprising women and poor. Rupantaran Nepal has also sensitized 180,000 people and capacitated 12,115 individuals. The initiative has involved more than 70 Government and Non- Government organizations in implementation at both district and local levels.

## **Mechanisms adopted in adaptation planning**

Local and community based adaptation planning initiated, by LFP and Rupantaran Nepal, is instrumental in creating district level political and policy ownership of climate change issues. In

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<sup>2</sup>LFP was a bilateral programme of GoN/MFSC and DFID/UK, which ran for 10 years (2001-11)

<sup>3</sup>IFP is jointly funded project by SDC and DFID Nepal from mid July 2011 to 12 April 2012



Rukum, the Climate Change Coordination Committee (DCCC) was formed under the leadership of the District Development Committee (DDC) and involves government line agencies, political parties, the media and local NGOs. Similarly in Nawalparasi, a District Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (DCCAM) Network was formed. This network, chaired by the DDC, involves government and non-government actors. The media and journalists in Dhankuta District initiated a Communication for Climate Change and Community. Despite this progress, there are still challenges in terms of building ownership among government line agencies and most importantly, institutionalizing climate change within ongoing district level planning and implementation of the activities. The institutionalization will only be successful if district line agencies have a clear policy mandate, sufficient information and knowledge and skilled human resources for climate change adaptation.

There are encouraging outputs demonstrating strong institutional leadership at community level and evolving institutional mechanisms at the VDC. In Terai, Western and Mid-Western Regions, local level adaptation planning and implementation is coordinated and managed by Village Forest Coordination Committees (VFCC). This is a VDC level coordination mechanism chaired by the VDC secretary and represented by political parties, local level government line agencies, community forestry user groups and other agencies working at local level. Representatives from CFUGs act as the secretariat to the VFCC. In the case of southern parts of the Terai, some active public land management groups and other groups form the VFCC. The mechanism is slightly different in case of Eastern Region. There, VDC level CFUG networks are formed from representatives of all the CFUGs within the VDC. Although most VFCCs are formed and endorsed by the VDC council, there are still challenges to formalize and legally recognize these established frameworks and mechanisms. There are questions whether these mechanisms can address the present climate change issues at the VDC level or alternatives are required.

### **Awareness and capacity building**

Local and community based adaptation planning has been instrumental/catalytic in sensitizing communities and households on issues related to climate change. Their level of interest and awareness has drastically increased. Many communities have used this information to relate to their own local experiences and have started to be more aware and prepared. CAP and LAPA piloting has developed a number of resource persons and facilitators who are motivated and interested to drive the climate change and adaptation agenda forward. Individuals within communities, community based organizations and implementing NGOs and agencies are also committed to the process and are very eager to share information about climate change with the wider public. However, issues still exist around information and knowledge availability on climate change adaptation. The uncertainties of climate change and lack of localized information and knowledge on real changes and impacts pose enormous challenges to using



information effectively and mobilizing people to respond. The government and concerned institutions need to work more on action research and knowledge generation on climate change to overcome this.

Although the LAPA and CAP process are at an early stage, an indication and examples from the districts show that communities have increased their influence and bargaining power to influence at least VDCs district line agencies to appreciate the plans and allocate resources for their implementation. The scale of resource leverage is very encouraging in LFP/IFP districts. The total direct investment by the projection adaptation has been 1.87 million USD resulting in additional resources of 0.51 million USD (equivalent to 21%) being leveraged from other sources. There are debates at international and national level about the incremental costs of dealing with climate change adaptation. Financial requirements for adaptation are huge and available resources are very limited. It is true that if action is not taken now, things will worsen and adaptation deficits will grow even larger. It is thus challenging to make our development actions more climate resilient and to support climate change adaptation. Government of Nepal needs to mainstream climate change within its development planning and create a more conducive policy environment for translating policy and plans into practice.

### **Targeting poor and vulnerable households**

The LAPA and CAP piloting has generated a mechanism and processes to facilitate the implementation of NAPA and other adaptation strategies. Piloting has been instrumental in providing the right approach and process for implementation and scaling-up of community based adaptation initiatives. The bottom-up planning process has provided space for vulnerable communities, households, women and other disadvantaged groups to identify their real adaptation needs. LAPA and CAP piloting has shed light on the debate about the need to recognize the potential role of communities in adaptation design and delivery. One of the major issues around local level adaptation is identifying and targeting the most vulnerable households. Power structures and dynamics at local level often dominate resource management and undermine the role of poor and disadvantaged groups including women in decision making. These societal dynamics often make targeting and delivery of impacts very complex unless some transformation happens at local level - particularly within the institutions and groups.

### **Technologies for adaptation**

Adaptation piloting initiatives have tested various adaptation technologies. A number of adaptation activities and technologies were promoted to address key risks and vulnerabilities at household and community level. One of the major constraints of the LAPA and CAP process is that it has overlooked the technology and scientific aspects of adaptation. Moreover,



adaptation was treated in a similar way as regular development planning. Technology identification, validation and promotion are crucial aspects of adaptation interventions. Good practice for sustainable development and natural resource management serves as a strong basis for designing adaptation technology and practice. The blending of traditional and scientific knowledge is important. Technology transfer has to happen at local, national and district levels. The technology transfer issue clearly indicates to the role of multiple agencies e.g. local government for coordination, sectoral line agencies for providing technical support, academic institutions for research and NGOs for social mobilization.

### **Challenges and Ways forward**

The lessons learned on community adaptation planning are encouraging. There are several policy implications of these initiatives that need to be addressed with high priority. Key areas of policy advocacy and support include: a) central level policy support and guidelines legalizing the institutional and financial mechanisms initiated by the CAP and LAPA process e.g. VFCCs and VDC CFUG networks, b) sectoral strategies for building ownership and support from government line agencies in harmonizing development and adaptation plans including other cross-cutting issues such as gender and inclusion, c) human resource development to build the capacity of practitioners and communities on climate change adaptation, d) decentralized funding mechanisms to increase access of communities to financial resources, e) knowledge management to facilitate technology transfer and knowledge management on adaptation and, f) strong monitoring and regulatory mechanisms for putting policies and action into practice.

### **About Rupantaran Nepal**

Rupantaran Nepal (RN) is an independent profit not distributing organization established in 2009 by a group of development professionals and social activists working in Nepal. It builds on experiences, expertise, and systems of more than 20 years, coupled with modern innovativeness to become a competent, professional, and value-based institution that will contribute to improving livelihoods of poor and excluded communities.

#### **For Further Information**

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