

Insight Brief: Engaging Subnational Governments in Climate Action

Lessons Learned from the NDC Partnership Support Unit¹ March 2020

KEY MESSAGES

Subnational governments are key implementers of climate policies but are not always closely involved in designing these policies or in national-level implementation planning. The NDC Partnership is frequently requested to support coordination between different levels of government in an effort to mainstream climate action at the local level.

Based on in-country work conducted by the NDC Partnership Support Unit and its members, the Partnership has identified a variety of ways to engage subnational governments, including:

- Conducting multi-stakeholder consultations at the local level and/or involving subnational actors;
- Establishing local climate plans; and
- Supporting local implementation and finance.

THE GROWING IMPORTANCE AND RECOGNITION OF SUBNATIONAL CLIMATE ACTION

Subnational governments and local stakeholders are key implementers of national policies and have access to critical climate data, allowing them to identify and address local contributions to adaptation and mitigation, local GHG emissions, and the local impacts of climate change.

The importance of subnational governments in the climate arena has been increasingly recognized over the past several years, most notably in the Paris Agreement itself. However, coordinating the actions of subnational governments with the national level—or receiving formal recognition in international fora—can remain a challenge. For instance, while two-thirds of NDCs (113 out of 164) reference the urban dimension of climate action, yet the development of most NDCs lacks the meaningful involvement of subnational actors².

¹ This paper captures insights from the NDC Partnership as seen by the Support Unit. It does not reflect the views of the NDC Partnership member countries or institutions.

² UN Habitat (2017), [Sustainable Urbanization in the Paris Agreement](#).

While NDC Partnership member countries are represented by national governments, these governments increasingly request support for engaging with subnational actors. As of February 2020, the Partnership has received 134 requests on subnational action from 36 countries (26 on NDC implementation and 23 on NDC enhancement).

In the NDC implementation requests, 21 percent are focused on mitigation measures, nearly 11 percent are focused on adaptation, and the majority (68 percent) are associated with measures that benefit both mitigation and adaptation efforts, like establishing policy frameworks, consultation processes and finance strategies (see Figure One below). Most of these requests are being addressed through the NDC Partnership, with active engagement from Partnership members such as Germany, UNDP, the World Bank, WRI, FAO, and ICLEI.

More generally, the experience of the NDC Partnership shows that:

- Within the NDC Partnership Country Engagement Process, subnational government engagement with national governments is increasing, and vertical climate action components are increasingly detailed in NDC Partnership Plans³.
- Requests for Support in subnational action includes a broad range of topics and sectors (see Figure One below).

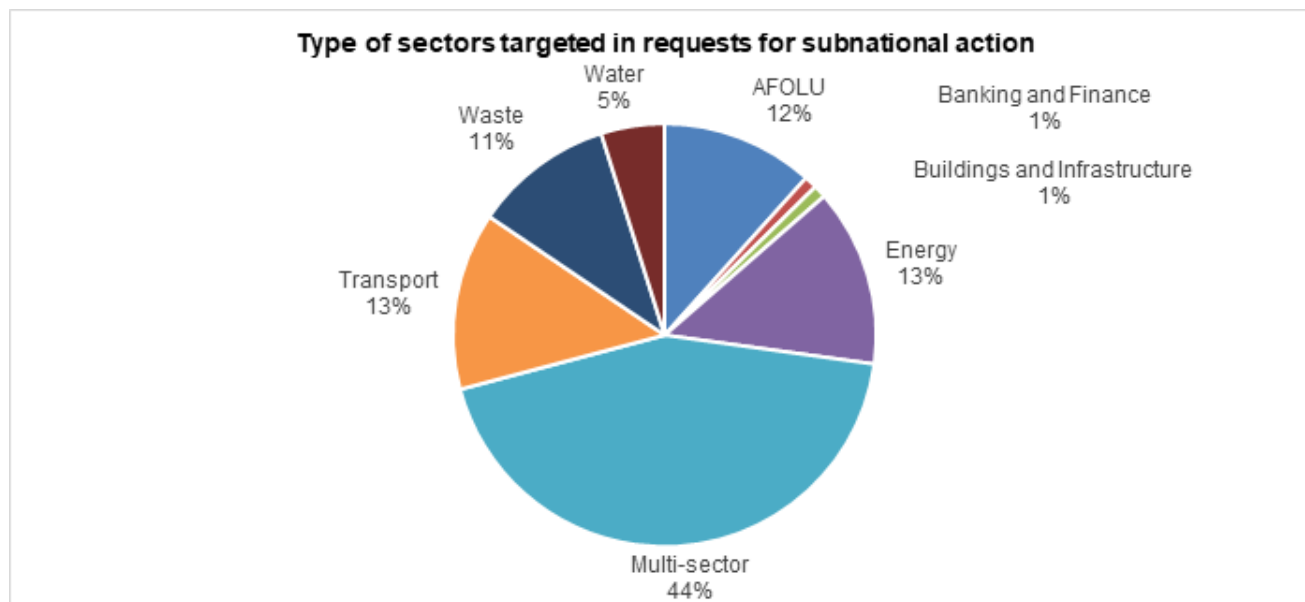


Figure One, Source: NDC Partnership

The NDC Partnership is involved in local climate action through:

³ A Partnership Plan is a tool to organize a country's NDC priority activities and match them with Partnership member support and in-country stakeholders.

- Conducting multi-stakeholder consultations at the local level and/or involving subnational actors.
- Establishing local climate plans.
- Supporting local implementation and finance⁴.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Multi-stakeholder consultations involving national governments, subnational governments, and non-state actors are often the first step in engaging with the subnational level. Multi-stakeholder consultations are used by a number of Partnership members and generally combine sectoral and local outreach⁵.

The benefits of multi-stakeholder consultations at the local level include:

- National governments obtain local information which can be used to design policies (e.g., information on climate impacts, needs, and perceptions by the population, on-the-ground innovations, and challenges faced by subnational governments).
- Local actors gain ownership and can work with the national government on creating incentives to engage in NDC implementation.

For example, **Indonesia** requested support to organize local consultations through five subnational workshops and a public campaign for its NDC enhancement process. **The Republic of Marshall Islands** consulted remote populations by organizing local climate dialogues in atolls and outer islands. Finally, **Peru** set up an ambitious whole-of-society process called ***Dialoguemos NDC*** (“let’s talk about the NDCs”)⁶. After a successful first phase of national consultations, a second phase was launched at the local level which aims to inform the Government in its NDC enhancement process⁷.

ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL CLIMATE PLANS

By engaging subnational governments, and through multi-stakeholder consultations, governments can develop local climate plans. In cases where local climate plans are already developed, the government can conduct local consultations to map climate initiatives and needs, which can inspire and contribute to national actions.

⁴ This list was established based on the requests sent by country members to the NDC Partnership and by no means aims to represent all the types of national-local collaborations. It should be noted that these policy actions do not necessarily exclude each other. Moreover, the best way to engage subnational governments depends on each country’s multi-level governance structure (e.g. federation, centralized state, etc.).

⁵ For more information on multi-stakeholder consultations, see: [“NDC Partnership Experience with Multi-Stakeholder Engagement: Key lessons Learned”](#) August 2019.

⁶ Please see [“Dialoguemos NDC: A Participatory Process for NDC Implementation in Peru”](#). This case study focuses on the first phase of the program that does not include local consultations.

⁷ More information can be found on the [website](#) of the initiative, hosted by the Ministry of Environment.

The benefits of establishing local climate plans include:

- Local plans are better tailored to local context and needs, with demonstrated innovation and increasingly ambitious policy.
- Local plans help national governments obtain key information on local vulnerabilities and adaptation needs that vary from place to place, as well as information on GHG emissions that can be used for national inventories. At the local level, this information can be used to facilitate the coordination between different initiatives, governments, and donors.
- Successful local initiatives can be used to inspire national policies.

Around the world, subnational governments are developing their own targets and programs, informed by and aligned with national policies where appropriate and can sometimes be more innovative and ambitious. For instance, **Colombia** has requested support from the NDC Partnership to achieve sectoral targets. These sectoral targets will have a direct impact on Colombia's cities and will only materialize through strong collaboration with local governments.

Nepal's subnational governments are also expected to develop local level adaptation plans. To that end, Nepal has requested support from the Partnership around institutional capacity building at all levels (national, provincial, and local) to integrate climate change into policies and plans at each level of government.

In addition, as part of its NDC update process, the **Dominican Republic** is looking for detailed information on local climate actions currently being implemented by subnational governments and non-state actors. This will allow the country to monitor progress and enable increased ambition in national targets. The Dominican Republic is also planning to establish subnational government structures and bodies to set local targets and oversee NDC implementation.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION AND FINANCE

The availability of financial resources is a major challenge at the local level that national governments can help address.

The benefits of supporting local implementation and finance include:

- Advancing and diversifying the implementation of national climate policy.
- Improving the monitoring of national policies.
- Helping local governments address finance issues through specific financial packages or policies, access to international financiers, or support to identify and manage resources.

For example, as a next step after the *Dialoguemos NDC* program, **Peru** has requested support in establishing agreements with local governments on NDC implementation, which will identify financial resources for implementation. Similarly, **Zimbabwe** has requested support for capacity building to access and manage financial resources, and to mainstream climate change at the national and local

levels. **Mexico** is planning to develop an investment package of strategic measures for its NDC, including some (federal) state-level projects. These will result in a pipeline of bankable projects that could be submitted to the Green Climate Fund or other financiers.

All of these projects will require the development of several local policies, such as electromobility expansion for selected cities or renewable energy generation with hybrid systems for rural communities. Subnational authorities will participate in the planning in order to align the projects with local development priorities.

NDC Partnership Resources on Subnational Climate Action

Member countries seeking support for subnational climate action can tap into the NDC Partnership resources by:

- Accessing the [Knowledge Portal](#) with several available resources, including:
 - [Good practices](#) from all around the world on subnational action and integration of climate policies.
 - A [Climate Toolbox](#) that provides tools, guidance, platforms, and advisory support.
 - A [Climate Finance Explorer](#) with financing options for subnational climate action.
 - [Links](#) to other relevant data sources.
- Requesting peer-to-peer exchanges in order to benefit from the experience of other countries.
- Getting in touch with other Partnership members, including [ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability](#), a global network of local and regional governments or UCLG-Africa.
- Reading our blogs that regularly touch upon local climate actions, for instance [here](#) and [here](#).

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