

Capitalisation Review

STORIES OF NDCs IN WEST AFRICA



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Innovations and good practices in consultation methods in the context of Covid-19 for setting priorities and targets for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)



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How did the actors manage to update the NDCs in a context of health crisis? This is the question that this issue attempts to answer by highlighting innovations and good practices to deal with this situation.

Editorial

Revising Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) despite the challenges of the COVID-19 health crisis.

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Since COP21 in 2015, the countries of West Africa have mobilised in support of the Paris Agreement, redoubling their efforts and increasing investments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and pursue a low-carbon development pathway. However, since 2020 the COVID-19 health crisis has been challenging implementation of the national climate action goals embodied in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This has manifested in, among other things, a delay in some countries submitting their updated NDCs, restrictions on stakeholder travel and meetings due to the pandemic, and difficulties with consultation which have slowed revision of the NDCs.

Despite this, all countries in the West Africa region have submitted their revised NDCs, with enhanced mitigation targets. The fact that the NDCs have been updated over the period 2020-2021, with all the complications due to the COVID-19 pandemic, underlines the determination of the countries to uphold their climate commitments.

How have the parties managed to update their NDCs in this time of health crisis? This issue attempts to answer that question, highlighting innovations and new working methods in response to the situation.

Overcoming barriers caused by the COVID-19 health crisis has given rise to new ways of doing things and new good practices. Looking at the 2020-2021 updates to NDCs, it is important to see what this can teach us about the process of revising NDCs in the West Africa region in such a difficult context. This capitalisation exercise is designed to disseminate and share innovations and lessons learned from this process. It demonstrates the prevalence of good practices in West Africa in terms of how to conduct consultation to establish priorities and targets for the updated NDCs against the backdrop of COVID-19. The capitalisation also provides lessons and insights to help ensure inclusive and effective consultation in the run-up to 2025.

We hope you enjoy reading this second issue of the “Stories of NDCs in West Africa” review, and that it will fuel your climate action.



Innovations and good practices in consultation methods in the context of Covid-19 for setting priorities and targets for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Framework for the preparation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the implications for multi-stakeholder consultations

At the end of 2014, all States that were parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) set the goal of putting their commitments on the table to make the possibility of an international agreement in Paris in December 2015 more credible. This process of developing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) therefore aims to aggregate the mitigation efforts made by the countries of the world. For the first time in the history of international climate negotiations, this process involves the collective efforts of developed countries—historically responsible for climate disruption—and developing countries, whose responsibility varies greatly depending on the level of progress of their economies.

Following the successive failures of previous COPs to reach a universal agreement to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations “*at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system*”, the INDCs were greatly responsible in terms of credibility. However, in 2015, the process lacked clear, common guiding principles, which led to difficulties in comparing and aggregating the commitments made.

At ECOWAS level, the report on the “Implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement in West Africa” noted that international organisations have provided

support for the development of the INDCs: AFD (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Chad), GiZ (Ghana, Mali, Gambia), UNEP DTU (Guinea Bissau, Niger, Mauritania, Nigeria) and UNECA/ACPC (Liberia). However, several West African countries have pointed out that the INDC was developed in haste (relatively short development time) and failed to cut back on the transversal nature of the consultation (inter-ministerial or even multi-player).

The Paris Agreement entered into force in 2016 and called upon the Parties to review their INDCs and submit updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in line with the confirmed joint target of limiting global warming to +2 °C and doing everything possible to limit the increase to +1.5 °C. For the 17 countries in the ECOWAS-CILSS zone, this update was coordinated mainly by the Ministries of the Environment, together with other ministries responsible for the relevant areas.

In the run-up to the 2020-2021 NDC update phase, many analyses have been performed to obtain an accurate picture of NDC implementation within ECOWAS over the next 5 years; however, they have frequently encountered difficulties when collecting data.

The First NDC Update Cycle: Implications for ECOWAS Member States

The Paris Agreement is an open-ended framework for sustainable cooperation. It establishes a dynamic cycle whose implementation must make it possible to progressively increase the ambition of the countries involved and the international community. The aim is to create a process of continuous improvement to achieve collectively agreed targets in mitigation and adaptation.

In terms of mitigation, each NDC must be reported and updated every five years, show progress as from the previous NDC and be at the highest possible level of ambition. In terms of adaptation, each country can voluntarily share its past (results, feedback) and future (strategies, action plans, needs assessment) actions for adaptation. If they choose to do so, there is a great deal of flexibility regarding the formality of the communication on their commitments.

It is important to recall that ECOWAS is not a “Party” to the Paris Agreement, as it is not a signatory. Its involvement in its implementation therefore seeks to promote regional cooperation between and with its Member States to combat climate change and provide regional support to national efforts designed to implement the Paris Agreement.

Accordingly, it has several levers of action: (i) the harmonisation and coordination of national policies and measures in ECOWAS cooperation; (ii) programmes and projects integrating climate considerations and challenges; and (iii) common market instruments (trade deregulation, tariff policy and the free movement of people, goods, services and capital).



Focus on the support of the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus - West Africa (GCCA+ WA) project

Four ECOWAS member countries benefited from tailor-made pilot support during the NDC update phase under the GCCA+AO programme. In **Togo**, the capacities of the Ministry of the Environment and Forest Resources have been strengthened, particularly for integrating climate issues into local planning documents.

In **Liberia**, the capacity of the Environmental Protection Agency to raise national awareness and understanding of the NDC has been strengthened.

In **Guinea Bissau**, an analysis was performed on capacity-building requirements for the revision and monitoring of the implementation of the NDC, together with an inventory of the implementation of the NDC. Finally, support for the drafting of the updated NDC was provided in **Sierra Leone** through the consolidation of preparatory documents and studies, on the one hand, and a CILSS study on projected impacts and cost estimates of adaptation in the AFOLU sector, on the other.

More broadly, at regional level, several schemes were created and several actions were initiated during the last update phase:

- ✓ The GRANIC: The ECOWAS Regional Support Group for International Climate Negotiations (French acronym: GRANIC) was set up in 2021 to support member states and enable ECOWAS to be more proactive in defending common West African interests within the African group, particularly to improve the coordination of common regional positions.
- ✓ ECOWAS is committed to the West Africa Network on Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) for technical and institutional capacity-building in the region.
- ✓ ECOWAS has launched and validated its Regional Climate Strategy to support the implementation of its member states' NDCs.
- ✓ An agreement was reached in 2020 by and between CILSS/CRA and ECOWAS to strengthen AGRHYMET for it to become the Regional Climate Centre (RCC). The aim is to provide regional weather and climate forecasts, increase climate monitoring, strengthen the operational capacities of National Meteorological Directorates, and manage and disseminate weather and climate information.

Climate ambition in the face of a health crisis

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has caused major upheaval around the world since early 2020. Although affected by the virus, West Africa was “lucky” to be one of the last regions affected by the crisis. Despite this exceptional situation, measures have been taken by the States in the region (home-working, border closures, travel restrictions and local or national lock-downs), with significant differences among and within countries.

At international level, the repercussions were unprecedented in the fight against climate change, as for the first time in the history of international negotiations, the COP scheduled for 2020 was postponed to 2021. This has affected the timetable for countries to submit their updated NDCs and has partly delayed the international climate action needed in the face of increasingly urgent evidence.

The only positive aspect of this situation is that states have been given an extra year to update their NDCs and consult widely with their stakeholders; however, the difficult conditions affecting consultations have continued throughout almost all of 2021.

Implications for the consultation process for updating NDCs

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had consequences for the consultation processes in ECOWAS Member States. To illustrate this, a panel of countries representing the diversity of ECOWAS that had published their updated NDC or were in the process of doing so was consulted. Here, the example of the Republic of Guinea is particularly clear. Mr Sékou Fodé Camara, CDN focal point since 2019, explained that the health crisis has put constraints on stakeholders’ options for meeting up and exchanging thoughts. It was difficult to mobilise the players, which led to a lack of time to discuss the crucial issues. With videoconferencing—the preferred tool for overcoming these difficulties—, not every issue could be raised.

However, the AFD’s Adapt’action process has helped build the capacity of the players involved in the development and updating of the NDC by appointing climate referents in the various ministries. These formed the core of the 2020-2021 update. The update process started with the inventory of the implementation of the NDC in 2015. After the inventory, the activities for the update were launched in spite of the health situation with the involvement of all institutional players: ministerial departments, the Prime Minister’s Office, the National Assembly and the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Council.

However, this has not been the case for all countries in the region, as West African civil society has lamented the slowing-down of the NDC process in some countries, such as **Mali**, due to the fact that the players concerned could not be brought together. Similarly, in Nigeria, Ms Edeh Chioma Felistas Amudi, Desk Officer: NDC & MRV, points out that the pandemic initially made it more difficult to interact with the various stakeholders involved in updating the country’s NDC. Although relevant, the digital tools were new to many players and required a collective learning phase before they could reach their full effectiveness. As in many other countries around the world, the main consequence of the pandemic in Nigeria was to move the timing of the update process initially scheduled for the end of 2020.

Solutions taken to ensure the most inclusive process possible

A health context such as that of 2020-2021 stood as a challenge for including all stakeholders in updates to the NDCs; however, concrete solutions could still be implemented. In **Ivory Coast**, for example, the work was inclusive, with the mobilisation of 70 people at central level, notably via teleconference systems and the construction of a three-level consultation architecture:

- a COPIL chaired by the Director of Cabinet of the Ministry of the Environment and comprising the Directors of Cabinet of the ministries relevant to the NDC;
- a Technical Committee chaired by the Director of Climate Change and assisted by the Director of the National Climate Change Programme, bringing together all the focal points of the ministries to analyse the reports issued by the international consultants that had been mobilised and exchange opinions; and
- a Coordination Committee acting as a link and consultations organiser.

Further to the central level, the involvement of local authorities in this update phase came as a major innovation (regions, districts and municipalities). Accordingly, 4 workshops involving a total of 110 people were set up in the region to identify the vulnerabilities of coastal areas and agricultural activities (cocoa and cotton).

In the **Republic of Guinea**, inclusion was also as extensive as possible in spite of the health situation. Several activities were carried out: :

- a launch workshop in Conakry;
- consultations in the ministerial departments;
- regional workshops in the 7 administrative regions of Guinea; and
- an on-line questionnaire to collect civil society's views on the NDC and their understanding of climate change in Guinea.

The involvement of the various levels was therefore made possible by regional consultations in the form of workshops, followed by in-person meetings with the international consultants mobilised to support the process. The in-person workshops involved regional players and high-level mobilisation was recorded. The workshops were held in the capital, but regional players travelled to where they were being staged and took part in the discussions. The health situation partly disrupted the workshops, but steps were taken to ensure they could take place without “losing” local participation. Similarly, international players were involved as much as possible either by video-conference or in person.

In **Nigeria**, all stakeholders were able to take part on a step-by-step basis as the health situation in the country evolved. Accordingly, the deployment of digital tools has enabled broad mobilisation at all levels: federal, national, sub-national and civil society. Weekly coordination meetings have been set up, virtually from 2020 and progressively in person in 2021.

The private sector's involvement has been a great success for the country as, despite initial health difficulties, many representatives of key NDC sectors, such as energy, transport or waste, have been involved in the update process.



Unresolved limitations in 2021

As of COP26, the new difficulties that emerged due to the health crisis appear to have been partially overcome by West African countries. Nevertheless, a number of challenges remain. This is the case for Côte d'Ivoire, for example, which reports that the capacity-building (e.g. access to climate finance, development of investment plans for NDC implementation) and experience-sharing activities planned as part of many initiatives have been undermined by the health crisis. Mr Frédéric Zakpa, Deputy Director of the fight against climate change in Côte d'Ivoire, NDC Partnership focal point and responsible for mitigation and adaptation policies, calls for said policies to be relaunched in order to mobilise the necessary resources for action and the emergence of a high-level regional ambition.

For S. Camara, in the **Republic of Guinea**, the main difficulty is still the availability of data. When the original NDC was carried out, the forest sector was not included in the considerations. During the consultations, it was realised that the sector needed to be involved and calculations were made to estimate the potential of Guinean forests and the financing needed for their conservation. The health crisis has created many difficulties in the information-collection process.

In broader terms, the analysis performed during this update phase shows that there is still a certain lack of knowledge of the content of the commitments assumed by Guinea on the part of those responsible vis-à-vis the de-concentrated regional and prefectural technical services. As a result, and although in line with mitigation or adaptation, several actions undertaken by the technical services in the field do not formally correspond to the framework for the implementation of NDC 2015. Indeed, they are seen as local responses to the increasing impact of climate change on the territory.

In **Nigeria**, according to E. Chioma, the situation is similar: a strategic roadmap is an essential first step, but technical and financial support and capacity-building are now needed for its effective implementation. The country currently has a lack of financial resources for the implementation of specific actions to combat climate change according to the recommendations agreed by stakeholders during the update process. An increase in human and financial resources is therefore necessary to ensure the systemic integration of climate matters at every decision-making level.

Lessons and perspectives for an inclusive and efficient consultation process by 2025 extended to all ECOWAS Member States

As we take stock of this update process, there are several items that give us cause for satisfaction. Indeed, unlike the CPDN in 2015, ECOWAS Member States have had time to update their commitments. Even if the health situation has made extensive consultation initiatives more complex, especially for West African civil society, the latter generally feels that it has been involved, as shown by the survey by the RC&D - Climate Network & Development (bringing together West African CSOs). According to the survey, 91% of members declared that they were involved in the NDC monitoring process in their countries (almost 30% as members of the NDC national committees or as experts, and 70% as observers or collaborators of the institutions responsible).

However, despite this good news, there are still limitations. For example, in the Republic of Guinea, the citizen consultations carried out for the update phase of the NDC show that citizens are well informed about the institutional framework for climate change considerations, particularly as a result of the high-level mobilisation around the Paris Agreement. However, the level of knowledge of specific actions undertaken at national level is very low. For example, only 4 out of 10 respondents to the on-line questionnaire made available during the update phase were aware of the Guinea NDC.

It is appropriate to end this issue of History of NDC on a positive note by proposing recommendations for the next update cycle in 5 years. F. Zakpa underlined that it would be of relevance to produce a policy brief comprising the lessons learned at ECOWAS level for there to be guidelines for future coordinators and focal points. For example, the initiative to hold one information meeting per month involving all the stakeholders taking part in the update of the Côte d'Ivoire NDC is an initiative to be valued and replicated. In addition, as part of an increased mobilisation of civil society, the RC&D proposes:

- supporting stakeholders in climate expertise and sending collective requests to French-speaking African states to include more realistic NDCs;
- mobilising resources for information/awareness-raising, technical assistance and training of the population to help achieve targets; and
- adapting the NDCs to the local level for better appropriation by stakeholders.





The Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is an instrument of the Paris Agreement in which each state signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) records its greenhouse gas reduction and climate change adaptation commitments by demonstrating the highest level of ambition possible given the country's circumstances.

The review entitled «Stories of NDCs in West Africa» aims to present the lessons learned, successes and challenges of implementing NDCs in the West African countries. The particularity of the review is to reveal informal or intangible practices that are not always documented in the implementation of NDCs.

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