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How did intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) address capacity building?

Implications for future communication by Parties on capacity building under the Paris Agreement

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Key messages

- ◆ The focus of NDCs and the overall Paris Agreement (PA) is its provisions on prior and subsequently regularly reported information provided by Parties. This paper surveys a sample of INDCs and assesses how capacity building is identified and mentioned in the context of their pledges towards the PA.
- ◆ Overall, the paper found that capacity building was a common element of developing country INDCs as an area where Parties especially require international support, and as part of domestic measures for adaptation and, to a lesser extent, for mitigation. Parties provided different levels of detail in information on national capacity limitations and needs, illustrating the possibility that some Parties may have a capacity building plan or strategy along with their INDC, while others do not have such a plan yet.
- ◆ The paper suggested that it is necessary to improve prior information on capacity building gaps and needs to enhance clarity, transparency and understating, and to ensure that Parties identify those gaps and needs so that international support can be delivered effectively through the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) of the PA.

1. Introduction

This paper assesses a sample of intended nationally determined contribution (INDC) submissions under the UNFCCC to explore how capacity building is identified and mentioned by Parties in the context of their pledged contributions towards the new Paris Agreement (PA).

The focus of the PA is on the development and implementation of NDCs. Parties will communicate NDCs every five years, with the expectation that the ambition of NDCs will increase over time. A key of NDCs is the PA's provisions on transparency, in the form of information submitted by Parties on their implementation progress. These submissions include the NDCs themselves and subsequently reported information on implementation progress (i.e. transparency framework stipulated in PA Article 13). The ultimate aim is to enable the international community to evaluate how and whether Parties are satisfying their pledges.

The PA is universal in that all countries—developed and developing—design and submit an NDC, implement it and report on their progress. Because many developing countries currently lack adequate institutional capabilities, capacity building is vital to support developing countries to fully meet the requirements of the PA and achieve their own national ambition. The COP21 decision associated with the PA established the new Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB)¹ to strengthen international capacity building efforts in the years to come. However, how specifically have developing country Parties recognised the need for capacity building in their initial NDC communication (i.e. INDC)?

To begin answering this question, this paper surveys how capacity building was identified in a sample of submitted INDCs. The COP20 decision stipulating guidance on the information to be provided by Parties in their INDCs, does not cover a capacity building element (UNFCCC 2014). Despite this, the UNFCCC synthesis report found that many Parties referred to capacity building either as a domestic measure or as part of international support they require (UNFCCC 2016). Specifically, this paper considers:

1. Under which section of the INDC (mitigation, adaptation, or international support), was capacity building mentioned, and how frequently. This information indicates the aspects of climate actions and plans in which Parties recognise the relevance and importance of capacity building.
2. If mentioned, did the Party describe what and whose capacity needs should be strengthened for achieving its INDC? This information can reveal details on how the Party expects capacity building to be integrated into its INDC.

Based on findings from this sample, we then discuss implications for future communication by Parties on capacity building under the PA.

¹ Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 72

2. Method and data

A total sample of 30 INDCs were surveyed to investigate whether and how specifically Parties identified capacity building. We analysed these INDCs for the terms “capacity” or “capacity building”, and we noted and categorised the location and context within which they were mentioned under the sections of “mitigation”, “adaptation” and “means of implementation or support”. We also identified information on sectors or actors (key organisational groups targeted), for which capacity building needs were identified by the Party.

The sample of INDCs covered 30 developing countries — 10 each from Africa, Asia and Latin America². We selected the INDCs that were submitted relatively recently or after July 2015. It should be noted that INDC submissions by Parties have a wide variation in their structure and content. Therefore, results presented in the following section indicate the general trend of how INDCs addressed capacity building.

3. Results

The survey results are summarised in Tables 1 and 2 showing the number of countries and the findings on capacity building mentions. Key points are summarised in the bullets below Table 2.

Table 1: % of the 30 INDCs which mentioned capacity building under different sections

Section	%
Overall INDCs	100
Mitigation	40
Adaptation	73
Means of implementation/support	83

Table 2: % of the 30 INDCs which provided information specific to sectors or actors for which capacity building is needed

Section	Sector-specific	Actor-specific
Mitigation	23	10
Adaptation	70	37
Means of implementation/support	37	13

² Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Benin, Brunei, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ghana, Grenada, Honduras, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saint Lucia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

- All of the 30 sample Parties mentioned capacity building at least once in their INDCs. This indicates a high relevance of capacity building to INDCs and its implementation.
- More countries mentioned capacity building as means of implementation or support than as part of domestic measures in adaptation and mitigation. This shows relatively high expectation by developing country Parties for international support for capacity building to implement INDCs.
- Domestic capacity building efforts were mentioned more frequently for adaptation components than mitigation. Capacity building is generally recognised as a more relevant measure for adaptation than for mitigation in the INDCs.
- When it came to sector-specific information related to capacity building, adaptation components again contained more information than for mitigation or means of implementation or support. This finding indicates a focus on the nature of adaptation measures that often involve improvement of management capacities in the agriculture, water or fishery sectors. Even without sector-specific information in the context surveyed, it may be possible to assume capacity building is mentioned implicitly in relation to all or some of the sectors covered in the INDCs.
- Actor-specific information was relatively limited for mitigation and implementation support. For adaptation, capacity building of local communities or vulnerable groups were often mentioned. Some countries also specified national institutions or universities, whose capacities need to be enhanced. Because INDCs are national in scope, even with the absence of actor-specific information, it may be possible to assume capacity building is generally targeted for national institutions implementing the INDC.
- Although a large proportion of the surveyed Parties mentioned they need international support, including support for capacity building, and some of them even put it as condition for their more ambitious target to be implemented, not many of them specified which sector and whose capacity required such support. The Parties that provided such information discussed selected priority areas or provided a list of areas for which international support is anticipated, including support for capacity building.

4. Discussion

Overall, capacity building was found to be a common element of developing country INDCs, although strictly it was not a required element to be communicated by Parties under their INDC submissions. Capacity building appeared to be one of the areas for which Parties especially requested international support. Parties also recognised capacity building as being part of their domestic measures for adaptation and, to a lesser extent, for mitigation. Some Parties provided more detailed information than others regarding for which sector and actor capacity building will be implemented towards INDCs. For international support, some Parties provided a priority list of areas for which capacity

building needs to be supported. Some Parties indicated that such support will enable them to achieve more ambitious INDC targets. Others simply indicated a need for international support for capacity building without specifying what they consider to integrate such support into their INDCs.

Parties that provided relatively more specific information on capacity building in their INDC illustrate efforts towards having a capacity building plan in relation to delivering their INDC. Parties that only briefly mentioned capacity building may have a national plan for capacity building but did not present it in their INDC, as such information was not explicitly requested. Parties with no capacity building plans at all may face difficulty in implementing their INDC, because they may lack clarity on their national capacity limitations and needs. These Parties may be in a poor position to take advantage of international support or apply for it where necessary.

We believe that the communication of information on capacity building needs and plans through appropriate channels is important for three reasons. First, it can help to facilitate clarity, transparency and understanding of how a Party will implement its NDCs. This is the important aspect of the system embodied in the PA where the Party's progress made in implementation and achievement needs to be trackable. Second, by expressing capacity building needs in public documents, developing country Parties can demonstrate to the international community what kind of international support they require (Levin et al. 2015). Currently, there are limited public channels through which Parties can communicate their capacity building needs and gaps in the context of implementing and achieving NDCs (Ellis and Moarif 2015). We need to consider an effective way for developing country Parties to express their capacity building gaps and needs in the 5-year cycle of NDCs, based on which international support can be arranged and delivered through mainly the PCCB. Third, identifying capacity building needs and developing plans can in fact help countries to improve the capacities necessary for them to formulate and implement climate policy.

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