

Climate Change Policy in Nepal: Challenges, Opportunities and Imperative



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Introduction

Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. The country is experiencing a constant increase in temperature, erratic and unpredictable precipitation and storms, irregular frost and fog, and several other types of climate variability. As a result, the threats of ice melting and glacial retreat cause Glacial Lake Outburst Flooding (GLOF); flashfloods lead to landslides and inundation in plain areas, as well as casualties and destruction of houses and cultivated lands; new diseases are emerging, damaging livestock and crops; and optimal crop growing locations and timing is shifting, resulting in poor yields. These results are already apparent. In order to improve adaptation to climate change, the government of Nepal (GoN) has been participating in different national and international negotiations as part of their responsibilities in being party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), one among three conventions which emerged during the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Upreti, 2009). As there is an obligation of each signatory country to develop a climate change policy, the GoN prepared and promulgated a Climate Change Policy for Nepal, in 2011.

The need for a climate change policy was realized in 2007, and was soon after followed by the conceptualization of

the Climate Change Policy with support from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Nepal, and the former Ministry of Environment. The policy was ratified by the GoN on the basis of technical integrity and feedback from the civil society organizations, as well as climate change experts and government line ministries. Other key policy instruments such as the National Adaptation Programme of Actions (NAPA) 2010, and the National Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPA) 2011, have also been prepared and adopted by the GoN to address the negative impacts and maximize the potential opportunities that changing climate can bring.

The NAPA document, a national programme document for climate change adaptation, has identified well-defined, urgent adaptation priorities of the country in order to address significant climate data gaps and uncertainty. The NAPA document was prepared by the GoN under the guidelines set by the UNFCCC, using participatory methods including north-south transects along the major river systems across the country. Information was gathered on currently emerging coping strategies as a basis for determining the urgent and immediate needs (Dixit, 2012). NAPA encouraged the government to commission a community-centric approach of local adaptation planning, i.e. LAPA, and helped start the wider discussion about the government's role in helping local communities to adapt to climate change impacts (GoN, 2011). The National Framework for LAPA has been formulated to

assist in the identification and implementation of local adaptation actions with local people's participation and with due consideration of integration of climate change adaptation into sectoral and area-specific plans (GoN, 2011).

Climate Change Policy 2011- Goal, Targets and Key Provisions

The main goal of Climate Change Policy is to improve livelihoods by mitigating and adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change, adopting a low-carbon emissions socio-economic development path and supporting and collaborating in the spirits of country's commitments to national and international agreements related to climate change.

The Climate Change Policy adopted a two-pronged approach, both adaptation and mitigation to address adverse impacts of climate change (Helvates Nepal, 2012). However, the policy has given thrust on adaptation, stating that Nepal has to implement adaptation programme.

The following policies are adopted to meet its goals and objectives:

- Climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction;
- Low carbon development and climate resilience;
- Access to financial resources and utilization;
- Capacity building, local participation and empowerment;
- Research;
- Technology development, transfer and utilization; and
- Climate-friendly natural resource management.

The Climate Change Policy 2011 set 7 ambitious goals/ targets, of which five have a deadline and two are without deadlines. The achievements made so far under those seven goals are presented in the table below.



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Table 1. Progress of targets specified in the Climate Change Policy of Nepal, 2011

Goal	Progress
Establishment of a Climate Change Centre within 1 year for conducting climate change research and monitoring, and regularly providing policy and technical advice to the Government of Nepal.	Not established yet.
Initiation of community-based local adaptation actions as mentioned in the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) through managing financial resources by 2011.	It was initiated through the Nepal Climate Change Support Programme (NCCSP) in 2013. Under NCCSP, 70 LAPAs are currently being implemented and an additional 30 are prepared. Ecosystem based adaptation and Glacial lake outburst flood projects are in implementation.
Preparation of a national strategy for carbon trade in order to benefit from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) by 2012.	National strategy of carbon trade has not been finalised yet. Though there are a few CDM projects in operation.
Formulation and implementation of a low carbon economic development strategy that supports climate-resilient socio-economic development by 2014.	The low carbon development strategy is being drafted by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE), Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC) and National Planning Commission for climate resilient socio-economic development. The draft is not made public yet.
Assessment of losses and benefits from climate change in various geographical areas and development sectors by 2013.	One assessment was undertaken at the request of GoN, focusing on agriculture, hydro-electricity and water-induced disasters. The study team was led by the Integrated Development Society (IDS) working with the Practical Action Consultancy and the Global Climate Adaptation Partnership in the UK, with financial support from CDKN, DFID and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands.

Promotion of climate adaptation and adoption of effective measures to address adverse impacts of climate change through technological development and transfers, public awareness raising, capacity building and access to financial resources.	This is currently being implemented by different multilateral, bilateral and LDC funds. Less attention is being paid to technological development and transfers. The government has prepared a briefing note on the establishment of a technology centre.
Development of a reliable impact forecasting system to reduce the adverse impacts of climate change in vulnerable areas of the mountain, hill, Churiya and Terai regions, and in natural resources and people's livelihood.	This target has not yet been materialized, but some projects related to Early Warning System (EWS) under Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) are being carried out by the government in collaboration with donor agencies and organizations.

clause 11.3 states that at least 80% of the total budget from the 'Climate Changes Fund' is to be used for this purpose. It is not clear whether the 80% is of the total climate finance received by Nepal or the money set aside in the climate change fund. Moreover, the policy is silent on the fund flow mechanism from the central to local levels.

Dichotomy in approach and strategy

First, it is important to be aware of the dichotomy on conceptual issues that policy makers and practitioners wrangle over. These include, but are not limited to, our focus (adaptation versus mitigation), unit of action (watershed versus Village Development Committee (VDC) versus Community Forestry User Groups (CFUG)), and approach (Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPA) versus Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EBA) versus Community Based Adaptation (CBA)).

Mainstreaming climate change adaptation in development planning

Many of the projects and programmes currently implemented in Nepal aim to mainstream climate change in development planning and programmes. However, the climate change policy does not explicitly mention "mainstreaming climate change adaptation" in development planning.

The National framework on LAPA has envisioned the integration of LAPAs into local and national plans in accordance with the national framework on LAPA and Local Self-Governance Act, 1999. It also talks about the identification of cost-effective adaptation alternatives for mainstreaming in local and national planning processes. Similarly, climate friendly socio-economic development and integration of climate change aspects into policies, laws, plans and development programmes are mentioned. But, to achieve those, neither methodologies nor guidelines for mainstreaming are in place. It is important to comply with the guidelines and framework outlined in LAPA while designing adaptation plans, to avoid redundancy and improve coherence among approaches instituted by different institutions.

Gender and Social Inclusion

The policy has recognized the importance of active participation of local communities in developing the local action plans. The policy also recognizes the value of local knowledge, skills and technologies in adaptation and mitigation measures. The policy seeks to ensure the participation of poor people, dalits, marginalized indigenous communities, women, children, and youth in the implementation of climate adaptation and climate change-related programmes.

Gaps in Climate Change Policy, 2011

Institutional Arrangement

Agwaral (2010) has stressed that local institutions have played an important role in the planning and implementation of the adaptation programme, effective for reducing climate risk vulnerability in local communities. The policy describes the goals and objectives in detail, but fails to provide clear identification of the main agents for implementation. In absence of locally elected government and executors at the local level, it is very likely that local stakeholders have less ownership, and that there is ambiguity around roles and responsibilities. The absence of decentralized executing units at the district and village levels has shown that implementation of the policy on the ground is extremely difficult.

Lately several institutions and coordination mechanisms like Climate Change Management Division (CCMD), Department of Environment (DoE), Multi-stakeholder Climate Change Initiatives Coordination Committee (MCCICC) and others, have been developed. The policy needs to refer to these institutions and mechanisms to effectively execute climate change projects and programmes.

Financial resources and utilization

There is ambiguity on the 80% fund provision. The provision in clause 8.3.8 of the policy, states that at least 80% of available funds will be used for field-level climate change activities implementation, whereas provision in

No legal basis

A policy requires a legal instrument for its on-the-ground implementation. Without a law or act there will be no real and legal instruments to implement the policy. Currently, the policy is a standalone document, and the climate change policy does not have supporting legislation to enable its implementation. Article 12 of the Nepal Climate Change Policy, 2011 has made a provision of formulating new laws and necessary revisions of existing ones, as required for the effective implementation of climate change related conventions and protocols.

Opportunities in Climate Change Policy

The Climate Change Policy has provided an opportunity of developing a better interface between science-policy and practice in Nepal. It can create a good match between adaptation and economic development. The Climate Change Policy of Nepal has the opportunity to create access to international funds and resource generation from carbon trading. The policy also calls for institutional capacity building, research and development on climate change and knowledge generation and transfer. Channeling funds (at least 80% of the climate change mitigation and adaptation funds should be directed towards community level activities), and ensuring the participation of the most vulnerable communities and stakeholders for the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation activities, are other opportunities created by the Climate Change Policy. The Policy recognizes the importance of local knowledge, skills and technology, and calls for an integrated approach to managing natural resources and adaptation activities with income and employment generation and poverty alleviation. Creating awareness on the concept of climate justice is also an opportunity to empower communities.

Call for Action

In considering the current gaps and challenges for the proper implementation of the climate Change Policy in Nepal, it is important to duly consider the following points:

- Adequate impetus is required to push the targets committed by the climate change policy, such as the development of a climate center, the creation of a climate change fund and the establishment of a climate change reward mechanism.
- Clarity on the institutional arrangements and their roles in implementing the policy is needed.
- Acts, regulations and directives to aid implementation of the policy need to be formulated.
- There should be a clear mechanism for managing climate finance which is accessible, transparent and accountable, in the spirit of Nepal's Climate Change Policy.

- Indicators need to be developed to monitor the implementation progress of this policy.
- Fund disbursement and expenditure, service delivery, monitoring and evaluation and a feedback system should be developed and implemented efficiently.
- A mechanism for filing complaints, providing feedback and managing grievances in the current policies and programs should be established.

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