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Megha Middha, Assistant Professor of Law in Mody University of Science and Technology, Lakshmangarh, Sikar

Megha Middha, is working as an Assistant Professor of Law in Mody University of Science and Technology, Lakshmangarh, Sikar (Rajasthan). She has an experience in the teaching of almost 3 years. She has completed her graduation in BBA LL.B (H) from Amity University, Rajasthan (Gold Medalist) and did her post-graduation (LL.M in Business Laws) from NLSIU, Bengaluru. Currently, she is enrolled in a Ph.D. course in the Department of Law at Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur (Rajasthan). She wishes to excel in academics and research and contribute as much as she can to society. Through her interactions with the students, she tries to inculcate a sense of deep thinking power in her students and enlighten and guide them to the fact how they can bring a change to the society

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Mrs.S.Kalpana

Assistant professor of Law

Mrs.S.Kalpana, presently Assistant professor of Law, VelTech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R & D Institute of Science and Technology, Avadi. Formerly Assistant professor of Law, Vels University in the year 2019 to 2020, Worked as Guest Faculty, Chennai Dr. Ambedkar Law College, Pudupakkam. Published one book. Published 8 Articles in various reputed Law Journals. Conducted 1 Moot court competition and participated in nearly 80 National and International seminars and webinars conducted on various subjects of Law. Did ML in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Administration. 10 paper presentations in various National and International seminars. Attended more than 10 FDP programs. Ph.D. in Law pursuing.



Avinash Kumar



Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC - NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR - Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and learning.

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NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANS: **AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

AUTHORED BY - MEGHA PHADKAY

[Contact email: meghaphadkay1@gmail.com]

Affiliation: Student, ILS Law College]

Abstract:

This paper gives a detailed procedure of formulating, implementing, and reviewing National Adaptation Plans. It analyses the current legislation and institutions India has for Climate Change adaptation, and gives suggestions on how to make it more effective. It also suggests a Legislative plan to make the entire process of NAPs more standardized and easy to follow.

The pandemic has made the economies even more vulnerable to Climate Change than they were before. Against this backdrop, along with mitigation measures, prioritizing adaptation options is needed. 'Adaptations' are the adjustments made as response to Climate Change, which help us cope up and learn to live with the effects of past and future emissions on ecosystem, livelihood, and human settlements. These adjustments are made in the ecological, social, and economic systems.¹ Along with moderating the potential damages, they help us benefit from the opportunities associated with Climate Change.

The best instrument to facilitate and implement Adaptation strategies is - National Adaptation Plans (NAP). It improves decision making, directs investments into resilient solutions, and helps harness climate benefits. It helps implement SDGs at a national level, and helps countries better manage disaster risks. There is no one-size-fit all plan, and it needs to be tailored as per the needs and goals of the country.

(Keywords: National Adaptation plans, climate, emissions, resilience)

¹ Available at <https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-plans>, Last seen on 6/7/2023

1. National Adaptation Plans

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) holds significant importance as a strategic framework guiding a country's efforts to assess and address the impacts of climate change. NAPs are designed to recognize and respond to the specific risks and vulnerabilities a nation faces, ensuring the integration of adaptation measures into national development plans. Several key reasons underscore the significance of NAPs:

1.1 Climate Change Impacts: NAPs provide a structured approach for countries to assess the potential impacts of climate change on their economy, environment, infrastructure, and communities. For instance, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that global warming beyond 1.5°C could result in intensified heatwaves, increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, and rising sea levels (IPCC, 2018). NAPs enable countries to understand these risks and devise appropriate adaptation strategies.

1.2 Risk Reduction and Resilience: NAPs facilitate risk reduction and enhance the resilience of vulnerable sectors and communities. Through thorough risk assessments and vulnerability analyses, countries can identify adaptation measures that minimize negative effects and promote sustainable development. For example, Bangladesh's NAP focuses on enhancing resilience in agriculture, water resources, and coastal zones, aiming to reduce the country's vulnerability to cyclones, floods, and sea-level rise (Government of Bangladesh, 2019).

1.3 Long-Term Planning: NAPs enable countries to integrate climate change considerations into existing policies, strategies, and plans, thereby ensuring long-term planning for adaptation. By incorporating adaptation measures into national development plans, countries can effectively address climate risks across sectors and levels of governance. The United Kingdom's NAP aligns adaptation efforts with its Climate Change Act, integrating adaptation considerations into policies related to infrastructure, agriculture, and health (Government of the United Kingdom, 2013).

1.4 Coordinated Action: NAPs foster coordination and collaboration among government agencies, sectors, and stakeholders. They provide a platform for engagement, consultation, and information sharing, enabling a multi-sectoral and participatory approach to adaptation planning and implementation. For instance, Kenya's NAP involves diverse stakeholders, including government ministries, civil society organizations, and local communities, ensuring broad-based engagement and collective action (Government of Kenya, 2015).

1.5 *Resource Allocation*: NAPs assist countries in prioritizing and allocating resources for adaptation activities. By identifying urgent needs and areas requiring attention, governments can mobilize domestic and international funding to support adaptation projects and programs. The Global Environment Facility's Adaptation Fund, for example, has allocated over \$500 million to support NAP processes in developing countries, facilitating the implementation of adaptation actions (Adaptation Fund, n.d.).

1.6 *International Cooperation*: NAPs facilitate international cooperation by providing a framework for countries to communicate their adaptation priorities, needs, and progress. This enhances access to climate finance, technical support, and capacity-building opportunities from international organizations, donor countries, and climate funds. Through the NAP process, countries can engage in global dialogues, share experiences, and foster collaboration to enhance adaptation efforts. The NAP Global Network, supported by the United Nations Development Programme, serves as a platform for knowledge exchange and peer learning among countries (NAP Global Network, n.d.).

1.7 *Monitoring and Evaluation*: NAPs establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of adaptation actions. Regular assessments of progress enable countries to identify gaps, adjust strategies, and learn from successes and failures, thereby improving overall adaptation efforts. Robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks ensure accountability and enhance the evidence base for decision-making. The National Adaptation Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, developed by the NAP Global Network, provides guidance and tools for

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2. Drafting a NAP for India

NAP for a particular nation should be drafted after taking into consideration the demographic, diversity, economy, current Climate Change impacts on ecosystems, etc. But there are certain guiding principles which will help us formulate an efficient NAP. It should be gender sensitive, participatory, and transparent. It should cater towards vulnerable communities too. It should be based on the latest scientific data, as well as indigenous knowledge.

The NAPs should be aligned with the NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions). These are complementary processes, and hence, duplication of efforts will be avoided. NAP can help identify NDC adaptation goals and help implement them, while NDC can give an overarching vision and framework for NAP. NDC is the 'what', while NAP is the 'how'.

1. Current Indian laws

The only legislation remotely close to NAP is the National Action Plan on Climate Change ,2008 (NAPCC), which helped mobilize resources and partnerships.

The 12th 5 year plan identifies Mitigation and Adaptation strategy. MOEFCC (as part of INDC) conducts consultations with other ministries, civil society and think tanks, but there is no binding legislation.

The NAPCC was launched in 2008 and outlined several missions and strategies to address climate change impacts and promote sustainable development in various sectors.

The NAPCC focused on eight major areas:

- a. National Solar Mission: Aims to promote the development and deployment of solar energy technologies.
- b. National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency: Aims to promote energy efficiency measures in various sectors and reduce energy consumption.
- c. National Mission on Sustainable Habitat: Focuses on promoting sustainable urban development and improving the energy efficiency of buildings.
- d. National Water Mission: Aims to enhance water efficiency and conservation through various measures.
- e. National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem: Focuses on conserving and protecting the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.
- f. National Mission for a Green India: Aims to increase forest cover and enhance ecosystem services.
- g. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture: Focuses on promoting sustainable agricultural practices and reducing emissions from agriculture.
- h. National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change: Aims to promote research, development, and capacity building in the field of climate change.

There have been separate plans for the sector/region since 2008 but no singular overarching legislation to transform the principles itself of which the institutions are run. Given the diversity in India, state-wise plans are imperative, but a singular guiding policy document should come the foremost.

2. Challenges

India is home to a variety of ecosystems and communities. There is a varying rate of growth among states. India's agrarian economy makes it very vulnerable/climate sensitive. This diversity presents unique challenges in identifying and addressing the specific adaptation needs of different regions, as they are affected by different climate change impacts. Adaptation needs of many sectors and vulnerable groups have not yet been recognized. Different strategies need to be used for vulnerable ecosystems like the islands of the Indian Ocean, wetlands, and forests of the northeast. Addressing the specific adaptation needs of different regions requires tailored strategies and interventions. Secondly, emerging socio-economic dynamics like rural-urban migration, feminization of agriculture, and rapid unplanned agriculture should be considered.

Until recently, all environmental policies were aimed at mitigation measures. They focused on investments in physical infrastructure and post-disaster compensation and relief. A major amount of domestic as well as international funding directed towards mitigation measures, hence adaptation remains an underfunded domain. While domestic financing mechanisms like the National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF) and the NAFCC have been established, there is still a gap between the required and available funds. Attracting international climate finance and exploring innovative financing mechanisms, such as green bonds and climate funds, can help bridge this gap.

At its core, India faces challenges related to coordination, capacity, and expertise at various levels of governance. Effective collaboration among ministries, departments, and agencies involved in adaptation planning is essential. For instance, the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) establishes the State Climate Change Cells to facilitate coordination at the state level, but further capacity-building efforts are needed to enhance their effectiveness.

There is a lack of in-depth, extensive, and updated data. Also, scientific capability at sub-national levels needs assessment. Adequate baseline data is essential for assessing vulnerability, identifying priority areas for adaptation, and monitoring the effectiveness of adaptation measures. For example, while there are weather monitoring systems in place, there is a need for more localized climate data and projections. Bridging these data gaps is crucial for informed decision-making. Initiatives like the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) aim to support data collection and analysis efforts.

3. Suggestions

4.1. Guiding Legislation: There are different legal instruments through which NAPs are implemented. NAP takes the form of a decree in Norway, an act in the UK, and an executive order in the US.²

India, currently, has no singular and comprehensive National Adaptation Plan in place. We have a project-based approach; focusing on short-term needs. India relies on Policies, executive orders, and schemes for managing Adaptation. Even though these instruments can still prevail, it's time we matured into formal legislation, which marks out the enforcement, assessment, monitoring and adjudication of the entire process. NAP will ensure that adaptation is an ongoing activity rather than an ad-hoc exercise. The policy document need not prescribe measures regarding specific sections, like health energy, infrastructure, etc. It should be more of a binding procedural format which needs to be adhered to, which forms SAPCCCs.

Enacting a completely new law is not an immediate need. Instead, they can be integrated with the existing legal domain.

NAP is not a one-time investment. It should be iterative, and requires a strong building base.

4.2. Converging policies: Instead of being a stand-alone policy, there should be a Convergence of policies and programs. In India, guidelines for convergence of MGNREGA (wage employment) and CAMPA (forest management) have already been formulated. Converging policies from different sectors, such as agriculture, water resources, infrastructure, and health, with climate change policies can enhance synergies and ensure a holistic approach to adaptation. By aligning sector-specific policies with the overarching national adaptation plan, India can address cross-cutting issues and promote integrated decision-making.

For example, the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture under the NAPCC aims to enhance the resilience of Indian agriculture to climate change by promoting climate-smart farming practices, improving water management, and introducing climate-resilient crop varieties. This integration aligns agriculture policies with the broader national adaptation agenda. There is a need

² Available at <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Pages/sectoral.aspx>, Last seen on 6/7/2023

to formulate more such converging policies.

We should realize the importance of mainstreaming adaptation into development planning processes to ensure long-term resilience. The convergence of policies will enable the integration of adaptation measures into sectoral and regional development plans.

Some steps towards this goal have already been taken.

For instance, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) approach adopted by India integrates climate change considerations into coastal zone planning. The ICZM plan converges policies related to coastal development, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity conservation, and livelihood enhancement, ensuring sustainable and climate-resilient coastal management.

4.3. Inclusion of locals: In India, there is a need to mainstream the inclusion of locals, i.e. incorporating the perspectives, knowledge, needs, concerns, challenges of all groups. There's a need for micro-level assessments, which will help us better understand the current challenges and prioritize options.

We should identify and strategically eliminate barriers to participation. In the last few years a general trend is seen in the Environmental legislation, where the current policies are amended to reduce the scope for public participation. (EIA Notification 2020 gave the option of directly surpassing the public hearing stage for some industries, while the FCA consultation paper proposed to do the same). This trend should be curbed. For this, Climate Action should figure high on the political agenda.

Stakeholder consultation is a crucial aspect of effective policy development and implementation, especially in the context of climate change adaptation, where multiple sectors and communities are affected.

Stakeholders can include government agencies, non-governmental organizations, local communities, experts, researchers, and representatives from vulnerable groups. T

When stakeholders are not adequately consulted, several issues may arise:

- a. Incomplete understanding of local context: Without involving stakeholders, policymakers may have an incomplete understanding of the specific challenges and vulnerabilities faced

by different regions and communities. This can result in generic or ineffective adaptation measures that do not address the local needs adequately.

- b. **Limited buy-in and ownership:** Stakeholder consultation fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the adaptation plans. When stakeholders are excluded, they may feel marginalized or disengaged, leading to limited buy-in from key actors. Without their active involvement, implementation efforts may face resistance or lack necessary support.
- c. **Missed opportunities for innovation:** Stakeholders often possess valuable knowledge and expertise that can contribute to innovative and context-specific adaptation strategies. Their exclusion can result in missed opportunities for identifying and implementing effective solutions, hindering progress in building resilience to climate change impacts.
- d. **Social equity and justice concerns:** Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, and their voices need to be heard to ensure that adaptation plans prioritize their needs. Without stakeholder consultation, there is a risk of exacerbating existing social inequities and leaving marginalized groups further vulnerable to climate risks.

4. Draft National Adaptation Plan for India

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for India should outline a comprehensive strategy to address the impacts of climate change and enhance the country's resilience.

According to the NAP Technical Guidelines developed by Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) in 2021, 4 main elements are identified,³ which can be implemented in India:

1. **Laying the groundwork and addressing the gaps:**
 - Collecting data.
 - Preparing the enabling conditions.
 - Institutional setups, clarify roles, addressing capacity gaps.

This step is further divided into the following stages:

- a. **Initiating and launching of the NAP process**

³ Available at https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/downloads/national_adaptation_plans_-_technical_guidelines_for_nap_process.pdf , Last seen on 6/7/2023

- b. Stocktaking: identifying available information on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation and assessing gaps and needs of the enabling environment for the NAP process
 - c. Addressing capacity gaps and weaknesses in undertaking the NAP process
 - d. Comprehensively and iteratively assessing development needs and climate vulnerabilities
2. Preparatory elements:
- conducting in-depth risk and vulnerability assessments,
 - identifying relevant adaptation options, and prioritizing for implementation. Analysis of options can be done with the help of economic indices such as Multi-criteria analysis, Cost-effective analysis, Cost-benefit analysis, etc).
 - Reviewing technical solutions.
 - Compiling and communicating the NAP.
 - Integrating it into national and regional and sectoral planning

This step is further divided into the following stages:

- a. Analysing current climate and future climate change scenarios
- b. Assessing climate vulnerabilities and identifying adaptation options at the sector, subnational, national and other appropriate levels
- c. Reviewing and appraising adaptation options
- d. Compiling and communicating national adaptation plans
- e. Integrating climate change adaptation into national and subnational development and sectoral planning

3. Implementation strategies:

A successful NAP implementation requires:

- A clear understanding of priorities
- Supporting policy measures and adaptation choices
- Harnessing necessary skills and capacities
- A comprehensive financing strategy
- Well-aligned institutional arrangements

This step is further divided into the following stages:

- a. Prioritizing climate change adaptation in national planning
 - b. Developing a (long-term) national adaptation implementation strategy
 - c. Enhancing capacity for planning and implementation of adaptation
 - d. Promoting coordination and synergy at the regional level and with other multilateral environmental agreements
4. Reporting, monitoring and review (This ensures transparency and accountability.)
- Assessing effectiveness.
 - Changing and updating the policy as per the contemporary conditions.

This step is further divided into the following stages:

- a. Monitoring the NAP process
- b. Reviewing the NAP process to assess progress, effectiveness and gaps
- c. Iteratively updating the national adaptation plans
- d. Outreach on the NAP process and reporting on progress and effectiveness

Formulating a cohesive National Adaptation Plan is essential for India to address the challenges posed by climate change, protect vulnerable communities, meet international commitments, and ensure a coordinated and effective response. By prioritizing adaptation measures, India can enhance its resilience, reduce economic losses, and secure a sustainable future in the face of a changing climate.

Although the process of forming and implementing NAP is cumbersome and lengthy, it is the most rewarding when we can bring real results to our communities!

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