

## Mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within governance systems in South Asia: An analytical framework and examples from practice

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ACCMS	Assam Climate Change Management Society
ACT	Action on Climate Today
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDKN	Climate and Development Knowledge Network
COP	Conference of the Parties
DFID	Department for International Development
FFRG	Financing Frameworks for Resilient Growth
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan of Action
LSG	Local Self-Government
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAPCC	State Action Plan on Climate Change
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDMC	SAARC Disaster Management Centre
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-NGLS	United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
VCA	Value Chain Approach
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Executive summary

This paper focuses on the governance challenge of adapting to the impacts of climate change. Adaptation requires a shift in how governments 'do' development: they now need to consider the impacts of climate change when making investment, planning and policy decisions. This idea of 'mainstreaming' adaptation to climate change within development is well established, but the governance dimension of this mainstreaming process is often side-lined in practice. In contexts where governance is already a challenge, the capacity to effectively adapt to climate change is particularly limited. Governments across the world are experimenting with different approaches to tackling climate change, supported by technical consultants, donors and civil society, but often with a piecemeal approach to addressing the governance dimensions.

The Action on Climate Today (ACT) programme, a UK Aid-funded programme, is focused on climate-proofing growth in five South Asian countries at the national and subnational levels, and is designed to transform systems of planning and delivery for adaptation to climate change. This paper is based on lessons from the experience of ACT on strengthening governance systems to deliver adaptation.

The paper introduces a general analytical framework for mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within governance systems. This has been developed on the basis of a review of existing literature and analysis on the governance dimensions of tackling climate change, as well as experience from the ACT programme. It covers both the process of mainstreaming and the context, and

is based on three dimensions that are relevant at multiple levels: 1) entry points for mainstreaming climate change into the planning and policy process; 2) the enabling environment or 'system' that supports mainstreaming; and 3) political economy drivers within the system.

These dimensions are then illustrated by means of a summary of the current state of play, in terms of which entry points have been leveraged, the strength of the enabling environment and some of the political economy drivers, at different governance levels: global; regional; national; subnational and local; and community. There are a number of common challenges and clear deficits in good governance of adaptation to climate change, as well as opportunities to build on best practices.

The paper then puts forward ACT experiences in supporting entry points for mainstreaming and strengthening the enabling environment at the national and subnational levels in the region. It explains how the programme is informed by, and monitors and reports on, the political economy drivers that influence success. The paper outlines whether and how the programme is operating within each dimension of the proposed governance framework, but also highlights where there are gaps and where the programme has faced challenges delivering impact.

The paper concludes by offering the climate change governance framework as a flexible and adaptive decision support tool for examining the opportunities for integrating climate change adaptation in governance processes, and key considerations necessary to achieve this.



# 1. Introduction

Climate change poses a fundamental threat to growth and development in South Asia. Its reality is challenging previous notions about what it takes to grow a country or region's economy and reduce poverty. It is estimated that, if we continue with the current development paradigm, the impact of climate change will reduce gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates by 2–7%, and GDP will be 50% lower in South Asia by 2050 (Ahmed and Suphachalasai, 2014).

Governments across South Asia have recognised that a new approach to development is required, one that can withstand the shocks and manage the uncertainty climate change brings. For example, for many countries, economic growth has traditionally been concentrated in coastal settlements; with the sea level estimated to rise by 26–98 cm by the end of the 21st century, this is increasing their vulnerability to climate change and undermining potential drivers of growth (IPCC, 2013). Adapting to current and unknown future levels of climate change therefore raises questions about where and how governments can invest in and plan for what is to come.

Tackling climate change is not a stand-alone subject; it needs to be factored into the decision-making process for development. This is what is commonly referred to as 'mainstreaming' climate change (Klein et al., 2005), and it raises a number of challenging governance dimensions:

- Climate change is a global problem that requires all countries, cities and communities to take action locally but in a coordinated fashion. For example, rivers often cut across multiple national and subnational boundaries; if a government upstream draws more water from the river to respond to a drought situation, downstream users will suffer.
- Climate change will affect growth in all sectors, and an economy-wide response is required. For example, water, energy and agriculture are inextricably linked. As climate change makes water an increasingly scarce resource in some locations, there will be difficult decisions and trade-offs between the sectors, such as on whether to use water to irrigate crops or to operate power plants. All parts of government thus need to work together.
- Adapting to the impacts of climate change involves private actors, such as citizens and businesses, changing their behaviour or

investment patterns. For example, farmers may need to switch from flood to drip irrigation to conserve water; real estate firms need to consider the future risk of flooding when buying land. The government's role is to leverage and influence this private investment so as to build overall resilience to climate change.

- Planning for and adapting to climate change entails challenges to how politicians normally make decisions. First, there is still uncertainty surrounding the impact climate change will have in the future, and politicians have to make decisions with incomplete information. Second, climate change poses a long-term risk to growth and development: most studies provide analysis up to 2050 or beyond. Politicians therefore have to look beyond the generation of short-term benefits that emerge only within the electoral cycle.
- Switching from a traditional approach to development to one that takes into account climate change will necessarily involve some people losing out while others benefit. For example, if a government restricts construction in a flood zone, the value of the land and therefore the wealth of the owners will reduce. Governments have to manage and if necessary compensate those who will likely oppose the tackling of climate change.

These are just some of the reasons that a hugely important governance dimension exists with regard to tackling climate change. If we approach adaptation as a purely technical solution, without addressing the governance dimensions, we significantly reduce the potential to ensure our actions will have a long-term impact.

The Action on Climate Today (ACT) programme attempts to put equal emphasis on the technical and governance dimensions of the adaptation challenge. This four-year initiative supported by the UK Department for International Development works in 10 locations across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan at the national and subnational level. It focuses on mainstreaming adaptation in government plans, policies and programmes in four core sectoral areas: climate finance, climate-resilient agriculture, climate-resilient water management, and governance and institutional strengthening.

This paper begins in Section 2 by examining recent literature on the governance of adaptation to

climate change, and puts forward a new conceptual framework that covers both the process of mainstreaming adaptation into development policy and plans and the context. The framework is both derived from existing research and analysis and informed by the experience of ACT within South Asia.

Section 3 provides a snapshot of the situation at different governance levels (from global to community), looking at the extent to which mainstreaming adaptation is taking place and how supportive the enabling environment is for adaptation. Using this analysis, the paper highlights

some of the critical governance challenges for adaptation, as well as some opportunities for catalysing or strengthening the process of mainstreaming.

Section 4 focuses on ACT's experience of supporting climate change governance at different levels, drawing out unique learning from the programme.

The paper concludes by offering the governance framework for adaptation on climate change as a tool for practitioners within civil society, government and donor agencies, for use in both understanding and addressing the governance dimension of climate change.

## 2. Conceptual approach to the governance of climate change adaptation

There is growing acceptance among practitioners, donors and academics that mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within development planning processes is not a straightforward linear technical or bureaucratic process. Mainstreaming adaptation requires considering current and future climate risks and opportunities for reducing these at every stage in the decision-making process (Box 1). It involves a complicated set of actors, institutions and processes, the effectiveness of which are informed by political economy factors (Yohe and Moss, 2000; Brooks et al., 2005; Halsnæs and Verhagen, 2007; Osman and Downing, 2007; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2009; Chaum et al., 2011; Lockwood, 2013; Bahadur and Tanner, 2014). However, there is no accepted framework or conceptual approach to tell us how these different governance dimensions fit together, or what constitutes 'good governance' of adaptation.

There is a large body of literature on how governance affects whether and how development policies in general are designed, implemented and have any impact. There are a number of conceptual frameworks on what 'good governance' means for development (Grindle, 2004; Smith, 2007; Kemp et al., 2017; World Bank, 2017a). These rest on the assumption that government planning and policy-making does not exist in a vacuum, but rather within a complicated political and social system in which different groups interact with different levels of power (World Bank, 2017a).

Governance is therefore defined here as 'the complex inter-relationships between stakeholders and societal coordination processes' (Fröhlich and Knieling, 2013). It is not only *formal* government decision-making processes and regulation that matter, but also *informal* interaction, including between public and private actors. The literature on governance as an underlying determinant of how development is managed is obviously very relevant for understanding adaptation to climate change. However, the process of mainstreaming adaptation within development planning and delivery also raises a specific set of governance challenges that require separate attention.

There have been a number of attempts to piece together the different elements required for successful mainstreaming of climate change within a conceptual approach (Biermann, 2007; Jänicke

and Jörgens, 2009; Fröhlich and Knieling, 2013). Most of these have been outputs of technical assistance programmes (and often have a bias towards the issues being worked on), with some academic analysis as well.

For example, the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) has identified the essential 'ingredients' of a successful planning process for 'climate-compatible development' as including a focus on local priorities; stakeholder participation; knowledge partnerships; gender equality; the right planning tools; environmental and other laws that reinforce climate-compatible development; supportive public expenditure and fiscal policies; and strong labour policies (Bickersteth et al., 2017). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) *Guide to Mainstreaming* is a process-driven approach that has three steps: finding the entry points and making the case to set the stage for mainstreaming; mainstreaming into on-going policy processes; and meeting the implementation challenge by mainstreaming into budgets and finance, implementation and monitoring (UNDP and UNEP, 2011). The International Institute for Environment and Development has put forward a framework for mainstreaming centred on three building blocks: a policy and planning building block (including policy frameworks, financial frameworks and institutional arrangements); a programmes and projects building block; and an enabling environment building block (political will, information services) (Pervin et al., 2013).

The different approaches to mainstreaming all tend to combine some amount of 'process' in terms of the steps that need to be taken to integrate climate considerations within different development plans and decisions, and wider contextual factors and variables that will affect whether the mainstreaming process is a success or not (e.g. institutional capacity, political will, etc.). However, none comprehensively covers all aspects of governance, including both the formal and the informal institutions, stakeholders and processes involved, as well as the wider social, cultural and political concerns.

ACT has developed a framework for climate change governance that builds on this existing literature



and analysis and aims to cover both the process of mainstreaming and the context. It combines three dimensions that are highlighted in the existing body of literature and that are relevant at multiple levels, from global down to community:

- **Entry points** for mainstreaming climate change into the planning and policy process;
- The **enabling environment** or 'system' that supports mainstreaming;
- Both of these informed by a set of **political economy drivers** specific to the location.

The framing of these three dimensions is also informed by the experiences of the ACT programme in trying to strengthen systems of planning and delivery for adaptation. The 'entry points' reflect where the programme has found opportunities for integrating adaptation in the planning process. The different parts of the 'enabling environment' outlined below are informed by the different challenges the programme faces in working within these locations. Lastly, the 'political economy drivers' reflect the programme's understanding of why certain locations have relatively stronger systems for adaptation than others.

Figure 1 illustrates the key components of these dimensions, described in more detail below.

## 2.1. Entry points for mainstreaming

This stage refers to the opportunities for considering climate change in different development policy and planning processes. It is based on opportunities identified within the ACT programme but also wider practitioner experience in mainstreaming adaptation (Pervin et al., 2013; UNDP and UNEP, 2011; Bickersteth et al., 2017). The following list is not comprehensive of all the various development policy entry points but does outline the main categories:

- **Cross-sectoral policy:** This is a top-down approach that sets a broad vision or strategy for development (e.g. a five-year development plan) that integrates climate factors. It can be legally binding, with the implementing entities clearly accountable for implementation, or it can be non-binding, but it usually holds significant political weight.
- **Sectoral policy:** This can be a broad sector-focused strategy or policy or a multi-year

**Figure 1: Framework for mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within governance systems**



action plan for adapting to climate change (e.g. factoring climate change within an agriculture strategy). Either the relevant line ministry initiates it autonomously or the requirement comes from the cross-sectoral policy. The policy should inform the annual plans and the design of projects for the sector.

- **Regulation and protocols:** These are specific rules that require the consideration of climate change when taking certain decisions or actions. They could relate to the internal decision-making processes of the government (e.g. budgeting protocols or rules of business) or rules for the public and private sector (e.g. building codes).
- **Annual plans and budgets:** This is when the regular annual development planning and budgeting process involves considering the risks of climate change, in terms of which projects will be funded and where. For example, a planning or budgeting protocol may require screening of the plan or budget for climate change risks and opportunities.
- **Projects:** This involves considering the risk of climate change, and adaptation opportunities, within the design of projects or programmes. It could entail a legal requirement stemming from a regulation (e.g. a protocol on climate screening of infrastructure projects), a top-down policy directive or an autonomous action of a particular agency.

While mainstreaming should happen at each level, it is usually easier and more effective to start with one or another entry point, depending on the context.

## 2.2. Enabling environment for mainstreaming

This step includes the systems and context within which mainstreaming takes place, and that can support (or hinder) the process. This has been informed by the challenges the ACT programme has faced in utilising some of the above entry points for mainstreaming, as well as wider literature on the governance dimensions of climate change and development more broadly (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2009; Lockwood, 2013; Bahadur and Tanner, 2014; World Bank 2017a). A broad categorisation of the main elements of the enabling environment include:

- **Evidence and research:** An important input into the mainstreaming process is relevant evidence on current and future climate risks and adaptation options. However, the use of this information depends on how it is packaged and how accessible it is to policy-makers. On the demand side, whether there is a culture of evidenced-based decision-making also influences the level of uptake.
- **Awareness and understanding:** The level of detailed understanding of climate change



ACT technical expert interviewing community members in Layyah, Punjab, Pakistan.

## Box 1: What is involved in mainstreaming climate change adaptation within development plans and policies?

To mainstream climate change within the various policy entry points outlined above, the following four sets of questions need to be answered:

**1. What risk does climate change pose to achievement of the development objective (of the country/sector/project, etc.)?** And what options are there to mitigate this risk? Which of these options provide the most adaptation benefits, at the lowest cost? This process is often called 'climate-proofing'.

For example, for a plan to construct a new coal-fired power plant, this would primarily involve looking at the level of demand for water by the plant, against current and expected future water availability in the location given climate change. To adapt to any possible shortage, a range of water-efficient technology and operational measures can be adopted.

**2. Is it possible to increase the adaptation benefits that are delivered?** Many actions taken with only a focus on development in mind also deliver significant adaptation co-benefits. It is often possible to further maximise the amount of adaptation benefits delivered. For example, a programme that promotes the construction of water storage facilities will already provide adaptation benefits in building the capacity of households to cope with erratic rainfall patterns. However, the adaptation benefits could be further maximised if projections of future rainfall are considered in terms of where the storage facilities are built (prioritising the most vulnerable areas) and the type of technology used. Smaller

storage options (e.g. ponds and tanks) may not be adequate if rainfall decreases significantly, while larger dams may be at risk if flooding is expected.

**3. Is the country/sector/project worsening its vulnerability to the impacts of climate change?** Often without realising it, a particular development objective or action can actually be making a location more vulnerable to the impact of climate change. This is called maladaptation.

For example, a programme that promotes the use of solar-powered irrigation pumps is delivering development benefits (increasing crop production, reducing fuel prices) and also climate mitigation benefits by avoiding the greenhouse gas emissions from the use of fuel. However, it also has the unintended consequence of making it cheaper for farmers to draw water, which reduces the incentive to conserve water and can lead to the over-extraction of groundwater. This increases farmers' vulnerability to instances of drought.

**4. Is it possible to take new actions to reduce the impact climate change will have?** There could be additional options for adapting to the impacts of climate change that are not connected to an existing development objective or programme, etc. For example, rainwater harvesting may not be considered a requirement in a location until a climate change impact assessment highlights the risk of a future reduction in rainfall. The need for such additional actions may emerge if there remains an 'adaptation gap' after taking the above steps.

risks and adaptation options among different stakeholder groups determines whether the mainstreaming process is initiated and the quality and effectiveness of the process. It also determines how climate change is framed and understood; for example, in some locations the narrative of climate change is focused only on natural disasters.

- **Stakeholder participation:** Whose voice and interest dominates the decision-making process on tackling climate change will determine the outcome. Mainstreaming climate change into development decisions and actions risks upsetting the *status quo* and various interest groups. Therefore, ensuring wide participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process,

including civil society, ensures a balance of views between 'winners' and 'losers'.

- **Political will:** Commitment at the highest political level to tackling climate change trickles down into institutional commitment. It ensures the mainstreaming process is started but also maintained. It also helps lower level policy-makers override any vested interests in maintaining the *status quo*.
- **Institutions:** This covers a whole remit of issues related to institutional capacity to carry out the mainstreaming process effectively, such as level of knowledge and understanding of officials, coordination across sectors and between different levels of government, systems for monitoring and reporting on adaptation,

etc. These issues are particularly important for determining whether policies, plans and projects are both designed appropriately and implemented effectively.

- **Policy framework:** A climate change policy document, strategy or approach can guide the mainstreaming process, including by setting targets and ensuring accountability. At the international level, this would include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); at the national and local level, it covers any specific climate change policy or framework that requires line ministries, local government and others to take action.
- **Finance:** The availability of resources to respond to the additional cost of adaptation influences whether mainstreaming can take place. Finance can come from existing domestic development budgets and maximising the adaptation benefits, as well as additional climate finance. Whether climate change is routinely considered in the budget process (e.g. in multi-year financial forecasts) also determines whether climate change is recognised as an economic and financial risk. It is important to note that adaptation does not necessarily come at a cost; at times, mainstreaming adaptation can also lead to substantial cost savings. For instance, factoring climate risk into a road-building project may lead to a change in the route that makes the length of the road shorter, leading to a reduced cost.

### 2.3. Political economy drivers

These are the factors that inform and influence the enabling environment, which are very specific to a particular location. They can be categorised into three broad areas (DFID, 2009; IDS, 2012).

- **The interests and incentives facing different groups, how they exercise power and how they influence outcomes:** The relative role and influence of different interest groups in the policy-making process reflect to a large degree the underlying economic interests in the society, but also how organised different

groups are (Grossman and Helpman, 1994). For example, within a coastal town, more well-off and organised residents may build walls around their neighbourhood to protect themselves from flooding, but this may lead to additional inundation of poorer residents.

- **The role formal institutions and informal social, political and cultural norms play in shaping human interaction and political and economic competition:** The policy-making process is affected by the structure of government and the number of institutional 'veto' players whose agreement is necessary for a decision to be made (Tsebelis, 2002)—for example whether there is a parliament with real power *vis-à-vis* the executive branch of government and whether it is a federal or centralised structure of government. If the country is democratic, then the degree to which the democracy is 'responsive' defines the extent to which politicians take into account the interests of their constituents (Steves and Teytelboym, 2013). The policy-making process is also affected by informal norms—for example the extent to which the bureaucracy is hierarchical and closed off to external advice and influence.
- **The impact of values and ideas, including political ideologies, religion and culture:** Within a location, there can be multiple, often conflicting, sets of values and ideas that have an impact on how climate change is tackled—such as across competing political parties. There can also be many different cultural, religious and ethnic groups with different beliefs on climate change. For example, certain political parties favour market-based instruments for tackling climate change, whereas others oppose them. Within certain ethnic groups, forests play a particularly important cultural role, which influences how they view forestry programmes (Tanner and Allouche, 2011). In countries with an abundance of fossil fuels, there is often a widespread view that energy use is less costly to society than it actually is (Steves and Teytelboym, 2013).



## 3. The current state of play of the governance of adaptation to climate change

This section provides a snapshot of the situation at different governance levels with regard to which entry points have been leveraged, the strength of the enabling environment and some of the common political economy drivers.

### 3.1. Global governance of adaptation to climate change

There are limited entry points to mainstream adaptation to climate change at the global level, because there are few global development policies or plans to start with. There have been some efforts within the UN system—for example climate change features within the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as in the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction. The SDGs entailed discussion about how climate change should be mainstreamed: whether it should feature across all relevant development goals or have its own stand-alone goal (Lacoste and Picot, 2014; UN-NGLS, 2014). In the end, there is a dedicated goal (SDG 13) on addressing climate change, under the remit of the UNFCCC, but it is also made clear that this also relates to a number of other goals.

Mainstreaming climate change has been more limited within the binding rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other economic and commercial forums. Negotiations under the WTO to agree reduced tariffs on environmental goods used in clean energy and pollution control collapsed in late 2016 (DW, 2016).

The enabling environment includes a strong and expanding evidence base on current and future impacts of climate change at the global level, anchored in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Similarly, under the UNFCCC, the global policy framework on climate change has influenced a great deal of action at the national level, and led to a significant commitment of resources. However, it is weaker for other dimensions; for example, there are few institutional structures to facilitate mainstreaming at a global level, only a relatively limited UNFCCC secretariat (Backstrand and Kuyper, 2017). Political will is also not consistent, and it is bureaucrats who lead much of the international negotiations.

Geopolitical interests dominate political economy drivers at this level, and governments tend to prioritise national sovereignty over collaboration and collective action on climate change. Global debate on climate change also cannot be divorced from underlying inequalities among countries, as well as vast differences in negotiating capacity and distrust among developing countries that rich nations will take responsibility for the problem they have mostly caused (Timmons Roberts et al., 2004; Fudge et al., 2011).

### 3.2. Regional governance of adaptation to climate change in South Asia

Virtually no mainstreaming entry points have been leveraged at the regional level, mainly because there are few regional governmental development policies or programmes. There are some trans-boundary agreements (e.g. the Indus Waters Treaty) but so far these have not formally integrated climate change. This lies in sharp contrast with the situation in other regions, particularly Europe, where governments negotiate binding common policies and rules on many adaptation-related subjects under the European Union, but also Africa, where governments under the Southern African Development Community have developed strategies for a regional approach to climate change.

The enabling environment in South Asia is characterised by very limited political will to collaborate on climate change at the regional level. The institutional structure is limited to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which does not have the political mandate to issue binding rules and regulations. The only form of a policy framework is the SAARC 2010 Thimphu Statement on Climate Change, which provides some high-level guidance to national governments and has resulted in the establishment of an Inter-Governmental Expert Group on Climate Change and some other initiatives (Thapa, 2013). However, as SAARC relies on national actions to implement the Statement, and without a monitoring and accountability mechanism, it is difficult to judge the degree of implementation (ibid.). For managing natural disasters, there is a SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC),





Traditional agricultural practices in Assam, India.

and a 2005 Comprehensive Framework guides disaster preparedness within the region. However, the SDMC is not seen as a particularly effective institution, and the policy framework does not influence policy or practice within member states (White, 2015).

The region's political economy is the key constraint to mainstreaming at this level. Tensions between governments in the region mean geopolitical interests override any effort towards cooperation.

### 3.3. National governance of adaptation to climate change

It is at the national level that there has been the greatest effort to mainstream climate change, mostly motivated by the UNFCCC requirements and global climate finance incentives. There is evidence of mainstreaming within overarching sectoral strategies and policies, and in some programmes. For example, under India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, a number of sectoral missions aim to tackle climate change risks and maximise adaptation opportunities, such as the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, which aims to 'transform Indian agriculture into a climate resilient production system' (Saigal, 2014; Venkataramani et al., 2015).

There has been less in terms of routine and purposeful mainstreaming within annual development plans and budgets (as opposed to one-off programmes or plans to address particular climate change risks, such as floods or droughts). Infrastructure or other development projects are also not routinely screened for climate change risks and adaptation opportunities, although a few

governments (e.g. Nepal and Pakistan) have piloted climate change budgeting tools—though external programmes and actors have driven these (UNDP, 2014, 2016).

The enabling environment for tackling climate change differs significantly in each country. However, some general trends include a strong policy framework, with cross-sectoral policies and plans in place in most countries (e.g. Pakistan's National Climate Change Policy and Nepal's National Adaptation Programme of Action). There is clear political will among national leaders to tackle climate change (and particularly the specific climate risks they face, such as floods and droughts), to the extent that they reference it in speeches and policy documents and commit to action. However, when a so-called 'development' priority comes into conflict with a climate change concern (e.g. building a road within a flood-prone area), the former still usually overrides the latter (Gogoi, 2017).

There is some institutional capacity, with most countries having a nodal agency responsible for climate change, although these tend not to have the mandate or authority to encourage or dictate mainstreaming of adaptation within the different sectors. In general, coordination on adaptation across sectors and levels of government is lacking, and there is virtually no monitoring and reporting on adaptation. Most countries, with India an exception, are also constrained in mainstreaming by a lack of domestic resources.

For all countries, a key political economy driver is electoral politics and the election cycle. The

overriding concern with re-election means politicians have a short time horizon and want certainty in terms of the short-term results any policy will deliver. This is at odds with the long-term, uncertain nature of climate change risks and adaptation options (Orlove, 2010).

### 3.4. Subnational and local governance of adaptation to climate change

South Asia has made significant progress in mainstreaming at the subnational level, particularly India and the other federalist countries. Some of this has come via national-level sectoral policies and programmes that already have climate change concerns built into them (see above), as well as donor-driven initiatives. Like at the national level, sectoral departments at the subnational level often take the initiative to address particular climate change risks such as droughts and floods, but this is rarely done in a comprehensive or routine manner, and is likely to overlook many risks and opportunities (Gogoi, 2017).

It is difficult to generalise about the enabling environment at the subnational level, given large diversity in the hundreds of subnational and local units of government in the region. In the large federal countries of India and Pakistan, top-down pressure from the international stage to tackle climate change has gone from central level down to subnational governments. Provinces in Pakistan and states in India have been directed to prepare cross-sectoral plans on climate change, which should implement the national-level policy framework. State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) in India and Provincial Climate Change Plans in Pakistan have in some locations been a catalyst for initiating discussion on climate change with line departments, but have mostly had limited impact on mainstreaming, given lack of ownership and other factors (Dubash and Jogesh, 2014; Gogoi, 2015). There is a huge difference in the level of institutional capacity: in India and Pakistan there is a mature and relatively effective government machinery in general at the subnational level, which is developing specific capabilities for tackling climate change such as dedicated nodal officers, knowledge management and research centres and coordination committees. However, in Nepal and Afghanistan, the federal structure is still emerging and there is very little capacity at the subnational level of government.

One important political economy driver is the structure of a country's local government and whether electoral politics are a relevant factor at this level. There is often a strong local identity and/

or different identities coexist, and political leaders are often required to distribute benefits across different ethnic or cultural groups. In a number of locations in Afghanistan, Pakistan and some parts of India and Nepal, conflict between different groups and/or with the central government dominates the concerns of local government, and governing in general is a challenge.

### 3.5. Community governance of adaptation to climate change

There have only been *ad hoc* attempts to mainstream climate change at the community level, with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) driving most bottom-up efforts and only in a small number of communities. These have resulted in pilot projects for adaptation without sufficient attention to scaling-up (Gogoi et al., 2014; Schipper et al., 2014). The exception is Nepal, where village-level climate change planning has resulted in Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAs) being rolled out across the country. Some *ad hoc* attempts have provided useful models for others. For example, the Government of India is attempting to mainstream adaptation to climate change within its rural employment guarantee programme, which requires village governments (*gram panchayats*) to identify where and how infrastructure projects can deliver adaptation benefits.

Governance arrangements at the community level are lacking, particularly with regard to political will and leadership, and institutional capacity, to mainstream climate change (UNDP et al., 2010). However, in most countries, there is a drive to build capacity at this level and to decentralise some governance functions even further downward. There is very limited information on climate change at this level, as most research is at a more macro scale. This makes it difficult to identify and manage climate risks.

In terms of political economy drivers, there are institutional and governance structures in place at the community level in a number of countries, such as *gaunpalikas* in rural areas of Nepal. In India, the Panchayati Raj system includes *gram panchayats* at the village or small town level with an elected *sarpanch* at the head. These are still relatively new institutions, and most planning and policy decisions are still taken at higher levels. There are usually strong informal cultural structures and norms that unite the community, particularly with regard to ethnicity and religion. The degree of homogeneity and/or conflict within the community obviously affects governance capacity.

## 4. Challenges and opportunities for climate change governance

### 4.1. Challenges for good governance of adaptation to climate change

Section 3 has illustrated that there are a number of critical governance challenges for adaptation to climate change at different levels. These can be explained by some common areas of weakness in the enabling environment across South Asia.

**There is a clear deficit of climate change governance at the regional level.** There has been very little attempt to govern adaptation to climate change under SAARC or any other regional platform or institution. National governments have been influenced by policy frameworks set at the global level under the UNFCCC, and these have not been filtered through any regional governance mechanism. This is principally because hostile political economy drivers, including geopolitical tensions, have generated a very weak enabling environment and a lack of commitment to establishing meaningful governance structures at this level.

There are some, mainly donor-driven, initiatives that (sometimes indirectly) are strengthening the enabling environment for tackling climate change across different countries and regions. For example, the South Asia Water Initiative is a major multi-donor programme that encourages dialogue around the management of the major Himalayan river systems that span multiple countries (World Bank, 2017b). In the neighbouring Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region there are some similar (but far less pronounced) political and institutional challenges to regional cooperation on climate change, yet there has been more progress than in South Asia. For example, under ASEAN, governments have issued a series of joint statements, established working groups and adopted action plans on climate change (Dator-Bercilla et al., 2010; Elder and Miyazawa, 2015).

**There are some strong connections between different governance levels but also notable gaps.** Multi-level governance is critical to ensuring plans and policies for adaptation are set at the most appropriate level. For example, if each local (or national) government within a river basin independently manages its portion of the river and does not share hydrological data with its downstream neighbours, then any local flood

warning mechanism will not be very effective. In reality, there is an important link between global governance structures, particularly the UNFCCC mechanism, and action at national level. For example, most national policy frameworks, such as the draft National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), have been established as a result of formal or informal pressure from the UNFCCC.

However, on top of the missing link at the regional level, linkages downward to subnational governance levels, including cities, are fragmented or *ad hoc*. This presents a risk for implementation of top-down policy on adaptation, as many environmental and other issues come under the mandate of lower levels of government. In some locations, there has been significant effort to prepare subnational climate change plans, which are expected to translate national plans downward. However, the quality and effectiveness of these is mixed, including the extent to which they are actually aligned with national-level policy priorities (Dubash and Jogesh, 2014; Gogoi, 2017).

Where multi-level governance of climate change has been attempted (e.g. in Nepal with LAPAs, in India with SAPCCs and in Pakistan with provincial climate plans), there is often confusion and inefficiency, with overlapping policy frameworks and a lack of coordination across levels (Ayers et al., 2011; Dubash and Jogesh, 2014; Venkataramani et al., 2015; Gogoi, 2017). For example, in Nepal, LAPAs were until recently prepared at the community level by Village Development Committees, and the financing for their implementation has to date been routed through the district government—but the funding comes from international donors and is quite separate from the district development budget (Marker et al., 2016). The LAPAs are therefore seen as separate from the district's routine development planning process, which works against the idea of mainstreaming. Nepal has recently announced its new constitutional structure of government, with significant changes at the subnational level and below. This could have implications for the future rollout of LAPAs.

**Cross-sectoral policy frameworks on climate change are often seen as a final policy output, rather than as part of the enabling environment.** The primary purpose of these policy frameworks is to provide guidance to others (e.g. line



ministries, lower levels of government) on how to mainstream climate change. They require others to take action to implement the policy framework, and are therefore a necessary, but not sufficient, policy output (Dubash and Jogesh, 2014; Lamsal et al., 2014; Gogoi, 2017). The policy documents themselves are often not particularly 'implementation-ready', and lack detailed activity plans or implementation pathways, budgets and allocated responsibilities. For 'implementation' to happen, line ministries need ownership over the plan and to have the knowledge and data available to take action. There need to be financial resources in place to cover any associated costs, and the leadership to drive and monitor the process. This also demonstrates that the cross-sectoral policy framework is only one element of the enabling environment, and that the other dimensions are also important in determining whether the opportunities for mainstreaming are leveraged.

For example, in Pakistan, the National Climate Change Policy outlines how the country will tackle current and future climate change risks. It requires provincial governments and federal line ministries to prioritise certain adaptation actions and mainstream climate change across their development initiatives. The federal government has even developed a Framework for Implementation of the Climate Change Policy, to provide greater policy guidance. However, while in theory this is a binding document on these actors, there are no incentives for action, or punishments

for inaction, and it has had limited impact in terms of implementation and mainstreaming (Salik et al., 2015). In 2015, the Lahore High Court ordered the Government of Punjab to implement the Climate Change Policy after an individual farmer suffering the impacts of climate change brought out a public interest litigation case. The Court's intervention, given the authority it holds, has significantly strengthened the enabling environment in Punjab, and the country has initiated steps to translate the national policy into a provincial plan (Sheikh, 2016).

**One critical weakness at every level is a lack of accountability for mainstreaming climate change.** Governments in general do not effectively monitor and evaluate their development policies, plans and programmes: efforts are limited to measuring expenditure and adherence to process rather than results. This owes partly to lack of capacity and overlapping donor requirements but also to a lack of internal demand for effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E), as this risks exposing poor performance (Mehrotra, 2013). Very few governments have established M&E systems for their cross-sectoral climate change policy frameworks, which further reduces any pressure on those expected to implement them. A properly designed M&E system for adaptation to climate change is also important for addressing the common problem of actors over- or under-claiming the adaptation benefits of a development activity. It would also help hold to account and coordinate the multiple government- and donor-led initiatives on



Potato sowing along with horticulture crops, as a safety measure against crop failure, in Mainpat, Chhattisgarh in India.

climate change happening at multiple levels (Fisher and Slaney, 2013).

Effective M&E on adaptation to climate change is lacking primarily because there is no common methodology for monitoring adaptation, and few resources or practical experiences to guide governments (Christiansen et al., 2016). Each donor and climate change fund has its own approach and imposes a different set of requirements on fund recipients. At the heart of the challenge for establishing a common or accepted methodology for M&E of adaptation is lack of consensus on what constitutes an adaptation activity and adaptation funding (as opposed to regular development activities and funding) (Parry et al., 2016). The UNFCCC has in the past not made many demands of developing countries in terms of monitoring and reporting on commitments and pledges made on the international stage, beyond some relatively weak reporting guidelines for accessing international climate finance. This has reduced the pressure on national governments to establish effective M&E systems for climate change. However, there will be more emphasis under the Paris Agreement for reporting on Nationally Determined Contributions, and a global stock-take will be completed every five years that will cover the adequacy of adaptation at the national level. The 'rules' for doing this evaluation are currently being negotiated, and could provide more clarity and pressure on governments (Parry et al., 2016).

**Political will for tackling climate change exists but is not entrenched.** It is now not unusual for political leaders to make speeches and policy statements about climate change, and they have the awareness and understanding to speak competently about the issue. This has been an important factor in the establishment of climate change policy frameworks (Dubash, 2013; Saigal, 2014). However, as attention moves from developing cross-sectoral climate change policies or plans to their implementation and mainstreaming within regular development planning processes, the strength of political will is being tested as it comes into conflict with more immediate political priorities (Gogoi, 2017).

For example, a climate change strategy or policy will often talk about mainstreaming the risk of natural disasters into all new infrastructure projects. However, unless there are specific protocols in place that legally require the design and location of all infrastructure to consider disaster risks, this guidance will rarely be followed, and a political leader is unlikely to enforce the need to mainstream climate change. For example, research in the Eastern Himalayas has shown that large dams are

widely perceived to increase the risk of landslides and other disasters, but there are a number of vested interests involved in such projects and the mainstreaming agenda is a threat to political interests and agenda (Bahadur et al., 2014).

Even when rules and regulations are in place, there are challenges related to enforcement. For example, in India, the National Green Tribunal has shown unprecedented activism in holding politicians to account for violating or not enforcing environmental laws (there were 3,500 cases under consideration in June 2017) (*The Economic Times*, 2017). In general, therefore, there remain limits to the extent of political will to tackle climate change, and short-term political gains are still prioritised over longer-term resilience-building.

## 4.2. Opportunities for strengthening governance of adaptation to climate change

Section 3 above also highlights some opportunities for catalysing or strengthening the process of mainstreaming climate change into development policy and planning. Some of these relate to successful entry points that ACT has leveraged to support the mainstreaming process and strengthen the governance of climate change in the region; others are beyond the programme's mandate. The opportunities have emerged from the particular enabling environment within each location.

**There is growing political capital in showing leadership on climate change.** A number of political leaders in the region are concerned about their international image and want to be seen as leaders on the global stage. For example, Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled extensively at the beginning of his term in office to promote his trade and investment agenda, and part of the bilateral discussions held covered India's important role in the upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP21). Prime Minister Modi recognised an opportunity to show leadership through India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), with this leadership continuing despite the US announcing its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. In Pakistan, former Prime Minister Sharif realised there was a need to demonstrate global leadership following a negative response to the country's INDC (Sheikh, 2016). Nepal has recognised the value in being a vocal global advocate for tackling climate change, and the country received international recognition when it held a cabinet meeting on Mount Everest in 2009 to raise awareness of glacial melting.

This interest in showing leadership internationally has already trickled down into showing action





Traditional practice of transplanting rice in Odisha, India.

domestically, but also presents an opportunity to hold these leaders to account for their international commitments.

**International climate finance could present a strong incentive for mainstreaming.** Across the region, governments are interested in accessing international sources of climate finance. This has been a major ‘carrot’, prompting sectoral line departments and ministries to engage on climate change issues, initiate discussions on climate change risks and look at opportunities for adaptation within their development plans and programmes. Although the amount available for projects is very small compared with the funds available for most national development programmes, it is attractive because it is flexible and allows governments to carry out interventions outside normal bureaucratic procedures. Governments are preparing project proposals that deliver a range of development and adaptation benefits, although most funds do not require a clear distinction between the two.

For example, India was awarded \$2.5 million from the Adaptation Fund for a project in West Bengal that aims to develop climate-resilient livelihood systems for small and marginal farmers in two districts. This project should result in increased incomes for the 5,000 target households, which will allow them to invest in their health, education and other development indicators, while also increasing their capacity to cope with erratic weather conditions that threaten crop production (Adaptation Fund Board, 2014).

While the chance to access climate finance has prompted many governments to look at

opportunities for tackling climate change, it can also unintentionally work against wider mainstreaming. There is contention among governments and experts about the correct definition of an adaptation ‘cost’ and what climate finance should cover (Bird et al., 2012; Weischer and Wetzel, 2017). The funding usually covers the cost of delivering both the development and the adaptation benefits, and therefore does not require governments to mainstream adaptation within an existing development programme or budget (Fayolle and Odianose, 2017). It also risks ‘projectising’ adaptation, promoting the idea that tackling climate change is something different from regular development activities (Ayers et al., 2011). If climate finance required mainstreaming within an existing or new development programme or plan (and the funding covers just the additional cost of climate-proofing), it would also undoubtedly have a larger impact.

Climate finance is therefore already being used as an incentive to engage with different government actors on adaptation issues; however, it also poses a wider (more difficult to leverage) opportunity to encourage, or even require, governments to look at opportunities to maximise their existing domestic development budget for adaptation purposes.

**Climate-proofing existing government programmes represents a useful and politically attractive entry point for mainstreaming.** Governments tend to have flagship development programmes that reflect their political priorities and that have a well-defined delivery structure, budget and mandate. There can be a clear cost-benefit case to make to governments that mainstreaming climate change into such programmes will increase

their impact. For example, the Government of India's rural livelihood guarantee programme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has a very high degree of political ownership. There are a number of initiatives underway to explore how to mainstream adaptation to climate change within MGNREGA so the programme does not just provide guaranteed work but also creates assets that build a community's resilience (Government of India, 2016). In Pakistan, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), which is based on an unconditional cash transfer, is the country's main social safety net. Analysis has been carried out on how to look at the evolving social protection and disaster management systems using BISP, such as by providing top-ups to BISP beneficiaries in the event of a disaster, using the BISP infrastructure to deliver a separate disaster relief effort (Watson et al., 2017).

As these programmes are political priorities and have large budgets (and work is required to adapt them), it takes more effort and time to convince government officials of the need for and merit of mainstreaming. As a result, many highly relevant flagship government programmes are currently giving insufficient attention to climate change, such as the Indian Smart Cities programme (Tomer and Shivaram, 2017). In contrast, government officials tend to be more open to developing or refining sectoral strategies or policies on climate change, as these do not have an associated budget line and there is no immediate pressure to implement. At the same time, donor-funded programmes in general tend to promote high-level sectoral strategy and policy-making, despite this not always being effective in many developing countries (Krause, 2013).

Mainstreaming adaptation within existing flagship development programmes therefore presents an opportunity to have an impact on the ground relatively quickly, but, as the political stakes are high, it requires time and effort to make the case for mainstreaming.

**Mainstreaming climate change within development planning at the community level is possible at a significant scale.** Most instances of bottom-up mainstreaming have been *ad hoc*, led by NGOs and limited to a small number of communities. However, Nepal has demonstrated that it is possible to carry out this exercise at a large scale, with over a hundred community-based LAPAs in place across the country. These have been prepared by Village Development Committees following a uniform nation-wide framework, and

provide important lessons for community-based participatory planning for climate change. However, whether and how these village-level plans are in practice integrated within the annual development planning process of districts is still not clear. They have so far depended on separate donor funds for implementation of the activities identified by the planning process, although this money does flow through the government system.

In many countries, there are multiple levels of government between the 'community' and the national level—that is, multiple 'subnational' levels. These provide an opportunity to link between levels of government and to support both top-down implementation of climate change plans and bottom-up definition of climate change priorities. For example, in India, there is an ongoing effort to use district-level planning as the entry point for mainstreaming. There is already an established process for developing District Disaster Management Plans, although in most cases the planning process and resulting plan are lacking. However, in a number of pilot states, district governments have been supported to integrate adaptation to climate change within these plans, and in turn mainstream the plans within the regular development planning process (Chopde et al., 2016).

Mainstreaming at the lowest level of government is therefore possible, but requires some degree of external technical support, and the challenge is to go beyond *ad hoc* pilot exercises and carry out a large-scale bottom-up planning process.

**There are opportunities to mainstream climate change within the annual budgeting cycle but limited political will to do so.** Governments do not immediately see the connection between climate change and the annual budgeting process, and are also resistant to external involvement in this sensitive process. There are also significant institutional hurdles to integrating climate change within the budget, such as a lack of incentives, extra-budgetary funding that bypasses government and overlapping institutional mandates (Miller, 2012). However, a number of long-running technical assistance programmes in the region have started to make inroads in terms of persuading national governments to introduce climate change as an indicator within their budgeting process in a number of ways. For example, in both Nepal and Pakistan, there has been progress in tracking and reporting on climate change expenditure. In Nepal, the budget includes a coding system that classifies expenditure as highly relevant, relevant and neutral to climate change, based on 11 types of climate

expenditure. The country also reports on the distribution of climate change expenditure across all ministries, and classifies expenditure according to the SDGs, including SDG 13 on climate change (ibid.).

Mainstreaming within annual development budgets is therefore a difficult to achieve opportunity for mainstreaming but potentially the most impactful. Significant dialogue and engagement with finance and other departments is required to build support for this process.

**There are levers for generating the political support needed to tackle climate change.** Public concern about the impacts of climate change, which is often focused on particular threats such as floods and droughts, can put climate change high on the political agenda. For example, in Ahmedabad city in India, people did not previously consider heat waves a significant hazard. However, in 2010, a deadly heat wave caused a spike in heat-related illness and mortality and caused widespread public concern and media attention. This was the catalyst for the local government to become a pioneer in tackling this climate risk (CDKN, n.d.).

Protests at the time of a disaster can be especially powerful in terms of garnering political commitment to tackling climate change, although even at other times civil society can put pressure on politicians (Bahadur et al., 2014). For example, Pakistan submitted a very short INDC that local NGOs and experts widely criticised as lacking any substance or ambition. This was a catalyst for the prime minister at the time to take more personal interest in the subject, appointing a focal person for climate change within his office and launching a flagship Green Pakistan Programme within the forestry sector (Sheikh, 2016). In India and Pakistan, a culture of legal activism has allowed civil society to use the courts to hold the government to account for tackling climate change (Sheikh, 2016). In India, the central government is attempting to curtail some of the powers of the National Green Tribunal or at least restrain what it considers judicial overreach (Chauhan, 2017).

There is therefore an opportunity to focus the narrative around climate change on the issues where there is most public concern, which should then deliver political support.



## 5. Emerging lessons from ACT on climate change governance

ACT aims to transform systems of planning and delivery to support adaptation to climate change at the national and subnational levels across South Asia. The programme is therefore focused on climate change as a governance challenge. Through technical assistance, ACT is supporting governments to utilise a range of different entry points for mainstreaming. An equally important component of the programme is engagement with and support to policy-makers, which is strengthening the enabling environment for mainstreaming. The programme's design and M&E systems recognise that political economy drivers influence success on both these fronts.

This section highlights how ACT is supporting climate change governance at different levels of the governance framework outlined in Section 2, including a number of the programme's key challenges and lessons learnt.

### 5.1. ACT's learning on entry points for mainstreaming adaptation to climate change

The programme has experience of supporting the whole spectrum of policy entry points for mainstreaming of adaptation to climate change, from broad cross-sectoral development policy to specific projects, annual plans and budgets and protocols.

**At the national and subnational level, ACT has supported mainstreaming within some economy-wide, or cross-sectoral, development policies, plans and vision documents.** In Afghanistan, ACT-supported consultations and technical inputs significantly improved the draft Natural Resource Management Strategy to mainstream climate change throughout. ACT was invited to join the coordination committee for developing the strategy at a relatively late stage: there was already a third draft of the document, which had not considered climate change risks and adaptation opportunities. The team was able to persuade the director general of the need to open up the process for additional analysis and consultation to screen the plan for climate risks, and adopted a results framework approach to set measurable targets and indicators for adaptation.

Although this strategy (and others like it) remains a high-level document, and there are significant institutional challenges to its implementation, it is an important entry point for follow-up work with the relevant ministries where mainstreaming can happen closer to the ground. To facilitate implementation, it is preferable to utilise existing policy implementation mechanisms, rather than trying to create new ones. ACT has also learnt that it is important to try and influence these high-level policy documents when they are first conceived, rather than to try to retrofit a draft.



Interviewing community members on agricultural practices in Odisha, India.

**Most of ACT's technical support has focused on mainstreaming within sectoral policy, particularly in agriculture, forestry and water, as this is where there has been initial interest from government.** For example, in Chhattisgarh, ACT found early demand from the Forestry Department to strengthen their section of the SAPCC, which in effect provides the department with a strategic overview and direction for tackling climate change within the forestry sector. This was an entry point for more substantive work, including development of a much-intensified programme of adaptation measures for forests that adopts a Joint Forest Management approach, believed to deliver greater adaptation benefits. The government itself is piloting this new approach in one region of the state, which is expected to lead a state-wide adoption.

In Bihar, the chief minister has launched a process to develop a state Agriculture Roadmap, putting in place a cross-sectoral vision for agriculture development. ACT is supporting line ministries to ensure the strategy and approach fully integrate current and future climate change risks and that the measures and actions put forward support adaptation. Mainstreaming within these sectoral policies and strategies has been a relatively straightforward early entry point for ACT; the challenge has been to ensure this leads to more concrete action at the level of programmes, projects or budgets.

Mainstreaming in sectoral policy and strategy has also proven useful for engaging with sectors that do not traditionally prioritise climate change. For example, in Kerala, mainstreaming is underway in the health sector, with ACT supporting the Department of Health Services to prepare a climate–health vulnerability and adaptation assessment report and create criteria for the identification and primary treatment for climate-related health disorders. This has highlighted issues related to the availability of health outcome and weather data across different parameters and regions, which currently make it difficult to link climate and health outcomes. The process has increased 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, Shornur municipality has launched a planning process for developing a Heat Health Action Plan.

**Government projects and programmes have represented an opportunity to directly affect adaptation on the ground.** In Punjab province in Pakistan, the programme carried out a review on behalf of the government of three flagship

government agriculture programmes, identifying their vulnerability to climate change and opportunities to further support adaptation. This included strengthening existing risk management systems and agriculture production surveillance systems to safeguard against crop failure as well as to promote water-efficient technologies such as laser land levellers and high-efficiency irrigation systems.

In Maharashtra, the government's flagship Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyaan aims to make the state drought-free by 2019. This programme was already highly relevant for climate change adaptation: it involves deepening and widening streams, constructing cement and earthen stop dams, digging farm ponds and other initiatives. The state government asked ACT to examine its activities and focus in the context of the latest climate data, to ensure measures prescribed for dealing with water scarcity were in line with expected changes in rainfall and there was no maladaptation.

In both these and other cases, a significant amount of investment of time and resources was required to make the case to the government on the value of mainstreaming within the flagship programmes, but this was ultimately worth it given the impact these programmes can have.

**In a few cases, mainstreaming has also taken place at the level of regulations and protocols, although the opportunities here have been limited.** For example, ACT has supported the Government of Odisha in India to improve its flood early warning system. Frequent floods are a feature of the lower reaches of the Mahanadi River Basin in the state, and climate change poses a growing, exacerbating risk. The Hirakud Dam provides some measure of flood relief, but its capacity to deal with growing climate hazards of increased intensity is becoming very stretched. ACT laid out options for improved flood management within a scoping report for the government, which led to the design of a holistic 'end-to-end' flood forecasting system, combining the Soil and Water Assessment Tool model that plots and predicts water movement within the main upstream catchment area, and the Hydrologic Engineering Centre–River Analysis System model that shows whether the forecast flood can pass safely downstream. The government adopted this new system in 2017, which is now able to provide a warning period of 48–72 hours (up from the previous 8 hours). ACT secured high-level political buy-in (it was launched by the chief minister) by making a strong case in terms of the number of lives that could be saved and the value for money of investing in the improved system.



**One of the key focus areas for ACT is mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within annual national and subnational budgets.**

Across locations, ACT has attempted to use the annual planning and budgetary process as an entry point to mainstreaming, with mixed levels of success. This has been element of the governance framework that has been harder to influence.

ACT has developed an approach to support governments in managing budgets for climate change called Financing Frameworks for Resilient Growth (FFRG), which covers a few general steps: calculating potential loss and damage, reviewing past climate expenditure trends, identifying the degree of climate relevance of adaptation expenditure and allocating financial resources for climate change.

There has been little immediate interest from government partners in looking at adaptation opportunities within existing budgets. ACT has thus invested a great deal of time and resources in making a strong case for carrying out an FFRG. ACT has also adapted and used only certain elements of the approach, depending on the interests and level of capacity of the government. For example, in Afghanistan, ACT began by screening the previous year's budget to identify trends in adaptation spending, as an entry point to increase understanding and awareness on what constitutes investment in adaptation. Kerala, by contrast, has a highly motivated senior official who is interested in the whole suite of options under the framework. In Maharashtra, the starting point was the SAPCC and the government's interest in conducting a cost-benefit analysis and climate change relevance assessment to prioritise actions for financing and implementation. ACT has also worked with UNDP and other partners to build on on-going work, particularly in Nepal and Pakistan, and to ensure a consistent message to the government on this complicated issue.

Building interest in FFRGs has taken three years, and, in some cases, particularly at national level, there is still limited uptake. This is partly because of political economy constraints, particularly in India, where there is concern about national sovereignty and a lack of openness in the workings of government. This is also a complicated and highly technical area of work, and it is usually only ministries of finance or the equivalent that can properly assess the merits of the approach and act on it—but these officials are difficult to access and do not immediately see the relevance to their work of a climate change programme. At the same time, ministries of climate change or the equivalent do not tend to have the capabilities to understand

in detail the approach and its value to the extent that they are willing or able to advocate for it with colleagues across government. However, with time and persistence, it has proven possible to break down these barriers. In a number of locations, the work has progressed considerably, particularly at subnational level. In some states in India, a second round of climate change expenditure review is taking place.

**Across all these entry points, ACT has focused primarily on the national and subnational level, reflecting the mandate and available resources of the programme, but also the opportunities that exist.** For example, there has been limited engagement at the community level, and few examples of promoting bottom-up adaptation planning. In Nepal, ACT has supported the government to develop its NAP, which has included consultations at the local level. However, there is no formal or carefully considered approach to building upward from village-level plans (LAPAs) to inform the national plan. There is similarly no top-down mechanism for ensuring the NAP is implemented via the village-level plans. In Kerala, ACT is attempting to work through a multi-level approach to adaptation planning. A key entry point for mainstreaming climate change has been identified: building the capacity of Local Self-Government (LSG) structures to strengthen coastal resilience. ACT is developing guidelines for LSGs to prepare Coastal Action Plans on Climate Change using participatory methods and delivering training to a number of LSGs on this process.

Similarly, the political economy constraints are such that not even a regional programme has found an adequate policy entry point for mainstreaming within policy or plans at the regional level. SAARC is not considered a viable platform for mainstreaming adaptation, and there are also few regional institutions to partner with. SAARC does have some regional technical and research centres, including on disaster management, but these tend to be very focused on one issue and lack the mandate or interest to support the cross-sectoral nature of mainstreaming. As an alternative, ACT has identified and engaged regional networks, programmes or initiatives that are non-governmental but can act as a vehicle for sharing learning across locations. For example, the Climate Action Network South Asia is a network of NGOs working on climate change across locations, with which ACT is partnering to build the capacity of civil society in Afghanistan through learning from others across the region. ACT has also collaborated with the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, an intergovernmental organisation of South Asian governments, the



Horticulture farming in polyhouse at horticulture extension center, Chhattisgarh, India.

Asia Pacific Advanced Network and others to share learning between the respective teams of practitioners and to communicate learning to a wider audience.

## 5.2. ACT's learning on strengthening the enabling environment for mainstreaming

ACT puts equal emphasis on strengthening the enabling environment for mainstreaming, to generate demand for mainstreaming at the policy level, but also as having value in itself. ACT is experimenting with different tools and approaches to strengthen the key dimensions of the enabling environment, such as through regular engagement with the ACT team, specific and targeted training, communication campaigns and specific advocacy or influencing type activities.

**For example, while ACT does not have a specific mandate for strengthening evidence on climate change, and produces new research only when it is tied to a particular policy output, the programme is supporting a number of governments to improve the accessibility of existing information and research.** For example, in Chhattisgarh, ACT helped the nodal officer for climate change apply for and receive funding from the central government to establish a knowledge management centre for climate change. In Odisha, the government already had the infrastructure for an online portal for climate change; ACT helped populate this with available reports and studies to make it a useful resource. In Bihar, the programme is supporting the government to effectively manage and use new data from an expanded network of automated weather stations. This data will provide more localised information on climate change

impacts, which should facilitate more targeted and appropriate local agriculture plans. ACT has learnt that nodal agencies for climate change tend to be interested in strengthening knowledge management for climate change, partly because it is one of the few areas that comes under their mandate and does not wholly rely on the line departments. It is therefore relatively easy to build a strong partnership with the nodal agency, although the potential scope of knowledge management activities for climate change is potentially overwhelming and therefore needs to be carefully defined.

**ACT is also increasing the level of awareness and understanding of key decision-makers, both indirectly by providing technical assistance in the policy-making process and directly via targeted training sessions.** The programme has a capacity-building plan for each of the locations, identifying key stakeholders whose understanding and capabilities are lacking. Each relevant government agency and stakeholder group has been assessed in terms of the key technical competencies required to deliver effective adaptation policies and plans—for example skills in gathering and using climate change data, implementation of climate change financial frameworks, coordination across services and levels of government, etc. The process of defining the capacity needed for adaptation to climate change and mapping gaps has proven critical to ensuring the programme's training and other initiatives are targeted and deliver results. ACT's Competency Framework, which has been the guiding document for this process, is being published to help other programmes follow this approach.

The capacity gaps that have been identified are being addressed through simple actions like

translating climate change action plans into local languages and synthesising them into easy-to-read versions. In addition, training sessions have been designed and delivered that range from a basic introduction to climate change, to detailed technical methodologies for climate change budgeting. Within the first two years of the programme, over 1,230 government officials and other key stakeholders received targeted training, over a third of whom were trained on issues related to climate finance. ACT has learnt that, by packaging a training around the opportunity for accessing climate finance, it can attract government officials who would not usually sign up for a climate change training programme.

**ACT is not designed to be an 'advocacy' programme; it is intended to provide demand-led technical assistance. However, in many cases, there is a need to strengthen political will or widen the support base for a particular issue, particularly around the issue of climate change budgeting.** ACT has learnt the value of investing time early on in identifying and building a cadre of committed and engaged officials interested in the work ACT can support. With local team leaders (many placed within the government), this has been done primarily by developing personal relationships and trust. With these 'champions' in place, the programme has focused on widening and deepening the political commitment to tackling climate change. For example, in Pakistan, ACT built a strong relationship with the Ministry of Climate Change, but as the ministry itself had a relatively limited mandate, the programme then focused on strengthening its authority across government and building political will at the highest level. The team made a strong case, accepted by the government, of the need for a climate change focal person within the Prime Minister's Office. As a result, both ACT and the ministry have access and a voice at the highest level, and there is much better coordination between different parts of government on climate change.

**In most of the ACT locations, a climate change policy framework was already in place, although in many cases the programme is helping strengthen it.** For example, in Nepal, ACT provided support to preparation of the NAP, which directly engaged approximately 200 government, non-government and private sector agencies across nine sectoral working groups. More than 1,000 representatives from these organisations participated in deliberations to assess vulnerabilities and risks across scales and identify adaptation priorities to integrate climate change adaptation into sectoral policies and plans.

In a number of the states in India, the SAPCC existed on paper but was not being actively operationalised. In some locations, even the nodal officer on climate change did not know it existed. However, ACT has learnt the value of using the SAPCC as an entry point to engage with different government actors, putting the plan on their agenda and highlighting their responsibilities for implementation. In Kerala, ACT helped review and refresh the SAPCC to update it, as it had been lying dormant for a number of years. In Assam, the programme helped the government redraft and adopt a new version of the plan. In Maharashtra, the government just wanted help to prioritise the actions listed in its SAPCC. Under the banner of supporting implementation of the policy framework, ACT has used the plan as a tool or catalyst to support mainstreaming climate change within different sectors. In this way, across locations, ACT has helped strengthen policy frameworks that provide a strong impetus for adaptation.

**In terms of increasing stakeholder participation in the decision-making process on climate change, ACT has promoted a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach to policy-making across all its interventions.** For example, in Assam, ACT is supporting the government to improve flood management along the Brahmaputra River, focusing on climate-resilient flood management planning in urban centres. The team is facilitating a participatory form of planning, using Shared Learning Dialogues with communities, experts and government officials. In addition, within the programme's work with agriculture departments, ACT is using a Value Chain Approach (VCA) to assess and identify the bottlenecks and opportunities for boosting climate resilience in the agriculture sector. The ACT approach to VCA is stakeholder-driven and employs innovative decision support tools that are scientifically robust, along with iterative, participative consultations. For example, to prioritise crops and map value chain transactions, the programme carries out farmer-government consultations, field surveys and key expert interviews. ACT has learnt that this help ensures the conclusions and policy recommendations are appropriate, and they have the buy-in of the stakeholders required for implementation.

ACT has tried to engage with the private sector on adaptation, but finding concrete and meaningful ways for businesses to contribute has proven a challenge. In Maharashtra, the programme is seeking to encourage and nurture partnerships between the government and the private sector on climate change adaptation, and making use of the obligation of large companies to invest at least



2% of net profits in corporate social responsibility. ACT has facilitated engagement between a number of companies, together with government counterparts, to develop innovative pilot projects on adaptation, which match the companies' core technical strengths with existing government programmes. There is therefore co-investment of finance, and a positive and proactive partnership between the government and private sector. This has proven a successful model to engage the private sector that others can follow.

**A key component of ACT is to build institutional capacity for tackling climate change, which has meant different things in each location depending on the context.**

In all locations, the team is working closely with (and often within) the nodal agency for climate change, for example the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in India, the National Environmental Protection Agency in Afghanistan and the Climate Change Cell within the Forest Department in Chhattisgarh. One challenge is that adaptation to climate change requires a cross-sectoral approach but climate change as an issue tends to be side-lined to ministries of environment or equivalent. These are often relatively weak ministries and struggle to motivate or advocate for other parts of government to take action. ACT has tried to overcome this by nurturing strong relationships with senior officials or politicians with responsibilities across sectors, such as chief secretaries or ministries of planning.

The programme has also attempted to strengthen the authority and capacity of the nodal agency through skills-building, leveraging additional funding for their work and setting up climate change cells or focal persons within line ministries who then provide direct access for the nodal agency. The daily interaction and support provided by local team members has proven a key factor in increasing the confidence, visibility and proactiveness of the individual officers, and the agency as a whole. The programme has also provided opportunities to showcase their work nationally and internationally, including at the UNFCCC COPs, further helping motivate them.

ACT's highly targeted and focused approach to building individual capabilities within an organisation has in turn built institutional capacity. In Nepal, ACT has trained individual officials within the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in survey design and methodologies to assess household-level climate impacts in the country, in addition to linking government officials to external experts for a long-term partnership. 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. The programme successfully partnered with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development to deliver some of the CBS training courses, and ACT plans to expand this collaboration for similarly targeted training of officials in Bangladesh.

ACT has helped with the institutional set-up for climate change in a number of locations. For example, in Assam, the programme team has helped establish new organisational structures for governance of climate change, such as the Assam Climate Change Management Society (ACCMS) and a Climate Change Cell in the Department of Agriculture. ACCMS is an innovative introduction in the government system, which operates as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for implementation of the SAPCC and coordinates climate change actions across all state departments. As an SPV, it is a legal entity with the mandate to receive and manage climate finance within the state and be accountable for the effective use of these funds. It can also use a certain percentage of the project funding received to cover the costs of its internal operation. It is headed by the chief minister and governed by a steering committee headed by the chief secretary. As such, it holds a high degree of political authority. ACT initially provided handholding support to operationalise ACCMS; the government has now engaged additional personnel to ensure its sustainability.

However, ACT itself has been constrained by insufficient institutional capacity, such as frequent changes in officials within government and overstretched and under-resourced government departments. The culture of hierarchy and risk aversion within the bureaucracy makes it harder for a new idea to take root. ACT has tried to overcome these constraints by investing in local team members who are often located within the government to provide day-to-day support, and so as to have a wide network of individual government officials who are directly involved in the programme to help mitigate the risk of staff changeover. The programme has put a great deal of emphasis on being a trusted partner to the government, and a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) allows ACT to quickly respond to *ad hoc* requests for technical support.

**ACT has helped facilitate the financial resources to invest in adaptation, both through leveraging additional climate finance and through making the case for governments to use their own budgets.**

In accessing international climate funds, such as the Green Climate Fund, technical capacity and

specialist skills are needed to navigate complicated fund procedures and rules and develop a successful proposal. In 2016/17 alone, ACT trained over 200 government officials on accessing climate funding. This led to 19 funding applications being developed in a single year, and \$127.4 million being leveraged from domestic and international public funds and the private sector. Using the FFRG approach, ACT has also made a strong case for increasing domestic sources of investment in adaptation, although this is much more complicated and harder to argue. The programme is also strengthening government capacities to plan, budget, track and monitor climate finance. For example, ACT's mandate as a regional programme has allowed the Government of Afghanistan to discuss, learn from and informally partner with the Climate Finance Unit in Pakistan, as Afghanistan prepares to establish its own unit.

### 5.3. ACT's learning on understanding and addressing the underlying political economy drivers

A central assumption of ACT's approach is that recognising and engaging with political economy drivers will help ensure the programme's interventions are effective and have a long-lasting impact. This political economy-led approach is built into the programme's internal planning and review processes, and filters into its day-to-day management and delivery. The following are practical examples of how ACT addresses the three sets of political economy drivers identified in Section 2: the interests and incentives facing

different groups and their relative power and influence; the role of formal institutions and informal norms; and the impact of values and ideas.

#### **ACT routinely and regularly identifies and maps the changing political economy landscape, to inform both programme strategy and evaluation of its impact.**

ACT has operationalised the use of political economy assessments so they are not just a stand-alone academic exercise but a routine part of its planning and reviewing process. Every year, the programme carries out an assessment of the context for tackling climate change in each of the national and subnational locations. This covers a number of dimensions, aligned with the description of the enabling environment outlined in this paper. It aims to unpack the political economy drivers that are influencing this context. It tracks the level of political will for tackling climate change but also what socioeconomic, cultural and other factors are influencing the set of political priorities. For example, a number of political leaders in the region are motivated to show leadership on tackling climate change domestically to enhance their relative influence and profile on the international stage. There is a complicated set of historical and economic as well as domestic political reasons as to why this is the case.

Repeating the process annually also makes it possible to monitor and explain broad shifts in governments' responses to climate change, and in some instances highlights the programme's contribution to this. The process tracks the most influential individuals and institutions within



Interviewing farmers in Assam, India.

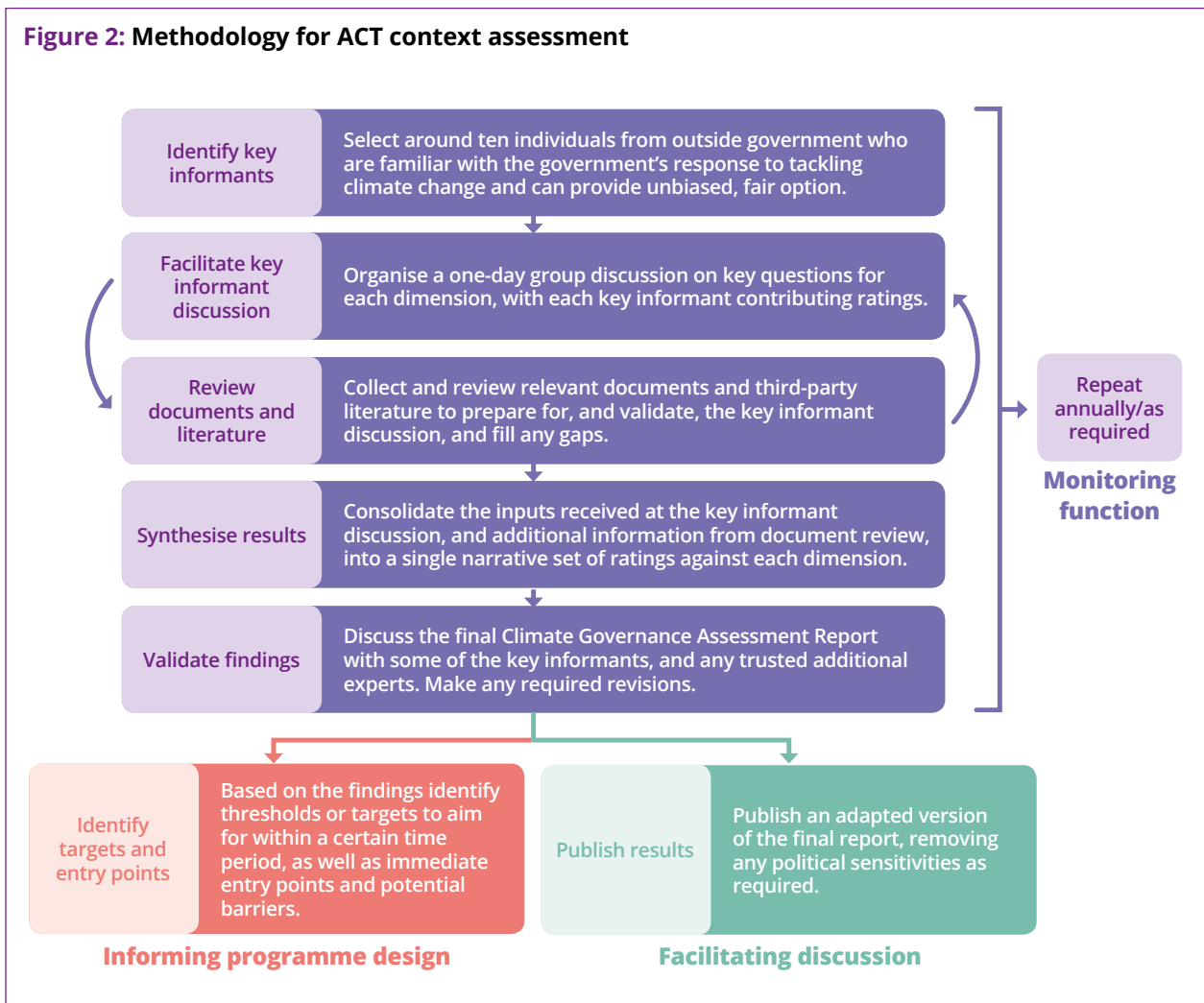


the system for adaptation to climate change and changes in their level of understanding and awareness and ability to influence and make decisions on adaptation. This informs the programme's strategy in terms of who to target as a potential agent of change and who to sensitise about climate change. The assessment also explores the narrative of climate change in the location: how it is understood and described in government and public discourse, including within the media. This helps inform ACT's communication strategy in each location, and shows what language will have greatest impact. For example, in many locations, the salient political narrative around climate change is the impact of extreme weather events, such as cyclones in Orissa, droughts in Maharashtra and floods in Pakistan. In Kerala, it is slow-onset events, particularly sea level rise, which is how climate change is principally understood locally.

The assessment process is primarily qualitative, and focused around key informant discussions with at least 10 stakeholders who come from

outside government but work closely with the government on climate change issues. These individuals also produce subjective ratings on some indicators, which makes it possible to track changes in the context easily. However, there is a need to rely on expert opinion to explore some of the difficult to quantify dimensions such as political will and capacity. The results are not published, and remain in an internal working document, discussed during the annual planning and review strategy meeting of the team. While there is a formal loop from the assessment process and results to the programme strategy review process, most of the benefits of carrying out the assessment come from the programme's local team leader and staff being closely involved in the assessment process itself, which gives them the space to reflect and discuss on the political economy dimensions and whether and how ACT is adequately addressing them.

Figure 2 summarises the methodology for delivering the context assessment process.



**The flexible design and structure of ACT, as well as its adaptive programme management approach, allows the programme to respond to changes in the political economy context.** The programme is set up to be demand-driven, while also having the space to put new issues on the political agenda. At the beginning of the programme, the team sets a clear strategy for each location in terms of what can be achieved and how, in terms of strengthening the enabling environment for mainstreaming and utilising entry points for mainstreaming—based on the latest political economy assessment. Long-term targets are set for each location, but there is flexibility in how to achieve them based on the changing local context. Each location strategy is formally reviewed and updated every year, but also throughout the year when there are changes in the local context and new constraints or opportunities emerge. For example, there are regular changes in government staffing, and, when a key ‘champion’ within government moves position, this affects and often delays the programme’s work. At such times the programme adjusts timelines or what it hopes to achieve, and most likely will invest additional time and resources in building new relationships and developing new ‘champions’, such as through targeted training, one-to-one engagement or exposure to best practices elsewhere.

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. A team leader within each location has responsibility for setting and reviewing the strategy for the country

or state, as well as overseeing the delivery of technical work. 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. In all cases, the team leader interacts daily with different government officials, and provides *ad hoc* support and advice. In the first year of the programme, the team leader focused on building these relationships, gaining their trust and understanding the priorities of different parts of the government. At the same time, the regional nature of the programme has allowed locations to learn from each other and encouraged best practices to filter across country and state boundaries.

The programme’s RRM is a small earmarked budget for responding to *ad hoc* and small but strategic requests for technical assistance to the government. In most instances, the RRM is used to build trust and a strong relationship with a government partner by supporting a piece of work that is of importance to it but is not directly in line with the programme’s strategy. For example, ACT provided some technical and logistical support to the Government of Nepal to showcase its approach to the development of the NAP internationally at the NAP Expo in 2016. This built goodwill with important government partners for the programme, but also increased their ownership over the NAP process through exposure to international best practice. ACT recognised that the Government of Nepal wanted to be seen as an international leader on adaptation, and this opportunity helped build momentum for the NAP process.

## 6. Conclusion

There are a large number of technical assistance programmes underway in South Asia and beyond supporting governments to mainstream adaptation to climate change within development planning and programming. Strengthening the governance dimension of adaptation is often a part of these, such as through developing a new government policy or building institutional capacity.

However, such programmes tend to address only some elements of the governance framework, and are therefore often affected or held back by other factors. For example, an effort by government to establish a new cross-sectoral climate change policy will have limited impact if it does not also address the level of awareness and understanding, and political commitment, of the sectors to implement it, as well as the availability of resources.

This paper outlines a governance framework for adaptation to climate change based on experience and learning from implementing the ACT programme across the region. It can act as a useful tool for practitioners and those interested in improving governance in this area. It outlines a number of key principles of good governance for adaptation to climate change, including the following:

- **A critical dimension of supporting adaptation to climate change should be understanding and addressing the governance challenges and constraints.** A project or programme that aims to strengthen adaptation to climate change within a location needs to consider issues related to institutional capacity, political will, the policy framework, etc. Ideally, as part of the planning phase of a new project or programme, the enabling environment should be assessed and regularly monitored, to identify potential governance risks but also opportunities to strengthen the governance of adaptation.
- **Utilising a policy entry point for mainstreaming adaptation to climate change will be successful only if there is a supportive enabling environment.** For example, if a government develops a climate-resilient agriculture strategy, this will be implemented and have an impact only if there are available resources, if practitioners on the ground understand it and if there is institutional capacity to monitor and report on implementation.
- **The political economy drivers of adaptation to climate change cannot be ignored.** Any project

or programme supporting mainstreaming of adaptation within policy and practice needs to identify and meaningfully engage with these political economy drivers, including the relative influence of different stakeholders within the system, as well as formal and informal institutions, norms and values.

- **Mainstreaming adaptation to climate change within development policy or planning involves governance at multiple levels.** Any attempts at adaptation to climate change at one level will necessarily rely on good governance at other levels. For example, a national-level effort to mainstream adaptation within the annual planning cycle will in most countries rely on subnational levels to similarly mainstream within their annual plans and to manage the implementation process. For many developing countries, it will also rely on international sources of climate funding to be available to cover the additional cost of adaptation.
- **Certain policy entry points for mainstreaming are easier to access but may not give the highest returns.** For example, sectoral strategies are usually the first target for mainstreaming because they provide a platform to set out the overall vision of the sector for climate change. However, a common governance challenge relates to the implementation of these long-term strategies and plans. A more immediate route for mainstreaming is at the level of government projects and programmes, which already have a budget and implementation plan.
- **The enabling environment for adaptation at certain levels is particularly weak, and acts as a barrier to mainstreaming.** In particular, at the regional level in South Asia, the political economy constraints are such that there is virtually no meaningful regional policy or plan within which climate change can be mainstreamed. It looks unlikely that the enabling environment in this regard will change in the immediate future, and as such ACT has focused on other levels where there are greater opportunities.

These and other lessons from the ACT programme will have relevance across the region and globally, for any practitioner from government, civil society or donors, designing or delivering a programme that aims to support adaptation to climate change.

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