

The Paris Agreement: the importance of pro-poor focused NDCs/LEDS in East Africa

POLICY BRIEF

Key message:

The current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that state parties submitted to the UNFCCC do not define how climate actions contribute to the alleviation of poverty. Instead many of them include primarily large scale climate actions in their mitigation sections. We have found this in an analysis of the NDCs of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. However, this is not just an East African issue, it affects many more countries and international guidance for NDCs would address it. This would enable countries to easily integrate NDCs in their development agendas, thus also contributing to the reduction of poverty. Therefore we suggest that:

- I. Guidance for NDCs to indicate how the actions proposed contribute to development and poverty reduction
- II. Each party's NDC states the action alongside the support that will go into the implementation of the NDC
- III. Guidelines and accounting of NDCs should give clear guidance for including local actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation in NDCs and in the reporting of NDCs
- IV. Guidelines for long term low emission development strategies (LEDS) should focus on how countries can develop LEDS that support their development and poverty reduction.
- V. Stakeholders are consulted in the development process of the NDCs

I. Background

196 State parties united and committed themselves to taking collective action to limit the increase in the global average temperature this century to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels through the adoption of the Paris Agreement, which provided tools to collectively ratchet up climate ambition and implementation in the areas of mitigation, adaptation, support (climate finance), global stock-taking and loss and damage (Burlison, 2016). This commitment involved parties submitting Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), which set out national intentions of actions of how individual countries will tackle climate change.

These indicative pledges that were to be submitted ahead of the climate negotiations in Paris in December 2015 were to contribute to a new international climate agreement aimed at keeping temperatures at levels safe enough to prevent dangerous global warming.

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State parties are therefore required to submit and implement increasingly ambitious NDCs in five year cycles, starting 2018. To increase the ambitions, the countries agreed, in parallel to the Paris Agreement, to review the adequacy of their commitments in 2018, and potentially increase ambitions of the NDCs.

In addition to the NDCs the countries shall develop long-term strategies, **“Low Emission Development Strategies” (LEDS)**. Parties to the agreement have urged each other to develop LEDS before 2020. In as much as African countries contribute very little towards the overall global green house gas emissions; activities such as overdependence on biomass for cooking and lighting and unsustainable land use contribute to emissions. In parallel, developing countries face the possibility of increasing their GHG emissions due to the increase of activities geared towards spurring development such as establishment of industries.

Unfortunately, these countries bear the brunt of climatic change due to their lack of resilience capacity. The groups mostly affected are those living under USD 2 a day and constitute about 69.9% of the population. (Borgen project, 2013). Sadder is the fact that mitigation actions proposed by the state parties to the convention, do not have a poverty alleviation inclination, thus placing this group in a precarious position due to the negative impacts that climate change presents to their livelihoods.

II. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Given the hurriedness with which parties submitted their INDCs prior to the COP 21 in Paris, it is important that countries now calmly review them with input from various stakeholders so as to generate workable options, secure long term engagement and above all national ownership of the actions to address climate change mitigation and adaptation. This also provides a time for reflecting on the national level institutions’ current capacity needs to ably coordinate with one another and with other stakeholders, in order to deliver the commitments under the NDCs (that calls for gradual ambition in subsequent years).

III. Low Emission Development Strategies (LEDS)

Countries have had strategies in place to achieve a low carbon and climate resilient pathway. However, from the adoption of the Paris Agreement (2015), countries are expected to develop longer term strategies in the form of LEDS. Some countries have already submitted LEDS, but if there is no guidance, it will limit the participation of many countries. Further, it will be difficult to compare the different national LEDS and have them aligned to pro-poor actions.

Thus guidelines and a list of information to include in the LEDS should be developed, allowing countries to develop and submit LEDS well in advance of 2020, following this guidance.

In the guidelines it is important to specify the key sectors to be included and all major mitigation options, including local solutions that are important for reducing local emissions which are prevailing in many countries.

Literature

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