

## State Climate Change Planning

Has It Reached the Mainstream?

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In 2009, the prime minister of India asked all state governments to prepare State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) in an effort to help implement the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). Since the process of drafting the SAPCC was rolled out across the country, states have moved forward with varying levels of motivation and speed. Some took many years to finalize and adopt it (for example, Maharashtra only formally adopted their SAPCC in 2017, after starting the process in 2010), while others (for example, Odisha) are already finalizing a second version. By 2017, the National Steering Committee on Climate Change had approved climate plans from 32 states and union territories and attention has since shifted to implementing (and updating) the plans.

This chapter aims to explore what steps the state governments have taken since the SAPCCs were first drafted to shed light on the potential and challenges of state climate change planning. It focuses

primarily on adaptation planning, drawing out trends in terms of what different states are doing and the challenges they face, while recognizing that it is impossible to generalize across all 29 states in India. It uses specific examples from six states, namely, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Odisha, which are part of the 'Action on Climate Today' (ACT) programme which uses the SAPCC as the starting point to support climate change planning, and with which the author is involved.<sup>1</sup>

## Evolution of the Concept of State Climate Change Planning in India

State climate change planning is a broad and potentially all-consuming term: it could cover many sectors, multiple levels of sub-national government, and be mitigation or adaptation focused, or both. However, since 2008 and the NAPCC, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and most state governments appear to equate climate planning, and in particular SAPCCs, with adaptation planning. There is very little state planning underway on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per se, and mitigation policy is being driven centrally by the NAPCC. State governments are putting in place plans and policies to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency, but this is primarily driven by the associated economic and development benefits and has typically not been tied to a climate governance process. There was some confusion about whether SAPCCs were originally intended to include mitigation actions, but, in practice, most plans focus primarily on adaptation (Dubash and Jogesh 2014).

State governments drafted their SAPCC with the understanding (or assumption) that they would receive central government

<sup>1</sup> The ACT programme (2014–19) is a United Kingdom (UK) aid funded technical assistance programme in South Asia being managed by Oxford Policy Management (OPM), in collaboration with a number of national and state partners. In India, the programme is called the 'Climate Change Innovation Programme' and supports six state governments to mainstream adaptation to climate change within systems of development planning and delivery.

funding to implement it and, as such, the plans were conceived as a set of fundable projects—often reading more like a ‘wish list’ (Kumar 2018). Although the National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change (NAFCC) was established in 2015 with the idea of funding some SAPCC actions, it is not at the scale that was expected. For example, the entire budget provision of Rs 350 crore (50.46 million USD as per present exchange rate) for 2015–17 would cover only a single year of Kerala’s planned activities, and even less of other states (Allen et al. 2016).

By 2015, the central government had settled on the idea of SAPCCs as frameworks for ‘mainstreaming’, meaning integrating climate change risks and opportunities within existing and new development policies, plans, programmes, and budgets. This pushed the responsibility for funding the SAPCCs back to the states. India’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) clearly states that 32 states and union territories have put in place SAPCCs, ‘attempting to mainstream climate change concerns in their planning process’ (Government of India [GoI] 2016). In reality, most of the plans are a mix of proposing new stand-alone ‘projects’ as well as guidance to line departments on what climate change risks their sector faces, and what possible actions could be taken (Dubash and Jogesh 2014; Gogoi 2015).

The evolving concept of state climate change planning in India has led to some confusion and different interpretations of what constitutes implementation of state climate change plans. The rest of the chapter will explore whether and how implementation of SAPCCs has occurred and the challenges surrounding it.

### Status of Implementation of SAPCCs

For the purpose of this chapter, I define implementation of SAPCCs as their impact on line departments to take forward the recommendations in the plan and take new actions to integrate climate change risks within their ongoing and planned work. In other words, the extent to which SAPCCs have adjusted the business-as-usual approach to development. This is very difficult to monitor and report on, and little formal data exist on the extent of implementation. Anecdotally, Odisha is one state that attempted reporting on implementation of

the SAPCC, but without distinguishing whether the line department was anyway planning or delivering the adaptation action prior to the SAPCC.

An annual, internal context assessment within each of the six ACT states suggests that there are very few examples of an obvious direct link between the SAPCC and a line department independently taking up a new recommendation in the plan (ACT 2017; Gogoi 2017). However, in a number of states, the SAPCC has had a role in facilitating new action on adaptation. For example, in Assam, the process of finalizing and adopting the SAPCC in 2015 (and the new opportunity for financing from the NAFCC) spiked government interest, leading to some new policy initiatives. An illustration being that the SAPCC highlighted that the State Water Mission was pending since 2008, and so the government restarted the process with a specific consideration on climate change.

In many cases the SAPCC has, however, provided a structure and mandate for donor-funded programmes on climate change. Bilateral donors and partners—UK Department for International Development (DFID), Swiss Agency for Development and Corporation (SDC), and the German development agency, GIZ, in particular—agreed with the MoEFCC to support the implementation process and most states are now in some way being supported by technical assistance programmes from one of these agencies. For example, with technical support from such programmes, the Government of Maharashtra has prioritized the recommendations within the SAPCC, and prepared sectoral action plans which are a mixture of new projects and plans and modifying existing ones. The aim of this intervention is a more visible implementation of the SAPCC.

### **Evidence of Efforts to Mainstream Climate Change within Wider Development Planning**

There is, however, significant evidence of states planning and implementing adaptation actions not directly linked to SAPCCs—meaning the actions were either not listed in the SAPCC or were listed but this was not the motivating factor (ACT 2017; Gogoi 2017).

States have chosen different and various entry points for mainstreaming climate change into their development policies and plans. Some states have integrated climate change into broad sectoral strategy or vision documents, a relatively easy entry point as there is no direct link to budgets, nor immediate pressure to implement (Gogoi, Bahadur, and Rumbaitis 2017). For example, the Government of Bihar in 2017 adopted an agriculture road map, which explicitly considers climate information and the implications for future agriculture productivity in the state. Some states have also mainstreamed climate change within flagship programmes, which can be a more difficult process but tends to have a more direct impact on budget and action on the ground. For example, in Chhattisgarh, the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development is looking at how the infrastructure built through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) can provide additional adaptation benefits to the local communities.

While these examples are mostly one-off efforts at mainstreaming, there are initiatives to integrate climate change within regular systems of state planning and delivery. For example, in Kerala, the State Planning Board included climate change as a new cross-cutting theme within the District Plan (2017–22)—a guideline for the annual planning process of different tiers (district, block, gram) at the district level. There is also an evolving policy, planning, and institutional architecture for disaster risk reduction at the state and district levels. The State and District Disaster Management Plans, to different extents, incorporate climate change information and concerns, although there are efforts underway to make these plans explicitly climate-smart (Gupta et al. 2016).

### **Importance of Local Factors Shaping State Climate Change Planning**

The examples of state climate change planning listed in the previous sections—both directly tied to implementation of the SAPCCs as well as wider efforts at mainstreaming underway—were motivated and influenced by different and varied local factors. Climate planning has happened in certain states and sectors, and not others, due to differences in the priorities, interests, and commitment of local

decision makers, as well as the wider institutional and governance context (Gogoi, Bahadur, and Rumbaitis 2017). This section uses examples from across different states to highlight some of the key governance-related challenges to climate change planning, and where state governments and other stakeholders are innovating to try and find solutions.

### Political Ownership of the SAPCC

The SAPCCs in many states are often not fit for purpose in guiding line departments on where and how to take action on climate change. Most suffer from the legacy of their drafting process and the lack of ownership across the government, as well as the quality of the content of the plan (see Chapter 20 in this volume). However, in many states, the SAPCCs have facilitated, for the first time, a discussion on the relevance of climate change for the state. There has, therefore, been an indirect benefit from the SAPCCs of increasing state government officials' level of understanding and awareness of climate change risks and making them more interested and receptive to opportunities for mainstreaming climate change.

Some governments are being proactive in strengthening the policy framework. The Government of Kerala is currently reviewing its SAPCC and updating it to be more focused and implementable. In Assam, a draft version of the plan was lying dormant for a few years, until an enterprising government official and a committed chief secretary got it redrafted, and adopted, in a matter of months, and it has been a catalyst for a number of institutional and policy initiatives. In Maharashtra, the plan was too broad and unfocused, and there was little government commitment to it. In 2017, the government used it as a basis for prioritizing a set of adaptation actions within the first-ever State Climate Change Policy. In all these cases, the government recognized the value of having a guiding policy framework, although they were motivated by different interests, and all had significant external technical support.

In the next few years, states will likely be required to report upwards on adaptation for both Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and NDC processes. If SAPCCs are used as the basis for

this reporting, the level of interest and ownership in them could improve significantly. If they are ignored, then their relevance will be further eroded.

### Convergence with Political Priorities of the State

The interests and incentives—and relative power—of different decision makers within a state defines the extent and type of political will that exists to tackle climate change. For many state governments, tackling or managing the particular climate change risks that they face is one of their highest political priorities (for example, tackling the increasing occurrence and severity of floods in Assam), and there is a very high level of understanding across the bureaucracy on the complicated set of contributing factors and possible solutions. There is, therefore, a political appetite for tackling climate change if it is presented in terms of tackling the most visible climate change risk facing the state.

Climate change, as a general issue in itself, is often still seen as a distant scientific issue and primarily an international concern, although with associated opportunities for accessing climate finance. In the last couple of years, the NAFCC and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) have caused a spike in interest within many state governments, and the process of preparing the project proposals has, to a certain extent, helped reconcile climate change as an issue with their political priorities. Preparing funding proposals has required many state departments to articulate the adaptation co-benefits of their existing development priorities.

In addition to political priorities, the informal cultures and values of a state or region are also significant. For example, in Kerala, there is a history and culture of 'environmentalism', with an active civil society, which survives successive changes in the ruling party. To a certain extent, this is a positive starting point for climate change planning, but also poses a challenge. The prevailing narrative of the government and society is around environmental conservation and 'green' development and over the last decade, climate change has been added to this agenda without sufficient discussion and clarity on what is different between tackling climate change and protecting the environment.

## Confusion About How Climate Change is ‘Different’

Across nearly all stakeholders—governments, private sector, academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), consultants, and others—there is still confusion about the difference between ‘good’ development and adaptation. For example, is an irrigation project always considered to be contributing to adaptation? The experts on adaptation have not clearly articulated what counts as adaptation to state governments and others (Bird et al. 2012). The national and international climate funds available require funding proposals to articulate to a certain degree how the proposed project provides additional adaptation benefits (as opposed to development benefits); however, there is little guidance for doing this. The funding will cover the entire cost of the project, rather than just the extra cost of the additional adaptation benefits. If the goal is to mainstream climate change within development plans and investment, then it seems crucial that stakeholders can identify the different multiple benefits that a single project or programme can deliver (Fayolle and Odianose 2017).

Some state governments have started to review and track their level of expenditure on adaptation within their ongoing development programmes (Resch et al. 2017). For example, in 2017, the Bihar deputy chief minister released a report which analysed and scored a number of government programmes and schemes on the extent to which they were providing adaptation benefits (as compared to the other types of benefits they were providing, such as economic, social, and environmental). This benefits-based methodology compares the benefits delivered by an action if there was no climate change (that is, the development benefits) with the benefits if it does happen (that is, the benefits increase—or decrease for cases of maladaptation) (Resch et al. 2017). This is useful for clarifying the additionality of tackling climate change (see Chapter 22 in this volume), but the work is at the early stages and reliant on external technical support.

## Institutional Capacity for Climate Change Planning

There has been some expansion in the institutional capacity of some state governments for climate change planning. The process of designing the SAPCC as well as developing funding proposals for

the NAFCC and global climate funds, and more recently discussions around the SDGs, have had a number of indirect benefits in terms of establishing institutional mechanisms for managing climate change risks. In different states, the SAPCC process has resulted in at least one of the following: nodal agencies or cells for climate change (for example, in Kerala); knowledge management centres focused on climate change (for example, in Chhattisgarh); climate change focal officers sitting in different line departments (for example, in Assam); and cross-sectoral coordination committees on climate change (for example, in Maharashtra). They vary widely in terms of the level of effectiveness and sustainability, but all tend to aim for facilitating and coordinating adaptation planning across departments.

There are different models and approaches to creating institutional capacity for managing climate change. In most cases, the nodal agency is located within the environment or forestry departments, which are relatively weak and struggle to facilitate action by other departments. In Assam, the government is trying to overcome this by establishing an Assam Climate Change Management Society (ACCMS), which operates as a special purpose vehicle (SPV) for coordinating climate change planning across departments, and can also receive and manage climate funds. The ACCMS, and the more typical Climate Change Cells located within the environment or forestry departments, all rely on the chief secretary and/or political leadership to provide the high-level backing to their coordination mandate. Similarly, coordinating committees have only proven to be productive (and survive beyond their initial mandate of overseeing the drafting of the SAPCC) if there is senior leadership participation and commitment. There are also questions around whether these mechanisms will become truly embedded within the institutional structures and live beyond the technical assistance programmes which are often, to different degrees, propping them up.

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This chapter provides a brief overview of the status of climate change planning across different states in India, highlights some of the challenges, and discusses experimentation with different approaches. There remains confusion over the purpose and role of SAPCCs,

although the opportunity of accessing NAFCC funding and the involvement of donor-funded programmes have sustained a focus on them. There is also mainstreaming of adaptation within development planning and programmes taking place that is not directly tied to the SAPCCs, as well as efforts to build institutional capacity.

There are valid questions around whether recent progress on climate change planning will be sustained once the current batch of donor-funded programmes, focused on cross-sectoral climate change planning, come to an end. However, international climate funds are expected to continue, which will require states to maintain a focus on adaptation planning, as will reporting on NDC and SDGs implementation. Addressing some of the critical governance challenges to climate change planning will be important to maximize these opportunities.

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