CENTRE FOR POLICY RESEARCH
Climate Initiative

State Action Plans on Climate Change in India

Framing, processes, and drivers

A report on the round table dialogue organized by

the Centre for Policy Research

27th April 2013

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Points of Discussion

A roundtable dialogue examining State Action Plans on Climate Change was organised by the Centre for Policy Research on 27 April 2013. The following are ideas and points of discussion that emerged from the workshop. These points by no means represent unanimity but rather key themes of discussion.

- There is lack of clarity and agreement on the framing of SAPCCs. Are they climate-specific and science-led plans or broad sustainable development plans? This lack of clarity impacts appropriate process design and implementation;
- Accessing regional climate science- at the scale and in the format relevant to states - is a concern for many states. Issues range from accessing observed as well as forecasted data, lack of short-term forecasts, problems with downscaling, and the usage of imported scenarios not necessarily pertinent to India;
- Participants suggested the centre play a larger role in communicating up-to-date relevant regional climate data to all states;
- There is scope for collaboration across states, and facilitated by the centre, on design of Vulnerability Assessment methodologies that are science based and robust, but also tailored to state circumstances and enable bottom up input from people and communities;
- There is ambiguity on the role of mitigation in the draft plan. While states understand that the centre wants SAPCCs to focus on vulnerability and adaptation, there are national missions centred on mitigation that states are also required to align with. Different plans therefore include mitigation actions to varying degrees. Furthermore, some states have commissioned GHG inventories but kept them out of the purview of SAPCCs;
- Appropriate design of SAPCC processes is important to final outcomes. There was discussion on whether existing designs adequately facilitate inter-departmental discussion and coordination, versus reproducing departmental silos. Adequate process also requires adequate time for preparation of SAPCCs;
- In some cases, the SAPCC process has considerably facilitated external participation of civil society organisations, sectoral experts, business groups as well as local stakeholders. However there were concerns of how this was finally integrated with the document and how it informed final recommendations;
- Donors and consultants can play an important catalytic role in SAPCCs. However, the precondition for this role is adequate state capacity. There were differing views on whether, under existing circumstances, donors and consultants had been able to play this catalytic role in SAPCCs so far;
- The source and availability of finance was regarded by many as a bottleneck to implementing SAPCCs. However, budgetary allocations stated in drafts plans were estimates at best. In some cases, there may be scope for implementation by creatively tapping centrally sponsored schemes and state budgets since SAPCCs are multi-sectoral exercises;
- SAPCCs represent an important start, but much work remains for them to become transformative planning exercises.

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Workshop Report

Twenty-two states in India have drafted or are in the process of drafting State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC), under the umbrella of the National Action Plan on Climate Change and Common Framework Document. Developing these plans is a substantial challenge along at least three dimensions. First, there is the conceptual challenge of "mainstreaming" climate change into development. Climate change potentially impacts many aspects of development, necessitating consideration of multiple sectors, uncertainties in future impacts, and interaction with ongoing development planning. Second, there is a policy challenge. How can large and unwieldy SAPCCs have an impact in practice on development outcomes. Third, there is an academic challenge. Sub-national planning for climate change is little studied and understood, particularly in the developing world. The roundtable dialogue on SAPCCs was aimed at generating a discussion on all three challenges.

The workshop was designed as a roundtable discussion with a minimum of formal presentations to capture a wide array of state experiences. The dialogue drew upon CPR's ongoing work examining a cross-section of SAPCCs through a combination of document reviews as well as field visits. Participants included officials from states visited by the CPR team namely Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, along with representation from additional states such as Delhi, Rajasthan and Gujarat that are in advanced stages of completing their action plan. In addition, representatives of donor agencies, consultants, scientists as well as NGOs involved in the SAPCC process took part in the discussion. A list of participants is appended to the report.

The round table was organised around three broad sessions, namely;

1. Framing SAPCCs.
2. The Process of SAPCCs: Mechanisms, Capacity, Stakeholders.
3. Towards Implementation: Frameworks, Mechanisms, and Financing.

An overarching message that emerged from the discussion was the lack of conceptual clarity on the role of the SAPCC process in the context of development planning. Participants were divided in their opinion on whether it was better positioned as a development planning exercise with a focus on sustainable development, or whether SAPCCs were defined by strong moorings in relevant science, particularly on climate impacts. Questions were raised on whether it was feasible to base state level planning on long term sectoral forecasts given challenges with generating and accessing existing climate data, as well as state torpor in addressing current development and environmental issues. It was felt by some that such concerns would hinder a political buy-in to the SAPCC process. Organisers also noted that this conceptual ambiguity on the framing of the SAPCC document had implications for the optimal design of the process to be followed in drafting a plan. This in turn affected the content, and added to the challenge of implementation and mainstreaming of climate concerns in the state's development agenda.

Before the first session commenced, there was a brief discussion on the relevance of the international context to SAPCCs, sparked by a question from a participant. The organizers clarified that the intended focus of the workshop was the domestic SAPCC process, but, since the question was raised, a brief discussion ensued. The international context, it was felt, was pertinent in at least three ways to SAPCCs. First, states, prompted by the centre, had in part undertaken the process of SAPCCs because of the global negotiating context, which has raised the profile of climate issues at multiple scales. In addition, the prospect of international climate finance, whether through the CDM or through new sources of climate finance, certainly formed part of the context within which states developed plans. Finally, there was interaction between the content of state plans and global negotiations, particularly on the question of mitigation, where there was some concern that state focus on mitigation actions might undercut India's negotiating position. Following this brief discussion, the rest of the workshop focused on national and state level context for SAPCCs.

I. Framing SAPCCs

The entry point for the discussion was how states had approached and framed the task of developing SAPCCs. Based on their research, organisers invited deliberations on the following questions;

- Is there conceptual understanding on approaching SAPCCs?
- What makes climate change planning distinctive from regular planning exercises?
- Role of climate science, the extent to which state level impacts can be generated and what gaps currently exist?
- What is the scope of the SAPCC on the following?
    1. Sectoral coverage.
    2. Relative balance of mitigation and adaptation.
    3. Coverage of all climate change work in the state.

The resultant free-flowing discussion focused primarily on the first three questions, and is summarized below.

Science as a prerequisite for SAPCCs?

Climate science was seen as the key link between a document that was framed as a sustainable development plan and one that also addressed climate change. Much time was therefore spent on this subject.

To be useful for SAPCCs, information on climate impacts at an appropriate scale are essential, but these are not available at the level of detail needed. In this context, uncertainties in regional climate forecasts impact how suggestions were framed for long term action in the draft plan. While projections of the temperature record are reasonably robust, it is much more challenging to predict the quality and quantity of future precipitation and this in turn interfered with adaption programs in water and agriculture sectors. Participants also noted that the scale of available projections matter. A speaker also questioned the usage of IPCC scenarios such as the A1B scenario in regional climate models since it was not necessarily indicative of India's development path. One suggestion was that central institutions develop and use indigenous scenarios in regional global circulation models. Speakers also rued the lack of capacity among central institutions to generate and disseminate regional scale climate data. It emerged that the

Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) is in the process of collecting data sets from seven to eight downscaled models using The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) forthcoming Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), and is expected to distribute it next year.

In addition to availability of science, another concern expressed was communication of the information that was available. A participant asked if the SAPCC process had an institutional mechanism in place for updating new science and thereby action plans. For some speakers however, this was a second order issue because accessing even initial observed and forecasted data had proved a major challenge. This was especially true for states that do not feature in exiting work on sectoral and regional analyses by the likes of the Indian Network of Climate Change Assessment (INCCA). A participant recounted how he "ran from pillar to post" to gather district-wise IMD data on rainfall and temperature for his state and wondered what states without the capacity to commission such a study would do.

Two key suggestions emerged on bridging the regional data deficit on climate science. It was noted that several regional universities have climate programs. One suggestion was to make IITM the central institute that then collaborated with universities to generate state-wise climate scenarios, and disseminated it to states in a format they could use. Another recommendation was to build on the centre's capacities in disseminating regional climate data to all states. One participant suggested the MOEF direct IITM to prepare and distribute "brochures or leaflets" showcasing what each state would face climatically in the next 30 years. The overarching message was that the centre's role could be expanded in aiding states with up-to-date regional climate data and not be limited to offering framework guidelines.

Beyond availability of science and its dissemination, there were strong opinions expressed that science had to be incorporated in a manner that was relevant to peoples' lives. One participant recounted how a professionally undertaken regional forecast study was less useful in helping officials develop priorities and plans than a vulnerability assessment (VA) study done by gathering local perceptions through Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs). He believed peoples' experiences made the SAPCC "real". This connection is important for conceptual reasons, also in order to translate the SAPCC into an actionable document. For instance, one participant explained how hard it is to convince politicians and locals to take seriously a finding that wheat production in a district may decline 30 years hence when there is no place to store all the surplus wheat currently grown. Linkage between science and current perceptions and realities was key, many participants felt.

For these reasons, many suggested that the vulnerability assessment (VA) is the lynchpin of the SAPCC report as it potentially dictates the selection and prioritisation of vulnerable sectors and regions for adaptive action. The organisers however, pointed out that different states were doing VA studies using different methodologies and with varying degrees of rigour, which called into question their utility. A participant noted that when the SAPCC was conceived, the Indian Institute of Science had provided states with guidelines and a template to conduct VA studies. He felt it was however not possible to have a uniform VA methodology for all states given varying regional conditions and socio-economic contexts. Several participants also spoke of how studies often contradicted each other on vulnerability in the same region because of varying methodologies and frameworks used. Finally, it emerged that the Ministry of Science and Technology under the National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change is planning to commission a study to develop a nation-wide VA strategy. It also emerged as a broad

conclusion, that it would be useful to pay more attention to methodologies for VA studies, both in general terms and in order to tailor them to local contexts, and enable local participation.

State action plans on climate change or sustainable development?

As discussed earlier, the debate on the requirement of science as a prerequisite in developing state climate plans links closely with the question of how the SAPCC was framed. There were divergent views on whether SAPCCs should be differentiated from sustainable development documents. Some participants suggested it was better if politicians were asked to act upon current environmental concerns rather than be apprised of long term forecasts fraught with uncertainties. Some however argued that without explicit reference to climate science, current adaptation approaches would not help states prepare for climatic uncertainties such as flash floods and cloud bursts like the one that took place in Mumbai in 2005. It was important to therefore incorporate climate projections, and particularly so on long term infrastructure projects. It was also mentioned that when finances are taken into account, any finance – whether domestic or international – would be tied to *additional* action beyond business as usual development actions, and hence an explicit attention to climate impacts, and not only broad sustainable development concerns, are required in SAPCCs.

Organisers suggested that it was not enough for the draft plan to be placed in the climate context but also have an institutional mechanism to mainstream climate concerns in the state's development agenda. While one participant suggested that it be integrated with the state's five year plan, another wondered if it would have been better to seat the SAPCC document in the state planning board with inputs from the environment and science department as well as other sectoral departments. This would ensure state financing for climate action and stronger departmental buy-in in terms of implementation.

Role of mitigation in SAPCCs

The debate on the role of the SPACC as a sustainable development document also led to a discussion on whether they should include mitigation actions. The context for this was two-fold. First, since climate change is a collective action problem, states do not reap the full benefits of mitigation actions (since mitigation gains are dependent on global collective action), but they do reap the full benefits of adaptation actions. Why, then, would states undertake mitigation actions? Moreover, it also runs counter to India's international negotiating position of only considering mitigation if is internationally supported by finance and technology transfer.

Despite these considerations and despite a general understanding that the central government has encouraged states to focus on vulnerability and adaptation, several states have draft plans that included mitigation to varying degrees. In one plan for instance, the relative balance was 90% adaptation and 10% mitigation, in another it was 60% adaptation and 40% mitigation. It also emerged the some states had undertaken mitigation-related activities such as GHG inventories, but kept these out of the purview of SAPCCS. While one speaker spoke of the robustness of climate science, and the need to mitigate since climate change was a non-linear system, another looked at the economic context and wondered whose priority it was to mitigate. These arguments notwithstanding, the observation that so many states are engaged in mitigation action raised the interesting question of whether some mitigation actions do emerge as sensible steps in the broader context of sustainable development within which SAPCCs operate.

II. The Process of SAPCCs: Mechanisms, Capacity, Stakeholders

The second session was structured on the premise that outcomes from the SAPCC could be strongly dependent on the design of the process – who participates, through what mechanisms, and based on which information. Organisers however felt that if the conceptual issue of framing was unclear then the process too would remain unclear. CPR put forth the following questions to open the discussion;

- How effective is the sectoral organisation of plans at identifying innovative ideas?
- How have donor agencies and consultants been deployed and how can their effectiveness be maximized?
- To what extents have outside stakeholders – business, NGOs, communities – had an opportunity to express opinions on SAPCCs and do they have the necessary information and ability to do so?
- What are the effects of this broader stakeholder engagement?
- How might SAPCCs be organized to provide opportunities for broader communication about climate change.

The discussion is summarized as below:

Process constraints

In terms of concern areas, the organisers asked whether the short time frame for delivery – at least in the first set of plans - could have led to a constraining of agenda and therefore process. Participants had a range of different reactions. While some spoke of the freedom they had in seeking extensions to complete the draft plan, others felt the time deadline had indeed affected the quality of on-ground consultations.

Participants noted the challenge of designing processes to ensure inter-departmental coordination, leading to fresh ideas and stimulation across departmental areas. Some states, for instance, structured their process to ensure some degree of inter-departmental participation. Odisha, for example, used working groups that cut across departments including both mining and forest officials who deliberated on the same platform. However, this was not a uniform trend across all states. Another issue was an insufficient process for prioritising actions in the draft plan, a concern shared by the organisers.

Role of donors and consultants

The organizers noted that in a discussion recently on climate planning in India, a representative from the MOEF had stated that the initial round of SAPCCs had yielded "more of the same." In this context, the organisers at the round table asked if, in the context of relatively poor capacity at the state level, whether there was a need to assess the role of donors and consultants in the formulation of SAPCCs. This was particularly salient because donor agencies had in the last five years reframed their programs to emphasise climate change. Some participants noted that while some donors had indeed reoriented their focus, this was not merely a re-labelling, as old programs had been phased out. Many participants were emphatic in stating that the role of donors was catalytic rather than directive, and geared towards facilitating states in designing their projects, rather than dictating the final shape and form of the document. One participant however added that a donor agency or consultant needed to implicitly recognize the abundance of local knowledge and capacity in the state.

Participation

Many participants agreed that one of the step changes in development planning that the SAPCC process had effected was the degree of external participation involved in the draft plan. For instance in Odisha the draft plan process was held up for a year to invite wider deliberations from civil society organisations. In addition, Madhya Pradesh had held regional consultations across 13 agro-climatic zones apart from several sectoral consultations in Bhopal. And finally Himachal Pradesh had constituted a separate peer-review committee of scientists, university chancellors and sectoral experts who vetted the HP draft plan process at various stages.
One speaker however stated that some stakeholders such as business chamber representatives often came with their own agenda on matters such as increasing Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs) in favour of renewable energy providers. Organisers however felt the concern area was not the prevalence or extent of participation but how it was integrated with the document and how it informed final recommendations. Participants agreed this was a challenge.

III. Towards Implementation: Frameworks, Mechanisms, and Financing

Most SAPCCs that have been completed have long lists of proposed projects and initiatives, in some cases accompanied by financing requirements, and in other cases not. The next step is moving towards implementation strategies. Apart from some extensions, some scale-ups in ongoing work, and pilot projects in specific sectors, no state – to the best of our knowledge- has kick started the process of implementing SAPCCs in its entirety. The source and availability of finance remain prevalent concerns. Organisers felt this was compounded by the fact that there was no technical basis for prioritising action points in draft plans. The organisers therefore invited discussions on the following questions;

- On what basis can action lists stated in SAPCCs be prioritized? Is a co-benefits metric one approach to prioritization?
- How can line departments be induced to consider these recommendations?
- What mechanisms and devices would assist mainstreaming of climate considerations?
- How important is finance (and predictability of finance) to implementation?
- To what extent can implementation occur in the absence of financing?
- Can SAPCC recommendations serve as generators of "Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs)" or adaptation actions for international financing?

The discussion drawing on these questions is grouped under three heads:

Prioritization

The organisers raised a concern that there was no existing framework for prioritising actions in the draft plan, as a result of which recommendations for action tend to be long and unwieldy lists of actions, at a variety of scales, and with a variety of implications. Supporting this observation, one participant recounted how a department official had pressed for all fifty action points put forward by that department to be included in the final document. In order to find a solution, another speaker proposed that states first determine whether the prioritization be based on on-ground constraints in implementation, on time-frames, or on the state's growth

priorities. The organisers also drew participants' attention to recent work put out by CPR in collaboration with partner institutes on developing a framework for prioritising climate plans following a co-benefits based approach.

Finances

A major area of discussion on the implementation of SAPCCs was finance. Organisers noted in the course of their research that while most states had offered budgetary allocations in their sectoral recommendations, the numbers were often estimates and resulted in a large degree of variation in the cumulative cost quoted by each state. Many participants agreed that this was frequently the case. One speaker noted that the state was still expecting budgets from each line department for its draft plan. It was felt that while it may be easy to assess investments on a project by project basis, it was a challenge to estimate the same for a policy document that also put forth long term concerns and solutions. The task of assessing the financial cost of climate vulnerability was an added challenge.

Interestingly two states offered instances of how a state could make innovative use of existing funds for implementing SAPCC activities. In Sikkim, MNREGA funds were used to recharge hilltop lakes as well as revive springs. A participant noted how other centrally funded schemes such as Raj Krishi Vikas Yojna and National Horticulture Mission could also help the SAPCC link with, and scale up ongoing sustainable development work in the state.

Another example was that of Delhi finding innovative ways of taxing residents to fund sustainable development programs. A participant alluded to the Ambient Air Fund for air pollution control which charged users of diesel a small 25 paise per litre as cess. As a consequence the state had, in the last three years, collected Rs 150 crores. The government plans to use it for schemes such as subsidizing eco-friendly vehicles as well as subsidies for cars to convert to CNG.

There were other recommendations for implementing SAPCCs in the absence of central or external funds. One was first budgeting and implementing simpler recommendations such as commissioning research studies in a particular sector or using existing funds from schemes such as JNNURM. Another idea was that climate change be treated as a sub-plan – like the one currently in place for measuring development allocations to scheduled castes and tribes. A participant however felt that such sub-planning could result in more paper jugglery.

Institutionalising SAPCCs

A research finding consistent with literature on sub-national climate action was the presence of motivated officials or 'savvy policy entrepreneurs' who have been responsible for driving the process agenda in SAPCCs as well. But given the reality of periodic transfers and the transience of official posts, it is worth asking how the process has been institutionalised to ensure consistency as well as sustained interested in process design, implementation, as well as mainstreaming climate in the state's development agenda.

On the process side, an example that was repeated was to seat the SAPCC document in the state planning department to ensure both funds and a buy-in from other departments. Another recommendation was to get climate knowledgeable officers of various departments along with the nodal agency, as well as other external stakeholders to form a think-tank. The organisation

could then be responsible for documenting all climate based interventions in the state, keep track of updated climate forecasts in the region, and look at prioritising the action plan. In terms of ensuring implementation, Madhya Pradesh offered two examples being considered in the state. The first is a checklist of ideas or best practices for climate proofing sectoral planning in a specific department. This could be used as a scanning tool to evaluate departmental policies and objectives. The second is to develop sectoral baselines for monitoring and evaluation, and offer voluntary indicators of how a sectoral policy is faring in terms of addressing climate concerns. A participant felt that given apprehensions and the general restraint of departments towards monitoring and evaluation, the approach had to be "subtle and polite."

In conclusion, the source and availability of finance was regarded by many as a bottleneck to implementing SAPCCs. Participants however agreed that budgetary allocations stated in their respective drafts plans were currently estimates and there was no definitive framework to prioritizing action plans for implementation. Some states offered innovative solutions of tapping into existing finance such as centrally sponsored schemes to fund SAPCCs since it was multi-sectoral exercise.

The workshop ended on a sobering note with one participant asking whether, despite the scale of the exercise, SAPCCs had really addressed climate change concerns through transformational ideas, such as revaluating a state's existing development path in the context of climate change. Given the scale and scope of climate change, he asked whether the current approach is significantly ambitious. The broad sentiment seemed to be that while SAPCCs are a useful start, the need for transformative change is important to keep in mind for future reflection and action on SAPCCs.

List of participants

	Name	Designation
1.	Dr. Anil Kumar	Director, Department of Environment, Government of Delhi
2.	Ashish Verma	Senior Project Officer, ICLEI South Asia
3.	Ashok Gupta	Senior Environmental Engineer, Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board, Government of Rajasthan
4.	Ashok Singha	Managing Director, CTRAN Consulting, Bhubaneswar, Odisha
5.	B.P. Singh	Director Environment cum Special Secretary, Government of Odisha
6.	Dr. Ashok Karumuri	Scientist 'E', and Deputy Chief Program Scientist, Centre for Climate Change Research, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune
7.	D.G. Shrestha	Additional Director, Department of Science, Technology and Climate Change, Government of Sikkim
8.	Elizabeth Colebourn	Project Manager, Asia, Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN)
9.	Kirtiman Awasthi	Swiss Development Corporation, Embassy of Switzerland
10.	K.H. Vinaya Kumar	CF & Director (Research), EMPRI, Government of Karnataka
11.	Lokendra Thakkar	General Manager, CDM Agency; Coordinator, Climate Change Division; Environmental Planning and Coordination Organization (EPCO), Department of Housing and Environment, Government of Madhya Pradesh
12.	Dr. Nagin Nanda	Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Department of Forests, Government of Himachal Pradesh
13.	Navarun Verma	The Energy and Resources Institute
14.	Nidhi Madan	Project Officer, MOEF/GIZ India
15.	Dr. Pramode Prusty	Senior Scientist, Dept. of Forest and Environment, Government of Odisha
16.	Dr. Rajiv Chaturvedi	National Environmental Sciences Fellow, Centre for Sustainable Technologies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore
17.	Ritu Kakkar	Director General, Environment Management and Policy Research Institute (EMPRI), Government of Karnataka
18.	S.B. Patil	Deputy Director, Gujarat Energy Development Agency, Government of Gujarat
19.	S. Vaideeshwaran	Independent Consultant
20.	Dr. Sandeep Tambe	Special Secretary, Rural Management and Development Department, Government of Sikkim
21.	Satish Awate	Program Coordinator, Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Pune
22.	Dr. Shirish Sinha	Senior Thematic Advisor, Swiss Development Corporation (SDC), Embassy of Switzerland
23.	Dr. Sumana Bhattacharya	Head – Climate Change and Sustainability, Intercooperation India