



National Adaptation Plans in focus: Lessons from Liberia



The Republic of Liberia is home to a population of approximately 4.7 million. It covers 111,369 km² in equatorial West Africa on the Atlantic Coast. Rich in water, minerals, and forest resources, the least developed country's economy is recovering from the protracted impacts of civil war from 1989-2003, as well as the 2014-2015 Ebola crisis. Around 50 percent of Liberians live below the poverty line; gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in 2017 was estimated at US\$ 455. The country faces high unemployment, limited access to basic services, natural resource exploitation, and urban migration. The agriculture sector employs 70 percent of the population, making it one of the largest drivers of GDP. Industries such as mining (gold and diamonds), hydropower, and palm oil and rubber processing also contribute to GDP, as does the service sector. Though rich in resources, the country is highly dependent on foreign aid. The Human Development Index for Liberia remains low, ranking 177 out of 188 countries.

Liberia's primarily equatorial climate means there is little temperature variation throughout the year. Most of Liberia has two main seasons: a wet monsoon summer and a winter dry season. Rainfall averages are higher on the coast. Forests make up 45 percent of the land cover, and the country is recognized as a global hotspot for biodiversity. The densest forest cover and highest concentrations of fauna and flora species remain in areas with low population density.

Climate change is impacting Liberia negatively. Our adaptation planning seeks to address the socio-economic issues, helping to improve quality of life. This is in line with the government's pro-poor agenda.

Hon. Nathaniel T. Blama, Sr. Executive Director/ CEO, Environment Protection Agency, Liberia

Climate change risks

Past climate trends since the 1960s show increased average temperatures in Liberia of 0.8 °C, increased number of high-heat events, and a decline in mean annual rainfall. Future climate predictions include an increase in annual temperatures of up to 2.6°C by the 2060s, more high-heat events, increasing wet and dry seasonal precipitation extremes and rainfall irregularity, and a rise in sea level of 0.13-0.56 meters by 2100. Several climate-sensitive sectors, already highly affected by climate variability and change, are anticipated to be further affected, including agriculture, fisheries, forests, energy production, coastal zones and infrastructure, and health.

Experts predict higher temperatures will negatively impact rice cultivation, and can result in crop and livestock losses that intensify food insecurity and decrease income. The threat of vector borne diseases is exacerbated in times of climatic change, and Liberia's health system is already severely degraded. If, as projected, water flows decrease, the potential for hydroelectric power will also fall. And, along the highly populated coastline, major infrastructure is at risk from sea-level rise and coastal erosion. In Liberia, women and children are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.



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Groundwork for supporting the process to formulate and implement NAPs

Policy, planning and budgeting

The Agenda for Transformation (AFT) is the Government of Liberia’s five-year (2012-2017) development framework. It recognizes climate change adaptation and mitigation as cross-cutting issues. The economic growth anticipated under the AFT is dependant on the management of the country’s natural resources. The Liberian government is developing a new National Development Agenda for 2018-2024. This will bring together all Liberia’s peacebuilding priorities and its efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It offers a new opportunity to integrate climate change considerations and build resilience into Liberia’s national planning and budgeting processes. The National Development Agenda also provides an opportunity for risk-informed investment planning to take place in climate sensitive and economically relevant sectors.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the primary agency responsible for coordinating climate change efforts in Liberia. It oversaw the preparation of the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA, 2008), Liberia’s first set of actions to address climate change adaptation. In 2014 Liberia began preparing a climate change policy, finalized in 2017.

At the sector level, climate change adaptation (and mitigation) is identified in the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (2008) and the Climate Change Gender Action Plan (2012). The latter provides a framework for enhancing gender equality and youth development in climate change activities, including decision-making processes, capacity-building, and implementation. Other sectors have not started to integrate climate change in development planning and implementation processes. Ministries are often hindered by the need to build technical capacity to undertake such integration.

In 2015 Liberia submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) to the UNFCCC, which set priorities for both climate mitigation and adaptation in agriculture and fishery, energy, health, forestry, coastal zone, and transport and infrastructure. Based on the NAPA, the INDC contains immediate and longer-term adaptation priorities. See the table below:

Primary Adaptation Priorities	Mid- and Long-term Adaptation Priorities
Increase agricultural resilience	Protect catchments that provide hydropower resources and strengthen energy distribution networks
Build a national hydro-meteorological monitoring system	Mitigate spread and impacts of climate-driven infectious disease
Secure the coastline, especially in urban areas	Protect forest resources and biodiversity
	Implement climate-smart fisheries
	Reinforce and improve transportation infrastructure
	Develop coastal zone management strategies, informed by climate projections

Preparing for adaptation planning

In addition to the efforts above, various NGOs have completed climate change vulnerability assessments and stocktaking in Liberia to determine needed interventions. Liberia initiated a REDD+ readiness process with the Forest Carbon Partnership Fund in 2011. In addition, the 2013 Liberia Climate Change Assessment completed by USAID created a social vulnerability index for climate impacts predicted in the country. The result of this assessment fed into Liberia’s initial National Communication, which was completed the same year.

Implementation of adaptation actions

Adaptation activities completed or underway address the priority areas identified in the NAPA, including agriculture and coastal vulnerability as well as gaps in climate services. Key projects include:

- The Coastal Defence Project (2012-2015), implemented by UNDP with GEF funding in partnership with the Ministries of Lands, Mines and Energy, and Public Works, reduced erosion, siltation, and degraded coastal landscapes around Monrovia and other areas.
- The Climate Change Adaptation Agriculture Project (2012-2015), implemented by UNDP with GEF funding in partnership with FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, diversified crop farming to lower farmer vulnerability to climate change.
- The Climate Information for Resilient Development/Early Warning System Project, implemented since 2013 by UNDP with GEF funding in partnership with the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, generates hydro-meteorological information and strengthens the forecasting of extreme climate events.

These projects have had limited budgets and geographic scope and have the potential for further scaling up nationally. In addition, the areas of transportation, hydropower, health, etc. identified as secondary priorities under the INDC have had limited adaptation actions.





Institutional arrangements

In 2010, the President of Liberia established two bodies: the National Climate Change Steering Committee (NCCSC), composed of representatives of different ministries and government agencies, including the EPA, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and academia; and its operational arm, the National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS). Due to lack of funding, the NCCS and NCCSC were not able to operate in their first four years and were re-activated in 2014 at the start of NAPA implementation. The NAP process is steered by the NCCSC and managed by the National Climate Change Secretariat housed at the EPA.

NAP support

In addition to the joint UNDP / UN Environment NAP-GSP, the key support providers for Liberia's NAPs are those international organizations and programmes that already have operations in the country, including: UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and bilateral donors.

Challenges

Liberia's climate adaptation planning faces four main challenges: i) limited availability of climate vulnerability information, ii) low technical and institutional capacity, iii) a lack of inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination, and iv) limited access to financial resources.

Policy makers in line ministries do not have access to up-to-date climate change data and are not sufficiently aware of the environmental, social, and economic impacts of climate change in their specific sectors.

Capacity development is hindered by the limited availability of specialised professionals and training opportunities, a lack of academic programmes with climate change curriculum, inadequate funding to research institutions; and limited technical capacity of extension services.

Inter-ministerial and inter-agency knowledge sharing and coordination is sporadic and not streamlined, and government institutions are underfunded. To overcome these barriers, the NCCS needs be strengthened and empowered to play a leading coordination role, a change that should be reflected in future budget and staffing priorities.

May 2015 –

A workshop to launch the NAP process was organised, bringing together close to 50 government representatives from various ministries and agencies. This was an opportunity to stocktake existing adaptation activities, and develop a road map.

March 2018 –

An Inception Workshop to launch the implementation of the NAP Readiness Programme entitled *Advance the NAPs process for medium term investment planning in climate sensitive sectors and coastal areas in Liberia* took place in Monrovia. Representatives of all relevant Ministries and government agencies attended as well as academia, NGOs, CSOs and international partners. The workshop was an opportunity to agree on a workplan and served also as an awareness raising event.

September 2016 –

Liberia submitted a NAP readiness proposal to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

November 2016 –

The GCF approves Liberia's NAP readiness proposal. It sets a record. This proposal and the proposal of Nepal are the very first proposals for advancing NAPs to be approved by the GCF.

July 2017 –

The Government of Liberia received US\$ 805,000 of the US\$ 2.2 million GCF grant. The release of the fund represented GCF's first transfer of adaptation resources to a LDC.

What is the process to formulate and implement NAPs?

The Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process in 2010, to enhance country-led planning and preparedness for climate change adaptation (CCA) in the medium and long-term. The objectives of the NAPs are to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and to facilitate the integration of adaptation into all levels of development planning. The NAP process is multi-sectoral, involving Ministries of Environment as well as Planning and Finance, in addition to other key ministries. By bringing greater institutional integration and coordination to adaptation planning, NAPs can enhance ongoing national development planning processes, safeguard development gains, and build resilience.



‘There is no graduate science program to enhance capacity to adapt to climate change. This is necessary, because issues surrounding climate change are significant to the growth and development of this country.’

Dr. Ophelia Innez Weeks, President, State-run University of Liberia (UL)

Successes

The NAP roadmap, developed through a consultative process, provides clear operational direction, in particular for short-term actions. Other noticeable successes are the identification of the primary and secondary NAP stakeholders and the efforts made to encourage them to actively engage in the process.

Liberia was the first country to benefit from the new readiness funding window for NAPs under the GCF. The progression from approval to implementation was longer than anticipated for Liberia. This was because it was a process of “learning by doing” – particularly on disbursement procedures and implementation arrangements for the Government of Liberia, UNDP as delivery partner, and the GCF secretariat.

The process has contributed lessons which will enhance the efficiency of progressing from approval to implementation of GCF projects for subsequent countries.

Opportunities and next steps

The NAP process in Liberia is not starting from scratch, rather it builds upon the foundation laid by the experiences of the NAPA to scale up existing adaptation efforts. The NAP process can add value by identifying gaps and tapping into opportunities for more effective climate responsive planning and budgeting.

The GCF NAP readiness programme under implementation will contribute in addressing the adaptation gaps identified. It will strengthen the capacity of the National Climate Change Secretariat and the EPA, build capacity of line ministries for integrating climate change adaptation into development planning and budget processes. In this regard, the national planning exercise 2018-2024 offers a timely opportunity to catalyse the integration of climate change into development and budget processes through implementing the NAP readiness programme. Assessments, including climate vulnerability and economic assessments, will also be conducted, and financing mechanisms will be identified and pursued in order to scale up adaptation actions.

The NAP process relies on the active engagement of development partners and civil society organisations, which have already a substantial presence in Liberia and provide a large share of the funding for climate adaptation projects.

Key documents

- [Intended Nationally Determined Contribution](#)
- [National Adaptation Programme of Action](#)
- [1st National Communication](#)
- [NAP readiness proposal submitted to the Green Climate Fund](#)

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Government institutions are key to the NAP process

18

NGOs are involved in the NAP process

3

NAPA projects are implemented

29

adaptation actions identified in INDC

80%

of rural population vulnerable to food insecurity

About the NAP-GSP

The joint UNDP-UN Environment National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme (NAP-GSP) was launched in June 2013, financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). The NAP-GSP, together with partners, are assisting developing countries to identify technical, institutional and financial needs to integrate climate change adaptation into medium and long-term national planning and financing. The NAP-GSP provides technical expertise and guidance on country NAP processes, and provides opportunities for knowledge exchange on NAPs.

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