Mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within governance systems:

An analytical framework and examples from practice

Successful adaptation to climate change and its impacts requires governments to change their investment, planning, and policy processes. To support this process, practitioners must engage with governance systems and identify the barriers and opportunities for climate adaptation mainstreaming.

The Action on Climate Today (ACT) programme has been working in South Asian countries to help transform government systems to increase adaptation to climate change. ACT's work on strengthening governance systems to deliver adaptation is focused on three dimensions:

- Entry points: Opportunities for integrating climate considerations into the planning and policy process.
- Enabling environment: The characteristics that help support the successful adoption of climate change adaptation policies and practices.
- Political economy drivers: The factors that influence and affect the enabling environment.

The ACT framework for mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within governance systems can be used to inform policy and practice in South Asia and around the world.

A full description of ACT's work can be found in the associated ACT learning paper: Mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within governance systems in South Asia: An analytical framework and examples from practice.

MAINSTREAMING WITHIN CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY:

ACT helped to improve Afghanistan's draft Natural Resource Management Strategy to mainstream climate change throughout the plan. The Strategy is an important entry point for follow-up work with the relevant ministries to inform annual budgets and plans. ACT learnt from this experience that it is more effective to influence high-level policy documents when they are first conceived, rather than to try to retrofit a draft.

MAINSTREAMING WITHIN SECTORAL POLICY:

Targeting sectoral policy has proven useful for engaging with sectors that do not traditionally prioritise climate change. For example, in Kerala, ACT is supporting the Department of Health Services to prepare a climate–health vulnerability and adaptation assessment report. The process has drawn attention to a growing public concern in the state: the health effects of extreme heat and the risk that climate change poses of increasing heat waves in the future. As a result, the Shornur municipality in Palakkad has launched a planning process for developing a Heat Health Action Plan.
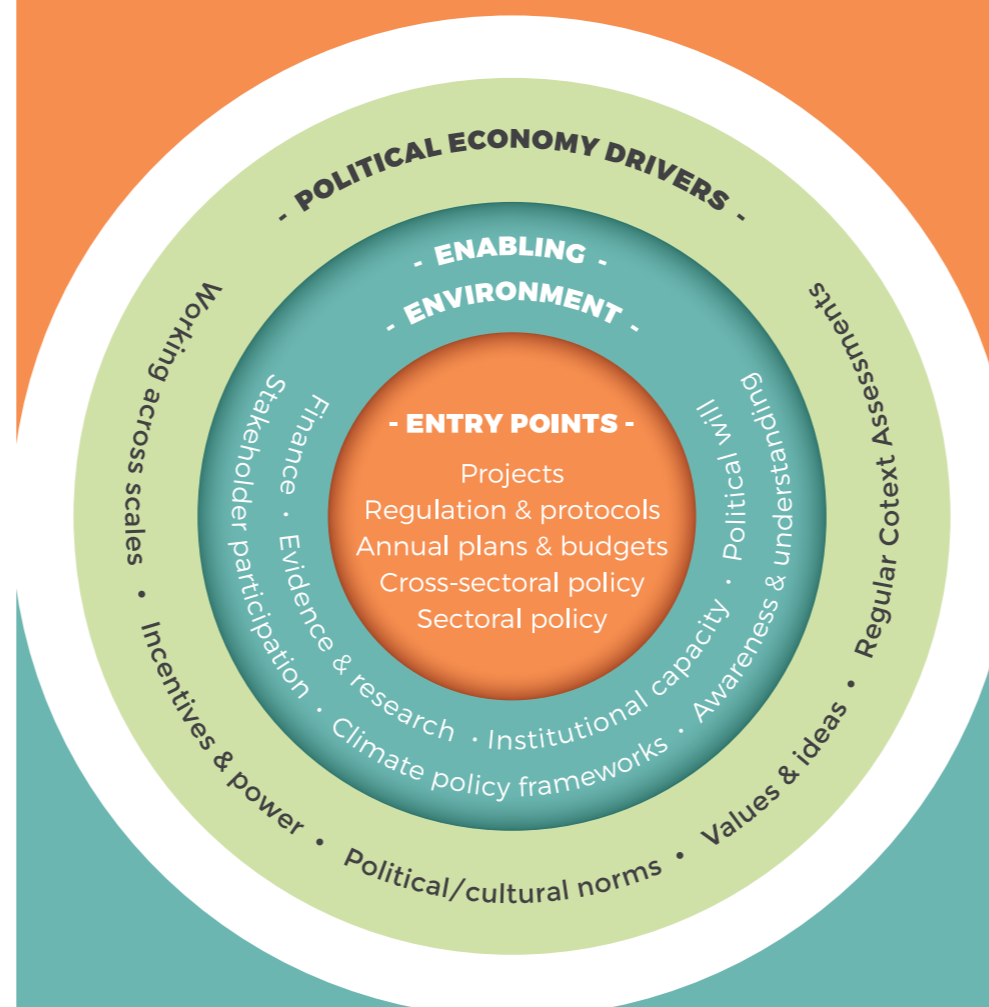
MAINSTREAMING WITHIN BUDGETS:

ACT has attempted to use the annual planning and budgetary process as an entry point to mainstreaming — one of the most challenging entry-points. ACT's Financing Framework for Resilient Growth (FFRG) supports governments to manage budgets to address climate change. This framework helps calculate potential loss and damage, review past climate expenditure trends, identify the degree of climate relevance of adaptation expenditure, and allocate financial resources for climate change.

REGULAR CONTEXT ASSESSMENTS:

Every year, ACT carries out an assessment of the context for addressing climate change in each of the national and subnational locations where ACT operates. It tracks the level of political will for tackling climate change, but also what socioeconomic, cultural and other factors are influencing political priorities. This informs the programme's planning and evaluation process. For example, it highlighted that one motivation for many political leaders to put in place ambitious climate change policies and plans, was to demonstrate leadership on the international stage.

POLITICAL ECONOMY DRIVERS

- ENABLING -
- ENVIRONMENT -

- ENTRY POINTS -
Projects
Regulation & protocols
Annual plans & budgets
Cross-sectoral policy
Sectoral policy

Working across scales
Finance · Evidence & research · Climate policy frameworks
Stakeholder participation
Incentives & power · Political/cultural norms · Values & ideas
Institutional capacity · Awareness & understanding · Political will
Regular Cotext Assessments

WORKING ACROSS SCALES:

One of the most important elements of the programme is the decentralised structure of the management and delivery team, with permanent offices and full-time teams in each location. The composition and set-up of this local team reflects the local context and, in some locations, is entirely or partially based within a government office. At the same time, the regional nature of the programme has allowed projects to learn from each other and encouraged best practices to be shared across state and national boundaries.

RAISING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING:

ACT identified capacity and knowledge gaps for each relevant government agency and stakeholder group, and then designed a communication and capability strategy for each. Tailored knowledge products are produced to improve access to fundamental information about climate change and resilience. ACT also translates climate change action plans into local languages and synthesises them into documents that are easy-to-read.

FOSTERING POLITICAL WILL:

In each respective country, ACT works with a wide range of government agencies responsible for climate change. One challenge is that adaptation to climate change requires a cross-sectoral approach but climate change is often siloed within ministries of environment or equivalent agencies. ACT has tried to overcome this by nurturing strong relationships between senior officials with responsibilities across sectors, such as chief secretaries or ministries of planning, and agencies responsible for climate change.

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITIES:

In 2016/17, ACT trained over 200 government officials on how to access climate funding. This led to 19 funding applications being developed in a single year, and US$127.4 million being leveraged from domestic and international public funds and the private sector. ACT's targeted approach to building individual capabilities within an organisation has in turn built institutional capacity. In Nepal, ACT has been supporting the capacity development of officials within the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in survey design and methodologies to assess household-level climate impacts. As a result, CBS launched the first National Climate Change Survey in Nepal in 2017, and this is expected to be an on-going initiative.

Key lessons from ACT's experience:

UNDERSTAND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS: Any adaptation project should consider issues related to institutional capacity, political will, and existing policy frameworks. This enabling environment should be assessed and regularly monitored, to identify potential governance risks and opportunities. ACT has done this through annual context assessment exercises.

A SUPPORTIVE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT IS CRUCIAL: Integrating climate change into policy and plans will only succeed if measures are supported by sufficient resources, capacity and capabilities to implement and monitor the initiatives. ACT has focussed on this by enabling access to finance and information, mobilising key stakeholders and political will, as well as supporting the development of the right policy frameworks and strengthening institutional capacity.

POLITICAL ECONOMY DRIVERS CANNOT BE IGNORED: Projects should identify and understand the relative influence of different stakeholders within the system, as well as formal and informal institutions, norms and values. This helps to define the best formal and/or informal approach to influencing the government. ACT has operationalised this by using a variety of Political Economy Analysis tools.

GOVERNANCE OCCURS AT MULTIPLE LEVELS: Successful adaptation at one level of policy making will need to be supported by good governance at other levels. Therefore, ACT works at the national as well as subnational levels across South Asia.

DIFFERENT ENTRY POINTS FOR ADAPTATION SHOULD BE USED: Policy entry points for adaptation measures that are easiest to access (and where there is demand and interest from government), are not always those that have the highest returns. This is why ACT has strategically used a wide variety of 'easy' and 'difficult' entry-points to achieve the overall objective.

These and other lessons from the Act programme are elaborated in the ACT learning paper: Mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within governance systems in South Asia: An analytical framework and examples from practice.

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