Ecosystem-based Approaches to Adaptation in National Policy

The Cases of Nepal, Peru and Uganda

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Introduction

The urgency to adapt to the impacts of climate change is growing, especially in developing countries. Existing coping strategies to deal with climate variability, as well as new and enhanced adaptation approaches are required. The role of ecosystems in adaptation can help to respond to climate change on the ground through measures that are cost-effective, reduce vulnerability to climate change, and support integrated development and poverty reduction. However, the value of taking an ecosystem-based approach is not always recognized in the political economy of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The integration of ecosystem-based approaches requires new strategies and innovative financing mechanisms. In this paper, we explore the potential for such integration in the cases of Nepal, Peru, and Uganda.

1. Nepal, Peru, and Uganda recognize, in recent climate change policies and plans, the importance of ecosystem management, conservation of ecosystems, and people to adapt in a changing climate. The research on integration of ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in national policy formulation and planning in Nepal, Peru, and Uganda reached the following conclusions. They provide an initial view of how ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation can be integrated in national policy.

2. Nepal's Climate Change Policy – Objective: “to enhance the climate adaptation and resilience capacity of local communities for optimum utilization of natural resources and their efficient management”. (p. 5-6)

3. The government of Peru's Ministry of Environment has developed a National Policy Plan on Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation of 10 years old. Sectoral policies require updating.

4. Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation are mainly in the sectors of agriculture, water and forests or under biodiversity conservation. In many cases, ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation are combined with other approaches to adaptation such as hard infrastructure and institutional strengthening.

5. In many cases, ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation are combined with other approaches to adaptation such as natural infrastructure and institutional strengthening.

6. Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation should also be implemented. (p. 247, unofficial translation)

7. Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation refer to ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation, even if they do recognize the importance of ecosystem management for broader human well-being and development. Climate change overall was not on the development agenda when most environmental and sectoral policies were formulated, many being about 10 years old. Sectoral policies require updating.

8. A cross-sectoral vision should be adopted for delivering adaptation, which emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral, ecosystem scale interventions and the value of taking an ecosystem-based approach. This will require understanding and managing multiple demands on ecosystems and managing trade-offs.

9. Cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, multi-criteria processes often prioritise ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation at national level. This may happen at the level of the Rio Conventions.

10. Further research on ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation is required. As new and enhanced adaptation approaches are required, the value of taking an ecosystem-based approach is not always recognized in the political economy of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Further research on ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation is required. As recognized in Peru's National Research Agenda on Climate and Nepal's National Policy Plan on Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation of 10 years old. Sectoral policies require updating.

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Climate change and adaptation policies and plans in Nepal, Peru and Uganda – Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in visions, policies and strategies

Five per cent of NAPA project profiles include ecosystem restoration as an adaptation component. The vulnerabilities of ecosystems to climate change are highlighted in Table 3.

Table 1: Policies having references relevant for Ecosystem-based Approaches to Adaptation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Policies Reviewed</th>
<th>Policies with reference to Ecosystem-based Approaches to Adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 4. Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in NAPAs

Policy formulation in Nepal, Peru and Uganda – Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in visions, policies and strategies

Climate change and adaptation policies and plans in Nepal, Peru and Uganda integrated ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in their visions, objectives, policies and strategies and actions. All countries had references to ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in their national development plans (Table 1 and Box 4).

Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation are seen as relevant components of climate change policy in all countries. National Development Plans also recognize the role of ecosystems in helping people adapt, and ecosystem conservation and management for adaptation were seen as part of broader sustainable development, economic growth and poverty reduction. For the 3 countries, climate change and adaptation policies were designed to build on and complement one another, therefore the priorities, objectives, visions and actions are synergistic, including with respect to ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation. In these cases, development plans are also aligned with broad objectives around these approaches.

Whilst climate change and adaptation plans and policies, as well as National Development Plans, all included ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in their visions and objectives in Nepal, Peru and Uganda, several national policies did not integrate the concept.

NAPAs under the UNFCCC support Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in identifying priority activities to respond to immediate and urgent climate change adaptation needs. Several LDCs have recognized the role that ecosystems can play in helping people adapt to climate change in their prioritized NAPA projects (Box 3). The majority of NAPA activities that recognize the role of ecosystem management in adaptation

The second step identifies which actions, or concrete activities and programmes, that identified in line with the objectives set at the policy formulation stage.

This paper provides an introductory analysis of how ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation are put forward in the plans and policies.

The first assessment of what policies include key word references and incorporate ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in strategies and policies. The following keywords were used as references for the concept of ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation: “ecosystems”, “biodiversity”, “conservation”, “sustainable management” and/or “restoration” – combined with “adaptation” of “people”/“livelihoods/”communities”.

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The analysis builds on OECD Policy Guidance (2009) on integrating climate change adaptation into policy cycles, in particular into national and sectoral strategies and policies. A range of adaptation relevant policies, including national development plans for climate change and adaptation policies, sectoral policies, national plans to plans to combat desertification (UNCCC NAPAs), and national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBAs) were reviewed. This analysis focuses on the Policy formulation stage, which includes incorporating keywords in visions, strategies and policies at national level, which are then integrated into sectoral plans and policies to guide decision-making. It then addresses the Planning stage, which includes climate change adaptation activities, programmes and projects that are identified in line with the objectives set at the policy formulation stage.

Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation in developing countries

Climate change is a cross-cutting issue and should be mainstreamed across policy domains. There has been comparative analysis of National Development Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and the role of ecosystems in natural resource management; and of how particular natural resource sectors have been integrated into development, climate change and sectoral policies at the country level.

Box 2. Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation

“Ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation: (c) Recognizing that ecosystems can be managed to limit climate change impacts on biodiversity and to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change; implement where appropriate, ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation that: (i) maintain the sustainability of ecosystems and their benefits as well as the management of human activities that impact on them; (ii) ensure the resilience of ecosystems to climate change; (iii) help protect at-risk populations and species; (iv) ensure that the benefits of ecological systems are distributed equitably; (v) build resilience of socio-economic and ecological systems, including through economic diversification and sustainable management of natural resources.” (FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1, Para 14)

Box 1. Promoting ecosystem resilience to allow adaptation

“The ultimate objective of this Convention ... is to achieve, ... stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere ... should be achieved within a time frame which allows ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change.” (Article 2, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change)