On the road to 2025
Lessons for effective NDC update support
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Capacity constraints across several stakeholder groups limit the extent to which they are able to meaningfully participate in NDC processes

Despite the challenges, this round of NDC updating has revealed opportunities for future enhancement

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<td>ACE</td>
<td>Action for Climate Empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFOLU</td>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use</td>
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<td>AR5</td>
<td>IPCC Fifth Assessment Report</td>
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<td>AR6</td>
<td>IPCC Sixth Assessment Report</td>
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<td>BAU</td>
<td>Business as Usual</td>
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<td>CAEP</td>
<td>NDC Partnership Climate Action Enhancement Package</td>
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<td>CANCC</td>
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<td>CICC</td>
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<td>Free, Prior and Informed Consent</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
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<td>IPPU</td>
<td>Industrial Processes and Product Use</td>
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<td>LDCs</td>
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<td>LULUCF</td>
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<td>LT-LEDS</td>
<td>Long-term Low Emissions and Development Strategies</td>
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<td>LTS</td>
<td>Long-Term Strategy</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>National Development Plan</td>
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<td>NDC-SF</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
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<td>Support Programme for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement</td>
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<td>TOR</td>
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<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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<td>World Resources Institute</td>
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Common Terminology

**Governments:**
National climate change and/or NDC focal points, as well as line-ministries and sub-national governments.

**Support Providers:**
Coordinators and channellers of funding to developing countries to support NDC update; for example, NDC Partnership, UNDP (HQ), GIZ (HQ), World Bank.

**Implementing Partners:**
Governments, organisations and private firms providing coordination and technical NDC update support services, internationally or locally based.

**NGOs and CSO:**
International or local organisations representing civil society and community interest in the NDC update and implementation processes.

**Funders:**
those providing funding to coordinating and implementing organisations, such as BMWK/IKI and other governments/government entities.

**Stakeholders interviewed or study participants:**
Those who provided primary data from which our inferences are drawn.

**Social Partners:**
Refers to civil society, NGOs, labour, business and academia.

**Vertical Integration:**
The integration of sub-national governments in NDC development, target setting and implementation.

**Horizontal Integration:**
The integration of sectoral line-ministries and agencies in NDC development, target setting and implementation.

**Whole-of-society:**
The inclusion of all societal players in NDC development processes, content, and implementation; key words related to a whole of society approach are inclusivity, gender, local/indigenous communities and just transitions.

**Whole-of-government:**
Considerations of vertical and horizontal integration, and integrated planning between national development plans, climate change plans, sectoral plans and NDCs.
Setting the scene:
Background to the study
Over the course of 2020 and 2021, countries submitted the first update to their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. This first round of new or updated NDC submissions represents a critical time to evaluate the success potential of this key mechanism of the Paris Agreement. Its five-year iteration cycle provides countries with a unique opportunity to continue “ratcheting up” ambition so as to limit global warming to well below 2°C, pursuant to the 1.5°C-cap commitment. It also presents an opportunity to examine two critical, interrelated aspects, namely: how developing countries are coming to grips with their NDC both as a key implementing mechanism of the Paris Agreement but also as a tool for national planning, as well as how support for the update process provided by development partners was received and how it can best be directed in the future.

The Glasgow Climate Pact, agreed at COP 26 in November 2021, requests countries to “revisit and strengthen the 2030 targets” in their NDCs by the end of 2022. This update is additional to the five-year cycle enshrined in the Paris Agreement. Parties agreed to this request due to the inability of the NDCs submitted in 2020/2021 to put the world on a path towards 2°C, let alone 1.5°C temperature increase. The Glasgow Climate Pact further emphasises: “...The urgency of enhancing ambition and action in relation to mitigation, adaptation and finance in this critical decade to address gaps between current efforts and pathways in pursuit of the ultimate objective of the Convention and its long-term global goal; and the establishment of a work programme to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade”.

As provided in Article 3 of the Paris Agreement, the highest possible ambition requires, and must be met with, progression in the availability of means of implementation and support from developed countries. Consequently, developed countries are contemplating how best to target support, including opportunities to perpetuate transformational shifts in climate governance.

The 2020/2021 NDC updating cycle represents the first time that the majority of developing countries (and other nations that converted their Intended NDCs into NDCs) have engaged in the NDC revision process.

It also represents their first attempt to address the question of what it means to increase their ambition to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. In updating their NDCs, developing countries received various forms of technical and financial support from development partners and their initiatives. In addition to support lent through specific development projects, there were two major global initiatives supporting the revision process: the NDC Partnership’s Climate Action Enhancement Package (CAEP), which supported 67 countries, and United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Climate Promise, responsible for assisting 120 nations. CAEP and the Climate Promise are mutually supportive, with the latter being closely aligned with the NDC Partnership. Germany was the largest funder towards NDC update support, providing half of the funding for the CAEP initiative as well as major contributions to UNDP’s Climate Promise.

This study, commissioned by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) (then German Federal Ministry for Environment and Nuclear Safety/now Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action), seeks to identify and highlight key lessons from developing country experiences of the 2020/2021 NDC updating process, and the support received from Support Providers, with the aim to inform and provide guidance to the provision of future NDC support enhancement and implementation.

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1 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Draft Text on 1/CMA3, para. 29.
2 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Decision -/CP.26 Glasgow Climate Pact, para. 4.
3 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Draft Text on 1/CMA3, para. 27.
4 The Climate Promise received USD 1.5 million from IKI/BMU to assist 10 countries (Guatemala, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Sao Tome and Principe, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe) in the first call of CAEP, EUR 44 million (also from IKI/BMU) to support, via the UNDP NDC-Support Programme, 41 countries, as well as other complementary funding from BMZ, the EU and Spain.
5 According the NDC Partnership Support Unit information, CAEP’s total resources amounted to more than USD 55 million – including USD 27 million for the Technical Assistance Fund (TAF), of which USD 13 million came from BMZ.
Approach and Methodology
Approach

The submission of revised/updated NDCs in 2020/2021 has been the focus of several studies, including an in-depth analysis by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the form of the NDC Synthesis Report (2021). Primarily, these studies have sought to provide a global picture on the status of NDCs, the progression in terms of content included in NDCs, the significance of changes in comparison to the initial round of submissions, and the implications thereof in relation to the goals of the Paris Agreement. Relatively less research has aimed to understand the nature of the processes that countries implemented to update their NDCs, and the interplay and effects of development partner support with such processes. In general, existing studies have focused on providing an assessment and analyses of the quantitative elements, while there remains relatively little information pertaining to the experience of key stakeholders responsible for the process of updating NDCs in developing countries. More so, information pertaining to the experiences of stakeholders who have an interest in NDC updating but who tended to not be included in the process is not readily available. This study adopts a qualitative approach that explores the experiences, challenges, and successes of a broad range of stakeholders in developing countries in updating their NDCs. The study focuses on several key aspects relating to the process of updating NDCs and the support provided by development partners in the process. In doing so, the approach seeks to provide deeper insights into the practical ways in which 1) subsequent NDC processes can be improved upon in future, and 2) provide key recommendations for ways in which development partners can ensure more effective, timely and efficient support to developing countries in their NDC update process.

Methodology

The methodological approach comprises both secondary and primary research. The analysis of existing literature pertaining to this round of NDC updating was drawn upon to inform the development of the analytical framework of the study. Key informant interviews – with a wide range of stakeholders involved in NDC updating – across 11 developing countries provided the primary data for the study. A wide range of perspectives were gathered from a broad group of stakeholders, including NDC focal points and government representatives, technical implementing partners, and international development partners. This qualitative analysis ensures a nuanced reflection of both the soft elements such as perceptions and understandings of the purpose and role of NDCs, as well as the practical aspects involved in the NDC updating processes, including the institutional frameworks, stakeholder consultation processes, and resourcing involved. The findings of the key informant interviews were validated through a validation workshop. The sample of countries included in the study was limited to eleven countries, which were selected to ensure diverse regional representation. The sample includes countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific Islands. The initial findings of the ten-country analysis were corroborated by testing these with a range of national and international implementing partners and development partners whose experience extends globally. Where initial findings were validated by these stakeholders they have been presented in this report as the key findings of the study.

When undertaking the primary research and analysis, it became clear to the team that there was a need for the study to more closely examine how NDCs are understood conceptually within the broader long-term planning frameworks that countries operate under. Consequently, the interplay between the NDC and Long-Term Strategy (LTS) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP) is explored in detail throughout the study, as is the relationship between these mechanisms and other national, sub-national, and sectoral planning processes. This provided a useful basis for further articulating how support for future NDC updating should best be positioned.
Executive Summary
Second generation NDCs present differently in key aspects

According to the literature on the new or updated NDCs submitted in 2020/2021, and the experiences of this study’s eleven target countries, the level of ambition articulated in recent NDCs has increased. More countries have included explicit Greenhouse gas (GHG) targets (89% - indicating an increase of 14%), and the recent submissions signal a further reduction of 2.9 gigatons of CO2 equivalent compared to previous NDCs. However, despite those relevant achievements, they still remain insufficient to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Developing-country parties, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), have shown leadership through the inclusion of ambitious GHG reduction targets and plans for adapting to climate change impacts. Developed countries, particularly those that are part of the G20, can and must do more to address the 75% of global emissions for which they are responsible.

In the 2020/2021 update process, developing countries have deepened their understanding of key elements of NDCs and have articulated second generation NDCs with enhanced clarity of mitigation targets. Adaptation elements, on the other hand, remain in need of improvement; in particular, establishing quantifiable or qualitative adaptation goals with clear indications of how to measure and report progress. It is worth noting, however, that some countries prefer to use NAPs to report on adaptation measures, making only references of such measures in their NDCs.

As clarity has increased, developing countries are expected to be able to engage further with aspects relating to NDC implementation. Feasibility of implementation is beginning to be better articulated, but governments foresee this being impacted by the availability of finance, technology transfer and capacity building. The UNFCCC Synthesis report notes that while most Parties’ NDCs are unconditional, at least in part, many have included more ambitious conditional elements. Finance flows to developing countries remain insufficient to achieve the targets contained in their NDCs, and developing countries remain hesitant to include stronger targets without a clear indication that finance is available. Whilst there remains significant scope for improving the inclusion of the costing of climate action in developing-country NDCs, there is a critical need for developed countries to commit to greater mobilisation of resources and technical support. Designing NDC implementation plans, finance strategies, investment plans and Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems are areas of further expressed need to advance the feasibility of implementation.

Whole-of-government approaches to NDC development have found broad adoption, with most countries having made deliberate and concerted efforts to engage more widely across ministries and areas during this round of NDC updating. Consequently, the second generation of NDCs benefit from increased awareness raising amongst, and consultation with, government institutions from relevant sectors at the national and sub-national levels. The integration of NDCs into governance frameworks is emerging as an area of interest to governments, though most have not undertaken programmatic interventions to map and address their needs in this regard.

Though not the case for all, for most countries this round of NDC development further benefited from a more consultative process outside of national government, leading to an improvement in the degree of inclusivity in NDC content. Governments recognised this as a short-coming in the first round of NDC development, owing to short time frames and capacity challenges. There has consequently been an increase in the number of NDCs addressing gender and youth compared to first generation NDCs. A recent study by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) found that of 89 updated or new NDCs reviewed, 69 (78%) include at least one mention of gender. This is up from 40% (or 65 out of 162 intended NDCs reviewed in the 2016 IUCN baseline analysis). The study further found that Latin America and the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa are regionally leading the way on gender mainstreaming NDCs, with 18 out of 18 NDCs (or 100%) and 17 out of 18 NDCs (or 94%), respectively, including gender considerations.

UNDP found that 45% of second generation NDCs reviewed include gender-responsive targets. Only in a few instances was special attention paid to addressing impacts of response measures on vulnerable groups and communities (37%), and in particular in relation

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6 Benin, Colombia, Ethiopia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Samoa, South Africa, Tajikistan and Vietnam.
8 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition, 12
9 International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gender and national climate planning: Gender integration in the revised Nationally Determined Contributions
10 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition
Several cross-cutting challenges present themselves

Integrating the NDC process into existing national planning frameworks requires several shifts in governance and institutional arrangements. Without clarity as to the positioning of the NDC process within the ecosystem of existing government planning mechanisms, NDCs often remain relegated to the side-line as a UNFCCC reporting requirement, divorced from the rest of national, subnational and sectoral policy planning/budgeting processes. Consequently, despite the advances detected by UNDP's Climate Promise survey on mainstreaming NDC targets, the focus for many sectoral ministries remains delivering their pre-existing mandate and not expanding to include their ownership of NDC development and implementation processes in their sectors. In doing so, they miss out on opportunities for synergistic alignment with ongoing development efforts and risk missing NDC targets in their ministries' sectors, too.

Capacity constraints across several stakeholder groups limit the extent to which they are able to meaningfully participate in NDC processes. This is as true for government stakeholders at the sectoral and sub-national level as it is for key non-governmental stakeholders, applying to both the NDC target-updating process as well as to the operationalization (implementation) thereof. All stakeholder groups require enhanced understanding of their role in relation to NDC development processes, as well as improved capability to understand the technical implications for their areas to enable meaningful participation and formal representation in the process. Stakeholders require support to fully comprehend the extent of their capacity constraints, as well as targeted assistance through programmatic capacity building efforts to address them.

Limitations to meaningful participation in NDC processes impact whole-of-society buy-in and implementability. As a consequence of the lack of integration of NDC processes, meagre political will and insufficient capacity to engage meaningfully in the development process, the level of buy-in required across the whole of society to support and deliver effective implementation remains largely unattained. This is particularly true when considering the wide-scale societal impact of the envisioned transitions, which many stakeholder groups have not yet begun to contemplate. This leaves the untenable situation in which resistance to changes brought about through the transitions remains a significant risk to the implementation of NDCs. Notwithstanding this scenario, many of the countries supported reported having improved their NDC processes in one way or another - including with increased participation.

Political will across government remains a challenge. Whilst the integration of NDCs and the clarification of roles and responsibilities will likely advance government ownership, harnessing and maintaining the necessary political will to develop and implement inclusive NDC interventions continues to require concerted efforts. There has to be more and better engagement of all relevant ministries in the process from the very beginning. The challenges for each country in this regard need to be surfaced and programmatically addressed.

Data availability and access constraints continue to impact ambition. Key sectors or sub-sectors have, in many instances, been excluded from the NDC update process due to the unavailability of data required to identify opportunities and develop targets. Among other factors, the Covid-19 pandemic was decisive in hampering efficient data collection for key sectors. The Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) is a recurring example where potential mitigation measures have often remained unreported in NDCs due to lack of data. This does not mean, however, that its mitigation potential will remain untapped or unutilised altogether, as governments may continue to advance its mitigation potential regardless of the NDC. To bridge the data access gap, governments highlight the need for longer-term support for the establishment and/or improvement of MRV systems, technical support for GHG emission factor calculations and estimations including baseline data, defining indicators and inventory systems, and developing and utilising modelling tools.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the pace and depth of NDC development. Study countries generally found that the consequences of the pandemic limited the speed at which their NDCs were developed, particularly given the initial adjustments to working remotely and the degree to which public consultations were or were not able to take place. Given the continuing internet access constraints in many developing countries, virtual engagements to gather broad input or validation were found to have a limited degree of success.
Meaningful participation requires iterative instances of engagement that were not possible or feasible during this time. In some cases, however, countries managed to move forward their consultation agendas as a result of the delay of COP 26.

**Despite the challenges, this round of NDC updating has revealed opportunities for future enhancement**

Integration with national medium and long-term vision setting processes provides entry points for whole-of-society NDCs. Clarity and efficiency in processes may increase if governments are able to integrate national development planning processes with LTS and NAPs, and thus co-create and clearly articulate a vision for a low-emissions, just, and resilient future. This, in turn, paves the way for a meaningful participation of members of society and just transition. In this scenario, NDCs become a useful mechanism for continually re-visiting and nurturing a social compact through highly participatory processes across society.

Empowering a coordination mechanism that links NDCs to long-term planning provides the basis for this social compact building. Data from UNDP’s survey on NDC building blocks show that many governments (67%) have now established government and stakeholder coordination mechanisms for climate action, such as a national climate change committee or commission. Many are centrally located and designed across governmental agencies and sectors to improve inclusivity and coherent climate policy planning. Creating space within such a mechanism for inclusive representation and participation across a range of societal partners can enable a whole-of-society approach to NDCs and related processes that furthers buy-in across society and, ultimately, increases also the implementability of the NDC. Supporting governments to empower and resource this mechanism can help to drive the integration of climate change into development processes. To achieve this end, however, governments must continually voice their needs for financial, technical, or capacity building support.

**Establishing a programmatic approach to implementation overcomes cross-cutting challenges and can drive coordination of support.** As countries begin to understand the potential impact of adopting integrated planning processes, they will continue to uncover further challenges to those mentioned above.
Understanding needs in relation to overcoming these challenges and actively nurturing an environment to deliver these programmatic approaches can both create opportunities to ensure more efficient implementation and raise support from development partners. For example, surfacing a clear understanding of the data constraints experienced in a country during NDC development, and programming a plan to systematically overcome these challenges, will greatly enhance not only future NDC development processes, but also advance NDC implementation as well as MRV related processes.

Knowledge and information sharing enhances capacity. Whilst each country faces unique circumstances, as this report identifies, many of the challenges and opportunities are common. Pioneering actions and innovative approaches present good-practice examples that can be shared to inspire action and develop capacity at the institutional and individual practitioner level. Furthermore, knowledge sharing amongst different government agencies promotes the integration of NDC components in policy and planning processes vertically, between national and sub-national government, as well as horizontally, between different sectoral ministries. Knowledge sharing is also particularly useful at a regional level where similarities between countries abound and where the opportunities for peer-to-peer learning can leverage support from international partners to surface opportunities for overcoming common challenges.

**Framing NDCs as part of a just transition framework unlocks their transformative potential**

The latest climate science supports the need for systemic transitions to be just transitions. In terms of the latest climate science, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is now in its sixth assessment cycle, in which it is producing the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). The latest IPCC findings highlight the need for Parties to the Paris Agreement to plan and implement transformative actions to effect systemic transitions on multiple levels for both adaptation and mitigation purposes.\(^{15}\)

This view is supported in the decision text of COP 26. Given the principles of justice, it is critical that establishing such a vision and pathway is not undertaken by the government in isolation, but instead is a co-created, whole-of-society process, underpinned by meaningful participation.

**LTSs, NAPs, and NDCs work together to establish and nurture a social compact.** Long-term vision setting and establishing the pathway for the just transitions go hand in hand as part of reaching a broad social compact for the country. A just transition framework as the basis for social compact building allows for the establishment and nurturing of a collective vision for an equitable and just society in which climate justice and social justice go hand in hand. It presents the opportunity to link countries’ long-term climate goals, economic development, and recovery goals in alignment with climate compatible growth.

The transformative potential of NDCs as part of a just transition framework is emerging and the opportunity to integrate NDCs into countries’ sustainable development planning and green recovery must be seized. A broad view of the existing climate planning landscape from 2020 to 2050 reveals that there is still significant scope and potential to use NDCs as blueprints for sustainable development and green recovery. As countries continue to develop planning mechanisms and implement actions, it is vital that this is done coherently to maximise synergies and efficiencies.

Governments should strategically position themselves to take advantage of the opportunity to develop frameworks for just transitions. The social compact-building approach to LTS, NAP, and NDC development holds the potential to perpetuate a transformative shift in governments’ approach to long-term planning by placing the goals of a low-emissions, climate-resilient and just future in the centre of national planning efforts. Whilst this is an exciting prospect, government administrations are not typically geared towards coordinating such broad, whole-of-society approaches towards long-term planning. Supporting governments to transform their outlook on the LTS, NAP and NDC processes will therefore require significant efforts to shape a new approach. Assisting them to understand this approach, and appreciate the benefit of adopting it, is a challenging task that should be done squarely within the development planning context.

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\(^{15}\) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Countries should engage critically with the potential for utilising NDCs as part of a just transition framework, deciding on their approach as it relates to on-going national planning processes. Countries should take the lead in designing and articulating the programme of work they wish to pursue regarding an integrated and ongoing approach to LTS and NDC development and implementation (whether this is the social compact approach or another). Assisting countries to articulate this programme of work offers a clear entry-point for support in the immediate-term. Once the programme of work is articulated, it becomes feasible to coordinate the support being provided by various development partners, thus optimising the implementation of the work programme.

Ultimately, the impact of the Paris Agreement in addressing the climate crisis relies not only on the level of ambition articulated by Parties, but also on feasibility and their ability to implement NDC targets. The attainment of NDC targets is limited by the degree to which the NDC can be integrated into the existing national planning paradigm and owned and implemented by capacitated stakeholders at multiple levels. It is also limited to a great extent by financing, deemed as one of the biggest challenges. These obstacles vary largely depending on the quality of support developing countries receive, which can meaningfully impact the quality of the process involved in undertaking their NDC update.

To conclude, the study has revealed that if properly integrated into national planning processes, NDCs and closely related mechanisms such as LTSs and NAPs hold great potential for perpetuating a transformative shift in long-term government planning. In particular, the notion of these mechanisms helping to develop and nurture a social compact for just transitions emerged as a significant potential change agent. The remaining air of novelty around NDCs and how they are understood is certainly a challenge, yet it also presents an opportunity. As views and understanding of NDCs have yet to crystallise, there remains the opportunity to work alongside all stakeholders to meld a collective understanding of the utility of NDC processes, and to shape such processes in a way that best serves the common imperative for a better world, and a better life, congruent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
4
Key Recommendations
These key recommendations are a set of priority actions that can be further explored by funders, and development and implementing partners seeking to provide NDC-related support to developing countries. Importantly, the recommendations provide an opportunity for engagement amongst funders and development partners to enable and enhance collaboration towards a support architecture that can provide maximum benefit to developing countries.

**Recommendation 1: Promote integration of NDC processes and functions through a national programme of work**

Support governments to develop and implement a programme of work for the integration of NDC and LTS processes into existing government planning frameworks and institutional arrangements, utilising lessons drawn from this and similar emerging initiatives.

**Key Actions:**

1.1 Support national dialogues on the integration of NDC and LTS into existing national planning frameworks – both at sectoral level and in long-term national development planning processes – highlighting the potential they hold for developing and nurturing a social compact as a just transition framework.

1.2 Support the establishment, designation, and capacitation of the requisite government body to act as the central, cross-functional coordinating mechanism for implementing the approach to NDC integration.

1.3 Support the development and implementation of the programme of work for the country’s selected approach to the integration of NDC and LTS processes through the provision of resources and technical assistance to the coordinating mechanism.

1.4 Provide technical assistance to governments in identifying their specific support needs in relation to the programme of work, to enable more efficient deployment of support by development partners.

1.5 Ensure seamless coordination of support provided by different development partners in each country, in alignment with the national programme of work, through the designation of a particular entity to assist government focal points, thus ensuring alignment of efforts between support providers. The NDC Partnership is one organisation that may be well placed to play such a role, given the NDC implementation support it already provides to nearly 80 developing countries.

1.6 Support cooperation amongst central, sectoral, and sub-national high-level officers to surface and address the relative challenges and obstacles constraining their greater involvement in and ownership of NDC and related processes. This can be advanced through concerted national and regional knowledge sharing interventions, promoting peer-to-peer learning.

1.7 Support the implementation of emergent needs through flexible and responsive support mechanisms that can easily be mobilised where gaps emerge in the implementation of the national programme of work. This type of additional ad hoc support is particularly necessary in the two-year period in the run-up to the next NDC submission. It may be best supported by a pool of financial resources made available specifically for this purpose.
Recommendation 2: Promote data availability and access through the national programme of work

Support the establishment of a centralised, robust and trusted data gathering and storage system to increase the efficacy of NDCs and related planning tools and support data access from across relevant stakeholder groups.

Key Actions:
2.1 Provide resources to countries to undertake a "data gap analysis". This would be best achieved in the immediate term by convening dialogues/workshops with all implementing partners involved in-country, given that in the NDCs update post-submission stage the challenges they encountered are fresh in their minds. It is important, however, to ensure the non-duplication of Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded support for National Communications and Biennial Update Reports.

2.2 Provide resources to countries to develop a plan to address data gaps, including tools to manage and retain data developed by international consultants implementing projects in country.

2.3 Provide resources to countries to implement the plan to address data gaps through funding of research to bridge sectoral data gaps, technical assistance to establish systems, and training and capacitation interventions where required (i.e., as part of the GHG inventory system process).

2.4 Provide resources for the establishment of a central coordinating function for NDC/LTS-related data gathering – perhaps at the level of national planning ministries.

2.5 Provide resources for developing a centralised repository of information related to data usages in sectoral, national, and LTS/NDC planning processes, including the methodologies and assumptions used throughout.

2.6 Provide resources to countries to support the establishment or strengthening of national MRV systems, including national inventory systems and the tracking of progress made in the implementation and achievement of NDCs.

2.7 Provide support for modelling how NDC and LTS measures contribute to the economic development of a country. This is key to getting the buy-in of finance and planning ministers and to integrating NDC and LTS measures into national development plans.
Recommendation 3: Facilitate improved country ownership through enhancing stakeholder capacity and representation

Support initiatives to raise government and civil society awareness of, and capacity to, engage in NDC processes to promote country ownership, including assisting governments to define what meaningful engagement in NDC processes looks like for their country.

**Key Actions:**

3.1 Provide resources for training and capacitation of sectoral ministry representatives to enable ownership of the target setting process, enabling bottom-up input into the formulation of the NDC. Provide, too, constant alignment with national and sectoral planning (such as LTSs and NAPs) as well as ongoing monitoring and reporting.

3.2 Provide resources for the deployment of dedicated staff, embedded advisors, to sectoral ministries to attain, alongside government personnel, ownership of the process of integrating LTSs and NDCs into sectoral development plans and processes.

3.3 Provide resources for training and capacitation of civil society organisations to understand their roles and needs in terms of just transitions and their country’s NDC.

3.4 Promote the development of local technical experts, national institutes, and academia by requiring that implementing partners work alongside and capacitate local experts.

3.5 Provide resources for capacity building programmes targeting sectoral and sub-national government stakeholders to enable greater participation in the NDC development process.

3.6 Support the development of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions that can operate as key delivery partners for governments - both as technical partners as well as fund managers (with proper care not to undermine the ownership of the process nor to encourage a donor-driven approach to it); and ensure the development of robust due diligence processes within such institutions.

3.7 Support the inclusion of social partners, from civil society, NGOs, labour, academia, and business to have representation in national NDC coordinating mechanisms, such as a climate change committee.

3.8 Assist national government to engage with social partners and the general public (including youth, women and indigenous groups) to define what meaningful engagement in NDC related processes means in their country.

Recommendation 4: Support the formation and operation of regional communities of practice, as well as the optimisation of already-existing ones

Support the establishment of regional (and sub-regional) communities of practice to promote peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing.

**Key Actions:**

4.1 Provide resources for the establishment of dedicated bodies that convene and coordinate the activities of regional or sub-regional communities of practice that relate to both the planning and implementation of NDC related activities.

4.2 Assist governments in identifying NDC champions within focal points and key sectoral ministries to participate in activities of their relevant community of practice.

4.3 Ensure funding is available to enable the participation of champions in regional communities of practice on a regular basis (as part of their ongoing role in LTS/NDC development and implementation).
5
Context
In signing the Paris Agreement, the Parties agreed that they would work collectively to keep global average temperature rise below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. The IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) states that the years from 2025 to 2030 present the last remaining window for doing so with least cost scenarios. After this time window, the global temperature goal of the Paris Agreement can only be achieved at substantially higher annual emission reduction rates and costs. The Working Group I contribution to the AR6, released in August 2021, further highlights the urgency for implementing such transformational shifts and raising ambition globally. It underlines that surpassing the first threshold of 1.5°C will lead to serious and sometimes irreversible consequences for centuries. This level of warming could already be exceeded in 2030, 10 years earlier than anticipated by the IPCC’s previous report. There is a rapidly shrinking window for planning and taking the types of transformative actions required to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

NDCs are a critical component of national planning and implementation frameworks for climate action, as they articulate countries’ commitments to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to climate change. The Paris Agreement requires Parties to prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs and submit the information necessary for clarity, transparency and understanding of the NDCs. It also sets an obligation on parties to ensure successive NDCs represent a progression and the highest possible ambition.

Whilst it was intended that Parties submit their new/updated NDCs by COP 26 in November 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the progress countries were making in NDC revision and implementation. The pandemic both delayed the NDC update process and severely limited fiscal spending towards NDC implementation as governments redirected resources towards economic recovery with less focus on climate action.

Developed countries have a responsibility under the Paris Agreement to mobilize at least USD 100 billion a year in climate finance prior to 2025. “But new data from Oxfam and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that wealthier nations are falling short and will continue to miss their target – meaning that climate-vulnerable countries will face a shortfall of between USD 68 billion and USD 75 billion in total over a six-year target period. Meanwhile, around the world, an astounding USD 423 billion is being spent annually to subsidise fossil fuels.” COP 26 acknowledged the failure of mobilising the joint USD 100 billion per year by 2020 and requested developed countries to deliver the goal by 2025.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and its effect on the European and global energy systems and markets significantly changes the outlook for the energy transition. Countries are likely to look for all available sources, including fossil-based ones, to secure energy supply at low prices. The effects of this on climate action will be significant, and the likely repercussions cannot yet be understood.
Second generation NDCs present differently in key aspects
The Paris Agreement defines NDCs as global ambitious efforts by all parties towards three main goals:

I) To limit the global average temperature rise to well below 2°C, pursuing efforts to limit to 1.5°C;

II) To increase the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience; and,

III) To make finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development (Article 2).

New and updated NDCs address each of these goals to varying degrees. The study presented below examines this from the perspectives and experiences of different key stakeholders involved in the 2020/2021 NDC update process.

Ambition has increased, but remains insufficient to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement

The number of countries with increased GHG reduction targets has increased; however, commitments will likely not deliver sufficient progress with regard to the collective ambition of emission reduction targets. At the time of writing this report, 93 of the 158 countries (totalling 65.3% of global emissions) have submitted a new or updated NDC with reduced total emissions compared to their previous version (158 countries, representing 83.5% of global emissions, have submitted a new or updated NDC). Similarly, UNEP found that the newest pledges would reduce projected 2030 emissions by 7.5% – whereas cuts of 30% or 55% are what is needed to limit global warming to 2°C or 1.5°C, respectively. These assessments make it clear that the level of ambition remains insufficient to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

It is worth noting, nonetheless, that there is no reference point on ambition for individual NDCs. Ambition narrative emerges during the UNFCCC analysis process, when emission trajectories of aggregated mitigation components are analysed against data and evidence-based emission trajectories for 1.5-2°C. From an individual NDC perspective, the rationale for recognizing and quantifying the level of mitigation ambition should be the decreasing ratio of emission/time (i.e., accumulated emissions in the updated, newest NDC should be lower than in the previous one).

LDCs and SIDS are collectively leading the way on pledging to raise ambition, according to UNDP’s 2021 State of Ambition report. However, the main problem of rising GHG emissions needs to be solved by G20 countries which contribute more than 75% of total emissions and have the capacity to take measures with 80% of the global Gross domestic product (GDP). As of October 2021, only 16 G20 members had submitted revised NDCs, of which five did not strengthen their mitigation goals. UNDP finds that nearly half of the G20 are not adhering to the core principles of the Paris Agreement to ratchet up their GHG emissions targets, emphasising that for those that have renewed pledges, more could be done.

Most developing countries are willing to take bolder climate action – but their ambition can only be realised through significant scaling up of investments, as indicated by another finding of UNDP. Access to finance was named by developing countries as being the biggest barrier to raising ambition.

Despite the challenge of accessing finance, compared with their previous NDCs, some 20% more Parties included unconditional elements in their new or updated NDCs. The implementation of most conditional elements depends on: access to enhanced financial resources, technology transfer and technical cooperation, and capacity-building support; availability of market-based mechanisms; and absorptive capacity of forests and other ecosystems.

19 Kurdziel, M., Emmrich, J., van Tilburg, X., and Roeser F., NDC Update Report: Time to Pull the Break – Actors of all governance levels need to achieve more faster, 16
20 Climate Watch, NDC Enhancement Tracker
21 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition, 10
22 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
Enhanced robustness and quality for mitigation and adaptation

Second generation NDCs are noted as having attained significant improvements in clarity and quality from the first round of NDC submissions for both mitigation and adaptation.²⁶ UNDP noted a decrease in the number of countries with unclear targets or no information from 71 in 2019 to just 15 in 2021.²⁷ In comparison to the 2015 NDCs, the updated NDCs provided improved and quantified mitigation targets (numerical targets) with reference points, economy-wide sectors with absolute emission reduction targets as defined in the 2006 IPCC guidelines and assumptions and methodological approaches for GHG estimations.²⁸ According to UNDP, 97% of countries submitted stronger adaptation components in their NDCs, e.g. by strengthening resilience criteria, clarity on adaptation action, scaling up investment for adaptation and prioritization of adaptation actions.²⁹

Some NDCs have missing information on metrics, including limited or incomplete data on the Business as Usual (BAU) or reference scenarios. There is also a need for provision of clear quantifiable or qualitative adaptation goals with clear indication of how to measure and report on their progress.³⁰ Indeed, 92% of developing countries would still like to improve on the data and evidence supporting their NDCs.³¹ Nevertheless, many countries (between 41% and 70%) linked their NDCs to a transition to a sustainable and low-carbon resilient economy, while considering the integration/alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³²

Feasibility of implementation is beginning to be better articulated, but remains impacted by availability of finance

Feasibility of NDC implementation is recognised as being a factor of the inclusion of certain key planning and financing mechanisms within or alongside the NDC. These include implementation planning and resource mobilisation aspects, such as assessments of costs and benefits, outlining financing needs, determining financing options and investment plans for NDC actions, as well as describing support needed for capacity building and technology transfer.³³ These elements of implementation are receiving more attention than during the first round of NDC submissions with countries working towards improving such foundations. However, countries have made less progress in relation to them as compared to other key aspects related to the ambition, robustness, and inclusivity aspects of NDCs.³⁴ Very few countries have included costs of implementing climate action in their NDCs or have developed associated financing plans or strategies. Unconditional NDC commitments appear to have declined slightly from 66% of countries in 2019 to 61% of countries in 2021.³⁵

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²⁶ United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition, 9
²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1
²⁹ United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition, 8
³⁰ Ibid.
³¹ United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition, 16
³² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1
³³ United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition
³⁴ Ibid.
³⁵ Ibid.
Whole-of-government approaches to NDC development have been adopted more widely

Countries have made deliberate and concerted efforts to engage more widely during this round of NDC updating, promoting a whole-of-government approach. Second generation NDCs have benefited from increased awareness raising and consultation with government institutions from relevant sectors at the national and sub-national levels. As a result of greater vertical and horizontal integration, the quality and legitimacy of NDCs has improved, including an improvement in access to data and integration of sectors not previously included. Most Parties have economy-wide NDCs, with all NDCs covering the energy sector and most NDCs covering agriculture, Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), waste and Industrial Processes and Product Use (IPPU). But although many Parties highlighted policy coherence and synergies between their NDCs and other developmental and sectoral priorities (e.g., the SDGs, Long-term Low Emissions and Development Strategies (LT-LEDS), green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic), many countries still face challenges aligning the different agendas for effective governance and implementation. Several cross-cutting challenges relating to data, capacity, integration and meaningful participation (detailed further below) continue to limit the degree of improvement.

NDC updating involved sub-national government stakeholders to a greater extent. Seventy-five percent of the surveyed stakeholders indicated involvement of subnational governments, with 60% claiming that subnational governments had put climate targets in place to support NDC implementation. This is recognised as an improvement given that the linkages between national climate strategies and subnational action were found to be weak in the first round NDCs.

Integration of NDCs into governance frameworks is emerging: second generation NDCs promote better alignment with national and sectoral plans. Some progress has been made to mainstream NDCs into policy and regulatory frameworks. According to the UNFCCC, many parties mention specific policy instruments in place to facilitate NDC implementation. Vietnam, for example, has instituted new laws that bind sectoral ministries to NDC targets. Many countries have linked their NDCs to their commitment to transitioning to a sustainable and/or low-carbon and resilient economy, taking into account social, environmental and economic factors, as well as the SDGs.

There is a growing trend in the preparation and submission of LTS with net-zero targets. This is up from 65 countries in total in 2019 to 83 countries in 2021. Almost all 33 countries that have communicated an LTS have clearly indicated their net-zero goal in those strategies. However, there are still relatively limited concrete plans and strategies underpinning ambitious long-term mitigation targets. There remains significant room for improvement in aligning NDCs with long-term mitigation strategies, and provision of clear quantifiable or qualitative adaptation goals with clear indication of how to measure and report on their progress.

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36 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition
37 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1
38 NDC Partnership, Regional Collaboration Centre Bangkok, Regional Collaboration Centre Dubai, Good Practices in NDC Updates and Implementation: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa
39 Kurdziel, M., Emmrich, J., van Tilburg, X., and Roeser F., NDC Update Report: Time to Pull the Break – Actors of all governance levels need to achieve more faster
40 Hsu, Angel & Brandt, John & Widerberg, Oscar & Chan, Sander & Weinfurter, Amy, Exploring links between national climate strategies and non-state and subnational climate action in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
41 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1
42 ibid.
43 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition
44 ibid.
45 ibid.
Greater inclusivity experienced in process and content

Most developing countries systematically targeted and engaged a wider range of stakeholder groups during the NDC revision process. Countries found that utilizing whole-of-society approaches in engaging with stakeholders from the private sector, civil society and academia ensures a more comprehensive NDC. In an analysis of a subset of 67 NDCs, conducted by UNDP, 80% of second-generation NDCs included broad consideration of youth/children compared to 40% in the first NDCs. Although only 25% of these countries involved women's groups and civil organizations in NDC design and revision, it is a major improvement compared to the 1% of countries in the first NDCs. UNDP notes that the involvement of more societal and political groups in the design and revision of NDCs has been seen to drive greater ambition in some countries.

Many second-generation NDCs have made progress in the level of inclusivity reflected in the content of their NDCs. Key NDC stakeholders indicated that women, youth and vulnerable groups often remain at the fringes of climate-related policies. Improving access to information and creating safe spaces for these groups can facilitate greater inclusion. Progressively, there has been an increase in the number of NDCs addressing gender and youth compared to the first generation. Ninety-seven percent of Climate Promise countries are addressing gender in their updated NDC, and the same trend is seen for all countries according to the UNFCCC Synthesis Report.

Support for NDC updating was provided and received in several ways worth noting

Depending on the Support Provider, NDC update support was provided in a mix of short-term, ad hoc support for certain technical aspects or coordination function, and/or as part of more long-term, programmatic climate support to countries. Based on country requests, development partners provided support in various ways. For instance, the support from the NDC Partnership, though the CAEP initiative provided short-term, ad hoc support to target specific aspects in the one-year period leading up to the original submission deadline. NDC updating activities were also supported through existing programmes of climate-related support to developing countries by organisations such as Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), UNDP, and the World Bank. Much of the support provided by those organisations took place within the NDC Partnership framework, given that they are part of it.

Ad hoc support for NDC updating was made available approximately 18 months ahead of the original submission deadline, with insufficient time to support a robust process. Whilst the support offered by development partners was often cited as the trigger for initiating the process, this support was generally seen to have been offered quite late, with the NDC Partnership’s CAEP initiative and UNDP Climate Promise initiative having launched no more than eighteen months ahead of the original submission deadline.

Most support was directed as per the explicit requests of the government, while in some instances development partners targeted their interventions more independently. The CAEP calls, for example, provided governments with an opportunity to formulate their list of required support under its two main objectives – 1) enhancing NDC updating processes, and 2) fast-tracking implementation – with a further call to support critical yet unsupported activities. On the other hand, the World Bank’s existing in-country support to various sectoral ministries was directed more independently – though the organisation was also a key implementing partner through CAEP.

Support was not always provided on the basis of a needs analysis, and the support process was not always well mapped out at the start. Most governments did not undertake a detailed needs analysis and did not develop a comprehensive NDC development
Ethiopia’s CRGE Strategy and programmatic approach to NDC development and update

Ethiopia’s Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Strategy represents one of the strategic pillars of the 10-year Development Plan (10YDP) which coincides with the NDC implementation period. The connection between the updated NDC, the CRGE and 10YDP were recognised at the outset and NDC update initiatives were integrated into ongoing processes for each policy. This coordination ensured alignment between initiatives, and further enabled the linkages between the policies to be developed. For example, the resources identified as required to realise the NDC were based on goals and targets of the 10YDP. Such alignment of planning processes allowed for scoping across sectoral ministries to be more horizontally integrated, and further benefited from sectoral input to the NDC update process. Having national level planning processes drive forward NDC development was found to be strategically advantageous for encouraging country ownership and whole-of-government buy-in.

Box 1: Ethiopia’s CRGE Strategy and programmatic approach to NDC development and update

Plan through consultative engagement with all relevant stakeholders. It appears to be even more beneficial for such a plan/roadmap to be developed as part of ongoing programmatic development work that aligns with the NDC and its implementation.

In many instances governments received NDC update support before they had fully scoped their needs or mapped out the process and steps required, the roles of various stakeholders, or how support from different development partners would be coordinated. Missing an up-front needs assessments resulted in instances where gaps, inconsistencies, and overlaps of support emerged throughout the process. NDC processes remain novel to most recipients of support and limited overall capacities affect the coordination and development of the next generation of NDCs. However, good practices have been reported in some of the countries supported via CAEP, where all partners responding to the country requests did so via a joint Terms of reference (TOR) which mapped out timelines, budgets, and activity details.

Almost all support was provided to the government, little to no support was provided to other non-state stakeholders. While NDC development is the responsibility of governments, the quality and content benefits from the participation of other stakeholders. Still, national governments were the primary recipients of financial and technical support (though they mostly had indirect control of resources as explored further below). And, whilst support was provided to enable the convening of consultative engagements during the process, little to no support was provided to enhance the capacity and capability of non-state actors to engage and participate meaningfully in the process. This would have enabled non-state actors to better understand their role in NDC development and implementation, the likely impacts, and their ability to contribute to the design of solutions. For example, there was no support to enable the running of processes separate to government-led NDC update activities that could then feed into the overall update process.

Implementing partners experienced minimal coordination between support providers. This varied across countries and the implementing partners involved. Whilst the CAEP process provided an opportunity for coordination of support amongst delivery partners, several development partners voiced that they had hoped for a stronger coordination role by the NDC Partnership than it actually played in the countries they supported. There was even less coordination amongst development partners running programmes in parallel. This was generally attributed to there being no entity, besides the government itself (which oftentimes struggles with capacity issues), officially recognised as having the mandate to coordinate support between development partners. The government’s NDC focal points were usually seen as having a coordination function, but this task came on top of already stretched capacities.
There are a range of perceptions and experiences of NDCs, NDC development processes, and support.
Whilst every NDC is in essence a document with national commitments submitted to the UNFCCC, the meaning that is attached to it depends on its quality and the process that has underpinned its development. The development process can vary considerably in almost every aspect, from its analytical scope and rigor to its inclusiveness and political significance. The development process is critical not only for producing a document that is ambitious on paper, but for the NDC to have good prospects of being implemented.

Understanding how the NDC development process, and the support provided, was perceived and experienced by a range of stakeholders gives critical input into designing and delivering more effective support into the future. This raises several key questions, including: how do different stakeholders and governments perceive the utility and function of NDCs? How have these perceptions shaped the process of developing updated NDCs? What forms of support were requested? What forms of support were provided? And how was support received? The experiences of governments, implementing partners, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is explored in relation to these questions.

These observations stem chiefly from our primary research and have been validated through engagements with international implementing partners with wide-ranging experience, as well as with key government partners and NDC focal points in the target countries: Benin, Colombia, Ethiopia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Samoa, South Africa, Tajikistan and Vietnam. Those observations are also further corroborated by the secondary research findings outlined in the report thus far.

**Governments**

**Amongst the government focal points interviewed, there was a greater sense of government ownership in this round of NDC development.** Interviewed government NDC focal points expressed a greater understanding of what the NDC development process entailed and a sense of being more actively involved in driving the process forward. This contrasts with the (international) consultant-led approach that, to a larger extent, drove the development of first-generation NDCs for many developing countries. Through the support provided by development partners (international donors and coordinating organisations), governments were able to scope their needs and administer and coordinate the support from technical implementing partners and service providers to a greater degree than in the previous round where NDCs were, for the most part, developed by consultants in a more isolated fashion.

**Government cooperation increased, but ownership outside of NDC focal point ministries remains a challenge.** This round of NDCs saw greater involvement by non-focal point ministries; however, in most instances horizontal integration was limited to cooperation in the provision of data and consultation in the testing of assumptions and models. Most focal points expressed a sense of limited support from other government stakeholders (ministries and departments). This as opposed to a more bottom-up process in which sectoral ministries own and lead the provision of input from their sectors. This brings into question whether the targets set in the NDC indeed align with the intentions and targets that exist at the sectoral planning level. For example, an approach that involves ministries of finance and planning and links NDC implementation with national priorities suggests that these are more likely to be included in national plans and therefore budgets.53

**Several examples demonstrate instances of more integrated, bottom-up approaches to NDC development.** In Vietnam, the development of a new legislative and regulatory regime, under the Law on Environmental Protection, as well as a GHG Decree, was instituted, making NDC targets legally binding upon sectoral ministries. This provides important legal basis for assisting ministries in conducting state management of GHG emissions and grants key motivation for their participation in and ownership of the sectoral target setting process. In the case of Colombia, the NDC updating has been a government process led by the ministries’ technical teams and other entities involved in the construction and strengthening of technical capacities. This has happened with the Intersectoral Commission on Climate Change (CICC) as the leading body, which is constituted by representatives of seven ministries and one national department. In the case of Peru, the institutionalisation of the High-Level Commission (CANCC) and the National Climate Change Commission (CNCC) allowed for the NDC update process to be conducted as a participatory, multi-level and multi-stakeholder process.

**Understanding of the function and positioning of NDCs, in relation to existing national planning mechanisms, is evolving, but governments would benefit from assistance to ensure cohesiveness.** Although this is the second instance in which countries have engaged with developing/updating their NDC, it remains a novel and relatively elusive component of the state’s policy and operation. NDCs are better understood by...
those government actors in whose responsibility the submission rests. It is significantly less understood by other government stakeholders who are still coming to appreciate the NDCs’ relation to their roles and responsibilities, and the goals and objectives of their division of government. Furthermore, countries are mostly still determining the relationship between the NDC and existing medium-term and long-term planning mechanisms, such as the National Development Plan (NDP). This relationship remains to be clarified in institutional arrangements and regulatory frameworks.

Most countries view NDCs primarily or exclusively as a technical exercise and not as part of a more expansive, collective long term agenda-setting process. Whilst broader consultation outside of government featured strongly in most developing countries’ NDC development process, such engagement came mostly towards the end of the process and remained substantively limited for reasons such as timing, resources, and capacity (explored further in the section Cross-Cutting Challenges, below). Whilst such factors influenced the depth, breadth and reach of these consultations, it appears as though the primary reason for the limited degree of meaningful, inclusive participation was the overall framing of NDCs most often as a technical process focussing on issues such as modelling. In contrast, there is an incipient realisation that NDCs are linked to longer-term mechanisms such as the LTS and NAP. In some countries these mechanisms have been developed and NDC alignment processes undertaken, for example in Ethiopia, Uganda and Colombia. The latter, for example, ran the NDC updating and LTS development processes in parallel and seized the opportunities for synergies in the two processes. In some cases, the connection between these mechanisms can be traced back to the availability of funding for them in the same period.

Viewing NDC updating as a UNFCCC reporting requirement as opposed to an integrated part of ongoing national planning efforts meant that it was often only seen as a priority shortly ahead of the original submission deadline. The late start and short time frames for the updating process were most often attributed to the NDC updating not being situated within other on-going national and sectoral planning cycles, from a legislative and institutional perspective. This demonstrates the need for the NDC update process to be considered an ongoing process, which would allow for more timely completion. NDC updating was generally not the exclusive mandate of the relevant government focal points tasked with administering the process. Rather it was often additional to their primary duties and responsibilities – even when they already faced limited capacities, which was the case for most focal points. This, in part, potentially explains challenges associated with timelines for submission, as focal points would naturally prioritise their primary responsibilities until quite late in the submission timeline. Vietnam provides an outlier example of a country that engaged in NDC development over a three-year period, an approach informed by the assessment of their experience with the first NDC submission as well as the continued support they received from GIZ. They found the availability of guidelines for NDC development to be greatly beneficial where development partner support was not yet in full swing.

**Vietnam’s bottom-up approach to NDC development**

Vietnam presents a good example of bottom-up NDC development over a three-year period. Ministries were required to independently identify sectoral NDC contributions and integrate these into their 5-year and 10-year work plans, which was seen by the NDC focal point ministry to be a success. This was recognised as being greatly assisted by a new piece of legislation that makes NDC targets legally binding for ministries, and therefore provides motivation for their involvement in the NDC development process. A task-force was established to coordinate the contributions from different ministries into the synthesised NDC. The decision on a three-year time frame was spurred by the depth of effort required to develop the first NDC, and the intention to submit an updated NDC in 2020. This prompted the relatively immediate efforts to start the update process soon after the first NDC.

**Box 2: Vietnam’s bottom-up approach to NDC development**

Governments generally found the support offered to be sufficient for their identified needs. However, impact was limited by the short time frames. The needs identified by government focal points were generally scoped within the bounds of what would be feasible in the limited amount of time available for the update process. In retrospect, those processes were generally not achieved within the original time frames. Most focal points agreed that a more comprehensive and inclusive process was required, but not possible even within the extended time frames given data, resource and capacity constraints, and limitations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic response measures (explored in more detail in the Cross-Cutting Challenges section below).

Offers of support from development partners reached governments too late within the updating cycle. Given the original due date for the submission of updated
NDCs (by COP 26, scheduled for November 2020), governments felt that the ad hoc, complementary support offered to them by development partners came rather late, leaving them with little over a year to complete this complex process.54 Governments generally agreed that were it not for the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shifting of the due date for NDC submissions by a further year, most countries would not have met the original deadline with a well-developed update.

Governments experienced some frustration in coordinating support between development partners. Some countries received support from a single source, whilst others received support from multiple development partners. Those receiving support from a single source appreciated the streamlined nature of working with one organisation. Where multiple entities provided support, coordination was found to be more difficult. Overlapping or interdependent processes being led by different development partners sometimes resulted in mismatches, such as conflicting or duplicated scopes of work and delivery timelines, resulting in wasted resources. However, from a development partner’s perspective, governments’ lacking definition of their needs upfront, was, too, a factor that inhibited streamlined support. The utilisation of different data sources and assumptions when developing technical outputs was also problematic (explored in more detail in the Cross-Cutting Challenges section). Where multiple development partners provide support, there is a need for up-front and ongoing collective planning, management and coordination. Coordination amongst implementing partners in the CAEP initiative was found to be better (though not perfect) than coordination between programmes.

Having the funds managed outside of government was generally found to be strategically advantageous. Some focal points appreciated the fact that under CAEP, for example, they were given more flexibility regarding the deployment of funds held by trusted implementing partners outside of the state’s bureaucratic financial sphere. This enabled contracting processes and the deployment of funding in a more flexible and speedy manner. This was seen as critical given the tight time frames involved and the fact that obstacles were not fully understood at the outset, with the need to adapt plans during implementation common. In a few limited instances, funding and technical support was provided directly to specific sector ministries to enable sector-level target setting to be undertaken and fed into the NDC in a bottom-up process. In contrast, support provided through existing programmes in-country provided less of a sense of direct control over resources and processes due to having a pre-defined scope of support over which government entities felt as though they had less direct control. To some extent, this limited the sense of government ownership over those aspects of the process. This stands alongside the finding that stakeholders found benefit in longer-term support initiatives that are able to drive more comprehensive and integrated programmes of work. Longer-term support programmes should therefore be designed in ways that maximise government ownership over the direction of support.

Implementing Partners

Implementing partners generally agreed on the need to ensure the NDC update process is a continuous effort and not linked to submission timelines. For many developing countries, the NDC update process is one which evolves as it unfolds, often happening in an uncoordinated and complex manner. For example, the NDC overlaps with a whole range of other policy processes in government which do not have the same time frames or concerns. Trying to coordinate different policy concerns is challenging. In order to better manage the complexity that comes with the integration of NDCs, implementing partners see the need for ensuring momentum in associated NDC update activities. Notwithstanding governments’ individual experiences with the NDC update process time frame, the five-year updating cycle remains important for implementing partners and international organisations, as it provides better guidance to analyse and coordinate support needs.

Implementing partners valued and agreed that there was a need for strong coordination between different actors that were contributing to the NDC update process. This is true from the initial identification of support requests and matching those requests with implementing partners, through to the process of implementation, including the coordination amongst various implementing partners tackling different aspects in-country. With the engagement of CAEP for example, implementing partners received a consolidated request from governments to direct their resources and the Support Unit of the NDC Partnership was able to facilitate the congregation of implementing partners to deliver and provide progress updates through calls and quarterly reports. Whilst this mechanism proved to generally function well, some issues did surface along the way, such as overlapping mandates and duplication of efforts, as well as misaligned timelines and where outputs of some processes were the inputs into another. Implementing partners therefore expressed...

54 NDC Partnership’s Climate Action Enhancement Package was launched in November 2019, and UNDP Climate Promise in September 2019
that coordination and information sharing can and should be strengthened. It was suggested that the facilitation and coordination role could be strengthened in-country, particularly that of the NDC focal point.

Academic and national research institutions can play a key role in data generation and management, as well as in the whole-of-society approach to NDC development – and their involvement throughout the update process could be increased in many countries. In some countries, national academic and research institutions played a key role in NDC development, whilst in other countries their involvement was underutilised. In the latter case, these institutions felt that their role needs to be included in the NDC development plan so that space for their engagement is defined. Where there were examples of their involvement, it was often as a contracted service provider for key components of the NDC and they did not have the latitude to participate more broadly.

Implementing partners find that there are opportunities for countries to learn from one another to benefit future NDC development and implementation processes. There are several synergies between developed and developing countries that can be leveraged as opportunities for cross-learning, as well as for cross collaboration between implementing partners providing support. For example, developing countries are required to do emissions projections, which is something that developed countries have done for the past decades. Similarly, there is a significant overlap between being able to do emissions projections and some of the planning functions and the datasets required for planning and updating subsequent NDCs. They generally find that such cross-learning platforms have yet to be established, and there lies an opportunity for partners to support the facilitation of peer exchanges that can support knowledge and experiential learning for enhanced NDC update and implementation processes.

Non-state Actors

Non-state actors took part in consultations, but active participation in NDC development processes was limited. Most study countries noted the importance of ensuring public participation and consultation throughout the NDC update process. The degree and extent of engagements differ widely between countries. Meaningful participation requires multiple opportunities for input and engagement in the design of different components, and in various levels of the NDC update over a longer time horizon than was generally available. Therefore, relegating engagement opportunities to the end of the NDC update processes where targets and plans are already developed falls well short of enabling meaningful participation in the process.

Engaging Non-state actors in Nepal’s NDC update process

A positive example of consultative approach involving non-state actors is the case of Nepal, where the NDC update process was preceded by a multi-stakeholder workshop, and a series of national and provincial consultations through a country-driven approach under the principle of ‘leave no one behind’. The NDC formulation process and emergent assessments were verified through in-person and virtual consultations both at national and provincial levels with line ministries, experts, women, indigenous peoples and youth. Despite challenges in the consultative process, due to COVID-19, the NDC focal point was able to coordinate consultations in the key provinces, as well as dissemination to CSOs and NGOs for comment prior to final approval.

Box 3: Engaging Non-state actors in Nepal’s NDC update process
The design and substance of NDC consultations matter for effective and meaningful participation. Given the highly technical nature of NDC target setting, public participation processes require mindful planning in order to be valuable and in order to gather relevant feedback and validation of the identified proposed national commitments/targets. For example, ensuring the presence of the technical implementing partner team responsible for the NDC modelling during stakeholder consultations to explain the target-setting process and its outcomes is important for meaningful participation by non-technical stakeholders. This would ensure collective understanding of the NDC process, purpose, identified targets and implications thereof, thereby ensuring more meaningful feedback and input. The availability of budgetary support to ensure participation of technical leads and more detailed technical presentation of NDCs is therefore important.

Resource and capacity constraints limit effectiveness of participatory processes. Whilst governments felt that support provided enabled more consultative processes to be undertaken, these were in some instances limited in scope and effectiveness. Some governments found that limited resources and timelines meant that engagements with stakeholders were mostly consultative in nature, left to the end of the process, and limited to opportunities to provide comment on already completed/existing draft documents. In some cases, it was noted that the effectiveness of the consultation would have been improved by enhancing the knowledge of the stakeholders.

Non-state actors seldomly received financial or technical support to enable their participation, with support generally only being provided to governments. Governments and non-state stakeholders agree that there is a need for capacity building to enhance the ability of non-state actors to participate meaningfully in NDC development processes. Most NDC focal points found this to be a critically unfulfilled need as non-state stakeholders were not provided with awareness raising, training or technical assistance to engage and provide input in a meaningful way. This is an area that if improved upon, perhaps during the design stage of the provision of support, could positively impact the quality and ambition of NDCs.

Public consultations at the national level are often too broad. Participatory processes are more effective if targeted at the subnational, sectoral level. In Colombia, line ministries identified key non-state actors in their sectors, engaged them in dialogue, and synthesised these discussions into policy-relevant outcomes for national NDC planning. This resulted in the identification of regional measures and generated a sense of responsibility regarding the management of climate change in sectors and territories, from the formulation of their actions in accordance with their capacities to the synergy with their development priorities. In Peru, the government conducted a participatory dialogue, Dialoguemos NDC, across a range of sectors and with both national and local stakeholders, including the private sector, indigenous peoples, and civil society.55 Peru recognizes that the capacities to mitigate climate change are lower in historically excluded populations, and that an action aimed at promoting citizen participation in the implementation of adaptation measures cannot be carried out without considering the inequality and vulnerability of these social groups, since it would affect its scope, impact and sustainability. In this sense, the NDC incorporates both the cross-cutting approaches and the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) elements in all its stages, from its formulation to its implementation.

Whole-of-society engagement in Peru’s NDC update process

In Peru, the NDC update was conducted as a participatory, multi-level and multi-stakeholder process in order to guarantee the success of formulation, update and implementation of the country’s national contributions. The engagement processes resulted in the development of sector roadmaps articulating the new NDC goals for the sector. The roadmaps are intended to guide and measure implementation, strengthen the institutional framework built, and guarantee the articulation between the various government sectors that have the measures of implementation under their jurisdiction, as well as to ensure the incorporation of cross-cutting gender, intercultural and intergenerational approaches, and inclusion of non-state actors and the general public.

Box 4: Whole-of-society engagement in Peru’s NDC update process

55 NDC Partnership, Experience with Multi Stakeholder Engagement: Key lessons Learned, Insight Brief, 2
Participatory processes utilising a “just transition” framework create space for broader engagement but have largely not been utilised. Just transition frameworks offer the chance to go beyond a more technical approach to the NDCs and discuss the social, economic and political impacts that are at the core of the transition to net zero pathways. The UNFCCC found that some countries plan to include the concept of just transition in their overall NDC implementation, such as a just transition mechanism and just transition funds; laws and strategies for protecting workers; a social mechanism for job creation, skills development and employment policies; and a consultation process for social protection.56

South Africa’s development of a just transition framework to build a social compact

South Africa presents a good example of the integration of the notion of just transition into long-term planning. South Africa was the only country to include mention of just transition in their first NDC in 2015. Subsequent concerted effort has led to the development of a Just Transition Framework and Presidential Climate Commission leading processes towards building a social compact for the just transition through multi-stakeholder engagement platforms to strengthen collaboration with stakeholders and social partners, including civil society, labour, academics, NGOs and businesses.

The participation of the private sector as well as national development banks in the NDC update process was generally limited. Private sector players, in particular development financial institutions, should contribute to the NDC formulation and implementation process. The participation of national financial institutions and/or development banks in the NDC update process by countries included in the study was generally found to be overlooked, with the exception of the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region. Support to include the participation of national financial institutions, such as national banks and in particular development banks, recognising their alignment with national development goals and their potential to finance climate-aligned development projects, would present a progressive step towards ensuring the financing of NDC activities.

Development and commercial banks in developing countries do not yet perceive their role in financing climate resilient infrastructure and development, not least in financing adaptation action, owing to the low rates of return and perceived bankability. There is therefore an opportunity to further support their participation in the NDC planning process, and their involvement in the development of NDC investment strategies.

There is therefore an opportunity to support countries to identify policy frameworks that support the alignment of private sector investment and financial sector lending with NDC planning and implementation to capitalize on potential opportunities for access to climate finance for the implementation of NDCs.

56 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1
Several cross-cutting challenges present themselves
Data availability and access constraints continue to impact ambition

The NDC development and target-setting process is a data-intensive exercise. The quality of an NDC largely relies on the extent to which accurate data was available and utilised. Data includes for example national GHG inventory and baseline data; sector-specific data, including economic indicators required for cost-benefit analysis; and is also critical during implementation in the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the achievement of NDC targets. Despite being the most commonly cited reason for preparing second generation NDCs, many developing countries indicate that the availability and access to data, including sector-specific data, remains a key challenge to effectively identifying and articulating revised NDC targets. In some instances, this has proven to limit the potential for enhanced ambition, such as at the sectoral and sub-sectoral level.

The study corroborates the challenges mentioned in the NDC Synthesis report in which a notable lack of access to sufficient and accurate data from which baselines could be measured and scenarios developed has presented some challenges in the NDC update process. There are several ways in which this appears to play out in practice:

Unreliable or inaccurate inclusion of data: Insufficient locally available data leads to a reliance on international datasets, which are often in conflict with one another, or in other instances are not scaled down enough to be considered accurate, leading to uncertainty in the reliability of baselines, modelling, and projections.

Exclusion of sectors or sub-sectors: Data gaps may result in entire sectors or important sub-sectors being excluded from the NDC, resulting in any potential, additional mitigation and adaptation measures not being quantified and included in the targets. The NDC Synthesis Report mentions data unavailability or inaccuracy as one of the key constraints to including certain sectors and/or gases in the NDC update. This was noted by study participants as a key issue at the sectoral level – the AFOLU sector in particular. In some instances, specific sub-sector data, such as emissions data from particular industries was unavailable. Data constraints for sectors such as the IPPU, Waste and Transport sectors were also experienced.

Mismatches between sectors compromises overall reliability: Multiple, often conflicting data sources lead to a problem commonly expressed by study participants. The unavailability of commonly managed national datasets from which different sectors can draw information to develop baselines, projections and scenarios, leads to conflicting accounts of what the reality actually is. This situation is worsened where data is not captured and stored in a centralised data management system, and where prior data analysis methodologies and assumptions are not well documented, and therefore replicating the analysis or comparing the situation down the line is inaccurate or impossible. This is particularly an issue when working from existing sectoral plans that are approved and in-place, yet are contradicted by newer NDC related analysis.

57 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition
58 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1, 16
59 In Tajikistan, for example, projections for the energy sector were informed by international data, due to insufficient local data. Where local data was available, several inconsistencies with international data sources were revealed.
60 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1, 16
61 Tajikistan, Namibia, South Africa. The focal point in South Africa pointed out that there is significant potential for emission reductions in the AFOLU sector but given the data gaps they were unable to include such in the NDC. Ethiopia mentioned support received enabled new data on the AFOLU sector.
62 In Namibia, data from the cement industry was not forthcoming, as large firms did not feel comfortable nor obligated to share this data with the government.
Support provided for NDC updating enabled improvements in the inclusion of quantifiable information on reference points, clarity on time frames, sectors and targets, and implementation periods. However, governments highlighted the need for longer-term support for establishing and/or improving MRV systems, technical support for GHG emission factor calculations and estimations including baseline data, defining indicators and inventory systems, and modelling tools. Sector and sub-sector data, such as AFOLU, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), energy and industry data, were specifically identified as limited. Furthermore, most NDC targets are conditional either on support or intentions to use cooperative approaches that involve the transfer or use of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. The challenge related to lack of clarity on provisions of support was highlighted by most countries.

**Lack of timely and sufficient access to nationally relevant data, that extends to the sectoral level, hinders the potential for comprehensive and more ambitious NDCs (that capture economy-wide targets).** Although this challenge still persists, countries have strengthened their information assessment and data collection systems to inform their NDCs, when compared to their previous NDC submissions. Advancements include scenario modelling, forecasting, and data analysis, as well as in adaptation-related assessments.63 In addition, almost all countries provided more detailed information than in the previous NDC on the assumptions, methodological approaches and procedures used for developing their baselines or mitigation scenarios.64

The potential for mismatches in datasets utilised remains high when databases are not centrally coordinated and maintained. Governments face the challenge of coordinating datasets that span different time frames and different national planning processes, to ensure that data and information is captured and articulated in a consistent manner. Further effort is required to ensure the effective and ongoing storage and accessibility of data so that it is available as a common database for planning purposes in multiple spheres of government, i.e. coordination of datasets that span across different sectors, time frames, and planning processes. This would ensure greater alignment and consistency in planning processes, particularly with the view that bottom-up target setting from the sectoral level is the more optimal, integrated approach for NDC target setting. Governments will have to ensure that sectoral stakeholders understand and fulfil their role in leading data management on an ongoing basis. This will require targeted capacity building and enhancement of data management skills across key sectors. Given the nature of data required, it will be important to ensure support is provided with sufficient time to address the technical aspects of filling gaps in primary data and resolving data conflicts.

Without processes and frameworks in place to enforce effective management of data, including those by international/external consultants, data consistency and access will remain a key challenge to the NDC update processes into the future. In instances where international consultants and partners have provided specific technical assistance that involved the development of datasets and methodologies, countries have mentioned that often this data and the accompanying methodology to derive that data (i.e. assumptions) is not archived and therefore leaves no opportunity for effective secondary use, or the use of that data to build on to subsequent planning processes. Similarly, the sharing of datasets, particularly by private sector stakeholders, has presented a challenge for the articulation of sector-specific targets. The lack of prioritisation of GHG inventory systems in the past, coupled with unclear guidelines and frameworks for the management of data to inform NDC update processes could render data accessibility a critical challenge. This may further clarify the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the generation and management of data. GITZ and Climate Analytics have developed an NDC handover checklist to address this issue.65

**Lack of data accessibility, particularly data for MRV purposes, reduces the potential of the NDC to become a strategic component of long-term planning.** Some of the challenges experienced include the lack of availability of relevant and up-to-date baseline data, as well as data for costing adaptation and mitigation actions, and up-to-date national inventory systems. Whilst few countries mentioned receiving specific support in updating national inventory systems, challenges around data for costing actions remain. This kind of data is particularly important to inform the development of NDC investment plans. They are also fundamental to ensure the MRV of NDC implementation and the correct use of tools to track and verify the implementation of prior NDC activities, which will help inform the subsequent NDC updating process.

63 NDC Partnership, Partnership in Action 2021: Country Stories
64 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement: Revised synthesis report by the secretariat, Document FCCC/PA/CMA/2021/8/Rev.1
65 Partnership on Transparency in the Paris Agreement, NDC Handover Checklist: Record your NDC knowledge to be ready for future NDC cycle
Countries are unable to fully articulate their support needs without a clear understanding of their data gaps and constraints. This round of NDC updating presented an opportunity for countries to better understand the data requirements for updating their NDCs, to reflect on the achievement of NDC targets articulated in the prior NDC, and importantly, the opportunity to make any adjustments or updates to the NDC based on the availability of new data. However, the study has revealed a general need amongst developing countries for establishing a more thorough understanding of where the data gaps in their countries lie, what drives the continuing dearth in certain data, and how to go about plugging the gaps.

**Namibia NDC includes strategic analysis of and direction for the development of a comprehensive transparency framework and MRV system**

Namibia’s NDC includes a vision for a vibrant national MRV system. The system is expected to harmonise and track all data needs of the relevant local and international stakeholders. It is to comprise the following components: mitigation, adaptation, GHG inventory, support received, and support needed. The NDC identifies the barriers and opportunities to MRV, identifies clear capacity needs in this regard, and outlines the necessary institutional arrangements.

**Box 6: Inclusion of MRV in Namibia’s NDC**

The assessment of NDC implementation effectiveness will be difficult in the absence of well-established MRV systems. MRV systems and capacities for development thereof are generally seen to be an urgent need. There are different levels of national inventory or MRV systems, (no single established MRV systems is being advanced). Countries observed that the lack of available technical and financial data limited the scope for accurate MRV. Technical capacity building for the design and implementation of MRV infrastructures (e.g. systems that generate, store, process sectoral and sub-national emissions data to inform national emissions trends) was identified as a key need across governments. In some instances, NDCs address the need for establishing MRV systems (such as Namibia’s NDC). However, support for the development of such systems themselves was largely not available through the NDC updating support process.

**Integration of the NDC process into existing national planning frameworks is a challenge requiring several shifts in governance and institutional arrangements**

Integration of the NDC process refers to three interrelated aspects, namely:

a) within the ecosystem of national and sectoral policy development and planning processes,

b) within legislative and regulatory frameworks, and

c) within institutional arrangements. The positioning of a country’s NDC amongst these processes and arrangements plays a significant role in determining the degree of enhancement possible.

Despite making some progress, the positioning of NDC processes is often not clearly articulated in existing frameworks, nor well understood across relevant stakeholder groups. As a relatively new component of national and sectoral planning processes, countries are still coming to grips with how to position the NDC processes. This results in several challenges explored below.

**When there is not sufficient clarity or alignment, NDCs are generally relegated to the side-lines as a UNFCCC reporting requirement, divorced from the rest of national and sectoral policy and planning initiatives.** This “side-line position” fails to highlight the importance of the NDC and thus it tends to lack the gravity required to attract meaningful engagement across government, and to some extent across the rest of society. Without clear integration into the policy/planning cycle it further remains unclear as to “what informs what?” What is the NDC informed by? What does the NDC inform? This is particularly challenging in relation to the NDP given that pursuing climate action often involves compromise as to the nature of the development pathway best suited to achieving a country’s development objectives. Reaching such compromises requires an integration of various planning initiatives, including a country’s LTS, NDP and NDC. This problem extends beyond visibility and participation in the development process and affects the degree to which NDC implementation is prioritised.
Opportunities for synergistic alignment are missed when the relationship between the NDC and other planning mechanisms, such as the LTS and NAP, is not well defined. LTSs set out long-term visions for climate and development, typically towards net-zero targets mid-century. The LTS should ideally be a key input into short-term planning and decision-making on the parts of government across multiple sectors and levels. The UNFCCC Synthesis Report found that for countries that had already established an LTS, defining NDC targets and implementation mechanisms was less challenging.\(^\text{66}\)

Few countries appear to be pursuing their long-term and mid-term planning in a coordinated manner, developing both enhanced NDCs and LTSs. The World Resources Institute (WRI) suspects that there are several factors at play, including stakeholder fatigue. “Given limited time, staff and financial resources, officials may be overwhelmed by the tasks of updating the NDC and developing a long-term strategy by the end of next year. Their efforts, and resources to support them, could compete with one another when, instead, long-term planning ideally would inform the NDC.”\(^\text{67}\) Key relationships that should be defined include the relationships between NDC implementation plans, LTSs, NAPs, investment plans/strategies, and MRV systems, as well as the alignment of NDC targets and sectoral and sub-national development plans.

Misalignment in planning processes can influence the level of ambition articulated by countries. In countries where bottom-up sectoral inputs into NDCs was strong, there were still challenges that impacted ambition. In these cases, sector plans and strategies utilised as inputs into the development of the NDC are required to have already been formally approved by the relevant ministries. Consequently, newly developed or developing versions, not yet approved, were not able to be integrated into the NDC, even where these contained more ambitious targets. There is a need to coordinate the timelines for the updating and approval of sectoral plans ahead of NDC development.

Integrated planning is unlikely to take place in the absence of adequate financial and human resources. There is a growing trend in the submission and preparation of LTSs – up from 65 countries in total in 2019 to 83 countries in 2021, of which 33 indicate net-zero targets. However, there are many more countries that still need to undertake this process.\(^\text{68}\) In several countries with an LTS in place, there is still a mismatch between long-term, net-zero commitments and medium-term goals, as well as a misalignment between the preparation of LTS and the NDC revision processes.\(^\text{69}\) Just over 50% of updated NDCs make reference to long-term goals, and more than a third have not initiated any preparation for developing long-term strategies, presenting a significant missed opportunity.\(^\text{70}\) This requires that countries revisit their tangible near term and medium-term targets in NDCs, NAPs and relevant national and sector policies and plans, and put in place necessary strategies, institutions and capacities for implementation to ensure alignment with the net-zero emission pathways.\(^\text{71}\)

Governments generally recognise this as an important next step but indicate that they lack the requisite funding and technical capacities. In particular, governments articulated a need to support the capacitation of sectoral ministries to enable their ability to mainstream climate change into sectoral planning processes and feed into LTS development. Capacity building and the funding of dedicated staff to drive these processes appears to be critical. Given the overlap between the development of LTSs, NDCs, sectoral strategies, and national development planning, there is a further need to support national planning ministries or central coordination mechanisms to play a stronger role. To this end, the need for NDC and LTS implementation plans and funding strategies emerges as a critical additional element.

Ill-defined roles and responsibilities result in limited participation and buy-in across government and the whole-of-society. In instances where there is legislative certainty regarding mandates for participation, as well as clear responsibilities for developing inputs into the process (such as in Vietnam), meaningful engagement and buy-in from key government stakeholders is much more likely. However, under the current institutional arrangements, many focal points expressed that driving NDC development is often not amongst their primary responsibilities. Whilst this creates difficulties within the focal point ministries, hindrances are even more apparent at the sectoral level. Sectoral ministry stakeholders often have no formal responsibility or mandate to drive NDC processes, including the development of

\(^{66}\) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA), Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. Synthesis report by the secretariat: Addendum.

\(^{67}\) ibid.

\(^{68}\) ibid.

\(^{69}\) ibid.

\(^{70}\) ibid.

\(^{71}\) ibid.
sectoral targets as part of LTS, NAP or NDC development processes. Where participation remains somewhat optional, the tendency is for sectoral ministries to send lower-level staff to participate in processes coordinated by the NDC focal point ministry, as opposed to them taking the lead in developing sectoral inputs into the NDC, following a bottom-up approach. To increase engagement and ownership across government, it is advisable to institutionalise the NDC updating and implementation processes and responsibilities – both at the national and sectoral levels. The consequences of a lack of engagement are explored in more detail below.

Opportunities to optimise coordination remain untapped when NDCs are not integrated into institutional arrangements. An encouraging finding is the degree to which most countries have, in relation to climate change, a cross-functional coordination mechanism in place. This is often in the form of a national climate change commission or committee. In many instances this kind of mechanism is centrally located in the office of the president, finance ministry, or national planning ministry. Having institutional arrangements for the NDC process that involve and/or mandate ministries of higher stature, such as ministries of finance, and/or at higher levels of government that have the necessary powers to coordinate other ministries, can influence the achievement of a whole-of-government approach. Whilst these mechanisms played an important role in encouraging engagement in NDC processes across government, in most instances they were not the primary drivers of NDC development. In most cases the administrative responsibility still fell upon the NDC focal point in a single ministry, often under-powered ministries such as ministries of environment. Institutional arrangements whereby such mechanisms play an active role in coordinating not just the development of the NDC, but critically its integration (alongside the LTS and NAP) across other government planning processes, hold greater potential for addressing the issues of integration, meaningful engagement, and buy-in.

Limitations to meaningful participation in NDC processes impact whole-of-society buy-in and implementability

Many developing countries indicate that despite the improvement in engagement experienced in this round of NDC updating, they are continuing to experience challenges in achieving meaningful engagement and buy-in on several levels. There remains significant room for improvement in this regard. Positioning and capacity both play a role in influencing the extent to which meaningful engagement is possible across the whole of society and buy-in is achievable across the whole of government.

Bottom-up input into NDC development is unlikely to happen without meaningful engagement, both vertically and horizontally, with government stakeholders. As a short-term planning mechanism, the NDC seeks to determine the priority actions that are feasible within the time frame of the NDC. Stakeholders agree that such a process is best informed by a bottom-up approach that relies on government stakeholders in the sectoral and sub-national spheres engaging actively in the process of determining and setting goals and targets. As described in detail above, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and capacitating government stakeholders is critical.

The absence of buy-in across multiple levels sharply reduces the possibility of implementing the actions required to attain the NDC. Implementing partners specifically pointed to this as a critical issue. Whilst it is possible for technical partners to develop various goals and targets for inclusion in the NDC with minimal engagement across government and society, ultimately, implementing the actions required to attain the NDC relies on capacity and willingness on the part of stakeholders at the sectoral and sub-national levels. Whilst this round of NDC updating saw a generally agreed increase in engagement, many stakeholders felt that engagement at the sectoral, sub-national, and societal level most often failed to extend to the degree of active participation and meaningful engagement required for achieving buy-in.

Government stakeholders will not be able to understand and meet expectations if there is no clear definition of what constitutes meaningful participation. Although the ideal view is of NDCs as a process of inclusive, bottom-up engagement, governments need to clarify what this means in practice. In particular, it is necessary to define meaningful participation as opposed to mere consultation, and how engagement in the design of NDCs and LTSs interface with existing planning initiatives such as NDPs, sectoral plans and sub-national plans. Where governments have not defined meaningful participation in their existing legislative or regulatory frameworks for development planning, NDC development and implementation plans offer an opportunity to include such a definition and elaborate guidance notes to drive processes in that direction.
Capacity constraints across several stakeholder groups limit the extent to which they are able to meaningfully participate in NDC processes

Achieving a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach relies extensively on the ability of both state and non-state actors to participate meaningfully, and collaborate effectively, in the NDC update process. Having technical and non-technical knowledge and capability that bridges their understanding of their role/function, the impacts of climate change on their areas of interest, and the purpose of NDC target setting is a vital prerequisite for meaningful participation. Their capacity to participate in the process is also a function of the stage, or ‘when’ they are brought into the process and their knowledge, understanding of the process and how they can engage effectively in it. Capacity is a factor of knowledge, capability, availability, and authority (mandate).

As long as there is a lack of enhanced capacity of government stakeholders (both at the national and sub-national levels) to contribute effectively to the NDC process, NDCs will remain limited in their ambition and scope. In countries where the NDC process is perceived as being the mandate of the NDC focal point and respective ministry, countries cited challenges associated with lack of meaningful engagement by other sectoral ministries in the process as a result of their lack of understanding of the overall NDC process. In addition, the capacity of the NDC focal point to understand the necessary aspects and steps required to undertake the NDC update process, including capacity to undertake a stakeholder mapping which identifies all the key non-government stakeholders, is important. In South America, most of the support for capacity building focussed on sub-national government stakeholders.

The NDC update process will fall short of being genuinely participatory if there is a lack of targeted capacity building of national stakeholders – including civil society, academia, labour and the private sector. Capacity building of all relevant stakeholders to participate and provide input into the NDC update process is critical for shaping meaningful engagement. In most countries, NDC focal points have undertaken a consultative process that centres on public knowledge and information sharing as opposed to processes seeking substantive input in the design of NDC components. Stakeholders mentioned the limitations in contributing input during the stakeholder consultation process. This can be seen as a missed opportunity for collaborative NDC planning and target setting, for example identifying novel ways in which the private sector can play a role in project planning and financing NDC implementation or utilising traditional and indigenous knowledge in the identification of opportunities and targets. Participatory processes should be specifically designed to ensure equitable access, particularly for vulnerable groups, and should include Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). This is necessary to ensure that participatory processes advance buy-in and a sense of collective ownership of NDCs.

Without dedicated support to countries in relation to developing cost-benefit analyses of both mitigation and adaptation components, NDCs will continue to lean towards a focus on mitigation. Noting that mitigation has received the most attention in the initial and subsequent NDCs, there is a need for ongoing support to be directed towards adaptation, including support specifically on adaptation planning, methodologies relating to identifying adaptation targets, and financing strategies. This support is likely best targeted at the processes for developing NAPs, which then feed into NDC processes.

Sustained and ongoing capacity building of local technical experts is necessary, otherwise the reliance on international consultants will inhibit the NDC process from being fully country-owned. Some countries noted challenges associated with relying on support from external, international consultants when there was a lack of opportunities for training and capacitation of local consultants, as this would contribute to challenges in subsequent NDC update processes. This contrasts with the experience of some other countries, such as Namibia, where the requirement for external technical partners to ‘twin’ with local technical specialists in academic institutions or local private firms was noted to be of great value. There remains significant potential for dedicated support to be provided to countries to establish and build the capacity of local experts in NDC and LTS update, implementation, and MRV processes.
Despite the challenges, this round of NDC updating has revealed opportunities for future enhancement.
The study has surfaced substantial challenges across multiple levels, but it also reveals key areas where support can be targeted into the future, potentially resulting in significant benefits. These opportunities present themselves in relation to key aspects of integration, coordination, and implementation.

Integration with national long-term vision setting processes provides entry points for whole-of-society NDCs

The foundations for a social compact can be laid in a clearly articulated vision for a low-emissions, just, and resilient future. The LTS holds the potential for articulating the country’s vision for a low-emissions, climate-resilient and just future. It stands to reason that governments could not, and should not, develop such a vision in isolation. The vision should be one developed in consultation with a range of social partners, including communities, civil society organizations, labour, academia and the private sector. LTS processes present opportunities to engage across society on the requisite pathways and compromises required for a sustainable, just, and resilient future, hence the framing of the vision setting and LTS process as a social compact. NDC development processes then present an opportunity to engage across society on the immediate priorities and associated goals and targets to bring that vision to life and a way to continually engage social partners in an effort to nurture the social compact. Most NDCs address both adaptation and mitigation, and increasingly so too do LTSs.

With the clarification of the relationship between the LTS and the NDP, countries can formulate a programme of work to establish inclusive pathways towards the vision. Countries generally already have an existing vision in the form of an NDP, though most do not extend that vision out to mid-century, and address the question of what a low-emissions, climate resilient society could look like at that point. There is a need to clarify the relationship between the NDP and the LTS. Critically, these two national planning tools should not compete, but rather should inform one another in their respective development cycles. Together they provide the basis for the long-term vision of a low-emissions, climate-resilient and just future.

LTS and NAP development processes can become powerful tools for coordinating the emergence of a social compact when they are framed as part of a just transition framework. Determining the pathways towards achieving the vision will require reaching compromises on several fronts. The compromises need to promote both climate and social justice in the immediate term and assure that over the long-term, nobody is being left behind. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance that any LTS encompasses the just transition narrative. Furthermore, the processes for developing the components of the LTS need to be underpinned by meaningful participation across both government and the full range of social partners.

The linkage between LTSs and just transition is supported by the Glasgow Climate Pact of COP 26. The decision provides that just transitions will have different phases and are a cumulative result of transitions:

- creating decent work and quality jobs;
- making financial flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emission and climate-resilient development;
- advancing the deployment and transfer of technology, and provision of support to developing country Parties; and,
- promoting sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

Box 7: Just transition in the Glasgow Climate Pact of COP 26

Meaningful and regular participation can be achieved when LTS and NDC development are integrated into existing government planning processes. Nurturing the social compact will need to be a constant, dynamic and responsive process. Locating NDC development as an ongoing effort amongst other ongoing government planning processes, and articulating its relation to existing planning cycles is an important prerequisite for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. As opposed to NDC development being a stand-alone, ad hoc process undertaken shortly before submission. This interplay should be made visible in several arenas of planning and development, including national, sectoral, and sub-national planning.

Stakeholders have a better understanding of the purpose and benefits of their engagement when the NDC process is properly contextualised in existing national planning frameworks. While it may not be possible to define a neat, sequential process in which the LTS informs sectoral and sub-national planning, which in turn informs the settings of targets for inclusion in the NDC, steps can be taken to clarify the dynamic...
interplay between planning processes, clarify roles and responsibilities, and open up opportunities for engagement and cross-pollination of ideas.

**Empowering an inclusive coordination mechanism to drive LTS and NDC integration supports social compact building**

With a centrally located, cross-functional coordination mechanism mandated and resourced, the integration of LTS and NDC processes across government becomes possible. Central coordination is required to drive the integration of LTS and NDC processes into existing government planning framework and institutional arrangements across multiple spheres of government (vertical and horizontal integration). A mechanism in the form of a committee or commission, with representation from key government departments, would enable the cross-functional coordination required. Such a mechanism would be well placed to coordinate the delivery of capacity building interventions to better empower functionaries to deliver on their new mandates. Government stakeholders almost unanimously agreed that this is best achieved by locating this central coordination mechanism within a powerful ministry, such as the presidency, finance ministry, or national planning ministry. It is important that such a mechanism is duly constituted, mandated, and resourced.

The development of a social compact is enabled when there is a central coordination mechanism ensuring inclusiveness and representativeness of the whole of society. In addition to driving government integration, the coordination mechanism is a key component of ensuring the application of the whole-of-society approach to support the emergence and nurturing of a social compact. This is best achieved by ensuring that social partners from civil society, academia, labour, and business, have representation within the structure of the coordination mechanism itself, as in the form of an executive council or board of representatives for the body as a whole, or for a specific functional aspect.
Establishing a programmatic approach to NDC implementation overcomes cross-cutting challenges and can drive coordination of support

Synergies can be unlocked via a programmatic approach to the planning and coordination of both the NDC update and the NDC implementation processes. Coordination in planning sets the stage for better coordinated and programmatic implementation of NDCs. Viewing the updating process and the implementation as an on-going body of work can seek out synergies between the two aspects. Issues such as needs analysis, process mapping, legislative reviews, and capacity development, can be holistically addressed across both aspects.

For example, the need to develop and implement MRV systems will necessitate effecting changes and enhancing capacity across many of the same stakeholder groups as other aspects of NDC development. The NDC Partnership indicated that one of the top five requests for support from countries is in developing or updating Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV)/Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems and collecting data. Most developing countries have yet to begin the process of developing and implementing MRV systems and see this as an area where urgent support is needed.

A holistic approach allows for the identification of synergies and thus the most efficient mobilisation of resources. It also enables lessons from this round of updating to be applied immediately, rather than fading from view in an interim period before the next round of updating starts. Much of the capacitation of societal partners to engage in the development process and the implementation stands to benefit in the same way. This has the added benefit of perpetuating buy-in and a sense of ownership; stakeholders included in the design-stage are able to contribute to the identification of workable solutions and financing opportunities.

Necessary steps include:

1) undertaking legislative review and reform processes,

2) establishing the necessary institutional and inter-institutional arrangements to manage functional interplay, and

3) clearly defining roles and responsibilities,

4) defining meaningful participation in relation to various planning processes, and

5) determining capacity constraints and taking action to enhance relevant capacities where necessary.

Countries are better able to seek out and access finance for implementation, and can understand the feasibility of raising ambition, with a clear picture of costs and finance needs. Given that the majority of developing country NDC targets are conditional on the receipt of financial support, it is difficult to argue for increased ambition without understanding whether current ambitions are implementable. Understanding their financing requirements is thus critical for understanding the potential for raising ambition. With the necessary support, countries can start to move towards formulating resource mobilisation strategies and NDC investment plans, as seen by a few of the countries included in the study. With NDC financing needs better understood, there is an opportunity to provide further support to assist countries to develop detailed project pipelines.

CAEP support was utilised to advance financial planning for NDC implementation in Namibia

In Namibia, CAEP has been supporting the development of an NDC investment strategy, beginning with the undertaking of a cost-benefit analysis. The cost-benefit analysis – supported by the IKI – is meant to inform the prioritisation of activities through the ranking of investments that will achieve greatest impact in terms of emissions reductions. Being more advanced in this regard, the Namibian experience could provide useful lessons if shared with other countries in the region. The articulation of an NDC investment strategy enhances the feasibility of the overall NDC, by providing the necessary link between NDC target setting and implementation. This further provides scope for enhanced ambition.

Box 8: Namibia’s NDC investment strategy

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72 NDC Partnership, Cataloguing Requests to Identify trends: How the NDC Partnership manages knowledge to accelerate climate action
A whole-of-society approach can be attained more easily when meaningful participation is clearly defined and understood. There is an opportunity to support countries to move beyond a consultative approach to a more participatory approach in the NDC update process. This requires a more strategic approach to the planning and execution of engagements, over longer time horizons, paired with capacity building efforts. Ensuring an inclusive and participatory process might also include provision of funding and technical support to CSO and NGO groups, enabling them to commission independent research and technical inputs to the process that capture the wider needs and interests of society, thereby enhancing their engagement with the NDC update and implementation process. Importantly, the participation needs to be throughout the NDC cycle i.e., from NDC updating through to planning and implementation, and through an ongoing process which allows lessons emerging from the implementation of NDC activities to loop back into the next NDC cycle update. Lastly, this level of bottom-up inclusivity can be further promoted and integrated into the development of sectoral plans, which ultimately inform and/or interact with the NDC and LTS development process. NDC focal points could consider the use of existing sector-specific consultative mechanisms such as development trusts, business and sector associations (e.g. energy/agriculture) to inform the NDC update process. These inputs can be fed through the relevant sectoral ministry engaging directly with the NDC focal point. Funding support should be directed towards regular/ongoing meetings of these smaller interest groups that can provide opportunities to explore their priorities and targets, as well as better understand the NDC process, and how these fit into national-level discussions.

Participatory approaches can be supported through dedicated resources for information and knowledge sharing on the NDC update process. The effectiveness of the whole-of-society approach is enhanced through communication and awareness raising on the NDC process, objective and respective roles of various state and non-state actors and is in line with Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. Providing support to governments to enable the necessary knowledge and information sharing at the onset of the NDC update process, and throughout, will enhance opportunities for more meaningful input to the process by non-governmental stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, and indigenous communities.

Regional lesson sharing initiatives amongst a “community of practice” provide opportunities to advance country ownership. Lesson sharing amongst government actors driving NDC processes presents an opportunity to enhance individual motivation and ownership. Whilst this is true at the level of focal point role players, it is equally true for functionaries in sectoral ministries for whom NDC processes are new and potentially intimidating. The interval between now and the next round of NDC submissions presents an opportunity to develop regional communities of practice that can be utilised to better understand capacity constraints and needs at an individual and institutional level and offer opportunities for peer-to-peer learning initiatives to advance capacity building. One of the aspects countries struggled with was attaining an understanding of what different aspects of the process should reasonably cost. There is an opportunity to develop regionally appropriate guidelines in this regard. Regional outputs could include things like costing guidelines that will enable better budgeting for NDC update processes.
Framing NDCs as part of a just transition framework unlocks their transformative potential
The latest climate science supports the need for systemic transitions to be just transitions

In terms of the latest climate science, the IPCC is now in its sixth assessment cycle, in which it is producing the AR6. The latest IPCC findings highlight the need for Parties to the Paris Agreement to plan and implement transformative actions to effect systemic transitions on multiple levels for both adaptation and mitigation purposes. The transitions make possible the adaptation required for high levels of human health and wellbeing, economic and social resilience, ecosystem health, and planetary health, as well as being critical for achieving the low global warming levels that would avoid many limits to adaptation. AR6 further highlights the need for climate action to conform to principles of justice. The term climate justice generally includes three principles: distributive justice which refers to the allocation of burdens and benefits among individuals, nations and generations; procedural justice which refers to who decides and participates in decision-making; and recognition which entails basic respect and robust engagement with and fair consideration of diverse cultures and perspectives.

AR6 highlights the need for countries to begin to plan for when and how GHG emissions will peak, with the goal of reaching net-zero by the middle of the century. When viewed in relation to this goal, NDCs articulate how the five-year cycles contribute to the pathway to net-zero. As previously established, the NDC is best viewed as a key building block of the LTS, together establishing:

1) a national vision for a low-emissions, just, and resilient future;
2) the pathway towards achieving this vision, and
3) the more immediate, short-to-medium term priorities towards achieving the pathway.

A just transition framework as the basis for social compact building allows for the establishing and nurturing of a collective vision of an equitable and just society, in which climate justice and social justice go hand in hand. A just transition framework also provides the opportunity to link a country’s long-term climate goals and its economic development and recovery goals through green growth. Ensuring, for example, a just transition in carbon intensive industries; includes the design and implementation of social protection systems and labour market policies to ensure a just transition of the workforce, especially for women and vulnerable workers.

NDC processes present an opportunity to continually nurture a social compact

Such a social compact needs to be maintained through continual nurturing as time progresses and the need for different trade-offs emerges. The NDC updating cycle presents useful touchpoints for this nurturing. However, to be genuinely meaningful, the NDC process should not be viewed as chiefly a technical exercise, primarily involving technocrats and scenario modellers. Instead, it should be seen as a vital participatory mechanism for establishing and driving an inclusive, on-going conversation between different key stakeholders across society to reach consensus on priority actions. Whilst win-win scenarios are not always possible in the short term, nothing short of an inclusive and transparent whole-of-society process, which makes it clear that nobody is being left behind, will allow for win-win scenarios that benefit everybody in the long term.

The transformative potential of NDCs as part of just transition frameworks is emerging, but needs to be seized to avoid a missed opportunity

As of 12 October 2021, of the 193 Parties to the Paris Agreement, 80 countries (including 16 G20 members) have made net-zero commitments. Of these, 14 countries have embedded their commitment in legislation. A further 47 countries have included net-zero ambitions in national development and/or climate policies or strategies. As of 8 April 2022, 51 LT-LEDS Parties have submitted an LTS to the UNFCCC Secretariat, very few of whom are LDCs.

74 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
75 ibid.
76 ibid.
77 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Long-term strategies portal
A broad view of the existing climate planning landscape from 2020 to 2050 reveals that there is still significant scope and potential to use NDCs as blueprints for sustainable development and green recovery. For the most part, NDCs remain focused on sectoral approaches, and are not positioned as part of an integrated solution for broader systemic transformation. Furthermore, they have generally not been integrated into post-pandemic recovery or green stimulus plans. This can be viewed as a missed opportunity to realign investments from “brown” to “green” and to address the financial barriers that are hampering scaled-up climate action and ambition.

Governments should strategically position themselves to take advantage of the opportunity

The social-compact-building approach to LTS, NAP, and NDC development holds the potential for perpetuating a transformative shift in government’s approach to long-term planning, by placing the goals of a low-emissions, climate-resilient and just future front and centre in national planning efforts. Whilst this is an exciting prospect, government administrations are not typically geared towards coordinating such broad, whole-of-society approaches towards long-term planning. Supporting governments to transform their outlook on the LTS and NDC processes will therefore require significant efforts to shape a new approach. Assisting them to understand this approach, and appreciate the benefit of adopting it, is a challenging prerequisite unto itself. If buy-in can be achieved, the challenge then becomes ensuring that the appropriate mechanism is established or designated to drive this work forward, and that it has the appropriate locus standi to do so.

Political will and cooperation are required at multiple levels, both within government and between government and civil society, to drive alignment of priorities and planning processes. Often, trade-offs will be required where competing priorities emerge. For this reason, alignment processes should include a focus on just transition to ensure that selected priorities and trade-offs are made with as much buy-in as possible. Insufficient political will has been cited as a barrier to articulating more enhanced NDCs in comparison to the first generation NDC, and the provision of technical support could potentially assist governments, and sectoral ministries, in particular, to navigate the political and technical complexities of the NDC update process.

78 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition
79 United Nations Development Programme, Nationally Determined Contributions Global Outlook Report 2021 - The State of Climate Ambition
80 ibid.
81 ibid.


As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

Published by:
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Further significant research and writing contributions were made by Pia Zevallos and Almendra Cáceres Ramírez (Libelula), Additional grateful contributions were made by Josh Ogada and Dr. Shehnaaz Moosa (SouthSouthNorth), Maite Cigaran (Libelula), Francisco Almeida, Lisa Zahrobsky, Marie Hertel, and Phillip Bernhard (GIZ). In addition, we are grateful for the insights gleaned from primary research undertaken by Cristián Retamal as part of similar efforts to identify lessons learned from countries, specifically in the Latin America region.

This study is a product of the Support Project for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPA) (funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and the German Federal Foreign Office under Germany’s International Climate Initiative (IKI)) and was produced jointly by SSN and GIZ.

Acknowledgment:
We would like to thank staff from the NDC focal point ministries in the following countries who agreed to be interviewed for this study for their invaluable contributions: Benin, Colombia, Ethiopia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Samoa, South Africa, Tajikistan and Vietnam. Without your dedicated efforts towards advancing ambition and willingness to share openly about your experiences, we would not have been able to draw out important lessons to benefit from in the future.

This report was kindly peer reviewed by technical teams from Climate Analytics, NDC Partnership Support Unit, the United Nations Development Programme’s Climate Promise and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We are very grateful for their valuable additions and insights.

Substantive inputs were received through interviews and materials shared by technical focal points at various development partner institutions including, UNDP, WWF, World Bank, NDC Partnership Support Unit, Ricardo and Global Green Growth Initiative (GGGI). In addition, the following CSO institutions provided substantive input: Little Earth (Tajikistan), CARE International and Climate Action Network (CAN). Technical institutions that contributed to the study include Energy Research Centre (ERC) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). We would like to recognise development partners who have provided NDC support to the countries examined in this report, for their contributions to advancing ambitious and quality NDCs.

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The opinions put forward in this publication are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and the German Federal Foreign Office.

Design/Layout:
undstoffers Designbüro
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Berlin, 2022