

Information on the experience of Benin with the application of the guidelines for the national adaptation plan process for least developed countries

INTRODUCTION

Benin is a least developed country and as such, it prepared a national adaptation programme of action (NAPA) and submitted it to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in January 2008.

The preparation of this programme followed the annotated guidelines developed by the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG). They include: the setting up of a national team, the assembling of a multidisciplinary team, the development of proposals for priority activities, the development of the NAPA document, a public review and revision, a final review process, the endorsement of the NAPA by the national government and its public dissemination. At the end of the development process, which followed a very participatory approach, Benin had identified five priority adaptation measures, including:

1. Integrated programme to combat the adverse effects of climate change on agriculture production and food security in Benin ;
2. Adaptation of households to climate change through the promotion of renewable energy and economic performance and energy-efficient stoves to address the shortage of fuel wood in Benin;
3. Mobilization of surface water for adaptation to climate change in the most vulnerable municipalities of the Centre and North provinces;
4. Protection of children under five and pregnant women against malaria in the most vulnerable areas to climate change;
5. Protection of the coastal areas against sea level rise.

To date, with the support of the GEF and UNDP, the integrated programme to combat the adverse effects of climate change on agriculture production and food security is under implementation. The total cost is USD 22,000,000. This project is funded by the LDCF up to USD 3,410,000. The rest comes from UNDP, the Government of Benin and the four recipient municipalities.

The PIF of project 2 on the promotion of renewable energy has been approved and will be submitted to the GEF for its consideration for funding.

Projects 3¹, 4², and 5³ are being implemented with the financial support of the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA), WHO, UNICEF, etc.; the Islamic Development Bank, the Saudi Fund for Development, Kuwait Fund, etc.

¹ Implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries with the assistance of UEMOA for a cost of USD 8 Million.

² Implemented by the Ministry of Health under the strategy for implementation of free health care for pregnant women and children under the age of 5 to treat malaria, which costs annually a minimum of FCFA 9,301,067,414 or around USD 18,602,134.83.

³ Implementation by the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Urban Development through the project to fight coastal erosion, which cost around USD 90,800,000.

I – LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADAPTATION MEASURES

Of the five projects indicated in Benin NAPA, four are under implementation and the fifth one will soon follow. The first direct lesson that can be drawn is that these adaptation projects are indeed priorities of the Government of Benin and as such, the Government has managed to mobilize financial resources for their implementation.

Sectoral ministries (including agriculture, health, energy, environment) directly implement these projects and build their capacity to address issues related to adaptation to climate change.

Thirdly, the adaptation measures which are proposed are relevant and have received the attention of leading policy makers, in particular the Head of State and the members of its government. For example, while Benin NAPA was approved by the government in November 2007, the fourth measure related to the “protection of children under 5 and pregnant women against malaria in the areas most vulnerable to climate change” was operationalized by a decision of the Head of State: In May 2011, he decided to provide free health care to pregnant women and children under five years old for malaria, to the relief of this group of the population which is particularly vulnerable to the endemic disease.

Fourthly, the integration of adaptation to climate change into national strategies and programmes becomes more and more of a reality. Such integration efforts are reflected in the SCPR3 (2011-2015), which is the reference document for ministries to develop and implement their sectoral strategies and policy. The integration efforts, however, deserve to be strengthened and consolidated to become systematic and visible.

Fifthly, the institutional framework for implementation of the UNFCCC is strengthening over time. Indeed, in addition to the National Committee on Climate Change established on 30 April 2003 by decree, a national adaptation team and an integrated multidisciplinary team (IMT) were also established by the Ministry of Environment during the NAPA preparation phase. During the implementation phase of the first NAPA project, a Steering Committee and a Technical Committee were established to assist the project management team in the planning and implementation of its activities.

Similarly, on April 2013, the Multidisciplinary Working Group for Agro-meteorological Assistance was institutionalized. One of the tasks of this working group is to provide agro-meteorological information to farmers to improve their knowledge of weather conditions and help them manage the agriculture calendar, which is particularly affected by climate change. In each local authority where the project is implemented, a Climate Change Focal Point was appointed. They are in permanent contact with farmers and advise the local authorities on how to take into consideration climate change in the planning of development activities in their area.

Finally, at the institutional level, a Thematic Group on Environment and Climate Change was established with the support of UNDP. The group is composed of Directors and senior executives of the sectoral ministries, Benin’s financial and technical partners working in the fields of environment and climate change. The principal mission of the Thematic Group is to provide a platform for consultation and dialogue between the Government, the private sector, the civil society and the financial and technical partners, on environmental and climate change related issues.

Chaired by the Minister in charge of coordinating the government action, the group focuses primarily on the following issues:

- Adaptation of the development sectors to climate change;
- Promotion of the Clean Development Mechanism;
- Promotion of climate finance;
- Climate change and disaster risk management;
- Significant mobilization of financial resources, both at the national and international levels.

In regards to financial aspect, Benin established a National Fund for the Environment, which received the accreditation of the Adaptation Fund to be a National Implementing Entity under the Fund.

It is in the light of these achievements that Benin has started to think about which strategy to develop to apply the guidelines for the national adaptation plan (NAP), based on decision 5/CP.17 and its annex.

III – EXPERIENCE OF BENIN IN THE APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES FOR THE NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLAN (NAP)

The central body for the implementation of the UNFCCC is the National Committee on Climate Change, a body established in April 2003 and chaired by the Ministry of Environment. It brings together officials from various government ministries, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. The National Committee has more than 10 years of experience, studies issues related to climate change and makes relevant proposals to the government. It is within the Committee that Benin's participation to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP) is prepared. It is also the Committee that collects and analyses the decisions adopted at the COP before briefing and advising the government.

Reflection on the application of the guidelines for the NAP started on 22 December 2011 at the national workshop for the restitution of the COP decisions adopted in Durban, which was funded by UNDP in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Urban Development.

It was during this workshop that the guidelines were first presented and explained by the UNFCCC Focal Point. The discussion that followed demonstrated that the UNFCCC decisions on the NAP process were positively received. It was understood that these decisions allow for the implementation of medium- and long-term adaptation projects and programmes and the placing of climate change at the heart of the actions conducted by sectoral ministries and the government as a whole.

Participants also wanted to know what would be the relevant strategy to develop to successfully formulate and implement a NAP, and what would be needed to reach this objective. They also inquired about the role of the various stakeholders. Responses are being provided by highlighting the differences with what has been done under the NAPA process.

The engagement of the representative of Benin at the 22nd meeting of the LEG in Tuvalu in October 2012 and the participation of members of the delegation of Benin to the LEG regional training workshop for Francophone LDCs on NAPA and NAP, which was held in Lomé (Togo), were important opportunities to make further steps and deepen the understanding of the content and requirements of the NAP.

The LEG, the GEF, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, GIZ, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for the Fight against Drought in the Sahel (CILSS), presented information and case studies of quality on the various aspects of the NAP process, which increased the delegation's knowledge of the NAP process and provided some tools to formulate and implement it.

On return to Benin, a report was made to the Ministry of Environment and consultation sessions between officials of the Ministry in charge of development; those from the Ministry of Environment and UNDP were organized to study the conditions to embark on the NAP process. Following these meetings, a preliminary roadmap has been developed and will be further refined. It includes the following elements:

- In May 2013, presentation of a communication on the NAP process and its requirements during the review of programmes and projects of the environment sector with the participation of UNDP, the project directors and coordinators. The objective is to share information on the NAP with the stakeholders and actors of the environment sector and identify an entry point for the possible integration of the NAP in the programme of work of these stakeholders.
- At the end of May 2013, organization of a meeting on the theme "Environment and Climate Change" to encourage Benin's technical and financial partners to be interested in the formulation and implementation of the NAP;
- In June 2013, organization of a national workshop for sharing the information and knowledge on the NAP acquired during the LEG training workshop in Lomé, with the view to making recommendations to the government;
- Progressive operationalization of government decisions on the NAP depending on the resources mobilized and available.

The fundamental objective of these actions is to successfully establish robust institutional arrangements with clear responsibility lines to formulate the NAP. Such arrangements should facilitate the effective integration of adaptation to climate change into the main sectoral and national development plans and programmes.

Then, a communication and awareness raising strategy would need to be developed to reach out to national and subnational stakeholders as they would need to understand the issues and opportunities of the NAP process, so that a large consensus on this issue can be obtained.

In addition, this groundwork will be used to assess the experiences gained in the design, formulation and implementation of national or sectoral plans and programmes to draw lessons and good practices and avoid facing some obstacles.

In regards to the popularity of the NAP process and the interest it has generated from many national stakeholders, Benin feels prepared and willing to kick start this process in accordance with the outline of the adopted guidelines, which are as follows:

- Laying the groundwork and addressing gaps;
- Preparatory elements;
- Implementation strategies;
- Reporting, monitoring and review.

Benin is currently working on addressing the first phase of the process. This will require technical and financial support, which are not easy for LDCs to mobilize quickly. Hence, the need for prompt and adequate financial support from the GEF and its implementing agencies (UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank, etc.). The assessment of the financial needs is also not an easy task to do as it depends on the extent and quality of the work to be undertaken.

Therefore conducting a sound financial needs assessment might require specific in-depth analysis.

In that respect, the implementation by the GEF of paragraph 1 of decision 12/CP.18, is of paramount importance to succeed in the NAP process. It is important to move quickly, to the extent possible, to ensure that the assessment of the process in 2015 at COP21 is satisfying.

Benin welcomes and appreciates to its true value, the immense efforts that the GEF continues to deploy to meet the expectations of the LDCs for the implementation of their NAPA and hopes that support to the NAP process will be effective in the short-term.

This is an opportunity to warmly thank all donor countries that have contributed to the LDCF for the NAPA and hopefully soon for the NAP, the GEF for its encouraging efforts for LDCs, and the LEG and the UNFCCC secretariat for their valuable technical support. NAPAs and NAPs are two complementary processes. Countries which are ready to start their NAP process should be enabled to do so, while ensuring the continuity of the NAPA implementation.

Adaptation is a vital issue for LDCs, diligence in decisions made and actions taken should be the motto.

Benin believes that the guidelines will contribute to the implementation of the NAP process.