

# Population and Reproductive Health in National Adaptation Programmes of Action

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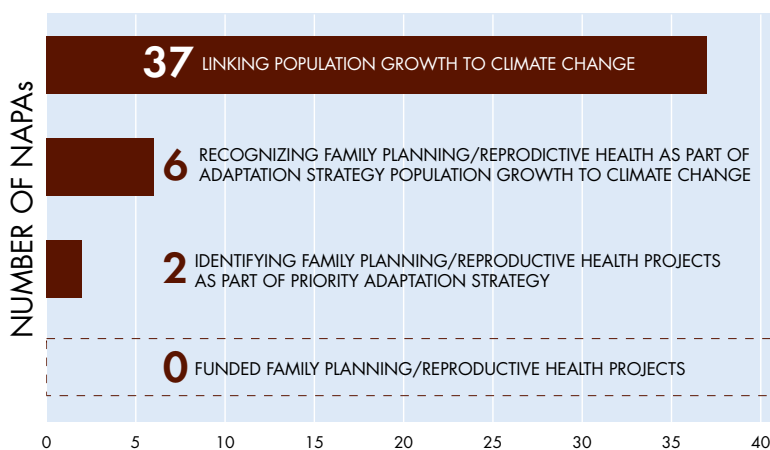
Adapting to climate change will entail a variety of responses, including policies to improve management of climate related risks by enhancing adaptive capacity while easing pressure on resources. The pressure on resources has been linked to a number of causes, key among them population dynamics. Thus, adaptation efforts that consider interventions that slow the rate of population growth—such as promoting gender equity and expanding access to reproductive health care and contraception—will yield a “win-win” opportunity, improving people’s health and well-being in the short term while building long-term sustainability by reducing pressure on the environment.

PAI reviewed 41 National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), submitted by Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to assess the NAPA process and identify the range of interventions included in countries’ priority adaptation actions. The review highlights how population issues and reproductive health/family planning (RH/FP) are addressed as part of the LDCs’ adaptation agenda.

The review found near-universal recognition among the NAPAs of the importance of population considerations as a central pillar in climate change adaptation. Among the 41 NAPAs, 37 link high and rapid population growth to climate change. This connection is supported by the UN’s most recent population projections: more than half of the 49 LDCs are expected to at least double their populations by 2050.

This appreciation is not matched with a proportional identification of adaptation interventions that address population-climate change connections. Only six NAPAs (Comoros, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kirabati, Zambia and Uganda) clearly state that slowing population growth or investments in RH/FP should be considered among the country’s priority adaptation actions. Only two NAPAs (Uganda and Sao Tome and Principe) propose projects with components of RH/FP among priority adaptation interventions. Most NAPAs focus priority attention on

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projects to promote food security and water resources, with only 7.1% of proposed NAPA projects in the health sector.

The low priority of health of projects to address population projects may reflect the NAPA guidelines, which in spite of their recommendation of the importance of aligning projects to long-term sustainable development planning, place greater focus on meeting immediate needs through short-term projects.

This review leads to five recommendations:

- The favoring of single sector projects within the NAPAs over integrated programs does not reflect people's lives. Strategies for adaptation should reflect a multi-sectoral approach that recognizes that people's lives are not lived in single sectors. People deal simultaneously with food, water, livelihoods, health, and education, among other issues, including fertility. Wherever appropriate, projects or programs funded through NAPAs should be integrated across sectors to avoid "winner" and "loser" sectors.
- The focus of NAPAs on short-term projects over linkages with development strategies that address medium- and longer-term issues is short sighted. Therefore, a mix of short- and longer-term projects that incorporate participation across development sectors to save lives and strengthen livelihoods is important to ensure a wide range of adequate responses in adapting to climate change.
- NAPAs should translate the recognition of population pressure as a factor related to countries' ability to adapt to climate change into relevant project activities. Such projects should include access to RH/FP, in addition to other strategies such as, for example, girls education, women's empowerment, and a focus on youth, that lead to lower fertility.
- Countries that have already clearly identified RH/FP projects in their NAPAs should expedite the development and implementation of these projects.
- Attention to population and integrated strategies should be central and aligned to longer-term national adaptation plans and strategies currently being discussed as part of enhanced action for adaptation.