

How Subnational Governments can Engage in the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Process

INTRODUCTION

RegionsAdapt Learning Briefs aim to support Regions4 and RegionsAdapt members in understanding global adaptation processes and the critical role Regions4 plays in advocating for its members on these issues. This guidance document highlights how subnational governments can actively engage in National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes to strengthen climate resilience.

The key findings are based from the NAP Global Network's Synthesis Report, [*Progress on Vertical Integration in National Adaptation Plan Processes: Analysis of strategic linkages between national and sub-national levels*](#) (Luna Rodriguez et al., 2023). This document serves as a concise summary for subnational governments.

We encourage readers to read the full report and additional recommended resources at the end of this Brief for more insights.

KEY POINTS

- Vertical integration in NAP processes should be reinforced to ensure alignment between national adaptation plans and regional and local adaptation plans.
- NAP processes integrate diverse non-governmental sub-national actors—such as civil society, local communities, small businesses, and specific societal groups (women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, people with disabilities)—into the adaptation process.
- NAP documents assign sub-national governments roles across planning, implementation, and, to a lesser extent, monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- Several NAP documents mentioned sub-national adaptation plans and explicitly recognize local dimensions through community-based and locally led adaptation approaches.
- Countries establish varied coordination mechanisms across different governance levels, using existing structures, new multi-scale mechanisms, or ad hoc consultations.
- Many NAP documents include financing mechanisms for sub-national adaptation, such as microfinancing, budget integration, and channelling international funds.

MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE COLLABORATION IN NAP PROCESSES

The new [UAE Framework for Global Resilience](#) and Global Goal on Adaptation, calls for all countries to have in place their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) processes by 2025 and to be implementing them by 2030, emphasizing the importance of climate resilience and multi-level, cross-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. It specifically encourages collaboration across all actors at various levels of governance to enhance the effectiveness of climate adaptation actions.

This process demands a deep integration of adaptation strategies from the national to the local level, ensuring that climate change impacts are managed in a way that reflects local needs and priorities.

Vertical integration of governance levels—connecting national policies with subnational planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)—is critical for the successful implementation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) alike.

THE NDC AND NAP PROCESSES

The NDC and NAP processes offer complementary mechanisms to support climate adaptation at both national and local levels. NDCs are the signature vehicle of the Paris Agreement, primarily focusing on national targets for mitigation. Although not mandatory, most countries are including adaptation components in their NDCs, recognizing that addressing climate change impacts is as important as mitigating future emissions.

While NDCs outline overarching climate goals, they often lack detailed guidance on how to implement adaptation actions at the subnational level.

The NAP process provides a domestic planning framework that sets out the 'how' behind adaptation goals, translating the adaptation goals in NDCs into concrete, on-the-ground actions. NAP processes focus on medium- and long-term climate resilience across sectors and engage local actors and communities, ensuring that adaptation goals are both ambitious and practical.

For more insights, consult: [Advancing adaptation action: Enhancing alignment between NAPs and NDCs](#) (Terton et al., 2024)

SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE WITHIN THE NAP PROCESS

NAPs reference various subnational actors, including civil society organizations, small-business owners, local communities and governments, and marginalized groups such as women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and people living with disabilities. Most NAPs assign roles to subnational governments during planning, implementation, and, to a lesser extent, MEL stages of the iterative adaptation cycle.

Additionally, some countries are establishing coordination mechanisms across governance levels, providing financing at subnational levels through microfinancing or mainstreaming adaptation finance into local budgets.

Subnational adaptation plans—at community, municipal, county, provincial, and state levels—are becoming increasingly common, reflecting a growing recognition of the local dimensions of adaptation action. In the [CDP States and Regions 2023 Disclosure process](#), 64% of the 109 participating states and regions reported having a climate strategy or plan that addresses adaptation.

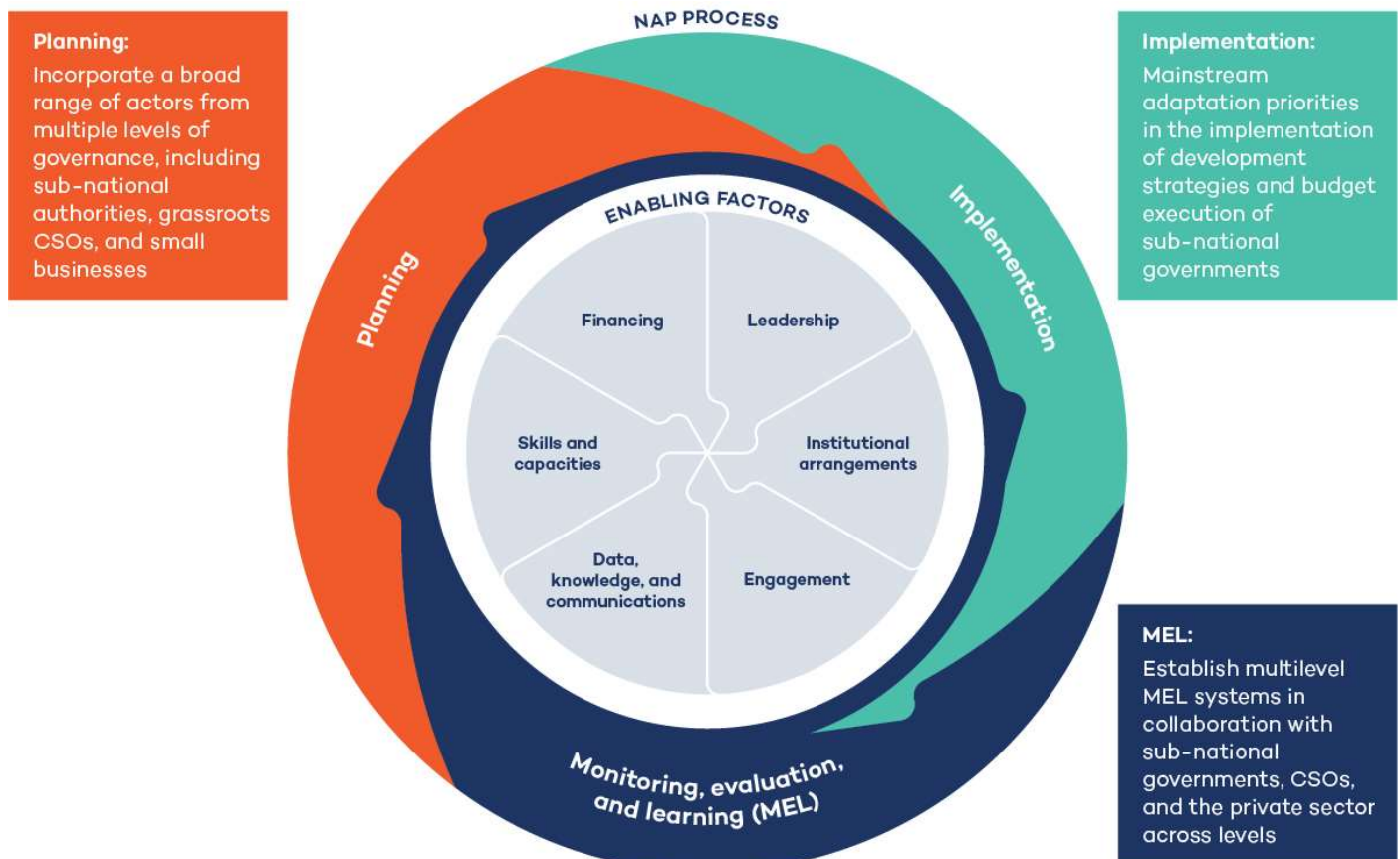
Consult for further information RegionsAdapt tracker: <https://regions4.org/regionsadapt-regional-adaptation-progress/>

VERTICAL INTEGRATION IN NAP PROCESSES

The NAP process is an iterative policy cycle that can be thought of as three major phases¹: planning, implementation, and MEL. These phases present key opportunities for vertical integration:

- **Planning Phase:** National governments can involve subnational authorities, to ensure local adaptation priorities are reflected. This phase enables the integration of adaptation planning into local decision-making processes.
- **Implementation Phase:** Coordination between national and subnational governments is essential to mainstream adaptation priorities into development strategies and budgets. Local and regional governments can contribute to implementing countries' adaptation priorities.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL):** Multilevel MEL systems require collaboration across governance levels, with subnational governments and other actors, tracking and reporting progress. This contributes to the iterative nature of the NAP process and strengthens adaptation outcomes.

Learn where your country is at in terms of establishing a NAP with NAP tracking tool: <https://napcentral.org/nap-tracking-tool>



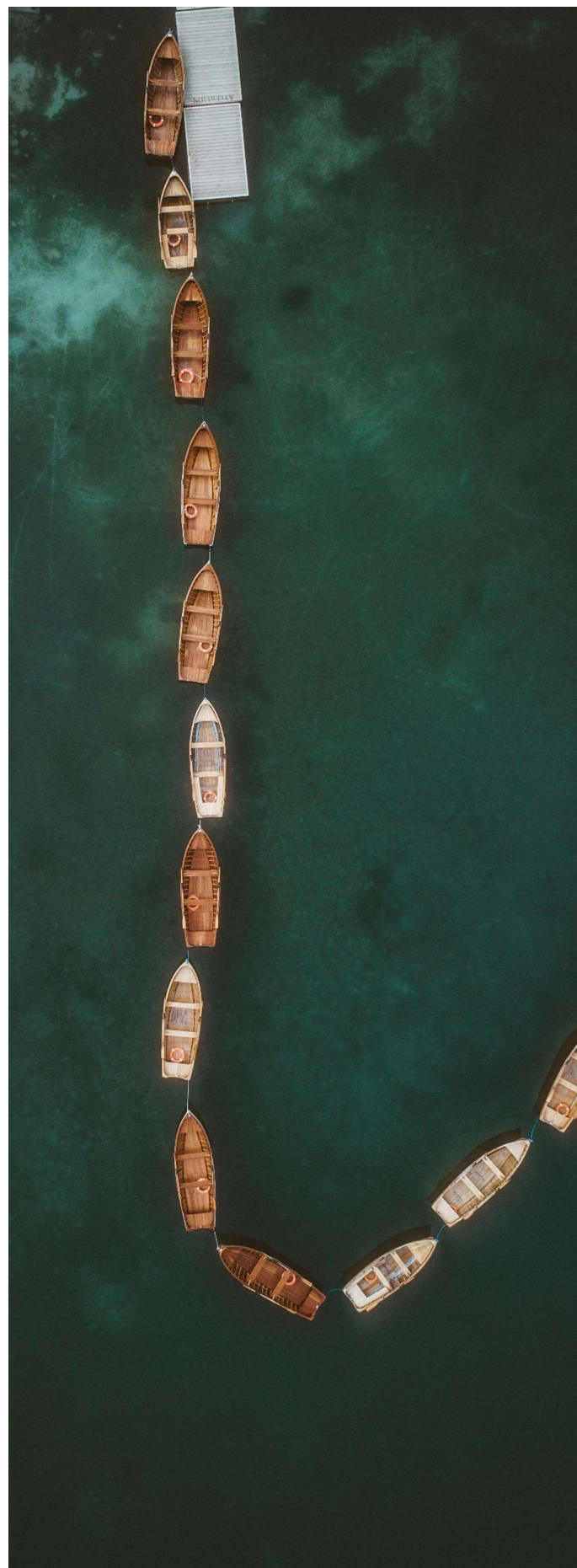
Source: Luna Rodríguez, M., Ledwell, C., & Bankole, O. (2023). Progress on vertical integration in national adaptation plan (NAP) processes: Analysis of strategic linkages between national and sub-national levels (NAP Global Network synthesis report). International Institute for Sustainable Development. www.napglobalnetwork.org

¹ The official definition, objectives and guidelines of the NAP process are available [via the UNFCCC website](https://unfccc.int/naap/).

LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICES²

As shared in NAP documents, several countries have made progress in engaging subnational governments in their NAP processes:

- **Costa Rica:** Over 20 municipalities are developing climate change action plans, integrating adaptation into local development planning.
- **South Sudan:** The NAP formalizes roles for climate adaptation at national, state, payam, and boma levels, with specific budgeting responsibilities.
- **Brazil:** The NAP promotes coordination between federal, state, and municipal governments to reduce climate vulnerability.
- **Benin:** The Green Climate Fund approved a \$9.9 million dollars project to strengthen local climate governance and finance local adaptation.
- **Kenya:** Counties are encouraged to develop County Adaptation Plans, integrating climate actions into County Integrated Development Plans.



² Adapted from Luna Rodriguez et al., 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS³

For Subnational Governments

- Engage in NAP processes and align and/or share regional adaptation plans progress.
- Develop needs assessments and capacity-building programs to enhance technical competencies in adaptation planning, budgeting, and project development.
- Build monitoring and evaluation processes to track, assess, and report adaptation progress at subnational levels and inform national MEL systems.
- Engage with national governments to advocate for increased resources and policy support for local adaptation and regional/local adaptation initiatives that contribute to NAP priorities.

For Funders or international donors

- Provide dedicated funding for vertical integration in the NAP process.
- Support long-term capacity building on adaptation for national and subnational governments.
- Offer flexible financing mechanisms to strengthen technical knowledge on climate risk assessments, adaptation planning, and adaptation investment planning.
- Design funding programs that prioritize locally led adaptation initiatives and build partnerships with subnational actors.

For National Governments, notably those signatories of CHAMP⁴

- Strengthen multilevel institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms.
- Establish financial flows to subnational levels for climate adaptation.
- Engage subnational governments (states, regions, cities, local governments) in the NAP process to ensure inclusive and equitable adaptation.
- Promote knowledge-sharing platforms to disseminate best practices and lessons learned from subnational adaptation experiences.
- Align NDC and NAP processes, to integrate NAP objectives within reviewed NDCs and vice versa.

By fostering vertical integration, subnational governments can play a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness and equity of climate adaptation actions, contributing to global climate resilience goals under the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement.

³ Adapted from Luna Rodriguez et al., 2023, Terton et al., 2024

⁴ The [COP28 Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships \(CHAMP\) for Climate Action](https://www.iclei.org/champ/), commits endorsing countries to enhance cooperation with their local, regional and other subnational governments – including cities, towns, states and regions – to collectively pursue efforts to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. For more information: <https://www.iclei.org/champ/>

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

- Luna Rodríguez, M., Ledwell, C., & Bankole, O. (2023). Progress on vertical integration in national adaptation plan (NAP) processes: Analysis of strategic linkages between national and sub-national levels (NAP Global Network synthesis report). International Institute for Sustainable Development. www.napglobalnetwork.org
- Terton, A., Qi, J., & Exell, G. (2024). Advancing adaptation action: Enhancing alignment between NAPs and NDCs (NAP Global Network briefing note). International Institute for Sustainable Development. www.napglobalnetwork.org
- Least Developed Countries Expert Group. (2012). National adaptation plans: Technical guidelines for the National Adaptation Plan process. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/publication_ldc_nap_techguidelines.pdf
- LGMA, Bloomberg Philanthropies (2024). [The CHAMP Opportunity – A toolkit for cities, towns, states and regions to get action on climate change.](#)

NAP TRACKING TOOLS

- [NAP tracking tool | NAP Central](#)
- [NAP Trends | NAP Global Network](#)

REGIONSADAPT TRACKING TOOL

- [RegionsAdapt Subnational Adaptation Tracker – Regions4](#)

ABOUT THIS LEARNING AND POLICY BRIEF

This brief is part of a series aiming to inform RegionsAdapt members on key results and recommendations based on RegionsAdapt research and Community of Practice session.

RegionsAdapt is a Regions4 climate initiative gathering more than 80 regional governments. It mobilizes ambition and action on climate adaptation by facilitating access to the latest innovations, tools, and best practices at the regional level.

RegionsAdapt Community of Practice offers a space for regional governments to present their expertise and to learn from each other, discuss and engage, on a series of learning sessions on focused topics on adaptation, so as to help them gain capacity and improve their own policies and activities on adaptation.

For more information on the initiative, please visit: <https://regions4.org/regionsadapt/>

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Author: Heloise Chicou, Climate Action and Resilience Program Manager (Regions4)

Reviewers: Mauricio Luna Rodríguez (IISD), Christian Ledwell (IISD), Mélisa Cran (Regions4)

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