



National Adaptation Plan process in focus: Lessons from Uruguay



Uruguay is situated in the eastern temperate zone of South America, with a surface of 176,200 km² and a coastline of more than 680 km. The total population is 3,400,000 inhabitants with approximately 70% living in coastal areas and over 95% living in urban areas. Uruguay has a temperate climate, with well-defined winter and summer seasons, separated by intermediate or transition seasons - autumn and spring. The mean temperature is about 17.5°C, the mean relative humidity 75%, and the mean annual accumulated rainfalls is 1,300 mm. Agriculture and related industries, and services including tourism, are the backbone of the Uruguayan economy, making the country highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. In 2014 livestock, agriculture and forestry products made up around 75% of exports. Uruguay stands out in the Latin American region for being an egalitarian society, and for its low level of inequality and poverty. With a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.795, Uruguay ranks 54th out of the 188 countries globally (2016). Moderate poverty fell from 32.5% in 2006 to 9.7% in 2015, whilst extreme poverty has practically disappeared; it fell from 2.5% to 0.3% in the same period. The country enjoys institutional stability.

Climate change risks

Uruguay experiences climate hazards such as droughts and floods, heat waves, hails, storms and tornados. Estimations suggest that Uruguay's temperature could increase by 2 to 3 °C by 2100. Rainfall is projected to increase in the entire country by 10-20% on average with a high seasonal and inter-annual variability. The El Niño-Southern Oscillation phenomenon (ENSO) further increases this variability with higher precipitation during El Niño years and higher droughts during La Niña years.

In the past decade, the country has experienced more intense and frequent floods and droughts, which have impacted its economy. A drought in 2008 increased costs for energy production to approximately 1.4% of GDP. In the same year, the impact of the drought on the agricultural sector reached 2.9% of GDP. Floods are becoming more intense and causing more damage to agriculture and infrastructure. In 2014, rains during January and February were between 150% and 350% of the monthly median, leading to extreme flooding. In 2015, floods caused 20,000 people to become displaced in urban areas.

Groundwork for supporting the NAP process

Policy, planning and budgeting:

Uruguay has set up a National System to Respond to Climate Change and Variability (SNRCC), and a National Environment System, to coordinate climate change and environment actions. In 2016, the SNRCC developed a National Climate Change Policy (PNCC) which provides a long-term strategic framework to integrate and strengthen the approach to mitigation and adaptation. The policy identifies strategic priority actions and specific institutional and capacity building measures to create an enabling environment for adaptation planning. Uruguay has since addressed adaptation to climate change and variability, and climate risk management for various sectors, through the implementation of public policies both at national and subnational levels of government, and by means of domestic and external financial resources. Uruguay is submitting its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2017, including its First Adaptation Communication under the Paris Agreement. The NDC contains an adaptation component proposing a number of adaptation actions with specific targets, which build on the experience and results of previous interventions. These include; national, regional and sector-specific climate change and variability adaptation plans, monitoring and reporting systems on adaptation, and specific areas of adaptation actions.



Key adaptation strategic areas and objectives (National Climate Change Policy, 2017)

1. Generate, obtain and systematize relevant, integrated, useful and accessible information for decision-making
2. Strengthen the risk management of climate-related disasters at national, departmental and local levels
3. Promote the development of cities, urban settlements and infrastructure that are sustainable and resilient to climate change.
4. Promote the resilience and adaptation of the society to climate change, and extreme weather and climate events, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable social and climate groups
5. Promote the conservation, recovery and restoration of natural ecosystems, and the provision of ecosystem goods and services
6. Reduce vulnerability in riverine, coastal and marine areas, through adaptation actions based on ecosystems
7. Promote the consideration of climate change and variability in the integrated management of water resources to ensure their availability and quality
8. Promote systems of agricultural production of greater capacity of adaptation and resilience to climate change
9. Promote the integration of climate change and variability consideration in cross-cutting planning and management of tourism activities

Our National Climate Change Policy allows us to take a long-term view, including all ministries, local government, civil society and the private sector. Under this strategic framework, we advance altogether in the same direction in building resilience to climate change.

Ignacio Lorenzo, Climate Change Director, Ministry of Housing, Land Planning and the Environment

In April 2017, Uruguay adopted a National Climate Change Policy (PNCC), which provides a long-term strategic framework to integrate and strengthen the approach to mitigation and adaptation to climate change and variability in the design and implementation of public policies and in the short, medium and long-term planning at national and local levels. It foresees its development and implementation with the participation of the different actors of the Uruguayan society with a horizon towards the year 2050. It also provides a mechanism for the formulation and adoption of the first and successive Nationally Determined Contributions of Uruguay to the Paris Agreement, and goals and actions to be implemented by the country in five-year cycles to implement the Agreement. The policy can be considered as an over-arching NAP framework and will be implemented through the development of sectoral and local adaptation plans.

Uruguay commenced the development of a National Adaptation Plan for Agriculture and a National Plan for Coastal Adaptation. Uruguay is also initiating a National Adaptation Plan on cities (NAP-Cities) to enable mainstreaming adaptation in cities and urban areas throughout the country. Regarding adaptation, the Policy highlights a set of strategic areas and objectives, summarised in the table above.

In addition to international funding, the Government of Uruguay has invested domestic resources to finance some adaptation actions and projects.

As the country evolves towards the systemic integration of adaptation in development planning and addressing the main climate risks to local development, it will require increasing national investment.

Uruguay also needs to attract new and novel climate financing, with synergies between central and local levels. As it develops its NAP-Cities, Uruguay is planning to build a strategy for sustainably financing adaptation at the local level, aimed at unlocking the potential for private sector investment. Currently in Uruguay, as in most countries, businesses are more aware of taking action to mitigate climate change by reducing their carbon footprints, but much less has been done by the private sector to address adaptation to expected climate change impacts.

Preparing for adaptation planning

Over the past few years, there has been relevant, but insufficient research on climate change and variability in the country. Climate scenarios and vulnerability studies were developed for specific sectors and regions: agriculture; land and environmental systems; urban areas; energy production and coastal risks. Effort to develop meteorological and climate information services have mainly focused on; Flood Early Warning System to forecast and manage floods in certain cities; a Climate Index Insurance for hydropower generation in Uruguay and for different sectors in farming production; instruments to monitor water excess and droughts in the country.

Studies of social vulnerability are less advanced, and the National Climate Change Response System has put together a Task Force on Indicators of Variability and Social Vulnerability to Climate Change, which is enabling interdisciplinary and cross-sectional work for further assessments on social vulnerability in Uruguay. Uruguay is one of the very few countries which has already submitted their Fourth National Communication to the UNFCCC.

Implementation of adaptation actions

The main adaptation actions undertaken in Uruguay include adaptation measures in power generation, restoration of coastal ecosystems, and in cattle production and soil management. In addition, significant work has been undertaken to address drought, floods and extreme events, including: establishment of information systems, climate services and monitoring programs and early warning systems, outlining relocation plans, urban and infrastructure development measures in high-risk areas. The National Protected Areas System has been further developed to protect biodiversity and ecosystems vulnerable to climate change. New measures are being developed to increase resilience in the health and tourism sectors.

Uruguay's NAP process

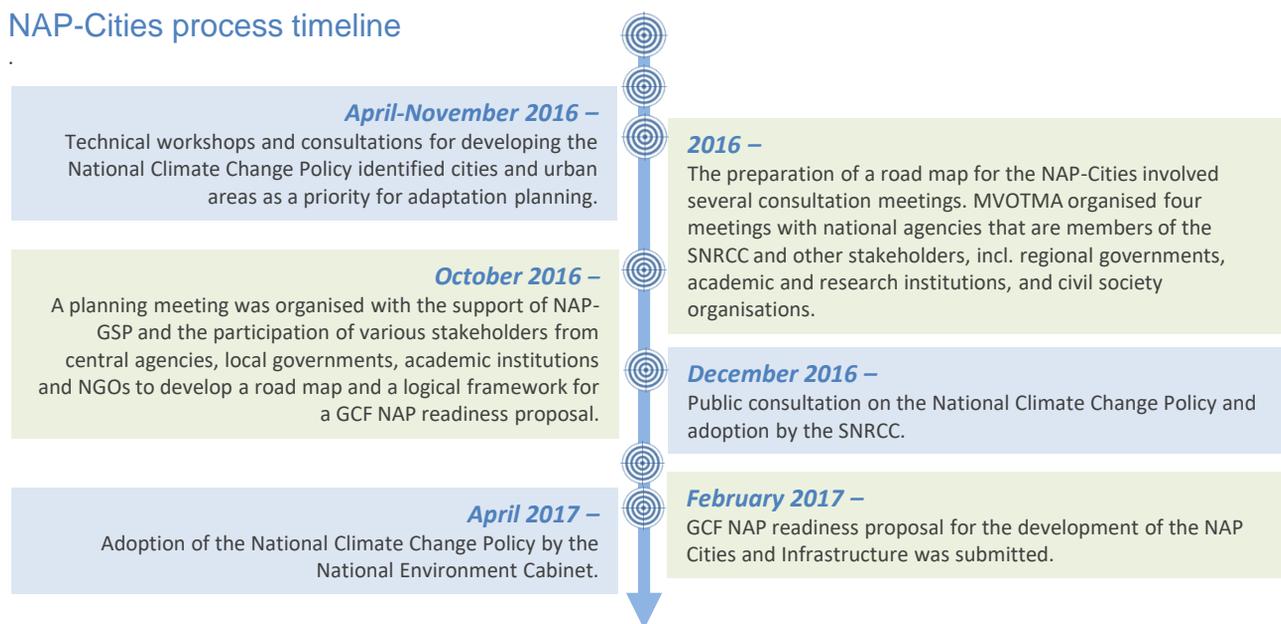
Institutional arrangements

In 2009, the National System for Response to Climate Change and Variability (SNRCC) was created under the presidency of the Ministry of Housing, Territorial Planning and Environment (MVOTMA) with the objective of coordinating and planning the public and private actions necessary for risk prevention, mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The SNRCC is managed through two major inter-agency coordination bodies, a coordination group which includes all major ministries as well as the National Emergency System, the Office of Planning and Budgeting, the Congress of Mayors and the Uruguayan Institute of Meteorology. It also has an advisory commission, which has six working groups that involve about eighty technical officers from various ministries and institutes. The SNRCC is the main body that coordinates the development of adaptation plans. In 2016 the National Environment System was also put in place to enhance cross coordination on issues related to water, environment and climate change, defining also a National Environmental Cabinet and the functions of the National Secretariat of Water, Environment and Climate Change.

In 2016, the Government through the SNRCC started a long multi-stakeholder participatory process for the development of a National Climate Change Policy (PNCC). The process aimed to strengthen cross-sectoral and inter-institutional work and a deeper engagement at the territorial level. The development of the PNCC involved various meetings and over 275 participants from governmental agencies, local governments, academic and research institutions, private sector and civil society. The new PNCC calls for establishing institutional and inter-sectoral mechanisms, within the framework of the SNRCC, for effective and informed participation of the various institutes related to climate change.

The sectoral NAPs that are being developed in Uruguay involve multi-sectoral and participatory processes enhanced by the SNRCC, and have independent timelines.

NAP-Cities process timeline



NAP-Cities and infrastructure

Uruguay's NAP-Cities and infrastructure aims to build strong foundations for integrating climate risk considerations in development planning through:

- Building and strengthening capacities for mainstreaming climate change adaptation into planning and budgeting in both central and local governments and private sector, with a particular focus on planning under uncertainty.
- Building a basis for comprehensive risk assessments that integrate climate change, disaster risk and development scenarios, to produce policy-relevant and actionable risk assessments for local governments.
- Designing tools and systems to mainstream adaptation in planning and budgeting processes at the city and local level in Uruguay and to enable and facilitate the exchange and sharing of spatial data at the appropriate resolution scale between stakeholders.
- Developing the basis for review and monitoring of the NAP-Cities with the development of specific indicators and baselines for resilience in cities and urban areas.
- Formulating sustainable financing strategies and mechanisms for scaling up adaptation in cities and urban environment, including options to provide incentives for the engagement of the private sector.

NAP support

The NAP processes in Uruguay have been supported by a range of partners, including UNDP (NAP-GSP programmes), FAO, the GEF, Germany and Spain. A proposal for NAP-Cities Readiness is currently being assessed by the GCF.

What is the process to formulate and implement the NAP?

The Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process in 2010, to enhance country-led planning and preparedness for climate change adaptation (CCA) in the medium and long-term. The objectives of the NAP are to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and to integrate adaptation into all levels of development planning. The NAP process is multi-sectoral, involving Ministries of Environment as well as Planning and Finance, in addition to other key Ministries. By bringing greater institutional integration and coordination to adaptation planning, NAPs can enhance ongoing national development planning processes, safeguard development gains, and build resilience.



‘From the social approach of our National Climate Change Policy we are strengthening the adaptation capacity and resilience of our people to climate change, with focus on the most vulnerable social groups, enhancing the framework of our social inclusion policies.’

Eneida de León, Minister for Housing, Land Planning and Environment

Challenges

The integration of climate adaptation into planning activities is still in its initial stages. Although there is an increased awareness and desire within various national agencies to improve adaptation planning, the awareness level within other significant stakeholders (such as local government and private sector) for the need to invest in early adaptation planning, remains limited. There is little dedicated capacity in sectoral agencies, cities and local governments to integrate adaptation into their strategies.

In addition, the tools and frameworks that enable this integration are still lacking. There is a limited access to, and integration of, national and international data available on climate change, risks and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The integration of future climate change scenarios into current risk assessments is limited and poses the question of how to appropriately reduce and integrate uncertainties in decision-making regarding current and future risks of variability and climate change impacts, particularly given the relative high uncertainty in certain climate change scenarios and models.

Successes

Uruguay has a robust policy framework that lays the foundation for integrating climate risks into development planning. In addition, there is a multi-sectoral institutional arrangement which has been working for close to a decade. The development of the National Climate Change Policy and the sectoral NAPs have featured strong stakeholder engagement. The country has extensive experience in implementing adaptation in key sectors, which provide critical lessons learned in moving forward.

Opportunities

The NAP-Cities and infrastructure provides an opportunity for testing multi-sectoral collaboration, given that planning in cities requires collaborative problem solving and coordination across many sectors, as well as across central and local governments (land use, housing, transportation, public health, tourism, water supply and sanitation, solid waste, food security, energy, disaster risk management etc.). Cities and local governments are well positioned to act as conveners of a wide range of active stakeholders including local communities, civil society organizations – trade unions, academic institutions, and the private sector.

The NAP focus on cities and urban areas also represents an opportunity to engage the private sector both to integrate climate risks in their own risk management planning, and to explore new opportunities to develop new products and services to build resilience.

Key documents

- [National Policy on Climate Change, 2017](#)
- [Five years of response to the challenges of climate change in Uruguay, SNRCC, 2014](#)
- [Fourth National Communication on Climate Change, 2016](#)

95%

of the population living in urban areas

3

sectoral NAPs being developed

20,000

urban people displaced due to floods (2015)

6

inter-sectoral climate change working groups

4

National Communications to the UNFCCC

About the NAP-GSP

The joint UNDP-UN Environment National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme (NAP-GSP) was launched in June 2013, financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). The NAP-GSP, together with partners, are assisting developing countries to identify technical, institutional and financial needs to integrate climate change adaptation into medium and long-term national planning and financing. The NAP-GSP provides technical expertise and guidance on country NAP processes, and provides opportunities for knowledge exchange on NAPs.

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NAP-GSP
NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLAN GLOBAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME