

## LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION PLANS IN VIETNAM: IMPROVING FROM EXPERIENCE

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### KEY FINDINGS

How can local governments in Vietnam prepare for climate change?

- Local governments throughout Vietnam have implemented Climate Action Plans (CAPs) in accordance with National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change (NTP-RCC) (Decision 3815/BTNMT-KTTVBKD KH dated 13th October 2009). Recently, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE) required all provinces to update their CAPs (CV990/BTNMT-KTTVBKD KH dated 24th March 2014) for the period 2015-2020.
- The Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) has approved Decision No. 1485/KHDT dated 17th October 2013, requiring the integration of climate change considerations into Socio-Economic Development Plans (SEDPs) at all levels. In addition, the Ministry of Construction (MoC) has approved Decision No. 2623/BXD dated 31 December 2013 requiring climate change to be considered in urban master plans and construction plans.
- These national policies are intended to ensure that local governments take action to implement climate adaptation and mitigation measures within their jurisdiction. But our review of selected provinces shows that with few exceptions, priority recommendations from the initial CAPs have not been implemented.
- There is limited understanding of the CAP, and how to use it to meet national policy requirements. This brief describes measures to integrate climate change into local planning through improved capacity and updated provincial Climate Action Plans.

## Summary

Local climate action planning is a relatively recent field of practice. At the time that MoNRE and NTP-RCC prepared the original guidelines for provincial level planning in 2010 (IMHEN, 2011), there was very little international experience on which to base these procedures (Bassett and Shandas, 2011; Preston et al., 2011; Carmin et al., 2012). However, since 2010 there has been a growing interest in local planning for climate adaptation, the focus of initial CAPs in Vietnam, and there are now a large number of guidebooks for local governments and a growing experience with local practice (ICLEI, 2010; Ecologic Institute, 2011; Heidrich et al., 2013). As a result of this experience, it is possible to identify an emerging consensus around good practices in this new field.

By undertaking a literature review of the experience of leading global practitioners in climate adaptation planning, our study was able to identify good practices that have been implemented by other local governments around the world. Using these good practices as normative criteria, we then compared the experiences of provincial governments in Vietnam on CAPs produced over the period 2010 – 2013. Nine provinces were selected for this study, taking care to select urban and rural provinces, provinces that had received international assistance and those that had not, from all seven climatic regions of the country. The study included review and analysis of the written provincial CAP documents, and interviews with responsible officials at the provincial level to compare local experience with international good practice. The complete results of our study are available in Vietnamese and English on ISET's website<sup>1</sup>.

## Findings

Even in the first round of provincial CAPs a number of good practices were applied. This reflects positively on the original guidelines provided by MoNRE and NTP-RCC in 2010, especially considering the lack of experience anywhere with this kind of planning. The study team assigned scores for the incorporation of good practices into provincial CAPs. Specific good practices, from a pre-defined list, were also counted for each province. The nine provincial CAPs that were sampled scored in three different clusters, with three provinces represented in each (see Figure 1).

These scores reflect several factors: the knowledge and experience of local government officials; the experience of technical consultants who prepared the CAPs; the technical support offered by international advisors; and the contents of the original MoNRE guidelines.

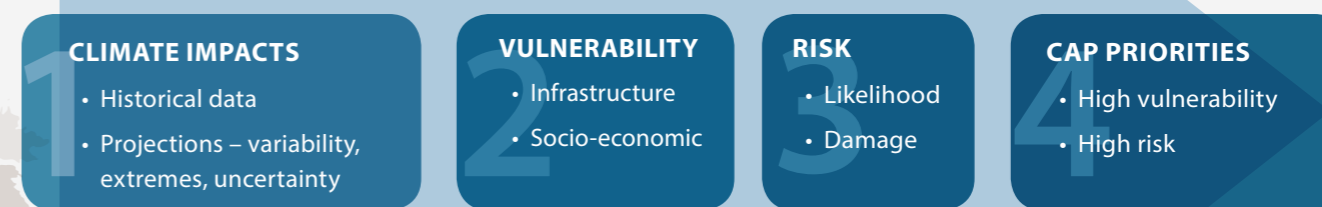
In relation to good practices, the results show that climate projections and climate impacts were handled reasonably well in most cases, and that recommendations were clearly assigned to responsible technical agencies. The greatest weakness of the first-round CAPs was that their recommendations could not be implemented, due to a lack of clear priorities and limited coordination with regular planning and budgeting mechanisms in the responsible technical agencies, as well as a lack of funding outside of regular budget channels. Other weaknesses in some provinces included:

- poor treatment of climate variability and uncertainties, which could lead to a failure to identify climate impacts;
- limited engagement of vulnerable groups, leading to a failure to recognize vulnerabilities; and
- limited application of risk assessment, which could lead to inappropriate priorities.

FIGURE 1.  
SCORE RANGES FOR THE INCORPORATION OF GOOD PRACTICES INTO PROVINCIAL CAPS

- 1 GROUP I - HIGH SCORE**  
This group of CAPs was supported by international donors and generally shared similar characteristics based on international good practices. They scored around 70% of the possible maximum.
- 2 GROUP II - MEDIUM SCORE**  
This group scored highly on some practices, but not on others. This group was more diverse, with different strengths and weaknesses in different provinces. Scores for this group were around 50% of the maximum possible.
- 3 GROUP III - LOW SCORE**  
This group was even more variable in its characteristics. They tended to be weak in many areas of the CAP in comparison with good practices, but most of them also scored well in a small number of areas. The scores of this group clustered around 30%.

FIGURE 2.  
CAP PROCEDURE STEP-BY-STEP



## CAP procedures

While the contents of a CAP were described in the 2010 guidelines from NTP-RCC/ MoNRE, the procedures for completing the CAP were not clear to many provinces, leading to wide differences in quality. Based on international good practices, the appropriate procedure should follow a step-by-step process (see Figure 2), first identifying potential climate impacts from the best available data on future variability, extreme events and uncertainty. The second step would be to identify local vulnerability to these impacts, which depends not only on exposure, but also the quality of infrastructure, ecosystems, capacities of local people and organizations, and response mechanisms. Finally, in cases where vulnerability exists, risk assessment should determine the likelihood and the magnitude of damage given the projected impacts and vulnerability. High risks should point to priority areas for intervention. Experience in Vietnam suggests that the analysis of vulnerability and risk need not be costly or complex if the appropriate local technical officials can contribute their knowledge and experience, and if suitable methods and tools are applied.

## Conclusions and Recommendations to Strengthen Local Climate Plans

These results suggest that there is already experience in Vietnam with most of the international good practices for climate planning, but despite the original NTP-RCC guidelines, the quality of CAPs varies widely. We recommend several inexpensive measures to strengthen the next round of provincial CAP updates based on these results:

- 1. Local governments should use CAP updates to provide input for integrating adaptation measures** into other local plans, as directed in recent policy decisions No. 1485/KHDT (MPI) and No. 2623/BXD (MoC)
- 2. Local governments should request better climate information in more user-friendly formats** that simplify planning and analysis. Special attention should be paid to the presentation of the best available information on extreme events, variability and uncertainty.
- 3. Local governments should develop indicators of climate change resilience** for use in monitoring their performance and the results of implementing climate action plans.
- 4. Provincial government officials require better direction about the procedural steps for CAP updates:**
  - Clarify how analysts should address uncertainty, variability and extreme events in future climate data to better assess climate *impacts*;
  - Suggestions for methods and tools to undertake simple *vulnerability assessment*;
  - Suggestions for how to conduct *risk assessment* using qualitative or quantitative methods and to use the results to set key priorities;
  - Clarify how local governments can *link CAP recommendations* to SEDPs and urban plans;
  - Clarify *monitoring* responsibilities and procedures.

<sup>1</sup> Please visit: <http://i-s-e-t.org/resources/major-program-reports/climate-adaptation-planning-vietnam.html>

**5. Provincial government officials need support for simple procedures to allow them to undertake CAP updates at low cost:**

- Guidelines on selection of technical consultants;
- Procedures for engaging multiple stakeholders early in the planning process;
- Coordination between adjacent provinces on CAP planning.

**6. The Provincial People's Committee (PPC) should be aware of its important role in coordinating**

between different technical departments and establishing priorities, supporting the Steering Committee on Responding to Climate Change, and assigning a high priority to CAP planning work.

**7. Training is needed for Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DoNRE) staff as the focal point** of CAP planning and implementation, as well as for technical consulting agencies, and local government leaders.

**8. Good practices already in use by local governments in Vietnam should be shared** with other provinces and professional groups and can serve as a basis for training.

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