

BUILDING INSTITUTIONS FOR CLIMATE POLICY IN INDIA

July 2015

Navroz K. Dubash
Centre for Policy Research

Neha B. Joseph
Centre for Policy Research

SUMMARY

The effectiveness of climate governance depends on its underlying institutional arrangements. This paper examines the emergence of climate-related institutions in India, organised around three periods: pre-2007; 2007–2009 and 2010–mid-2014. Several key themes emerge: Institutionalisation is inadequately geared to India's co-benefits based approach to climate policy; there is a lack of continuity in institutions; performance of the cross-government coordination function has been inconsistent over time; there are limited mechanisms for knowledge aggregation and strategic thinking; capacity within existing institutions remains low; and there is nominal scope for public input and consultation in climate policy formulation processes. Addressing these shortcomings would enhance the design and implementation of climate policy in India.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of policy instruments addressing climate change in India. Since the release of the National Action Plan on Climate Change in 2008, its eight subsidiary missions have been approved and are under implementation. As of October 2014, 28 states and union territories have completed drafts of state climate plans (Dubash and Jogesh 2014). While there is growing attention to climate policy, its implementation requires attention to institutional design for climate governance. A growing literature suggests that robust institutional arrangements that enable sectoral interconnections, ensure institutional continuity and facilitate interactions between relevant stakeholders and policymakers can enhance the implementation of policy and effectiveness of climate governance (Somanathan et al. 2014; Meadowcroft 2009; North 1993).

This brief presents findings from a recent [Working Paper](#) analysing the evolution of institutions dealing with climate change in India covering the period upto mid-2014 (Dubash and Joseph 2015). We first summarise the evolution of institutions around three distinct periods, before turning to key findings and suggestions for the future of climate institutions in India.

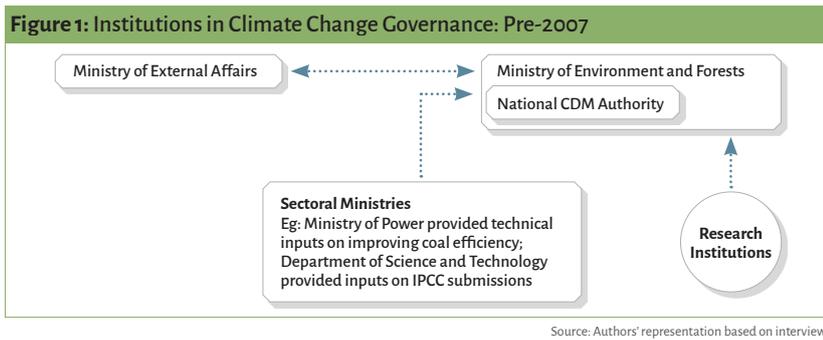
Three Phases of Climate Institutionalisation

Pre-2007: Climate Change as a Diplomatic Problem

Prior to 2007, climate policy was synonymous with foreign policy on climate change. As a result, preparing diplomatically for international negotiations was the focus of this period. This was handled collaboratively by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) (the term 'Climate Change' was added to the Ministry's name only in 2014). Thus, this period saw minimal institutionalisation (*see Figure 1*). Coordination was facilitated by long-standing working relationships between key individuals. Stakeholder interaction was limited and relatively unstructured.

2007–2009: 'Co-benefits' as a Doorway to Domestic Climate Policy

The years 2007–2009 witnessed hectic climate activity, driven in large part by international developments. Large developing countries, including India, came under intense pressure from the developed world to formulate domestic mitigation action. There was consequently a rapid mushrooming of institutions focused on strategic planning (*see Figure 2*). Specifically, the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change was set up to chart out a domestic strategy for climate action. The resulting National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), articulating India's approach to climate policy based on the idea of co-benefits, was released in 2008 and prompted a range of activities. Nodal ministries embarked on processes to formulate Mission documents, dramatically expanding the landscape of climate institutionalisation and the resultant coordination needs.



The Office of the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Climate Change was established to serve this purpose, and ushered in perhaps the most coordinated phase of Indian climate policy and action. In the build up to the climate negotiations at Copenhagen in 2009, India also announced its pledge to reduce the emissions intensity of its economy by 20-25% from 2005 levels by 2020.

2010 – mid-2014: Diminished Momentum, Diminished Coordination

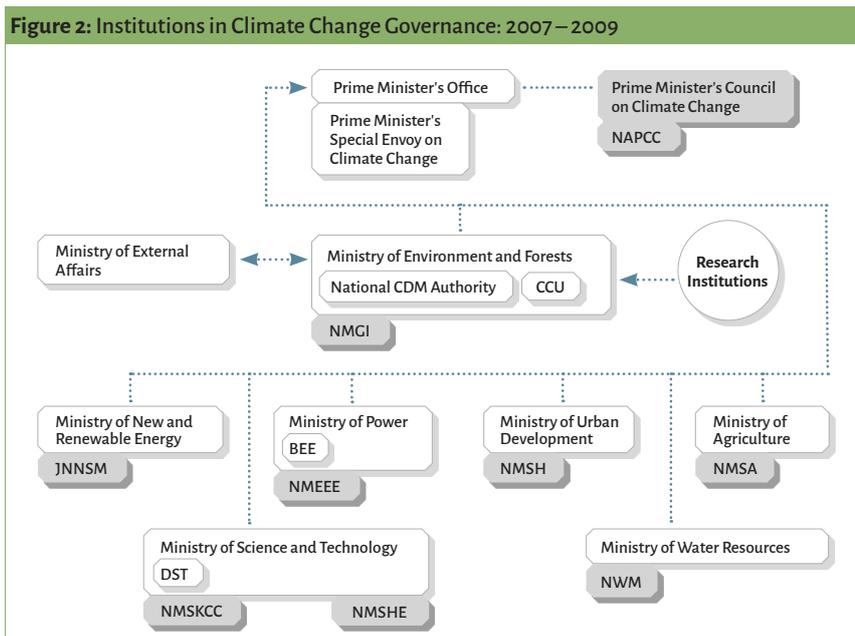
Following the appointment of a new Minister for Environment and Forests in mid-2009, this period saw a shift in the centre of gravity around climate policy making from the Prime Minister's Office to the MoEF (see Figure 3). The initial years under this period witnessed a further broadening of institutional linkages around climate change: the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance were drafted into the policy making process; line Ministries further developed internal focal points; and institutional nodes were established in states to develop state climate plans. The assertion of authority by the MoEF, however, came at the cost of the Special Envoy's office which was disbanded in early 2010,

toward strengthening this structure.

Institutions not well matched with India's Approach to Climate Policy

Institutionalisation around climate change has often been in response to international pressures. While the NAPCC does reflect domestic development objectives in its orientation around co-benefits, there has been little effort to design an appropriate institutional form to suit India's approach to climate policy. Doing so requires an interweaving of climate objectives into existing policy making constructs and institutions. Instead, the approach seems to be creation of multiple institutional openings in a scatter shot manner, often in hasty reaction to international circumstances. This reactive mode has filtered down to states, with states rather hastily setting up climate nodes in response to a central diktat to produce state climate plans. This approach is not without gain; it often creates opportunities for enterprising bureaucrats committed to bringing about change, or space for new voices, such as solar entrepreneurs. However, a more deliberate process of institutional design that facilitates mainstreaming of climate considerations among existing

authorities and operationalisation of co-benefits would yield greater gains.



Key: See Figure 1.

Lack of Institutional Continuity

Institutions, once established, have not been stable or long-lasting. A case in point is the Office of the PM's Special Envoy on Climate Change, which played an important role coordinating climate policy, but was dismantled after two short years. Since then, coordination mechanisms have weakened considerably. This instability has meant that climate policy making is more often driven by individuals than institutions. Such an approach can lead to both inconsistent engagement with the issue and create a vacuum when no strong and interested leader emerges. For example, after a change in the leadership at the MoEF in 2011,

there were relatively few new developments around domestic climate policy.

Inconsistent Performance of Coordination Function

The extent of coordination has ebbed and flowed with different institutional configurations. For example, during the tenure of the Office of the Special Envoy, explicit coordination mechanisms were established that helped generate forward momentum on several NAPCC missions. Since the dismantling of the office, no institution has been formally assigned the responsibility of coordinating across Ministries. Instead, coordination occurs in a rather ad-hoc manner, such as through special committees in the case of Missions, and bilateral consultations between MEA and MoEF on international negotiations.

Limited Mechanisms for Knowledge Aggregation and Strategic Thinking

Currently, there is little specialised analytical capacity within the government to track the burgeoning climate literature, develop conceptual tools (such as on co-benefits), and serve as a store of knowledge. While various efforts have been undertaken to enhance knowledge generation around climate change, they have not added up to a sustained and consistent mechanism for strategic thinking. The PM's Council, once the NAPCC was completed, has met a total of eight times for the approval of the eight missions, with the last meeting held in 2011 (it was then re-established under the new government in 2014). The 'Expert Group on Low Carbon Strategies for Inclusive Growth' set up to devise an approach towards fulfilling the Copenhagen pledge fell short of its mandate and did not create mechanisms for ongoing knowledge generation. The Special Envoy's office held consultations with external experts but had access to very limited internal analytical capability. Particularly since climate policy needs to bridge domestic sectoral concerns and global negotiation pressures, a sustained, strategic and analytically sound process is a necessity.

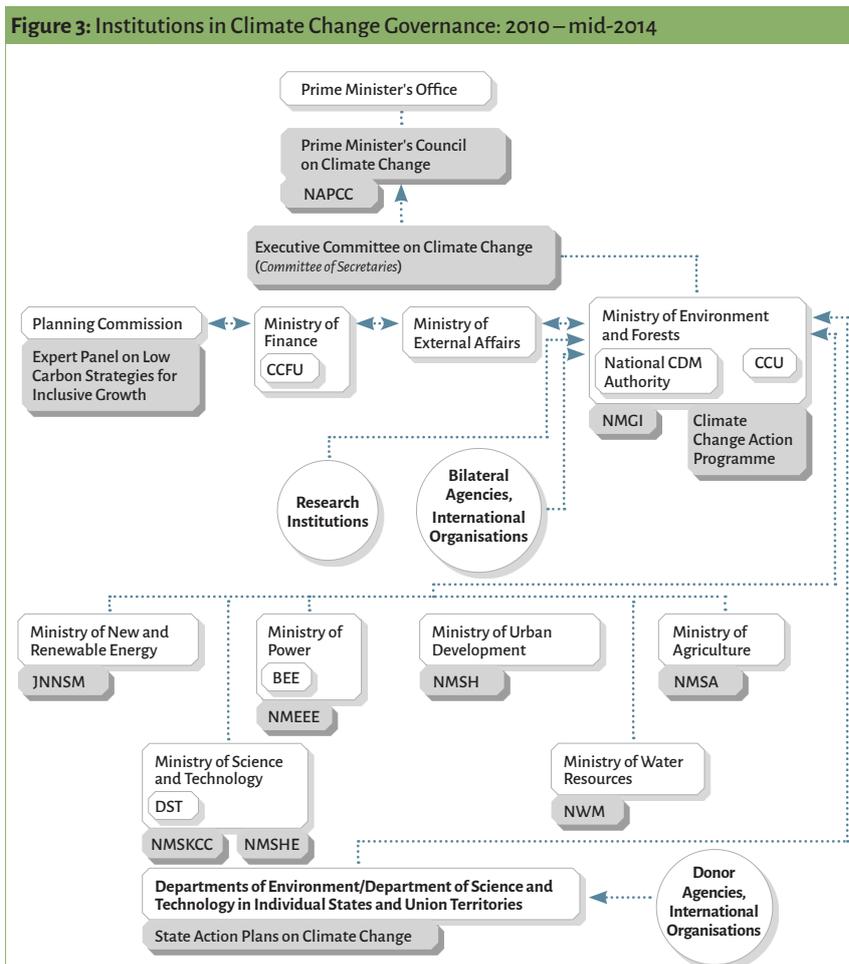
Low Capacity within Institutions

Aside from coordination and strategic roles, the capacity within individual governmental organisations to address climate change remains limited. There are two aspects to this capacity shortfall. First, the cross-sectoral nature of the climate problem has meant that concerned officials are required to understand linkages with other issue areas such as energy, urbanisation,

agriculture and so on. Currently, there exist no mechanisms within the government to mobilise such specialised knowledge. Second, the absolute number of personnel in existing institutions dealing with climate change remains low, leading to a problem of over-burden. For example, the MoEF, the nodal agency for climate change, has only 6 full-time staff working in its Climate Change Unit (see Table 1). This agency has to keep track of design and implementation of the NAPCC and its missions, oversee state climate plans, and cover the gamut of international discussions ranging from the climate negotiations to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to the Green Climate Fund. This range of tasks warrants an increase in the number of personnel involved. Other Ministries are also relatively under-staffed as Table 1 shows. Ideally, capacity would need to be enhanced not only within central government agencies but also in states and cities.

Nominal Public Input and Scope for Consultation

The policy formulation and institution building process, so far, have provided few opportunities for public input and consultation. For example, the NAPCC was a largely closed process, the Low Carbon Expert Group had no consultations, the Missions have been uneven in the extent of their consultative processes (an exception is the Green India Mission), and the state plans have been heavily



Key: See Figure 1.

Source: Authors' representation based on interviews

TABLE 1: PERSONNEL WORKING ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN KEY MINISTRIES

		ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS IN MINISTRIES			
		Special/ Additional/ Joint Secretary/ Scientist (G)	Director/ Deputy Secretary/ Scientist (D,E,F)	Under Secretary/ Scientist C	Section Officer/Desk Officer
Ministry of Environment and Forests	Climate Change Unit (CCU)	1	3	1	1
Ministry of Environment and Forests	National Mission for a Green India (NMGII)	2	1	1	NA
Ministry of External Affairs	UNES (United Nations Economic & Social) Division	1	1	0	0
Ministry of Finance	Climate Change Finance Unit (CCFU)	1	1	1	0
Ministry of New and Renewable Energy	Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM)	2	2	NA	NA
Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power	National Mission On Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE)	3	8	0	0
Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology	National Mission On Strategic Knowledge For Climate Change (NMSKCC)	1	2	NA	NA
Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology	National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE)	1	2	NA	NA
Ministry of Water Resources	National Water Mission (NWM)	3	2	1	NA
Ministry of Urban Development	National Mission on Sustainable Habitat (NMSH)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ministry of Agriculture	National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: Data was gathered from Ministry websites, Right to Information petitions and personal communication between May 2014 and May 2015 and is valid for that period. Details are available in a complementary working paper available at www.cprindia.org

Note: NA refers to Not Available

bureaucratically driven processes (based on a limited sample of five states; see Dubash and Jogesh 2014). Particularly in the context of over-burdened staff, creating opportunities to draw in academics and civil society representatives with specialised knowledge provide a way to complement existing capacity of government personnel.

While a detailed institutional design is beyond the scope of this brief, the contours of an approach can be drawn from these findings. Indian climate institutions should follow a facilitative approach that stimulates existing agencies

to engage with climate considerations, and promotes internalisation of these concerns. A robust analytical capacity to service decision-making across government is essential. Given existing over-burden, complementing capacity by drawing in external experts would be helpful. Having institutional structures at multiple scales – centre, states and cities – would reflect the multilevel nature of climate governance. Finally, past experience suggests that a high-level strategy group that can also serve a coordinating role and enhance accountability of other institutions is necessary.

REFERENCES

- Dubash, N. K. and A. Jogesh. 2014. *From Margins to Mainstream? State Climate Change Planning in India*. EPW XLIX (48): 86-95.
- Dubash, N. K. and N. B. Joseph. 2015. *The Institutionalisation of Climate Policy in India: Designing a Development-Focused, Co-benefits Based Approach*. Centre for Policy Research Working Paper. New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research.
- Meadowcroft, J. 2009. *Climate Change Governance*. Policy Research Working Paper 4941. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- North, D. 1991. *Institutions*. Journal of Economic Perspectives 5: 97–112.
- Somanathan, E., et al. 2014. "National and Sub-national Policies and Institutions." In *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Edenhofer, O., et al. (eds.)]. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to several interviewees who gave generously of their time and insights to this research. However, they are not responsible for any of the findings or opinions presented here. This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada. We are also grateful for additional financial support from the Oak Foundation, Switzerland.