

# Advancing Adaptation Planning and Implementation in the Asia-Pacific region

*A review of progress made and pathways forward*

## Key messages

- *The Paris Agreement calls for an acceleration of support to developing countries to develop their national adaptation plans (NAPs) and integrate climate change adaptation into development policies.*
- *Eleven out of 14 surveyed countries already have their own NAPs or equivalent, and NAP preparation is underway in the remaining three countries. However, NAP implementation is slow and relevant tools and approaches that could facilitate implementation are underutilised.*
- *Key focus areas for accelerating NAP implementation include: (i) mainstreaming adaptation across national development plans and strategies; (ii) institutionalising adaptation practice at all levels of government; (iii) strengthening systems for accountability and engagement; (iv) enhancing access to and use of the tools and approaches; and (v) assessing effectiveness of existing international support.*

## 1. Introduction: Paris Agreement emphasises increased support for national adaptation planning

Under the Paris Agreement, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed to assess the adaptation needs of developing countries, review the adequacy and effectiveness of present assistance provided by the international community to developing countries to enhance their adaptive capacity, and increase support to accelerate the development of their national adaptation plans (NAPs) (UNFCCC, 2015). NAPs are important instruments for adaptation, as developing countries can use the planning process to assess vulnerabilities and integrate adaptation into their development policies to address climate change (UNFCCC, 2012b). The NAP process consists of a series of activities that can be divided into the

following four elements: (A) laying the groundwork and addressing gaps; (B) preparatory elements; (C) implementation strategies; and (D) reporting, monitoring and review (UNFCCC, 2012a, 2012b). Each of these elements consists of multiple steps.

To promote the NAP process in the Asia-Pacific region, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) conducted an assessment on the status and needs of developing countries in preparing and advancing their NAPs. This early effort to examine the needs of developing countries in the

**Robert Didham**  
**Isao Endo**  
**Henry Scheyvens**  
**Yohei Chiba**

region with respect to their NAPs aimed to reveal the challenges and opportunities that the countries faced by examining their activities under the NAP process. A questionnaire survey was conducted in September 2015 with government representatives who were in charge of adaptation planning at the national level in the following 14 countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. Follow-up consultations with these government officials were held during workshops organised in October 2015 and January 2016 to verify the information collected. Using this information, this briefing note outlines the regional progress made on the NAP process, and suggests future directions for developing countries to further the process.

## 2. Current status of NAP development in the region

### Adaptation plans

Of the 14 surveyed countries, 11 countries have some form of national-level adaptation plan. Three countries — Indonesia, Samoa and Vietnam — developed their NAPs following the formal NAP process, while the following eight countries have their own equivalent national plans addressing adaptation: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. In the majority of these countries, adaptation is included in the national climate change plan or strategy, which addresses both mitigation and adaptation actions, rather than in a stand-alone adaptation plan. Bhutan, Mongolia and Nepal are the three surveyed countries that do not currently have a national-level adaptation plan.

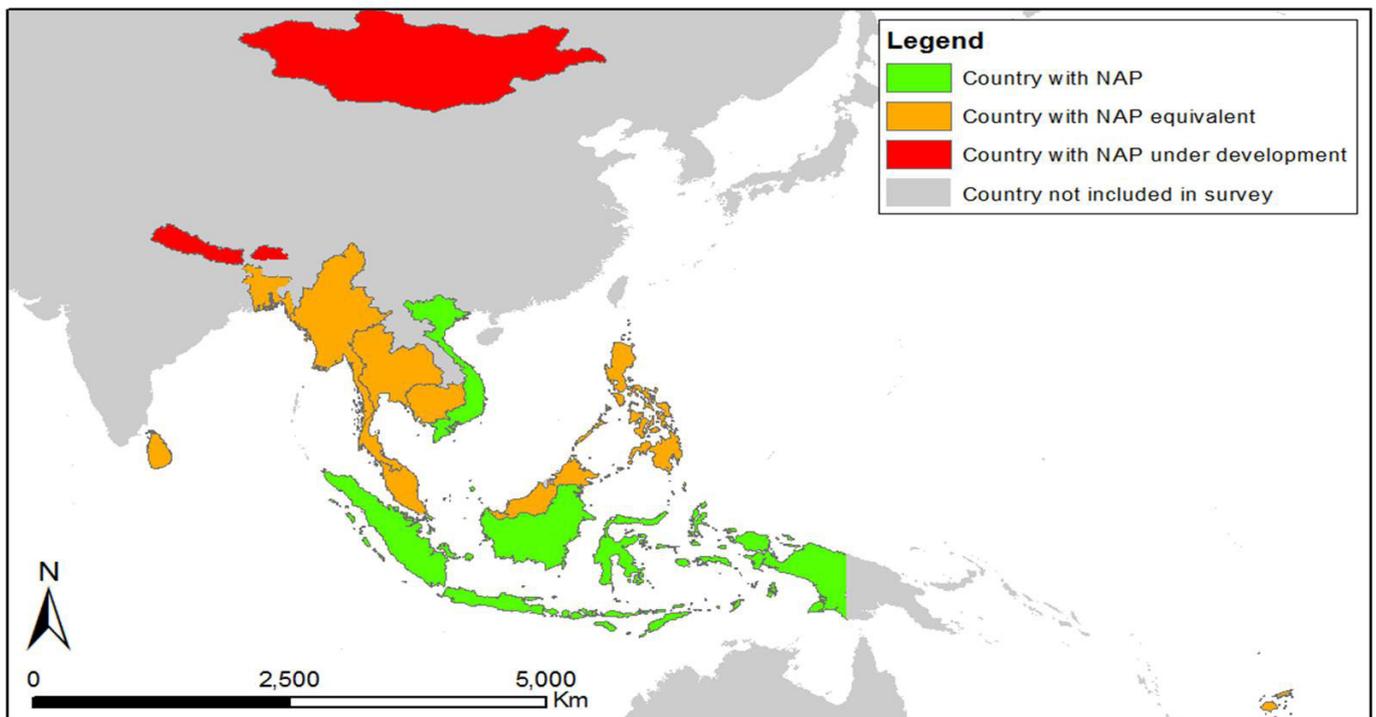


Figure 1. Current status of developing national adaptation plan (NAP) and NAP equivalent plan in 14 countries surveyed in the Asia-Pacific region

Following the structure of the technical guidelines on the planning process for NAPs (UNFCCC, 2012a), countries were questioned on the actions they took during the planning process in relation to the four elements outlined in the NAP technical guidelines: A) groundwork, stocktaking, capacity building and addressing gaps; B) preparatory assessments and integrating into development planning; C) developing implementation strategies, coordination, and implementation; and D) monitoring, evaluation and reporting (Table 1). Countries reported whether they had completed each element in the proposed planning process, and on whether they had completed the individual steps of actions under each element.

In descending order from element A to D, the countries surveyed reported the highest completion rate for element A (79%) and the lowest completion rate for element D (21%), while element B and element C had completion rates of 57% and 36%, respectively.

Each element is comprised of a series of steps (Box 1). The survey found that the completion rates of each

step also vary. Elements A and B both had specific steps with a completion rate of only 29%, even though the elements as a whole had 79% and 57% completion rates, respectively. The opposite was observed for element C, where all steps individually had higher completion rates (C.1=50%, C.2=43%, C.3=50%, and C.4=50%) than the overall reported completion rate of 36%. For element D, the individual steps had completion rates either above or below the overall reported completion rate, which was relatively low at 21%.

## 3. Use of Tools and Approaches during the NAP planning process

From the NAP technical guidelines, a series of recommended tools and approaches were identified for each element in the NAP planning process. Countries were asked to respond on which tools they had used. Use of 13 tools and approaches were surveyed for element A, 17 for element B, 13 for element C, and 11 for element D.

**Table 1. Progress in National Adaptation Plan process in the Asia-Pacific region**

Country	Bangladesh	Bhutan	Cambodia	Fiji	Indonesia	Malaysia	Mongolia	Myanmar	Nepal	Philippines	Samoa	Sri Lanka	Thailand	Vietnam	Number of Countries Completed	Percentage of Completion among Surveyed Countries
<b>A</b>	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	11	79%
A.1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	8	57%
A.2	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	10	71%
A.3	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	7	50%
A.4	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	4	29%
<b>B</b>	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	8	57%
B.1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	8	57%
B.2	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	8	57%
B.3	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	8	57%
B.4	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	4	29%
B.5	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	7	50%
<b>C</b>	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	5	36%
C.1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	7	50%
C.2	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	6	43%
C.3	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	7	50%
C.4	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	7	50%
<b>D</b>	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	3	21%
D.1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	5	36%
D.2	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	4	29%
D.3	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	2	14%
D.4	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	✓ 1	✗ 0	✗ 0	✗ 0	3	21%

(Numerical coding: 1 = Yes; 0 = No)

## Box 1. Elements and Steps of the NAP Process

### Element A. Lay the Groundwork and Address Gaps

Step A.1. Initiating and launching the NAP process

Step A.2. Stocktaking: identifying available information on climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation and assessing gaps and needs of the enabling environment for the NAP process

Step A.3. Addressing capacity gaps and weaknesses in undertaking the NAP process

Step A.4. Comprehensively and iteratively assessing development needs and climate vulnerabilities

### Element B. Preparatory Elements

Step B.1. Analyzing current climate and future climate change scenarios

Step B.2. Assessing climate vulnerabilities and identifying adaptation options at the sector, subnational, national and other appropriate levels

Step B.3. Reviewing and appraising adaptation options

Step B.4. Compiling and communicating national adaptation plans

Step B.5. Integrating climate change adaptation into national and subnational development and sectoral planning

### Element C. Implementation Strategies

Step C.1. Prioritizing climate change adaptation in national planning

Step C.2. Developing a (long-term) national adaptation implementation strategy

Step C.3. Enhancing capacity for planning and implementing adaptation

Step C.4. Promoting coordination and synergy at the regional level and with other multilateral environmental agreements

### Element D. Reporting, Monitoring and Review

Step D.1. Monitoring the NAP process

Step D.2. Reviewing the NAP process to assess progress, effectiveness and gaps

Step D.3. Iteratively updating the national adaptation plans

Step D.4. Outreach on the NAP process and reporting on progress and effectiveness

For element A (Groundwork, Stocktaking, Capacity Building and Addressing Gaps), the most commonly applied approach was “stocktaking of existing information, data and activities”, which 11 countries reported doing (Figure 2). The second most common approach (applied by nine countries) was “climate change communication, awareness-raising and education”. Eight countries conducted a “synthesis of available analyses of current and future climate”, a “stakeholder analysis”, and “establishing a coordinating mechanism”, and seven countries developed a “NAP process road map”. In contrast, no countries conducted “assessment of potential barriers to planning, designing

and implementing activities”, while only two countries conducted “systems mapping and co-benefit identification between development and adaptation” and only three countries “developed a flowchart of responsibilities and roles in the NAP process”.

For element B (Preparatory Assessments and Integrating into Development Planning), the most common tools/approaches applied were “vulnerability assessment” completed by 11 countries and “scenario analysis of future climate projections” completed by ten countries (Figure 3). “Climate change impact assessment” and “risk analysis” were both

used by eight countries, while “geographic mapping of climate scenarios and risks”, “sectoral analysis of climate scenarios and risks” and “compilation and analysis of past/current climate data” were each applied by seven countries. The least used tools/

approaches for element B were “cost-benefit / cost-effectiveness analysis of adaptation options” and “scenario analysis of future socio-economic projections”, which were each only applied by two countries. A “decision matrix of adaptation options”

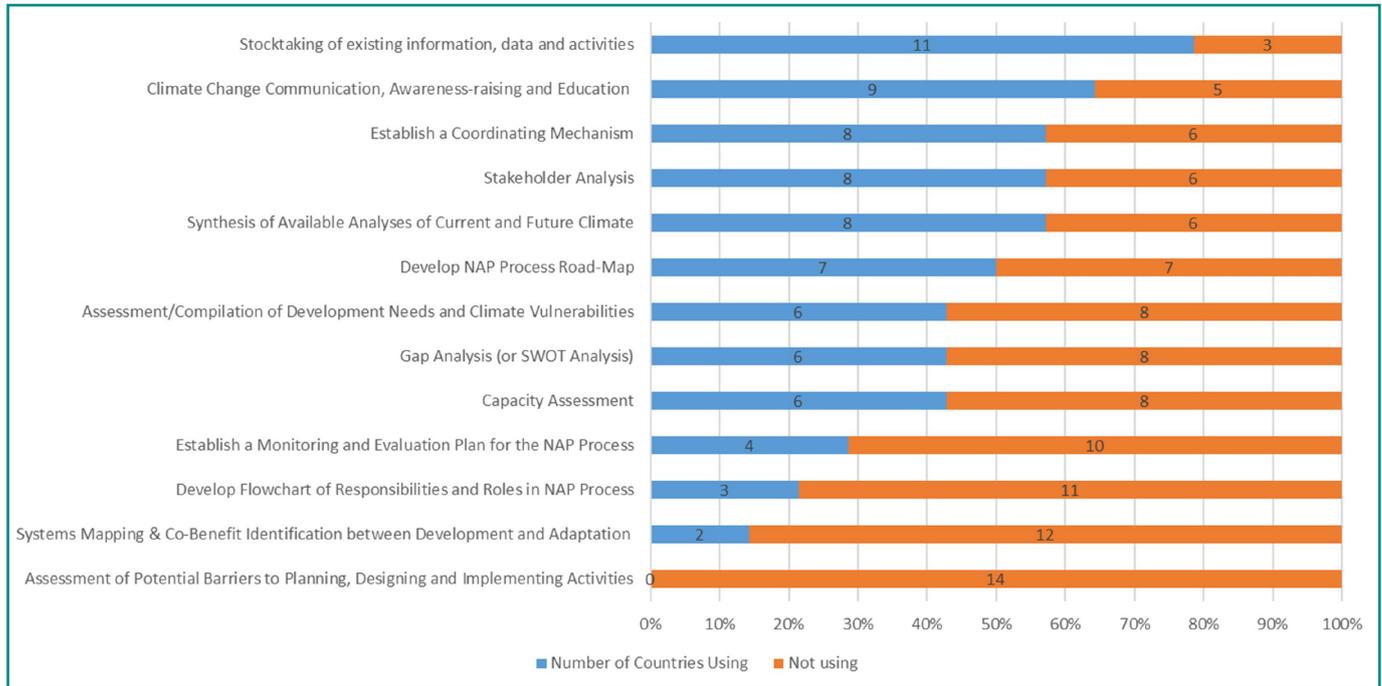


Figure 2. Tools and Approaches for Element A: Groundwork, Stocktaking, Capacity Building and Addressing Gaps

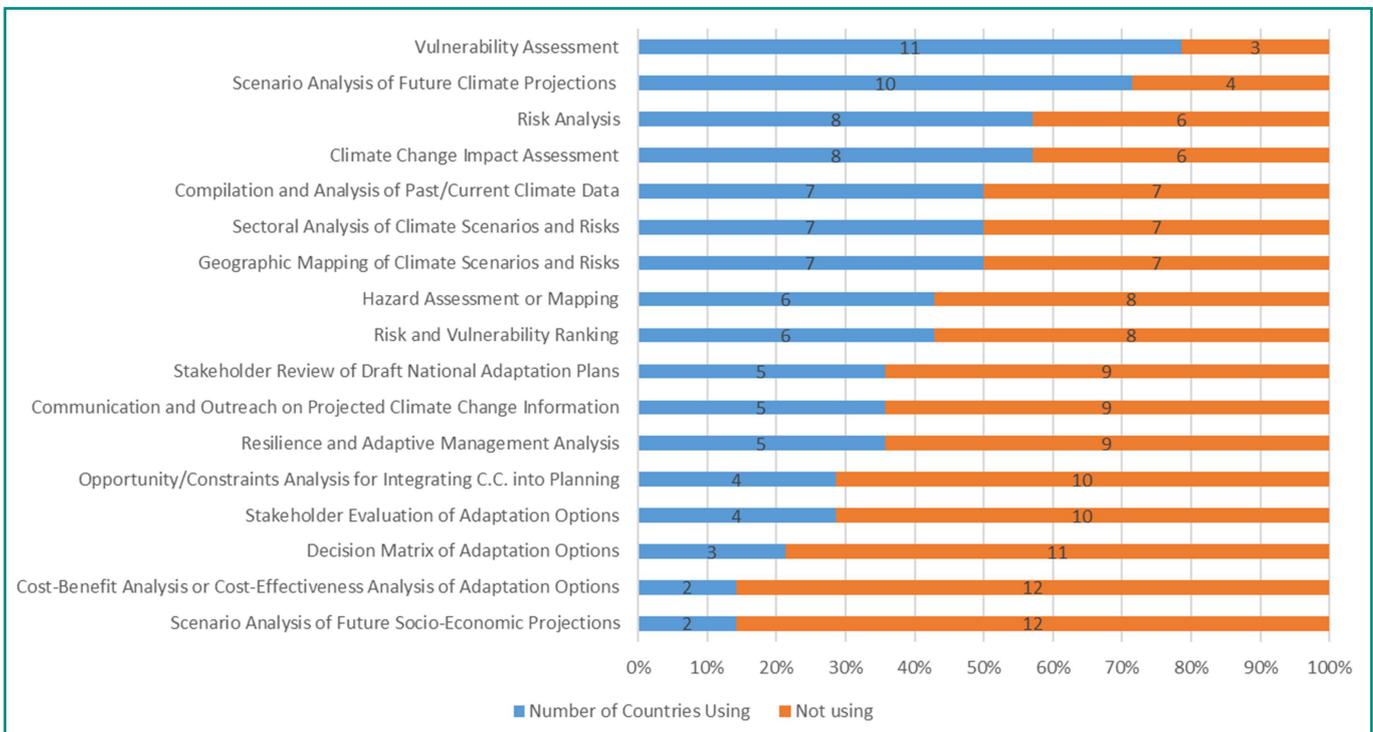
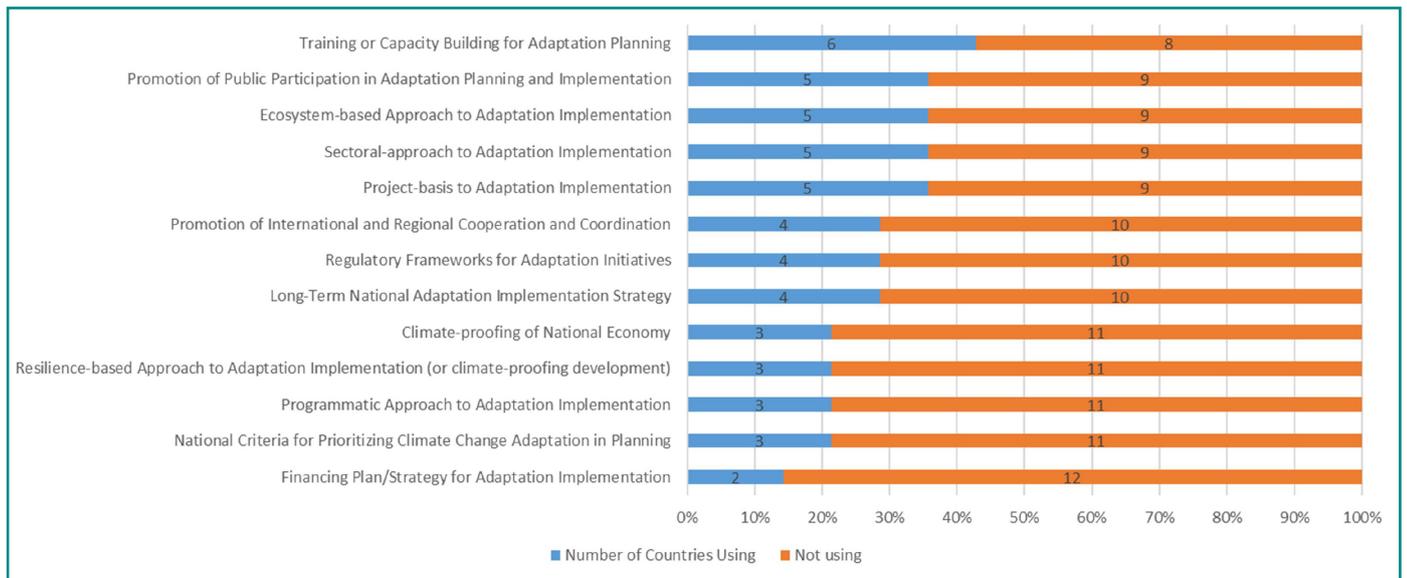


Figure 3. Tools and Approaches for Element B: Preparatory Assessments and Integrating into Development Planning

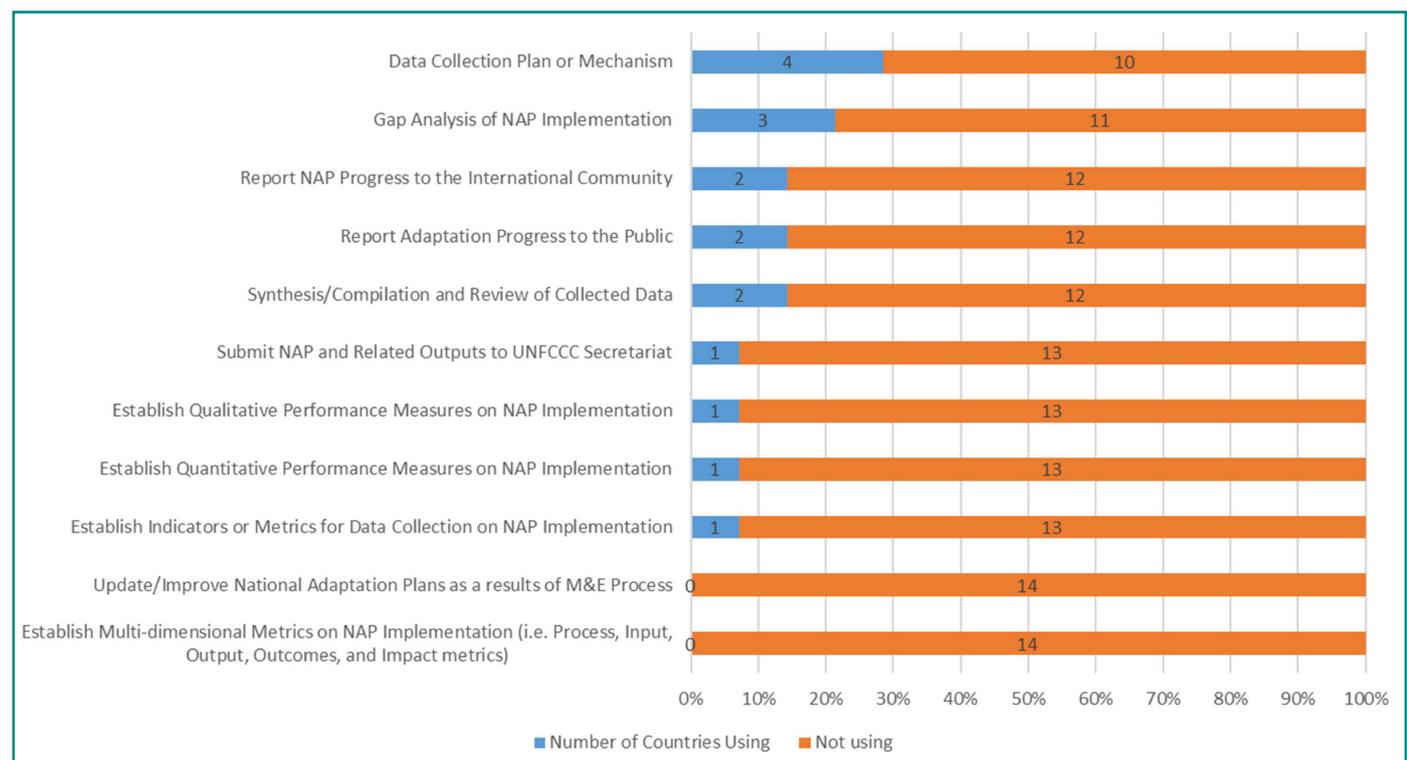
was developed by three countries, and four countries each conducted “opportunity/constraints analysis for integrating climate change into planning” and “stakeholder evaluation of adaptation options”.

For Element C (Developing Implementation Strategies, Coordination, and Implementation), there was generally a low usage of relevant tools and approaches, which corresponds with the fact that only five countries reported completing actual implementation activities under their national-level adaptation

plans (Figure 4). The most used approach was “training and capacity building for adaptation planning”, which was conducted by six countries. Five countries each reported using “project-basis to adaptation implementation”, “sectoral-approach to adaptation implementation”, “ecosystem-based approach to adaptation implementation”, and “promotion of public participation in adaptation planning and implementation”. The least used approach was the development of a “financing plan/strategy for adaptation implemen-



**Figure 4. Tools and Approaches for Element C: Developing Implementation Strategies, Coordination, and Implementation**



**Figure 5. Tools and Approaches for Element D: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting**

tation”, which was completed by only two countries.

For Element D (Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting), there was very little reported use of the surveyed tools and approaches (Figure 5). In fact, only four countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Samoa) reported any usage of tools and approaches for this element. Considering that only three countries reported having completed Element D and also that in general most countries still have limited implementation of adaptation plans, it would be premature at this point to expect monitoring, evaluation and reporting to be fully mainstreamed. However, further investigation is needed to confirm that the lack of activity and achievement in this area are mainly due to timing, rather than it potentially demonstrating a lack of capacity. Of the four countries reporting use of approaches under this element, developing a “data collection plan or mechanism” was the only approach completed by all four countries. The second most used approach was “gap analysis of NAP implementation”, which was completed by three countries.

## 4. From knowledge to action: How to advance the National Adaptation Plan process

As indicated above, developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region have made significant efforts to devise their adaptation plans at the national level. Most countries already have their own NAPs or equivalent, and NAP preparation is underway in other countries. Although there may be room for improvement in their preparation phases (i.e. elements A and B) of the NAP process, many countries have completed almost all steps in these initial elements. However, the countries lag behind in NAP implementation as indicated by the low percentage of completion rates for elements C (Developing Implementation Strategies, Coordination, and Implementation) and D (Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting), and for certain steps of these elements (C.2; D.1 through 4). Relevant tools and approaches for these elements and steps are underutilised (Figures 4 & 5), which may be part of the reason behind this slow implementation.

Further efforts are underway to better understand how to strengthen the smooth transition from adaptation planning to implementation and to also ensure that the planning process addresses the

necessary institutions, mechanisms and capacities to facilitate effective adaptation implementation at national, sub-national and local levels. This initial research however indicates several important aspects that require improvement for mainstreaming and integrating strong efforts for adaptation in developing countries across the Asia-Pacific region.

- **Mainstreaming of adaptation:** National adaptation plans, policies and measures need to be properly integrated into national development strategies, economic plans and budgeting for adaptation implementation to be linked to all sectors and levels of government. Many countries currently lack the necessary mechanisms for cross-ministerial coordination on climate change issues in general and adaptation specifically, and the lack of integration of adaptation into development strategies and economic plans results in a situation of competing interests between differing agendas. Certain countries demonstrate good practices in the mainstreaming of adaptation, such as specific tagging of a percentage of budget lines to all sectors for adaptation implementation, and these examples help in identifying the key mechanisms that support strong integration of adaptation implementation across national policies and planning.

- **Institutionalising adaptation practice at all levels of government:** Local governments, civil society and communities are key stakeholders in realising adaptation implementation on-the-ground. Thus, it is important that national adaptation planning identifies and outlines the supportive institutions and mechanisms that will enable down-scaling from national planning to local implementation. Many methods, tools and approaches applied for national adaptation planning need to be replicated and utilised at local levels. For example, risk mapping and vulnerability assessment both depend on local contextualisation for detailed analysis. However, while the expertise for these approaches have already been generated at national level, such capacities are still lacking across many local levels, which raises the need for the provision of capacity building on adaptation planning and implementation for local governments, as well as the establishment of a mechanism for knowledge management that can collect and share data, methods, approaches, and good practices throughout the country.

- **Strengthening accountability and engagement:** Stakeholder engagement is an important factor for effective adaptation planning and implementation, but there is a need for improving the

systematic facilitation of this engagement. Coordination mechanisms and the clear definition of roles and responsibilities are key to initiating this facilitation, while good information sharing, awareness raising and capacity building can enhance the quality of engagement by various stakeholders. Directly related to strengthening engagement systems is the need to ensure good transparency and accountability across the adaptation process. One key aspect of accountability that is lacking in the majority of countries is the establishment of monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems, as well as the use of performance based indicators. Institutionalising the regular use of matrixes with criteria and indicators to evaluate the progress of the NAP process and the effectiveness of actions taken can generate information in a timely manner and lead to the routine enhancement of the NAP process.

- **Enhancing access to and use of the tools and approaches:** Support from the international community is crucial for developing countries with limited capacity to utilise the tools and approaches for promoting NAP implementation. Multilateral and bilateral development agencies, research institutes and others can assist these countries by providing them with opportunities to improve their technical skills and strengthen their institutional setups, and by helping them secure access to data, information, and funding.

- **Assessing effectiveness of existing international support:** To increase the effectiveness of assistance to developing countries on their NAP process, the impacts of existing interventions by bilateral and multilateral development agencies should be carefully studied. Such study can help identify potential gaps between the support provided and the needs identified by the survey discussed in this paper. With this understanding, better support can be provided to developing countries to accelerate their NAP process.

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Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES)  
Natural Resources and Ecosystem Services Area  
2108-11 Kamiyamaguchi, Hayama, Kanagawa,  
240-0115, Japan  
Tel: 046-855-3700 Fax: 046-855-3709  
E-mail: [nre-info@iges.or.jp](mailto:nre-info@iges.or.jp)  
[www.iges.or.jp](http://www.iges.or.jp)

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