

From Margins to Mainstream?*

State Climate Change Planning in India

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For much of the last two decades, climate change has largely been considered an esoteric issue in India, to be discussed in international negotiations, but not one of much salience to domestic development imperatives. This has always been a flawed understanding, because climate change impacts can make the task of developing in a sustainable manner much harder. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) *Fifth Assessment Report* notes, 'sufficiently disruptive climate change could preclude any prospect for a sustainable future' (Fleurbay et al. 2014: 5). More recently, however, there has been growing awareness of the relevance of climate change for India, both within government and other sectors of society, such as civil society, business, and media (Dubash 2012). ...

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In response, at least initially, to growing international clamour for domestic adoption of climate strategies among emerging economies, India prepared its National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The initiative was ostensibly aimed at two outcomes—to adapt to climate change and ‘further enhance the ecological sustainability of India’s development path’ (Prime Minister’s Council on Climate Change [PMCCC] 2008: 1).

In August 2009, the prime minister (PM) asked all states to develop State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) (Press Information Bureau 2009). The rationale was to decentralize action beyond the eight missions of the NAPCC, particularly, given that many subjects covered—especially those like water and agriculture—are actually state subjects and tackle issues necessitating adaptation interventions. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), earlier called Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF),¹ developed a ‘common framework document’, with the assistance of some donor agencies, to guide this process, stressing that it be participatory, build capacity, develop a vulnerability assessment, and draw on experts and donors for guidance and support (MoEF 2010a). A number of states embarked on the ambitious plan formulation processes. As of October 2014, 28 states and union territories have completed drafts of their plans; 19 have been endorsed by the MoEF and 3 have been considered by the Expert Committee on Climate Change (MoEF 2014).

To what extent do these newly forged state climate plans and the underlying process of their creation shift climate change from the margins to the mainstream of India’s development debate? This is an important question to ask for several reasons. First, in the light of challenges posed by climate change, a business-as-usual approach to sustainable development is likely to be increasingly ineffective. Second, state planning for climate change affords an intriguing opportunity to revisit existing development planning in ways that prompt more explicit attention to environmental sustainability.

¹ The MoEF was renamed MoEFCC in May 2014. For the purpose of this chapter, the earlier acronym of MoEF is employed as many of the documents and web pages pertaining to the study refer the old name.

Third, and most pragmatically, SAPCCs are unlikely to be a one-off exercise; the current round of plans will have to be reviewed, updated, and improved upon in an iterative process. Given this, it is important to document the lessons of experience.

A summary response to the aforementioned overarching question is that state climate plans have been a ‘door opener’,² as one official put it, to a more in-depth engagement with the concepts and implementation challenges of sustainable development, but they have not, as yet, provided an opening for transformative change—the ‘directional shift’ called for in the NAPCC (PMCCC 2008: 7). ...

Approach and Methodology

The study draws on an analysis of state climate plans in five states:³ Himachal Pradesh (HP),⁴ Karnataka,⁵ Madhya Pradesh (MP),⁶ Odisha,⁷ and Sikkim.⁸ The states were primarily chosen to represent geographic spread and variability in donor organizations involved, with additional attention to agro-climate variability, size, and economic prosperity. Further, only states that had completed a draft report were considered when this study was initiated in May 2012.

² Interview with Felix Nitz, former technical advisor, Environmental Management and Policy Research Institute (EMPRI), Government of Karnataka, Bengaluru, Karnataka, 28 September 2012.

³ In some cases, there are multiple versions of climate plans in the public domain; this study uses the most recent version. The plans, in general, are referred to as State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs).

⁴ See Department of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of HP (2012). Hereafter cited as HP climate plan.

⁵ See Environmental Management and Policy Research Institute (EMPRI), Government of Karnataka, and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) (2012). Hereafter cited as Karnataka climate plan.

⁶ See Housing and Environment Department, Government of MP (2012). Hereafter cited as MP climate plan.

⁷ See Department of Forest and Environment, Government of Odisha (2010). Hereafter cited as Odisha climate plan.

⁸ See Government of Sikkim (2011). Hereafter cited as Sikkim climate plan.

The report is based on interviews with officials from nodal and department ministries in each state, civil society actors, consultants, and donors. The interviews are complemented by close analysis of state plans and supporting documents. The approach is primarily qualitative and interpretive. ...

Framing State Climate Plans in India

Linking Climate Change with Sustainable Development

In many states, climate change action plans were approached as sustainable development action plans. A low level of initial knowledge about climate change in some states, a lack of a conceptual framework with which to link sustainability and climate change, limited access to appropriate state-level climate science projections, and, in some cases, pressures on time, all led to a default approach of broad sustainability planning. Interviews with state officials suggest that while climate change is often a little understood abstraction, there is greater motivation to address concrete local issues of sustainable development, which is also likely to bring greater political support for action. Viewed thus, state climate change plans may be understood, as one state official put it, as a useful 'door-opener' to consideration of long-standing sustainable development concerns, since there is a considerable overlap between sustainability and climate resilience.⁹

On the other hand, understandings of sustainable development are incomplete without taking account of future climate change impacts. For example, changes in future rainfall trends have impacts for the trajectory of hydropower development, and sea-level rise carries implications for infrastructure development along the coast. ...

The incomplete framing of sustainable development in the context of climate change is partly due to limitations at the initiation stage of plans. As an official from MP put it, 'SAPCCs [are] not climate change plans but good development plans. States were thrown into the process without capacities to understand the process or the product....'¹⁰

⁹ Interview with Felix Nitz, 28 September 2012, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

¹⁰ Not for attribution interview with a state official, Government of MP, 29 August 2012, Bhopal, MP.

Use of Science

State plans made limited use of relevant scientific knowledge on climate change, in large part because of difficulties in accessing such knowledge, which is an important reason why they failed to upgrade sustainable development to include climate resilience....¹¹

While all states conducted a vulnerability assessment, the effectiveness of these was limited by lack of adequate regional-level climate predictions and adequate scientific capability. The Odisha and Sikkim state plans, for instance, derive sectoral and region-wise climate sensitivity from current climate trends rather than future projections (Odisha climate plan: 12; Sikkim climate plan: 3). ...

Consequently, even where science-based information is available, there is little evidence that final plan recommendations reflect priority areas based on science. For example, in MP ... climate-specific information was added later, after the first iteration of the report was ready, but does not seem to inform plan recommendations.¹² Odisha, which prepared a draft in just three months, did not carry any climate forecasts. ...

Balancing National Direction and Local Concerns

In India's federal system, there is an inevitable tension between the consistency obtained by a centrally directed approach and the gains of tailoring policy to the local context when states take the lead. Taking guidance from the MoEF, states largely followed the template of the eight missions laid out under the NAPCC (MoEF 2010a). Indeed, even the recommendations sections of some plans followed the sub-categories listed under the missions (Ogra 2013).

At the same time, local concerns did play a role in shaping both the content of the plans and some additional emphasis on certain sectoral areas. For example, the Odisha climate plan was seen as a way to bring in much-needed funds to reduce transmission and distribution losses in the state's privatized electricity sector, even though this is not a major theme in the NAPCC. As one official noted, 'Nothing

¹¹ Interview with Lokendra Thakkar, coordinator, Climate Change Cell, Environmental Planning and Coordination Organisation (EPCO), Government of MP, 29 August 2012, Bhopal, MP.

¹² Interview with Lokendra Thakkar, 29 August 2012, Bhopal, MP.

was moving in the [energy] sector.... In the name of climate change, highlight that the sector needs support ... we would not have got support without the climate document.¹³ Indeed, a third of the plan budget is set aside for this purpose (Odisha climate plan: 107–8). In Sikkim, water issues dominate state concerns around glacial retreat, given the dependence of the state on mountain springs for water supply (Sikkim climate plan: 9). ...

The climate plan process has, therefore, found a balance between laying out a broad framework set by the Centre and leaving space for state direction. In the future, it may be advisable to tilt the balance in favour of state initiative for at least three reasons: many climate-relevant issues are state subjects; implementation chances are heightened if states can focus on issues that are politically salient locally; and experimentation at the state level is more likely to lead to creative new ideas than a fixed central diktat.

Role of Mitigation in State Climate Plans

Among some state officials, there was a clear sentiment that it was appropriate for state plans to focus on adaptation issues, one backed by the MoEF.... As a senior official in MP said, ‘we would only engage in mitigation activities if it offered a win-win situation for the state’s development agenda.’¹⁴

However, ... there were some confounding factors that led to mixed signals on the relative balance of plans on adaptation and mitigation. First, the NAPCC, which served as the guiding document for state plans, includes several missions focused on mitigation (PMCCC 2008). Second, the common framework document issued by the MoEF explicitly states that each plan should include a greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory, which by its nature is mitigation focused (MoEF 2010a). Finally, some states had an interest in pursuing energy-related issues in their plans.

¹³ Interview with Pradeep Jena, regional director, Reserve Bank of India, Odisha, former principal secretary, Department of Energy, Government of Odisha, 22 May 2012, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

¹⁴ Interview with Avani Vaish, former chief secretary, Government of MP, 7 September 2012, New Delhi.

In such states where local importance was given to mitigation issues, mitigation-related actions formed a substantial (though rarely a majority) component of final SAPCC recommendations. Examples include Odisha's focus on reducing losses in the electricity system (Odisha climate plan: 430), Karnataka's efforts to restructure agricultural power tariffs (Karnataka climate plan: 165), and HP's exploration of payment for ecosystem services as well as acquiring more carbon credits through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) process (HP climate plan: 215).

However, while some states conducted a GHG inventory, not all chose to include these in the final plan. Interviews in four states suggested that feedback from the MoEF (contrary to the guidance initially presented in the common framework document) advised against inclusion of these inventories on the grounds that it might unnecessarily expose India to international pressure. As a consultant to Sikkim and MP put it, 'The MOEF is not encouraging it [inclusion of GHG inventories] at this point even though it's in the framework since bi-laterals and multilaterals can pick up state numbers and informally push their cause [for India taking on emission cuts].'¹⁵

While concerns about opening the door to international obligations may be understandable, these concerns are alleviated by the NAPCC's emphasis on a co-benefits framework for Indian action, which places an emphasis on development first, and the fact that many states appear to have their own interests in pursuing energy-related actions in a co-benefits context (PMCCC 2008: 28). ...

The Process

The process through which a state develops its climate plan can either open doors to creative ideas or close off opportunities, empower voices outside the mainstream or silence them. Accordingly, exploring the process followed by states is an essential precursor to looking at their outcomes. ...

¹⁵ Interview with Sumana Bhattacharya, Head—Climate Change and Sustainability, Intercooperation, India, 6 August 2012, New Delhi.

Local Political and Bureaucratic Support as Plan Drivers

Climate change plans have occasionally received high-level political support in an effort to project a green image, which has translated to bureaucratic attention. The chief ministers of some states, notably Sikkim, HP, and Odisha, have been reported as being keen to project their state as environmentally forward-thinking. As one official noted, ‘We wanted to make sure through these [climate initiatives] that HP had a good track record of proactiveness with respect to environment matters.’¹⁶ ... The Sikkim chief minister constituted a ‘State Council on Climate Change’ well before the SAPCC process, and also established a ‘Glacier and Climate Change Commission’ (Tambe and Arrawatia 2012: 278). Himachal Pradesh hosted a Climate Change Conclave and announced a climate-neutral target for the state to be addressed with assistance from the World Bank (Government of HP and Leadership for Environment and Development [LEAD], India 2009; Press Trust of India 2009, 2011). High levels of political attention translated to bureaucratic energy and proved helpful in mobilizing bureaucrats from other departments. ...

The Role of the Nodal Agency and Other Line Departments

The process of formulating state plans followed one of two broad models. In Karnataka, HP, and MP, the plan was drafted by the nodal department after obtaining inputs from relevant departments. In Odisha and Sikkim, the plan was drafted by sectoral working groups formed by the nodal group. Comparing the two approaches, the nodal group-led model provided almost no scope for cross-departmental input or new ideas from within the process. In all three states though, state plans were able to draw on external ideas—the expert-led Bangalore Climate Change Initiative – Karnataka (BCCI-K) process in Karnataka, the peer-review group consisting of academics and chancellors from several universities in HP, and

¹⁶ Interview with Nagin Nanda, joint secretary, Empanelled with the Government of India, Former Director-cum-Secretary (Environment), Department of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of HP, 7 February 2013, Shimla, HP.

sectoral workshops in MP involving line departments and retired government officials.¹⁷

Done well, the working group-focused model can provide the basis for new ideas and breaking of silos. For example, a stakeholder commenting on the Odisha plan remarked: 'It is not often that you find forest officers sitting face to face with mining officials to discuss environmental sustainability' (Mani 2010). In Odisha, representatives of the nodal agency were also strategically placed in each group to ensure progress.

However, to ensure cogency with the broader process, the plan process must be carefully designed to both foster interaction (and avoid silos) but also build ownership. This is a challenge, since there is a possible trade-off across these objectives. Ensuring interaction through cross-departmental discussion using a nodal agency to stimulate discussion rather than own the process, and allowing time for new understandings to emerge, are all important ingredients of a good process.

Extent of External Participation

In addition to cross-departmental deliberations, external input commissioned from academics and consultants, or consultation with stakeholders from business and civil society, can provide sources of creative input. In several states, the formal process was supplemented with either *ex ante* or *ex post* consultation, but these were highly variable in quality and effort, and there is only limited evidence that consultation had a tangible effect on outcome.

For example, HP set up a peer-review group comprising vice chancellors of universities as well as eminent scientists to vet the draft plan. Their most significant intervention was guiding the nodal department in preparing a new district-level vulnerability assessment study using climate-based variables to replace an existing environmental vulnerability assessment study.¹⁸ However, the process in HP

¹⁷ Interview with Felix Nitz, 28 September 2012, Bengaluru, Karnataka; Interview with Lokendra Thakkar, 29 August 2012, Bhopal, MP; Interview with Nagin Nanda, 7 February 2013, Shimla, HP.

¹⁸ Interview with Nagin Nanda, 7 February 2013, Shimla, HP.

failed to provide space to civil society voices. The most ambitious example of *ex ante* consultations is in MP, where the nodal agency organized regional workshops in 11 agro-climatic zones, resulting in a synthesis of sector-wise concern areas and recommendations for each agro-climatic zone (MP climate plan: 19). However, since the main report writing proceeded in parallel, there is no indication of the impact of these consultations on the final plan.

To be effective, external input needs adequate time, appropriate sequencing with plan preparation processes, and the inclusion of both *ex ante* and *ex post* elements.

Capacity Building and External Support

State climate planning processes are typically housed in environment and forests or science and technology departments with limited capacity to conceptualize and develop climate plans.¹⁹ In all the states studied, there was considerable concern that the state plan be locally driven; in practice, states drew on external technical ability in a variety of ways. In some cases, donor agencies were explicitly involved in the process, as in Odisha, while in other cases, donors were engaged indirectly, through support for larger, related programmes, as in Sikkim, HP, and MP. Donors, in some cases, bridged capacity shortfalls by providing technical expertise, and facilitating a conversation on climate change with knowledgeable local bureaucrats, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The assistance of donors and consultants, however, failed to enhance states' long-term capacity on climate change. Most states conducted an inception workshop and/or prepared an initial scoping document with donor assistance. The impact of these efforts, however, varied. In Odisha, for example, the scoping report drafted by a United Kingdom (UK)-based academic consultant provided a list of recommended sectoral actions. The scoping report was used by working groups as a 'first cut' towards drafting the plan, arguably short-circuiting local discussion of priorities (Odisha climate plan: 3). In Sikkim, state officials

¹⁹ Interview with Anshu Bharadwaj, director, Center for Study of Science, Technology & Policy (CSTEP), 28 September 2012, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

suggested that an initial scoping workshop conducted by senior academics and other experts from around India was of relatively limited use, as the plan was ultimately framed around broad climate change issues, without an explicit effort to build a conceptual bridge from local realities to climate threats.²⁰ Ultimately, the inception workshops and other consultations supported by donors showed little signs of usefully facilitating a conversation about climate change in a manner that allowed for engagement with local concerns.

Apart from these workshops, Indian consultants often took on a substantial role in plugging knowledge gaps and provided assistance in coordinating and drafting the plans. ...

The challenge for effective state climate planning processes is to mesh external specialized knowledge of climate change with detailed local knowledge in ways that can mainstream climate change. To do so requires building local capacity over time, both within the government and in networks of local academic and civil society institutions. In most states, the process was geared substantially more towards producing a report, than to long-term building of capacity to work on integrating climate change into development practice in a sustained way.

Outcomes

Recommendations for sectoral actions are at the heart of what the state climate plans finally communicate. A systematic understanding of these recommendations and their import are stymied by the numbers and diversity of approaches to generating recommendations (see Table 20.1). However, a comparison of recommendations suggests at least two broad themes discussed later in the chapter.

Lack of a Systematic Framework for Formulation or Prioritization

States diverge in the extent to which they offer broad objectives or specific actions, but no state offers a clear, consistent, and well-argued set of recommendations that amount to either a vision or an action plan. For instance, generic recommendations across plans include promotion of 'integrated farming practices', 'fire

²⁰ Interview with Sandeep Tambe, 24 July 2012, Gangtok, Sikkim.

Table 20.1 Range of Priority Actions in State Plans and Recommendations for Further Research

State and Relevant Section	Number of Recommendations	Number of Recommendations for Future Research (% of total)	Comments
HP 'Indicative Action Plan 2012–17'	287	35 (12%)	Six different strategy and action lists present. No stated basis for prioritization of the indicative action plan.
Karnataka 'Priority Actions and Entry Points'	100	21 (21%)	31 priority actions (containing 100 implementation arrangements)—no stated basis for prioritization.
MP 'Strategies and Budget'	337	30 (9%)	Strategies provided in each sectoral chapter. No stated basis for prioritization of the final 'strategies and budget' list.
Odisha 'Sector-Wise Table of Key Priorities'	148	38 (26%)	A six-point template created for selection and prioritization.
Sikkim 'Actions' List in Sector Chapters	224	50 (22%)	Sectoral actions tagged to 5-, 10-, and 15-year timelines. No stated basis for selection of actions.

Source: HP climate plan, p. 224; Karnataka climate plan, pp. 25, 165; MP climate plan, p. 97; Odisha climate plan, p. 118; Sikkim climate plan, pp. 43–163.

management', 'river bank protection', 'native forest management', etc. (HP climate plan: 228; MP climate plan: 101; Odisha climate plan: 80; Sikkim climate plan: 43). The Sikkim state plan, which carries a recommendation as broad-based as riverbank protection, however, also offers a very specific suggestion of moving a bus depot from the capital city to a town on the outskirts, to decongest the main city centre (Sikkim climate plan: 134). In addition, the Karnataka plan, which recommends 'vaccination of livestock', also

suggests a specific measure such as making water-use audits mandatory for industries and allied sectors (Karnataka climate plan: 117, 171).

One reason for this variation is the lack of up-front agreement and clarity on exactly what the plans were meant to deliver. As one consultant involved in multiple states noted: 'Earlier officials said that SAPCCs need to include specific actions, now they want it to be more of a knowledge document. ...'²¹

Another factor is the relatively thin information base on which recommendations rest; specific action items need detailed information. Notably, recommendations include many ideas for future research, several of which are actually prerequisites to constructing an informed climate plan (see Table 20.1). Climate plans, therefore, are more appropriately viewed as the first step in an iterative process, rather than the launch pad for implementing policies.

With both approaches—nodal agency led or working group led—recommendations were derived through a bottom-up process. While this approach has the potential benefit of allowing for creativity and experimentation, it also resulted in a diversity of recommendations at different scales and degrees of specificity. ... Most states further tried to categorize their recommendations. In each case, however, there was no basis provided or discussed for prioritization. The approach is, perhaps, best summed up by the candid statement by an official in Karnataka that actions and their priorities were 'ocularly' decided.²²

The Process Did Not Facilitate a Rethinking of Development Pathways

The academic literature notes the important role of federal units as 'laboratories of innovation' (Schreurs 2008). Understood thus, state plans could contribute significantly to realizing the NAPCC's call for a 'directional shift in the development pathway' of India in

²¹ Interview with Arabinda Mishra, Director, Earth Sciences and Climate Change Division, TERI, 27 April 2012, New Delhi.

²² Not for attribution interview with a senior official, Government of Karnataka (Environment and Ecology), 28 September 2012, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

response to climate change (PMCCC 2008: 7). The process in most states, however—organized around sectoral working groups and chapters—was not conducive to rethinking development pathways, since it tended to reinforce existing approaches by departments. A stakeholder elaborated: ‘Poverty is a big issue, urbanisation, migration: NAPCCs don’t capture all developmental issues. The alignment is happening only for budgetary reasons.’²³

This approach may have been indirectly promoted by the Centre’s common framework document, which called for state plan recommendations to align with the NAPCC’s various missions (MoEF 2010a).

Where potentially transformational issues do emerge, they are inadequately explored in the formal process. For example, a controversial and debated statement introduced by the official in charge of the Odisha plan in its second phase calls for a cap on thermal power projects: ‘In the power sector I asked what is the carrying capacity of Odisha in power; the outer limit of coal-based power? I brought some scepticism into the development trajectory of the power sector.’²⁴ However, this statement did not come out of deliberation, nor was it engaged with in the plan process, but was promoted by one individual. In another example, in HP, the former chief minister announced a rather ambitious carbon-neutrality target for the state by 2020, but the SAPCC itself does not seriously engage with this commitment.

While the state plans may not have systematically explored directional shifts, they did provide an institutional vehicle for pursuit of some innovative ideas. In the current round of plans, innovation, creativity, and the potential for transformation are driven by individual initiative. In the future, the challenge will be to structure the process to systematically explore transformative change.

²³ Interview with Ritu Bharadwaj, India program manager, Institute of Industrial Productivity, former advisor, Climate and Environment, Department for International Development (DFID), 20 April 2012, New Delhi.

²⁴ Interview with Aurobindo Behera, 23 May 2012, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Implementation

In most states, the focus thus far has been on preparation of plans; discussion of implementation is largely preliminary. ...

Institutional Capacity for Implementation

The process of preparing state plans has contributed to the creation and entrenching of dedicated climate change institutions in all states except Karnataka. Sikkim and MP had climate change institutions in place before they undertook their plans; HP and Odisha proposed creating such institutions in the course of developing their plans (Government of HP 2009; Government of Odisha 2010; Government of Sikkim 2009; Sikkim climate plan: 234). The existing capacity of these units, however, was insufficient for stimulating and monitoring implementation.

An official in Odisha noted: 'We are a weak institutional sector, whether environment or climate change. Our strengths don't lie in institutional capacities.'²⁵ Although in most states implementation is likely to happen through line departments rather than directly by climate change units ... dedicated climate units will likely play an important monitoring and evaluation role. The coordinating and steering role of these units for future refinements of climate plans will only increase over time, further calling for capacity enhancement.

Mainstreaming of Recommendations into the Functioning of Line Departments

There is broad convergence across state plans that implementation will have to happen through line departments. Indeed, most plans in their sectoral lists mention specific departments and agencies responsible for that area of work (Karnataka climate plan: 165; MP climate plan: 97; Odisha climate plan: 100; Sikkim climate plan: 43).

However, there is no agreement on the mechanisms through which this implementation can be achieved. In Odisha, the process

²⁵ Interview with Ashok Singha, MD, CTRAN Consulting, 22 May 2012, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

of working groups was explicitly aimed at creating ownership among line departments, in the anticipation that they would take up aspects of the plan. ... Perhaps the most intriguing idea arose from MP, where the approach suggested is one of providing departments services such as advisories of progress towards goals and checklists, as a way of inducing or 'nudging' states towards action. As a senior MP official describes the approach: 'We hope to make a checklist and send it to various departments for them to see how projects can be made more climate friendly and compatible. This would be a voluntary initiative. We would ask for their policy assessment reports but we won't comment on it.'²⁶

These various indirect efforts to stimulate action arise from an acceptance that nodal agencies (typically environment departments or science and technology departments) do not have the heft to insist on action. And that sufficient financing is unlikely to be available to serve as an inducement to other line departments. Hence, building ownership over the relevance of the climate agenda to the work of the department is likely the only viable long-term solution, albeit one that is challenging to achieve in the face of competing demands and limited capacity.

Several officials involved with the state plans also noted the possible benefits of closer synergy with the state development planning process. For true mainstreaming of climate change, it is arguably counter-productive to have a development planning process and a parallel climate planning process that typically includes a wide range of departments.... As a consultant working in Odisha noted, 'we need to develop a[n] SAPCC which is not an independent entity but linked to the state planning document' (Centre for Policy Research 2013). ...

Securing Finance for State Climate Plans

The MoEF's common framework document requires that state plans estimate 'additional resource requirements' and explore 'existing and new and additional carbon finance potential' (MoEF 2010b). However, officials across states conveyed their reluctance to include

²⁶ Interview with Lokendra Thakkar, 29 August 2012, Bhopal, MP.

budgets for sectoral actions, adding that stated numbers were estimates at best and had no technical basis: ‘It is a weak link for all states. If we had left it [budgetary allocations] blank, it would have given the document more academic credibility. ... The costs are currently indicative. ...’²⁷ Finally, some states have initiated actions without seeking additional funds, suggesting a promising indication of ownership of results and recommendations. Sikkim, for example, has deployed Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) funds to implement actions in the water sector, enabling some mainstreaming of climate concerns. Indeed, in interviews, some government officials indicated that finances were not the key constraint, but rather clarity on what to do and the capacity to implement actions. As one senior official noted:

[the stated budget] is not a big amount. The issue is how and where to spend it ... the state’s plan budget [in 2011–2012] was 15,000 Crore Rupees, of that the state could not spend 2500 Crore Rupees and it was surrendered at the end of the year. This was supposed to have been spent on energy, water, fisheries, rural development.²⁸

State Action Plans on Climate Change hold potential as an important intervention in the development process. They provide an institutional platform to mainstream concerns of environmental sustainability into development planning and, if done properly, to update ideas of sustainability to include climate resilience. This platform provides a potential opening to enterprising and committed bureaucrats, but is also an opening with which development practitioners, academics, business, and civil society at large could productively engage.

At the moment, this promise is not being adequately realized. As discussed in this study, there are shortcomings in approach, process, formulation of outcomes, and implementation efforts. These shortcomings are united by a common thread—a tendency to prematurely

²⁷ Interview with Lokendra Thakkar, 29 August 2012, Bhopal, MP.

²⁸ Not for attribution interview with retired senior official, Government of Odisha, 23 May 2012, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

view state climate plans as vehicles for generating implementable actions rather than an opportunity to re-direct development towards environmental sustainability and climate resilience. Thin conceptual frameworks, processes that provide no space for generating a vision of change, limited state capacity, and truncated time frames all reinforce this outcome.

While concrete actions are indeed important, these may be of limited value unless informed by a broader vision of future directions in key climate-related sectors such as agriculture, water, and energy.

However, if state plans are viewed as the beginning of a complex process rather than as an end in themselves, they provide a foundation upon which to build. Building on the analysis here, there are several specific measures that the central government, state governments, donor agencies, and civil society could adopt towards this end. Conceptually, plans would be more effective if built on a robust conceptual framework linking climate resilience and sustainable development, one which is also informed by science-based and state-level predictions of climate impact. Plan processes could more usefully prioritize longer-term transformative outcomes over short-term incremental actions as there are few existing processes that play this role. To do so, plans would need to develop a mechanism for generating fresh ideas, such as by drawing on the full range of stakeholders through adequate consultative processes, and by structuring silo-breaking interaction across departments. Organizing desired outcomes around integrative themes rather than sectoral recommendations are more likely to provide the desired 'directional shift' in development trajectories (PMCCC 2008: 7). Mechanisms to enhance the potential for effective implementation include developing a logical system of prioritizing outcomes and actions, ensuring sufficient capacity of nodal agencies to take follow-up action, and experimenting with creative ways of inducing policy actions in line ministries, particularly through information and analysis tools.

Given existing shortcomings, there is a risk of shifting into the implementation phase, as the Centre seems keen to do, somewhat prematurely. If state plans are to be transformational, going beyond cherry-picking existing projects and presenting them as climate projects, then it may be necessary to consider integrative approaches that cut across sectoral silos. Transformative approaches are also likely to transcend

the project mode and are better formulated as initiatives or programmatic efforts. The failure to develop adequate capacity to both design programmes, induce cooperation with mainstream departments, and monitor and track outcomes will also need rectification. ...

Growing evidence of real challenges to the achievement of sustainable development objectives due to climate threats provides compelling reasons for climate change planning to join the mainstream of development policy discourse. The state plans open the door to doing so, and invite the attention of not only environmentalists, but equally if not more importantly, of a wide range of development practitioners.

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