

# National Adaptation Plans Report: Lessons from Liberia 2019

Over the last two years, the Environmental Protection Agency, with the assistance of UNDP through the [GCF funded National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) project](#) has been supporting the Government of Liberia to advance its medium-to long-term plans for integrating adaptation planning across critical sectors. Building on the momentum of the previous year, significant gains were also made in 2019.



## A STRATEGY FOR RESILIENCE

Liberia developed its first ever Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Strategy: the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Strategy of Liberia (2020-2030). Working alongside a Multi-Disciplinary Integrated Assessment Team (MAT) of 30 national experts from various ministries, agencies, and commissions - which were divided across four technical working groups (TWGs) - the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) conducted a national disaster risk assessment. The assessment included risk profiling and consultations leading to a National Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Strategy. The strategy will guide efforts to proactively prevent and manage disaster risks in order to minimize the loss and suffering caused by disasters. The strategy outlines priorities for actions broadly aligned to three global agendas: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

## CLIMATE CHANGE KNOWLEDGE SHARING PLATFORM AND DISASTER DATABASE

In an effort to strengthen the knowledge base for adaptation, Liberia has developed its first interconnected online knowledge management platform hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency. The platform is



designed to synchronize existing climate information platforms used in other government departments. It allows national, regional and international networks and research institutes to connect and access the same climate information. The platform facilitates access to relevant climate-relevant data, events, workshops and training courses. It also serves as a repository of knowledge products, which will contribute to the sustainability of the NAP project and of national adaptation efforts in general by creating highly accessible information systems and strengthening capacity for knowledge sharing between different groups during and beyond the lifetime of the current project. (More info available [here](#).)

Additionally, Liberia has developed a Disaster Database; a cloud-based disaster platform hosted by the NDMA as part of efforts to provide information and track disasters nationally. The database will help address the serious challenge of lack of proper management of disaster and related data/information by providing a platform for systematic tracking, storing, manipulating, and retrieving of disaster data/information. In this way, planners including government and policy makers, development and humanitarian partners, among others, will have easy access to information to better guide and inform their planning, preparation and response to disasters and related issues. (More info available [here](#).)

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL ON ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES & CLIMATE CHANGE**

Liberia has developed and inaugurated its national academic programs on environmental science and climate. The programs, situated in the School of Environmental Studies and Climate Change at the University of Liberia, offers both undergraduate and graduate programs in four disciplines: Master of Science in Environmental Science, Master of Science in Climate Change, Master of Arts in Environmental Management, and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies.

The programs address the need for research, and capacity development that will contribute significantly to solving developmental and environmental issues in Liberia and beyond. These professional programs capture at their core, climate change adaptation and vulnerability concepts and approaches, as well as disaster management, thereby responding to increasing labor-market demand for professionals knowledgeable about these issues in Liberia and internationally. In so doing, the programs will also support the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Climate Action (SDG13). (More info available [here.](#))

## **MAINSTREAMING ADAPTATION IN BUDGET AND PLANNING**

Liberia has developed technical guidelines for mainstreaming climate change into budgeting and planning processes for the personnel of the Ministry of Finance & Development Planning and other relevant ministries. The guidelines will support the systematic inclusion of climate change adaptation activities into national plans and budgets, which has been absent from national planning and budgeting processes in the past. These measures will ensure planning, budgeting and reporting processes that are climate-proofed. It will also ensure that the government can systematically and sustainably tackle climate risks, which are recognized to be a matter of imperative national importance, given the potential impacts the country faces. Approximately 40 staff of relevant government agencies received training in the application of the guidelines.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING - ADAPTATION CHAMPIONS**

Liberia is striving to build a cadre of adaptation champions through capacity building (institutionalized training programs) to help meet the critical need of mitigating climate change impacts. The government has identified competent staff on the basis of gender balance for the purpose of building their capacity to facilitate the implementation of climate and disaster resilience strategies. With trainings carried out in both Liberia and Israel, Liberia has developed capacity of more than 200 staff of government ministries and agencies on climate change adaptation. Ultimately, it is envisioned that these trainees – and those mentored – will become the next generation of climate change adaptation champions in government ministries and agencies. In addition, they will have the capacity to support the development and implementation of adaptation strategies and action plans for the purpose of increasing resilience across critical sectors.

## **TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

The government recognizes the importance of mobile applications for disseminating accurate climate information. With the support provided by the UNDP, Liberia's [Environmental Protection Agency](#) has supported rollout of [WeatherBug](#), a market leading Android phone app that provides weather forecasts and news, relevant to a variety of sectors and trades, delivering critical information to farmers, fisherman, media practitioners and. In October 2019, over 50 participants convened from eight countries to be trained on 'how-to-

use' the WeatherBug application. The officer-in-charge of early warning systems projects from the [Ministry of Transport in Liberia](#), Amos Baba said, “*The training workshops are essential to development planning and accurate weather reporting*” and believes information sharing is key for increasing awareness on climate change, which ultimately impacts everyone throughout their daily lives.

### **IDENTIFYING KEY CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT**

One of the greatest challenges facing Liberia has been the lack of expertise and the absence of mentorship and training programmes necessary to engage in climate change related activities. This is a nation-wide issue. Additionally, the absence of a repository for climate change data in most government agencies has posed significant challenges for research. To help solve these issues Liberia has been able to train a gender-balanced group of staff from key government entities and academia in vulnerability and risk assessments, multi-criteria analysis, climate resilient agriculture, climate change adaptation, coastal management, and disaster risk management. This has enabled the country to form a multidisciplinary team of national experts who can support research and planning for NAP-related processes sustainably. Liberia has developed a knowledge management platform, synchronized with existing climate information platforms locally and internationally, to make climate data and related information accessible across all sectors. Other key challenges and lessons learnt are below:

- **High level political will is critical for driving climate action.** Liberia has utilized the current political will to unlock barriers to climate action including the development of a policy framework for climate and disaster resilience and for securing legislative approvals for ratification of key instruments such as the Paris Agreement.
- **Climate change impacts whole societies, but climate change affects women and men in different ways.** Developing a clear understanding of the gender and social impacts of climate change has provided information necessary for ensuring that adaptation strategies and action plans are gender responsive and specific, where necessary.
- **Broad stakeholders' engagement with a robust coordination and communication mechanism is important for success in NAP implementation.** Liberia ensured its NAP process was transparent and inclusive from its inception and has managed to communicate all of its activities in ways that keep stakeholders engaged and informed.
- **Need to enlist the involvement and contribution of private sector and academia in climate change adaptation (CCA) for scaling up adaptation and knowledge management.** Lessons learnt thus far prove that the private sector and academia sector are important wagons for sustaining CCA action.
- **NAPs are a useful tool for supporting the attainment of Sendai, Nationally Determined Contributions and SDG targets at the national and local level.** Studies conducted in the NAP have generated information and products that are contributing to these global initiatives at the national level.
- **The role of the media in awareness and sensitization is key to the NAP process and to the efforts towards a carbon-neutral, climate-resilient development path.** In communicating NAP-related activities, Liberia has availed itself of the outreach potential of mass media (radio, television, social media, newspapers) and traditional approaches (cultural dances, folk's songs etc.) reaching out to various populations.

**ENSURING THAT PROGRESS ON ADAPTATION PLANNING IS SUSTAINED:**

Academia has a critical role in expanding and maintaining the knowledge base for scaling up adaptation, and climate action in general, through research and training of national experts. Private actors are best placed to identify and implement strategies to reduce emissions, as well as produce and supply climate-sensitive technologies and services, and of course provide investments in climate adaptation related projects. The Government of Liberia is building capacity and working to educate the private sector on the impacts of climate change and the role businesses and other stakeholders can play in the implementation of adaptation activities.

**EXPECTATIONS FOR THE LONG-TERM**

The NAP process will strengthen institutional and human capacity, generate evidence-based strategies, and create new investment opportunities, driven by the private sector, to assist national efforts of realizing a climate-resilient and sustainable future for Liberia.