

Three recommendations for advancing adaptation tracking emerge from a review of 53 African countries' NDCs and NAPs

Submission to the Adaptation Committee

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Three recommendations

1. Amplify and scale out recent progress on adaptation tracking through targeted capacity building, enhanced investments in M&E systems, and south-south knowledge exchange.
2. Classify indicators to support a common framing and aggregation for adaptation tracking.
3. Expand the scope of adaptation tracking indicators to pair the current activity-focused approach with outcome indicators to document impact.

Assessing national adaptation indicators

This brief reports on the state of national adaptation tracking in Africa¹. We analyzed the potential for existing national-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts for advancing adaptation tracking, as The Paris Agreement invites parties to report on progress in responding to climate impacts but states that it should be country-driven, and not create additional burdens. We screened the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) submitted by 53 African governments before 31st of December 2020. We extracted information on adaptation indicators and their related objective, unit of measurement, timeframe, data source, data frequency, institutional responsibilities, and sector of applicability. We distinguished adaptation indicators² from adaptation goals³ and actions⁴. Our synthesis provides a nuanced understanding of how adaptation tracking features in current national climate change processes, from which three recommendations to advance a country-driven, bottom-up adaptation tracking emerge⁵.

Recommendation 1: Amplify progress. Adaptation is prominent in national policy agendas, but few countries currently plan to track performance of identified priorities. By December 2020, 52 African governments had integrated adaptation components in their NDCs, defining broad goals and/or actions (Figure 1, left). Six governments—including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Togo—developed NAPs that further unpack their adaptation strategy. However, only about 20% of countries ($N = 11$) identify indicators and define institutional roles for adaptation tracking. Yet, some notable progress has

¹ The research was led by The Alliance of Bioversity and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) under the Accelerating the Impact of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) initiative and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), in collaboration with the Basque center for Climate Change (BC3), iCatalyst, and the African Group of Negotiators Expert Support Group (AGNES).

² Indicators refer to quantitative or qualitative variables that measure achievements and changes

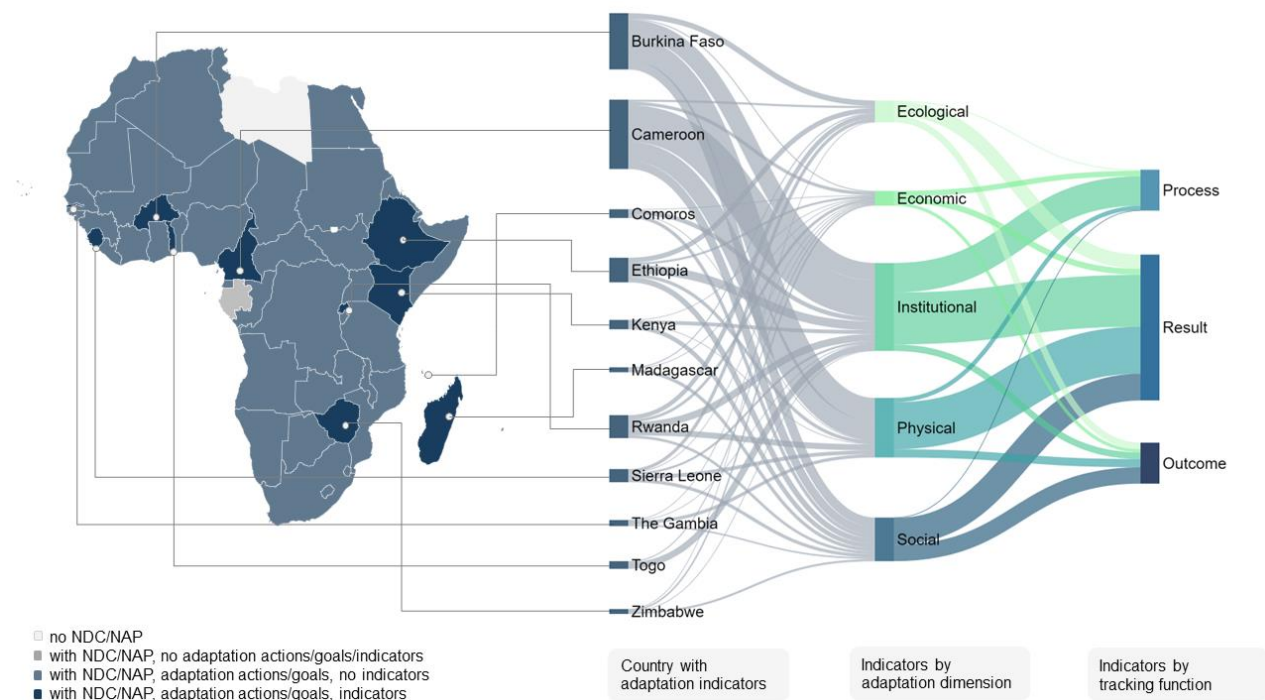
³ Goals describe the long-term, macro-level, adaptation vision.

⁴ Adaptation actions refer to efforts or processes geared towards achieving the adaptation goal(s)

⁵ The dataset used in the analysis is available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/TVZFSV>. The dataset is being updated to include submissions up to 31 May 2022.

been made. The Rwandan NDC includes a comprehensive adaptation results framework with sector-specific indicators matched to priority actions that map to governmental entities responsible for data reporting. Ethiopia’s NAP lays out a roadmap for achieving envisioned goals and outcomes and the foundations for a national M&E system for adaptation by identifying vulnerabilities, priority actions, performance indicators, data sources and assumptions. NDCs submitted after we compiled our dataset provide further proof of progress in adaptation tracking across the continent; by May 2022, at least 10 additional NDCs include adaptation indicators and targets. These developments demonstrate the feasibility of building on existing foundations and call for efforts to amplify progress. Targeted capacity building, greater investment in M&E systems for adaptation and south-south dialogues that facilitate knowledge exchange, are important tools for advancing adaptation tracking across the continent.

Figure 1. Adaptation tracking in NDCs and NAPs submitted by 31 December 2020. Left: The state of adaptation tracking based on NDCs and NAPs submitted by African countries prior to 31 December 2020. The diagram on the right illustrates the extent to which indicators suggested in existing NAPs and NDCs cluster around typologies of adaptation (by dimension of the system and by tracking function). The width of the bars is proportional with the numbers of indicators identified in the country’s NDC and/or NAP. Data: Nowak et al. (2022).



Recommendation 2: Identify commonalities. Our results indicate a richness of approaches, where indicators vary significantly among countries. We identified 417 adaptation indicators included in just the five NAPs and seven NDCs that include indicators (Figure 1, right)⁶. The diversity of approaches speaks to the context-specificity of adaptation measures but has stalled progress towards a collective and consistent framing for adaptation tracking. However, we found that the indicators tend to converge towards broad

⁶ Burkina Faso included adaptation indicators in its NDC and NAP, which explains the inconsistency between total number of documents with adaptation indicators (12) and total number of countries (11).

themes. One such common theme is depicted in Figure 1 and refers to elements of socioecological systems that need to adapt, such as the institutional environment (39% of all indicators in the dataset); physical infrastructure (26%); social systems such as food and nutrition security, health, or education (19%); ecological systems (10%); and economic systems (6%). The relative distribution of indicators across these elements is asymmetric among countries. Given their prevalence, however, the elements provide opportunities for a common framing for adaptation and aggregation of indicators, which can facilitate context-sensitive measurements within coherent global patterns.

Recommendation 3: Track what is possible today while preparing for tomorrow. Current adaptation tracking approaches principally focus on monitoring activities. The bulk of indicators (82%) measures processes and short-term results such as: vulnerability assessments, plans or policies, institutional structures, funding mechanisms, but also capacity building activities, physical infrastructures in place, or services developed (e.g., insurance schemes, advisory services). Process and result indicators are valuable tools to document ongoing efforts and achievements. However, analyzing and reporting on the value of adaptation efforts over time requires outcome and impact indicators that measure changes in the status quo—i.e., reduced vulnerability, improved adaptive capacity or resilience, or maladaptation. The small number of such indicators found in our analysis (18%) suggest that current efforts are poorly suited to provide the desired understanding of adaptation effectiveness and adequacy of actions. Long-term policy planning will require tracking adaptation benefits over time and under uncertain conditions and baselines to inform future analyses. Impact evaluation design at project level⁷ and nascent initiatives such as the African Development Bank’s Adaptation Benefits Mechanisms⁸ can offer important learnings for advancing work on a broadened, forward-looking scope for adaptation tracking.

Looking forward

Progress in adaptation tracking has been slow but continued improvements in how African governments plan to track and report on adaptation provide an important foundation. Our research revealed three recommendations for advancing adaptation tracking. Although not exhaustive, these entry points can stimulate critical advancements, ensuring that national monitoring and reporting on adaptation is fit for purpose. Implementation of the three priorities will be costly but worthy; they will likely require changes in mindset, significant additional investment, and capacity, but they will be essential for delivering a more accurate picture of progress towards desired national and global adaptation goals.

Resources:

Nowak A. et al. 2022. Adaptation Indicators in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) of African countries: A reference system to improve adaptation measurement and tracking. Harvard Dataverse, V1. <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/TVZFSV>.

Contact:

Andreea Nowak (The Alliance of Bioversity-CIAT): a.nowak@cgiar.org

Lucy Njunguna (ILRI): l.njunguna@cgiar.org

⁷ GIZ. 2015. Impact Evaluation Guidebook for Climate Change Adaptation Projects. Available at: <https://www.adaptationcommunity.net>

⁸ AfDB. 2017. Adaptation Benefits Mechanism. Available at: <https://www.afdb.org/>