

A TECHNICAL GUIDE

# Stages in the implementation of National Adaptation Plans

A practical, eight-stage path from an adaptation plan to financed, delivered action on the ground

LDC Expert Group



**United Nations**  
Climate Change

**8** stages · **4** phases · feedback loops

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## How to use this guide

This guide sets out a practical sequence for taking a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) all the way from a planning document to financed, delivered action.

It is written for the people who make that happen – the National Designated Authority (NDA), the Ministry of Finance, planning authorities, sector ministries, and their delivery partners – and is designed to be worked through in training workshops.

The core idea is simple. The eight stages are arranged in the order that works best in practice: each stage builds on the one before, so effort spent early makes every later step easier. Getting the order right is as important as the content. A strong proposal, for example, achieves little if the country has not yet decided which priorities matter most or who will deliver them – so the guide puts that groundwork first.

### Each stage is set out the same way

- 1 **What the stage achieves** – its purpose in the path
- 2 **A do-this checklist** – the practical steps
- 3 **The output** it produces
- 4 **A done-when test** – so you know when to move on

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Where a stage produces a written output – a summary, a package profile, a concept note, a proposal – a **NAPX** note shows how the NAP finance navigator can help you produce it.

**A note on order.** The stages are sequential because each builds on the last, but the path is not rigidly linear. The binding initial step is Stage 2 – the one that unlocks the most. Many other activities can and should begin in parallel from the outset; these are listed later in the guide. And access requirements at the various funds can be demanding: this guide focuses on how to organize and navigate them efficiently, so a country can move through them with a coherent national offer already in hand.



## The path at a glance

In compressed form, the path runs:



The eight stages fall into four phases:

|                                   |                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Foundational</b><br>Stages 1–2 | Without these, finance cannot be organized or absorbed.                                                    |
| <b>Access</b><br>Stages 3–5       | Getting finance packaged, matched, approved and committed.                                                 |
| <b>Delivery</b><br>Stages 6–7     | Turning approvals into disbursement and implementation.                                                    |
| <b>Learning</b><br>Stage 8        | Tracking whether the NAP is being implemented and where gaps remain, then feeding that back into the plan. |

### The binding first step is Stage 2

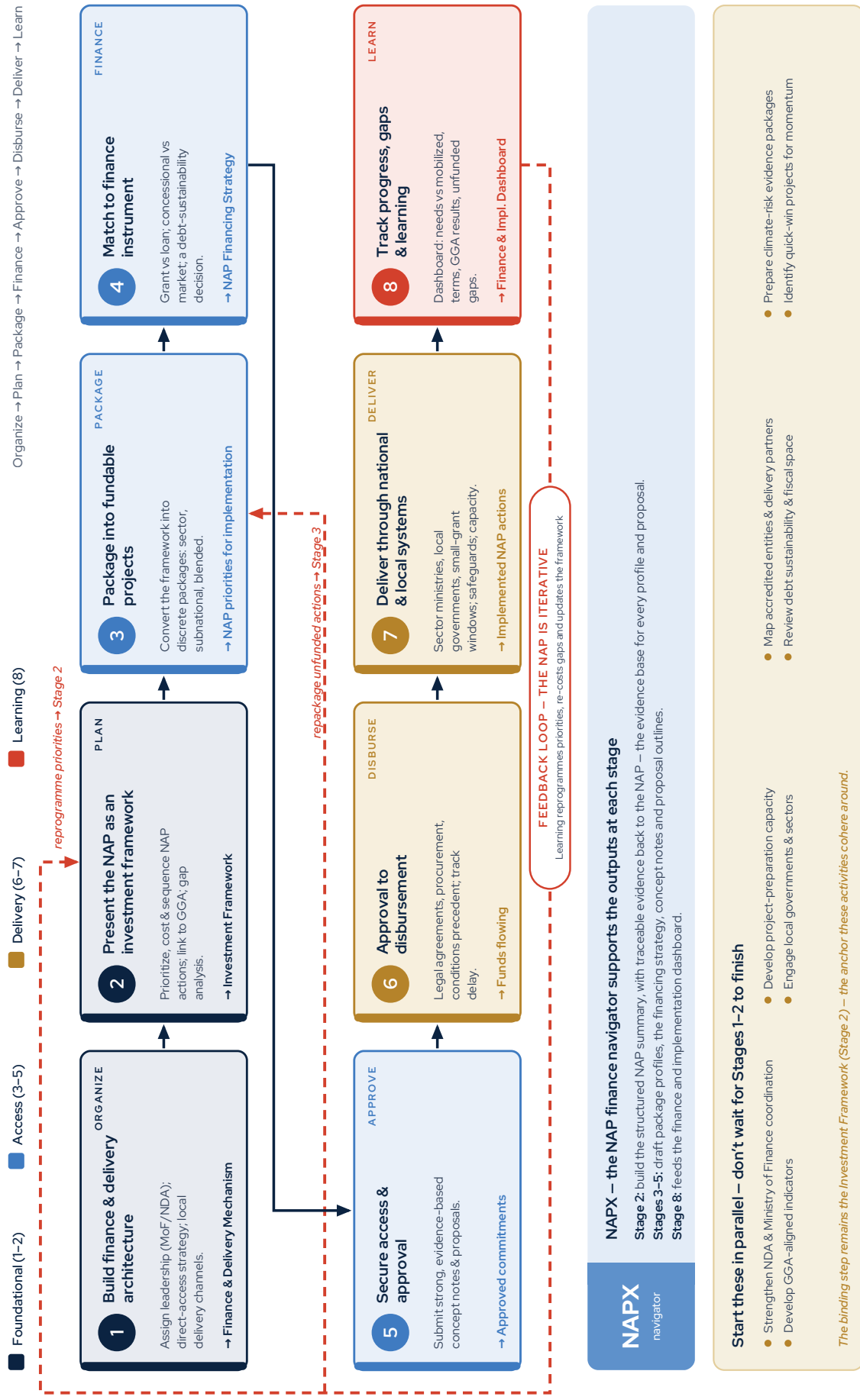
A NAP Implementation Investment Framework is the single most important starting point, because it is the reference every later stage draws on. Without it a country stays reactive – preparing separate proposals whenever a window opens. With it, the country can approach funds and partners with one coherent national programme.



**Getting the order right is as important as the content.**

Each stage builds on the one before, so effort spent early makes every later step easier.

**Figure 1** The eight-stage path



Solid arrows show the core sequence; dashed red arrows show the Stage 8 feedback loop (reprogramme priorities, re-cost gaps, repackage unfunded actions). The blue band shows how NAPX supports the outputs; the sand band shows national activities that can start immediately.

# 3

## The eight stages, step by step

@Paul V. Desanker



# 1

FOUNDATIONAL PHASE · ORGANIZE

## Build the national finance and delivery architecture

(as part of the broader NAP process)



**What this stage achieves.** Once the programme is clear, the next question is who will manage, coordinate, access, receive, disburse, implement and track the finance. Without this architecture, even approved finance may fail to move. Accreditation, delivery partners, procurement, local channels and national coordination all come together here.

### Do this

- ☐ Define respective leadership roles of the Ministry of Finance, the planning authority, the National Designated Authority (NDA), and other equivalent bodies so that climate finance is integrated into national public-investment systems and the necessary linkages with international climate finance;
- ☐ Create a project-preparation function to reduce dependence on external consultants;
- ☐ Map potential delivery partners to determine where national, regional, or international entities are needed;
- ☐ Decide on access strategies rather than waiting indefinitely on accreditation;

- ☐ Identify local delivery channels that can reach districts, communities, islands, and sectors, or create new ones.

#### OUTPUT

A National NAP Finance and Delivery Mechanism.



**Stage is complete when:** There is a named lead, a coordination function, a direct-access strategy and mapped delivery channels able to absorb and move finance.



#### FOUNDATIONAL PHASE · PLAN

### Present the NAP as an implementation investment framework



**What this stage achieves.** A NAP is often a broad planning document rather than an investable programme. This stage converts it into a single, coherent implementation offer that funders and partners can read – the master structure every later stage draws on. It is not yet a project proposal; it is the reference document behind all of them.

#### Do this

- ☐ During formulation of the NAP, present the NAP priorities and expected results showing goals and concrete activities;
- ☐ Estimate associated costs;
- ☐ Classify the actions by readiness to implement: what can be funded immediately versus those needing further preparation;
- ☐ Sequence actions over a 5–10 year horizon;
- ☐ Link the priorities to the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) themes and national development priorities to strengthen the justification;
- ☐ Show what financing is available, if any, and what the financing gap is.

#### OUTPUT

A NAP Implementation Investment Framework – stating national priorities, their costs, sequencing, expected results and funding gaps.

## NAPX

**Use NAPX to build the structured NAP summary.** This is a structured digest of the NAP that captures each priority, its cost (if available), its expected results and its GGA links.

**Evidence traceability.** NAPX keeps a clear line from every entry in the summary back to the supporting text in the NAP, so each priority carries its own evidence. This traceable evidence base is what later stages draw on to justify project profiles and proposals – reviewers can see exactly where a claim comes from.

## COSTING TOOL

If cost information is not available in the NAP, use a costing tool such as the one developed by South Africa.



**Stage is complete when:** You have a costed, prioritized, sequenced framework with a gap analysis that a funder could read as one national programme.



## ACCESS PHASE · PACKAGE

# Package the NAP into fundable projects



**What this stage achieves.** Once the programme and the delivery architecture exist, the country can move into proposal preparation. This stage converts the investment framework into discrete, fundable packages so every proposal is visibly part of a national portfolio rather than a one-off. This is the reverse of the common approach of picking a project idea first and only then trying to work out priorities and delivery.

### Do this

- ☐ **Immediate-implementation package** – mature actions ready to fund in zero to two years;
- ☐ **Readiness-to-implementation package** – actions still needing feasibility, design, data or safeguards work;
- ☐ **Programmatic sector packages** – water, agriculture, health, ecosystems, infrastructure, livelihoods, or other key sectors, as necessary;
- ☐ **Subnational package** – district, municipal, island, watershed or coastal investments;
- ☐ **Enabling-systems package** – data, monitoring, procurement, coordination and local delivery;

- ☐ **Private-sector or blended-finance package** – commercially viable or partly bankable actions, as appropriate;
- ☐ Include enabling policies as part of the mix, not only projects.

## OUTPUT

## NAP Priorities for implementation.

### NAPX

**Use the NAPX Navigator to draft each package profile.** Drawing on the structured summary, the Navigator assembles the priorities, costs, results and evidence for a package into a first-draft profile, keeping the traceability back to the NAP so the package is defensible from the outset.



**Stage is complete when:** The framework is expressed as a set of discrete packages, each visibly part of one national portfolio.



### ACCESS PHASE · FINANCE

## Match each package to the right finance instrument



**What this stage achieves.** This is where the grant-versus-loan question is decided, alongside public versus private, domestic versus international, and concessional versus market. Because scarce concessional and grant resources have to go where they matter most, matching instrument to action is a debt-sustainability decision as much as a financing one.

### Do this – match the action to the instrument

| TYPE OF ACTION                                                                                        | APPROPRIATE FINANCE                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Public-good adaptation, vulnerability reduction, social, health, food-security and ecosystem measures | → <b>Grants or highly concessional finance (they rarely generate revenue to service debt)</b> |
| Climate-resilient public infrastructure                                                               | → <b>Grants combined with concessional loans where debt risk is manageable</b>                |
| Revenue-generating infrastructure                                                                     | → <b>Concessional loans, guarantees, blended finance</b>                                      |
| Private and SME adaptation                                                                            | → <b>Credit lines, guarantees, concessional capital</b>                                       |

| TYPE OF ACTION                                   | APPROPRIATE FINANCE                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local community adaptation                       | → <b>Small grants and devolved or enhanced-direct-access funds</b> |
| Risk transfer                                    | → <b>Premium support and forecast-based finance</b>                |
| National systems and institutional strengthening | → <b>Readiness and implementation grants</b>                       |

| OUTPUT | <b>A NAP Financing Strategy.</b> |
|--------|----------------------------------|
|--------|----------------------------------|

#### NAPX

**Use the NAPX Navigator to produce the financing strategy.** The Navigator maps each package to a candidate instrument and records the reasoning, producing a first-draft financing strategy the team can review and adjust.



**Stage is complete when:** Every package carries an instrument choice justified against revenue potential and debt sustainability.



ACCESS PHASE · APPROVE

## Secure access, approval and commitments



**What this stage achieves.** This is where the country presents its packages to funds and secures approvals and commitments. Access requirements – templates, evidence, accreditation, review timelines – are demanding and vary from fund to fund. The task here is to navigate them efficiently, which is far easier when the country already has an organized programme and delivery architecture behind it and can present each request as part of one national offer. This is where LDCs and SIDS face the most visible bottlenecks today: complex templates, long reviews, accreditation requirements, evidence burdens, and dependence on intermediaries.

### Do this

- ☐ Work with the NDA to confirm the access route and the accredited delivery partner for each package for the GCF;
- ☐ Work with respective focal points for the other funds to confirm the access route and the applicable accredited delivery partners;

- ☐ Prepare strong, evidence-based concept notes and full proposals, drawing on the traceable evidence from Stage 2;
- ☐ Anticipate each fund's evidence and safeguard requirements and prepare for them early;
- ☐ Present every submission as a visible part of the national portfolio, not a one-off;
- ☐ Sequence submissions so the strongest, most ready packages go first and build a track record;
- ☐ Track each submission through review so bottlenecks are visible and can be followed up.

## OUTPUT

## Approved finance commitments.

### NAPX

**Use the NAPX Navigator to draft concept notes and proposal outlines.** The Navigator turns a package profile into a concept note or proposal outline, pulling in the costed priorities, results and traceable evidence so drafting starts from a substantive base rather than a blank template.



**Stage is complete when:** Finance is approved and committed against packages in the portfolio.



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DELIVERY PHASE · DISBURSE

## Move from approval to disbursement



**What this stage achieves.** Approval is not success. A project can be approved and still stall on legal agreements, procurement, conditions precedent, safeguards or implementing arrangements. This step is easy to overlook, yet it is where commitments either become cash flow or do not.

### Do this

- ☐ Pre-negotiate standard legal agreements;
- ☐ Prepare procurement plans early;
- ☐ Resolve conditions precedent before approval wherever possible;
- ☐ Stand up financial-management systems;
- ☐ Establish implementation agreements with ministries and local actors;
- ☐ Track approval-to-first-disbursement time so delay becomes visible.

### OUTPUT

**Funds flowing into implementation systems.**



**Stage is complete when:** Committed finance has become cash flowing into national implementation systems, with disbursement lag tracked.



DELIVERY PHASE · DELIVER

## Deliver through national and local systems



**What this stage achieves.** This is where finance finally becomes adaptation action. The delivery system must reach ministries, districts, municipalities, islands, communities, farmers, utilities, health facilities, schools, protected areas, infrastructure agencies and private actors.

### Do this

- ☐ Use sector ministries for technical implementation to anchor adaptation in national systems;
- ☐ Use local governments and delivery partners to reach vulnerable communities;
- ☐ Establish small-grant or devolved windows to enable locally led adaptation;

- ☐ Build safeguards and gender systems into implementation to avoid compliance delays;
- ☐ Fund permanent national capacity rather than only consultants;
- ☐ Support procurement, supervision and maintenance so investments last.

#### OUTPUT

#### Implemented NAP actions at scale.



**Stage is complete when:** Finance is producing adaptation action that reaches sectors, local governments and vulnerable communities.



#### LEARNING PHASE · LEARN

### Track progress, gaps and learning



**What this stage achieves.** The final stage is a feedback loop, not merely reporting. The country needs to know which priorities are funded and which are not, which GGA themes are advancing, who is being left behind, which projects are delayed, which risks are worsening, which interventions are delivering, and what must be reprogrammed. This closes the loop the iterative NAP process depends on.

#### Do this

- ☐ Track costed needs against finance mobilized (approved, committed, disbursed, spent);
- ☐ Track the terms of that finance (grants, concessional loans, guarantees, private);
- ☐ Track GGA alignment across themes;
- ☐ Track implementation status from not-started to implemented;
- ☐ Track geographic coverage and remaining unfunded priorities;
- ☐ Track results – beneficiaries, assets protected, systems strengthened, losses avoided;
- ☐ Feed findings back: reprogramme priorities (→ Stage 2) and repackage unfunded actions (→ Stage 3).

#### OUTPUT

#### A NAP Finance and Implementation Dashboard.

## NAPX

**NAPX feeds the tracking dashboard.** Because the structured summary already holds the costed priorities and their evidence, progress and finance can be tracked directly against it – closing the loop back to the framework the country started from.



**Stage is complete when:** A live dashboard shows funded versus unfunded priorities and results, and its findings feed the next iteration of the framework.



# 4

## The feedback loop – why the path is a cycle, not a line



Stage 8 is not the end of the path; it is the hinge that turns the sequence into an iterative cycle.

The NAP is designed to be revisited, and the dashboard is what makes each revision evidence-based rather than guesswork. Two feedback arrows matter most:



### Reprogramme

→ Stage 2 · the long loop back to the plan

Where the dashboard shows worsening risks, shifting priorities or results that fall short, the investment framework is re-costed and re-prioritized.



### Repackage

→ Stage 3 · the shorter loop that keeps the pipeline live

Where priorities remain unfunded or a window opens, those actions are re-bundled into fresh portfolios and taken back through matching and approval.

Because of these loops, the dashboard should be stood up early and populated as the earlier stages produce data – not built once at the end. The path is a managed cycle a country runs continuously, tightening the fit between needs, finance and delivery on each pass.

# 5

## What can start in parallel

The path is sequential at its core but not strictly linear.

While the investment framework is being prepared, several activities can begin immediately – and most should, because they will be needed regardless of how the framework turns out:

- 1 **Strengthen NDA and Ministry of Finance coordination**  
Needed throughout the process.
- 2 **Develop project-preparation capacity**  
Required for every portfolio.
- 3 **Map accredited entities and delivery partners**  
Informs the access route.
- 4 **Prepare climate-risk evidence packages**  
Reduces future proposal delays.
- 5 **Develop GGA-aligned indicators**  
Supports results frameworks.
- 6 **Engage local governments and sectors**  
Improves implementation realism.
- 7 **Review debt sustainability and fiscal space**  
Informs the grant-versus-loan decision.
- 8 **Identify quick-win projects**  
Builds momentum.

The path is not purely linear – but the **NAP Implementation Investment Framework (Stage 2)** remains the central organizing step around which the parallel activities cohere.

# 6

## A possible structure for a workshop discussion

For a workshop, the eight stages collapse usefully into five discussion blocks, each with a single core question.

### Box 1 Five discussion blocks

1

#### Block 1 – Who will deliver the finance?

**FOCUS** Institutions, NDA, Ministry of Finance, accredited entities, local delivery partners, procurement.

**CORE QUESTION** *Does the country have a delivery architecture capable of absorbing and deploying finance?*

2

#### Block 2 – What is the country trying to finance?

**FOCUS** NAP priorities, costs, sequencing, GGA alignment, investment packages.

**CORE QUESTION** *Is the NAP ready to be financed as an implementation programme?*

3

#### Block 3 – What type of finance is appropriate?

**FOCUS** Grants, concessional loans, debt risk, private finance, guarantees, fiscal space.

**CORE QUESTION** *Which parts of the NAP require grants, and which can use other instruments?*

4

#### Block 4 – How will the country meet access requirements?

**FOCUS** Templates, accreditation, evidence, delivery partners, proposal quality, submission sequencing.

**CORE QUESTION** *How will the country prepare strong, evidence-based submissions and move efficiently through each fund's access requirements?*

5

#### Block 5 – How will implementation be tracked?

**FOCUS** Disbursement, implementation progress, GGA results, unfunded gaps, learning, course-correction.

**CORE QUESTION** *How will the country and partners know whether the NAP is actually being implemented?*

# 7

## Bringing it together



The path shows that NAP implementation is not only about mobilizing more money.

It is about completing a chain: a costed NAP portfolio must be connected to appropriate finance, moved efficiently through access and approval, delivered through capable national and local systems, and tracked through a results-and-finance dashboard. If any link is missing, implementation slows.

Costed NAP  
portfolio

Appropriate  
finance

Access & approval

National & local  
delivery

Results-and-  
finance dashboard

So the guiding question for a country is not only *“How do we mobilize more finance?”* It is also:

**“What is the minimum finance and delivery system we need to implement our NAP at scale – and which piece do we build next?”**

# About the LEG

The Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) was established in 2001 and is mandated to provide technical guidance and support to the LDCs on the process to formulate and implement NAPs and the implementation of the LDC work programme.

The LEG is also mandated to provide technical guidance and advice on accessing funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for the formulation and implementation of NAPs, together with the GCF secretariat. Furthermore, the LEG is mandated to engage a wide range of organizations in implementing its work programme.



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For more information, please visit:

<https://unfccc.int/LEG>

<https://napcentral.org/>