



# ADAPT OR DIE:

An analysis of African climate  
adaptation strategies

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**POWER SHIFT**  
A F R I C A

# INTRODUCTION

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Countries are responding by increasing their spending on adaptation. On average, they are looking to make investments equal to more than 2.8% of their current GDPs every year. This is the result of an **analysis** of the six National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) submitted by African countries since 2018. Among them are Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan and Togo. Numbers range from anything between USD 90 million a year in Sierra Leone to USD 6 billion in Ethiopia.

## AN ADAPTATION CRISIS

In Ethiopia and Kenya, millions are suffering from droughts every year. Millions of South Africans are struggling with water shortages. While most of the South Sudanese territory could dry out by the end of the century, the highly-populated coastal zones in Liberia are drowning. Countries are responding by increasing their spending on adaptation. On average, they are looking to make investments of 4.04% of their current GDPs every year. In developing countries alone, annual adaptation costs could reach **\$300 billion** by 2030. According to a **2017 report**, the financial gap between what is available and what is needed for meaningful adaptation is at 80% in Africa. More **recent numbers** suggest that this gap is even widening. Therefore, a drastic increase in funding is needed. But African countries cannot do this by themselves. None of the countries considered in this analysis had sufficient resources even for the most urgent adaptation priorities. They rely on international assistance, in the case of Togo for as much as 80% of its public investments. As acknowledged in the South African plan, one of the functions of an NAP is to “provide a blueprint for channelling international financial support for adaptation into developing countries.” Not having a NAP is perceived to be a disadvantage. As climate finance commitments and adaptation are expected to become central topics at COP27, NAPs could play an important role in shaping this year’s debate

## WHAT IS ADAPTATION?

Adaptation refers to the adjustment of ecological, social, or economic systems to both the current effects of climate change and predicted impacts in the future. It includes changes in processes, practises, and structures, which can take various shapes depending on the context. Examples range from building flood defences, setting up early warning systems for cyclones and switching to drought-resistant crops, to redesigning communication systems, business operations and government policies. Adaptation is a key component of the global response to climate change and reflected as such in the Paris Agreement.

## IPCC WORKING GROUP 2

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is meeting in Berlin in late February to assess how the world is dealing with climate change impacts so far. At the end of it, they are going to publish the Working Group 2 Impacts report. As the sixth major assessment report, it will likely offer the starkest sense yet of the various challenges we are facing globally today. It is expected to show that adaptation to climate change is essential but underfunded. It will highlight the immense damages already done and the actions that are necessary to prevent the worst outcomes in the future. Adaptation will be a top priority, making plans such as the African NAPs of utmost importance.



## ETHIOPIA

### **NAP | To spend USD 90 billion on adaptation until 2030**

Climate change impacts in Ethiopia range from floods and diseases to hailstorms and wildfires. Droughts have become more severe, putting millions of lives at risk every year. To respond to these changes, the Ethiopian NAP outlines a range of adaptation measures, to be implemented until 2030. Taken together, they are expected to cost USD 6 billion every year, which is equal to about 5.6% of their current GDP. As levels of foreign direct investment are insufficient to pay for these plans so far, part of the NAP is to come up with a more detailed finance mobilisation strategy.

“For a country like Ethiopia, which is vulnerable to the climate change, it is imperative to implement coordinated adaptation measures.”

“The projected level of foreign direct investment, grants, and transfers will not be sufficient to fund the required additional investments. Therefore, finance mobilization is identified as one of the major constraints for implementing the NAP-ETH.”



## KENYA

Kenya is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and variability. Recurrent extended droughts and intermittent floods continue to undermine the resilience of vulnerable sectors (including agriculture, livestock, water, health, and energy) and affect the country's economic development. Impacts of climate change have resulted in loss of lives, livelihoods and great socio-economic losses estimated at 3-5% of the GDP annually threatening the realisation of Kenya Vision 2030 goals. This is expected to increase with projected worse climate scenarios. Cognizant of these realities, Kenya has put in place elaborate policy and legal frameworks for climate change and aims to mainstream climate change into national and sub-national development planning and budgeting processes. The country's NDC commitment is largely towards adaptation efforts with over 70% of the USD 62 B NDC budget up to 2030 earmarked for adaptation and building resilience. The country has committed to financing 10% of the adaptation costs while 90% will require international finance. A detailed NDC finance strategy is in place.

“An increase of global temperature by 1.5 °C is 3°C for Africa and is not a statistics, it is a matter of life and death for our people who contribute the least in terms of emissions, yet bear the brunt of the devastating effects of the global warming.”

“Adaptation is a must and Kenya's top priority response to climate change, and the NAP is the foundation of Kenya's contribution on adaptation”

“Kenya will require substantive international climate finance, investment and partnerships to achieve its adaptation goals.”

DETAIL OF A DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN AN AGRICULTURAL TRAINING CENTRE, KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA, AFRICA.





## LIBERIA

### **NAP | Up to USD 250 million of climate change damages along the coast**

Most of Liberia's population lives along its 550km coast. Increases in annual rainfall, the frequency of heavy rainfall events and sea level rise are causing severe flooding in exactly these zones. In the coming years, this may cause infrastructure and land damages of up to USD 250 million. Recognizing these perils, the country's NAP proposes a range of adaptation priorities. While the costs are yet to be determined, financing has already been identified as a central gap for implementation.

“Though historically Liberia's contribution to atmospheric greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations has been negligible, our country is unfortunately confronted with the daunting challenge of adapting to these new climatic conditions and their impacts.”

“This National Adaptation Plan (NAP) marks a fundamental landmark in addressing [Liberia's] susceptibility and resilience to climate change.”

“Fundamental to the success of the NAP process in Liberia will be... designing a coherent approach to mobilizing funding for effective climate change adaptation”



## SIERRA LEONE

### **NAP | At least 40% of international development funding to go into adaptation**

Sierra Leone is the third most vulnerable country to climate change impacts. Temperature increases, stronger winds and more frequent rainstorms can be witnessed across the country. Extreme weather-induced floods are responsible for 90% of the people affected by disaster. In its NAP, Sierra Leone sets out investments into adaptation of USD 90 million per year, equivalent to 2.3% of its current GDP. This will require channelling at least 40% of the country's international development funding into adaptation - funding that will be missing in other areas.

“Climate change has adverse impacts on Sierra Leone's economic development and poses a fundamental threat to the realization of the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023”

“As a nation, we strongly believe that through effective implementation of this NAP, Sierra Leone will reduce its vulnerability by half by 2030”



## TOGO

### **NAP | Adaptation spending equal to 2.5% of its GDP every year**

While smaller in size, Togo is projected to experience similar kinds of impacts, ranging from frequent floods and droughts to poor rainfall distributions and land erosion. Sea level rise is threatening key economic infrastructure along the coast. Following its NAP, the country plans to spend as much as USD 93.6 million on adaptation every year, equalling about 2.5% of its current GDP. As almost 80% of its public investment has relied on foreign assistance in the past, Togo's funding strategy focuses largely on international sources.

“Despite the efforts of the international community to stabilize the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the phenomenon of climate change continues to increase drastically day by day. This requires greater adaptation efforts from developing countries, which are the most vulnerable.” (translation from French)

“As far as the public sector is concerned, the most important contribution of the public sector is still made by international cooperation. However, given the limitations of these resources, it is desirable that options be identified and explored for the increased mobilization of public resources, both national and international.” (translation from French)



## SOUTH AFRICA

**NAP | As much as USD 2.02 billion into adaptation every year**

South Africans are experiencing more frequent and extreme storms, fires and daily rainfall events. Drought conditions and temperature increases can be felt across the whole country and a recent water crisis has put lives and livelihoods in danger. Under a low mitigation scenario, climate change impacts may lead to as much as 23.1% GDP loss in South Africa until 2050. Acknowledging these projections, the country plans to make annual investments into adaptation of up to USD 2.02 billion. This would equal about 0.67% of its GDP every year. A detailed financing strategy is already in place.

**CATTLE CARCASS.  
DROUGHT IN RANGELANDS  
OF SOUTH AFRICA**



“The projected adverse effects of ongoing climate change in South Africa are likely to threaten the achievement of urgent national development needs, and well-founded aspirations to address historical inequities.”

“Africa is likely to experience changes in climate earlier than other regions, and therefore adaptation measures are urgently required on the continent.”

“It is clear, however, that substantial finance will be required to implement the [NAP] to achieve meaningful adaptation in South Africa.”



ASUNTA'S FARM IS FLOODED, CAUSING DESTRUCTION OF HER CROPS, AND VERY LITTLE FOR HER AND HER FAMILY TO EAT. SINCE 2020, FLOODS AND DROUGHT HAVE CAUSED HUNGER. THE VILLAGE, IN AWEIL SOUTH, NORTHERN BAHR EL GHAZAL, IS NOW IN DIRE NEED OF URGENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

CREDIT: CHRISTIAN AID





## SOUTH SUDAN

### **NAP | Up to 10% higher losses to GDP than in next most exposed region**

South Sudan is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Sudden shocks of extreme rainfall and subsequent flooding have led to increases in water-borne diseases, displacement, and damaged crops and farmland. Years of conflict have weakened the country's resilience capacities. Projections indicate that South Sudan may face losses to its GDP that are up to 10% higher than the region next most exposed to climate change impacts (India). Going forward, the country is set to spend USD 376.3 million on adaptation every year until 2030, equalling about 3.1% of its current GDP. As this spending is linked to South Sudan's greater NDC budget, it can be expected that as much as 93.5% have to be covered by sources of international finance.

“Though the people of South Sudan have made virtually no contributions to the global threat of a warming atmosphere, its effects have had an enormous impact on our economy and society. Therefore, it is imperative that all South Sudanese take a proactive stance in addressing and adapting to climate change and building resilience.”

“If left unaddressed, the impacts of climate change could undo the hard-fought gains our country has achieved in terms of building peace and unity... We do, however, have the choice to anticipate and address these conditions before they arise through planning processes informed by the best available science.”

“Attracting international capital will not be easy. International competition for scarce capital increases the challenges for least-developed countries in accessing such funding.”

# POWER SHIFT AFRICA RECOMMENDATIONS

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## TO THE RICH POLLUTING WORLD

It is incumbent on the rich polluting world, which caused climate change in the first place, to assume responsibility, and support the vulnerable communities and countries adapt to the inevitable and profound changes in the climate.

Adaptation of the poor and vulnerable communities and countries must not fail for want of finance or technology. The rich world must stop sidelining the vulnerables needs if the world is going to have an equitable approach to dealing with the climate emergency.

## TO COP27 IN SHARM-EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT

The incoming Egyptian COP27 Presidency and the African governments together with other developing countries, must urgently begin to frame COP27 as the “Adaptation COP” to help undo the historic imbalance of the UNFCCC process.

Sharm-el-Sheikh must help deliver an elaborated outline of the elements for the global goal on adaptation, to be subsequently fleshed out and provided with more detail through negotiations taking place in 2023, with a decision on the global goal on adaptation to be adopted at COP28.

At COP27, massive new funds must be injected into poor and vulnerable countries to help them cope with the increasing impacts of climate change. The COP27 should result in a clear call to developed countries to scaling up annual financing in the period 2021-2025 and accelerate the implementation of the Climate Finance Delivery Plan.

On the Glasgow Dialogue on Loss and Damage, there should be significant advancement in the course of 2022 particularly in relation to the establishment and operationalization of a loss and damage financing facility.

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