A study of LDC capacity at the UNFCCC

Engaging in negotiations and interpreting outcomes

Stephanie Andrei, Janna Tenzing, Brianna Craft and Achala Abeysinghe

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About the authors

Stephanie Andrei, visiting researcher and coordinator, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)

Janna Tenzing, researcher, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Brianna Craft, researcher, IIED

Achala Abeysinghe, principal researcher; team leader, global climate change law, policy and governance, IIED

Corresponding author: janna.tenzing@iied.org

Partner organisation

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International Institute for Environment and Development
80-86 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
Fax: +44 (0)20 3514 9055
email: info@iied.org
www.iied.org

@iied
www.facebook.com/theIIED

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) represent 48 of the 197 parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Not only are they the world's poorest economies, they are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Since 2001, they have acted together as the LDC Group in UNFCCC negotiations. But as well as providing assistance, this has aggregated individual country experiences, opinions and interests, creating challenges, particularly when trying to remedy individual countries' struggles to participate, monitor and implement decisions back home. This paper aims to address this disconnect by analysing LDC feedback on how they prepare, analyse, report and disseminate information on the UNFCCC negotiations.

Contents

Executive summary

The LDC Group in the UNFCCC forms an important strategic negotiating group, because of both its size and its role in responding to the impacts of climate change. Despite being the poorest and most vulnerable members of the international community and those least responsible for causing climate change, the LDCs have over the years shown their willingness to do more than their fair share in addressing climate change. Most have pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement national decisions on climate change. Several LDCs have also made ambitious pledges as part of their nationally determined contributions to the Paris Agreement, adopted in December 2015, including reducing deforestation, increasing investments to renewable energy and reducing per capita emissions.

Despite significant progress at the national level, the LDCs have been disadvantaged in a UNFCCC process that becomes more complex with every meeting. This has been a problem for the LDCs, who struggle to remain on an equal footing with their wealthier counterparts. First, their geographical distance from Bonn, Germany (where the intersessional meetings are held) makes travel throughout the year extremely expensive for most governments. Second, with negotiations conducted primarily in English, translating and interpreting text is a major challenge. Although many countries have bilingual negotiators, they are still faced with the burden of translating text to the lead negotiator, ministry and so on. These two challenges alone have a cascading effect that influences LDCs' ability to participate effectively in negotiations and analyse and interpret decisions.

Over the years, various organisations and stakeholders have made efforts to build LDCs' capacity to engage in the global climate change negotiations, both as individual countries and as a group. But these efforts have often generalised the challenges they face, and there has been little research into understanding the capacity and limitations of individual countries. As a result, there are many uncertainties in terms of LDCs' human, institutional and financial capacities.

This study aims to capture some of the different and competing priorities LDCs face in the UNFCCC process – around participation; communications before, during and after negotiations; and interpreting the decisions. Important to note, this study is not an evaluation of LDC capacity projects nor does it make any recommendations as to their relevancy, importance or impact to LDCs in the UNFCCC process.

We gathered information for the study from 24 countries (50 per cent of the LDC Group) using three sources:

- Key informant interviews (KIIs) with LDC government representatives
- An online questionnaire that we disseminated to the focal point (FP) of each LDC, and
- A review of the official Conference of the Parties (COP) 20 participant list.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, all respondents pointed to the cost of sending negotiators and delegations to intersessional meetings and COPs as one of the main barriers to their attendance in the process. Language issues and time to translate text and decisions for officials back home were big challenges for some countries, making it difficult for them to develop their position in a timely manner. The composition and structure of negotiating teams was another reoccurring theme, particularly in the KIIs, with several LDCs struggling with dynamic and constantly changing negotiating teams.

Our study identified three areas for further action and/or research:

1. There needs to be a more level playing field: To this end, support for increasing LDC representation and participation in the UNFCCC negotiations is vital. Most LDC delegations consist of fewer than 15 people. And if we exclude non-governmental representatives from the equation, this number drops to fewer than three.
2. The degree of involvement and co-ordination between various LDC government ministries that engage in the UNFCCC negotiations needs to be both better understood and strengthened.
3. There needs to be further research through country case studies of how different LDC delegations engage in the UNFCCC process. This will allow us to better share learning and practices across LDC delegations around co-ordinating and communicating upcoming negotiations and outcomes.

Background

As a negotiating group to the UNFCCC, the experiences and diverse interests of each LDC are usually lost in aggregate. This can be problematic when trying to prescribe measures for building capacity that may be relevant as a whole but not necessarily useful for individual countries.

1

The United Nations introduced the LDC category in 1971 to generalise countries with low levels of socioeconomic development and weak human and institutional capacity. Based on their gross national income per capita, human assets and economic vulnerability, this grouping qualifies countries for external support with trade, development and humanitarian assistance.[1] Figure 1 shows the geographical spread of the 48 countries: 34 are in Africa, 13 in Asia and the Pacific and one in Latin America.

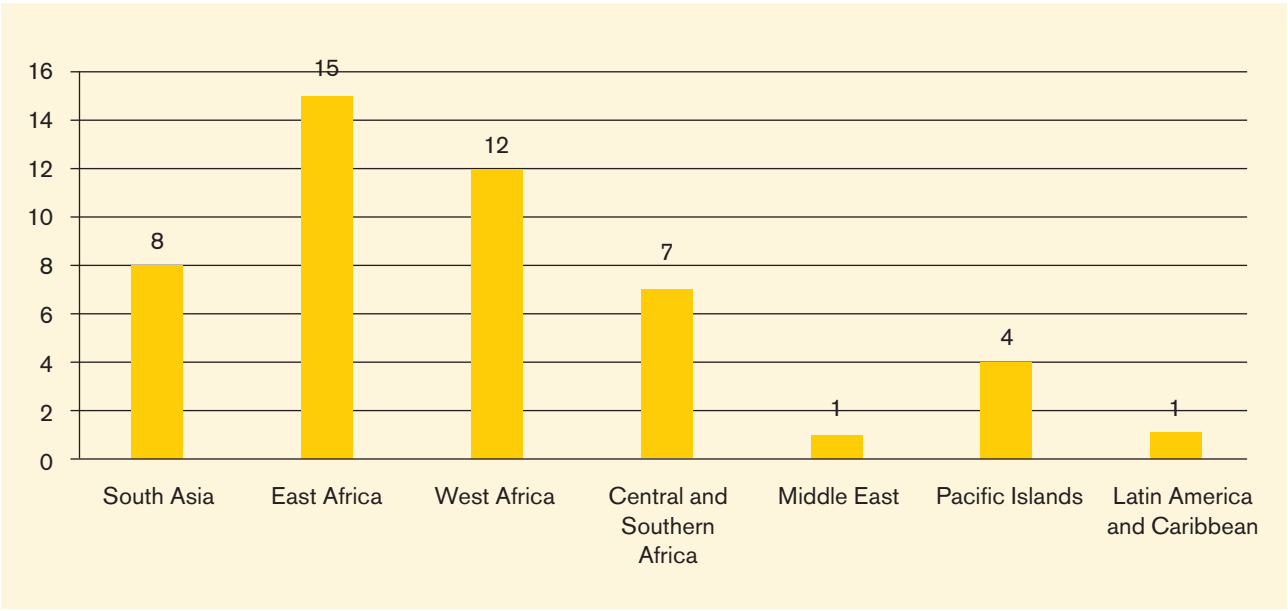
In the context of the global response to climate change, Article 4.9 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) mandates all countries party to the convention to "take full account of the specific needs and special situations of the least developed countries in their actions with regard to funding and transfer of technology".[2] This call is repeated in the 2015 Paris Agreement, which also highlights LDCs as countries that have significant capacity constraints and are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

There are specific channels of support to help LDCs implement their commitments or actions under the UNFCCC. These include:

- Least Developed Countries Fund: set up in 2001 to finance the preparation and full implementation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action and other elements of the LDC work programme.
- Green Climate Fund: mandated to target 50 per cent of its adaptation funding at the most vulnerable countries – including LDCs, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African states – and to deliver at least 50 per cent of its readiness funding to these countries.[3]
- World Meteorological Organization: has a specific Office for the LDC Programme and Regional Coordination to provide LDCs with regional and national weather and data information.[4]

The UNFCCC provides financial assistance for developing countries to enable their participation in UNFCCC processes, prioritising LDCs and small island developing states (SIDS). For intersessional meetings – of the two permanent subsidiary bodies, ad hoc bodies or working groups – the UNFCCC typically funds two negotiators from each LDC delegation, although at the 10th meeting of the 2nd session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP 2-10) in August–September 2015, only one delegate from each LDC and SIDS received funding. For the annual COP sessions, the secretariat has funded three delegates from each LDC delegation since COP15. Before this, it supported two.

Figure 1. LDCs by region



1.1 UNFCCC negotiations: an uneven playing field

Even in intergovernmental processes, LDCs face a number of human and institutional capacity and resource constraints, which affect their ability to engage on equal footing with their wealthier counterparts. This is certainly true in the UNFCCC negotiations, for a number of reasons.

LDCs typically have disproportionately smaller government delegations, and are sometimes limited to the three UNFCCC-funded negotiators. So when a large number of meetings – such as plenaries, contact groups, spin-off groups, drafting groups and side-events – occur in parallel and continue all night, LDCs are conspicuously under-represented. Delegations from developed countries and other major economies have a dedicated negotiator or a team of technical experts to follow a single thematic issue that is under discussion, such as climate finance. But LDC delegates have to juggle meetings for multiple themes and negotiate without the support of technical experts.

LDC delegates often have to follow other multilateral processes and/or are responsible for national portfolios that extend far beyond the climate change context. So they have little capacity to prepare for UNFCCC sessions, be represented in the meetings or participate in side events.

Some LDC governments use participation in the negotiations as incentives for officials; others nominate new delegate(s) for each session on a rotation basis. Having such a high level of turnaround within LDC delegations means there is little institutional memory and many delegates have to learn on the job when they attend meetings.

These are some of the challenges that affect LDCs' ability to prepare for and engage meaningfully in international climate change negotiations, and to communicate, analyse and implement the outcomes of these discussions at the national level. It is clear that the UNFCCC process has grown more complex with every session, and the LDCs are increasingly constrained.

One way in which the LDCs have made efforts to overcome their capacity and resource constraints at the UNFCCC has been by negotiating as a bloc.[5] Established in 2001, the LDC Group is among the most progressive negotiating blocs in the UNFCCC. Its current chair is Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Previous chairs have come from: Mali (2001–02), Tanzania (2003–04), Bangladesh (2005–06), Maldives (2007–08), Lesotho (2009–10), Gambia (2011–12), Nepal (2013–14) and Angola (2015). Despite representing the poorest and most vulnerable members of the international community who are least responsible for causing climate change, the group has consistently believed that its members have important contributions to make in the various aspects of the global response to climate change.

Working as a group has enabled the LDCs to approach negotiations strategically, ensuring that the various streams take their common positions into account. The group and its members have received support to strengthen their engagement in the negotiation, including:

- Co-ordination support for the chair
- Technical support for group members
- UNFCCC funding and other financial assistance to increase the number of LDC participants in each session, and
- Capacity building initiatives to help LDC representatives improve their technical expertise and broaden their networks.

But despite all this support, the UNFCCC process remains a far from level playing field.

1.2 Objective of the study

This study acknowledges that the LDC Group has a wide range of human and institutional capacity to engage in and report back on negotiation outcomes. We aim to provide a first step for broader research to explore the various national institutional arrangements and co-ordination mechanisms that are in place in LDCs.

To that end, our study seeks to capture how each LDC prepares for UNFCCC negotiations (including formulating national positions) and how they report back, analyse, interpret and disseminate information on the outcomes of each session to their respective capitals and other national-level sectors. We identify three areas for further action and research to help strengthen LDCs' national institutional arrangements and co-ordination mechanisms, thus enabling more effective LDC engagement in negotiations and better implementation of negotiation outcomes in LDCs.

Methodology

Although mindful of LDCs' limited human capacity at the negotiations, our research methods aimed to capture as many individual perspectives as possible. For this reason, we used a combination of methods including KIIs, an online survey and a review of the official COP20 participant list and attendance figures.

2

We collected 32 responses from 24 countries (50 per cent of all LDCs) (see Figure 2) through 18 KIIs and 14 online surveys (see Table 1). There were multiple responses for six countries; in some cases therefore we averaged some of the analysis for the study to account for this.

Table 1. Breakdown of how information was collected

Online responses	14
Key informant interviews	18
Countries with multiple responses	6
Total responses (includes overlapping country representatives)	**32**

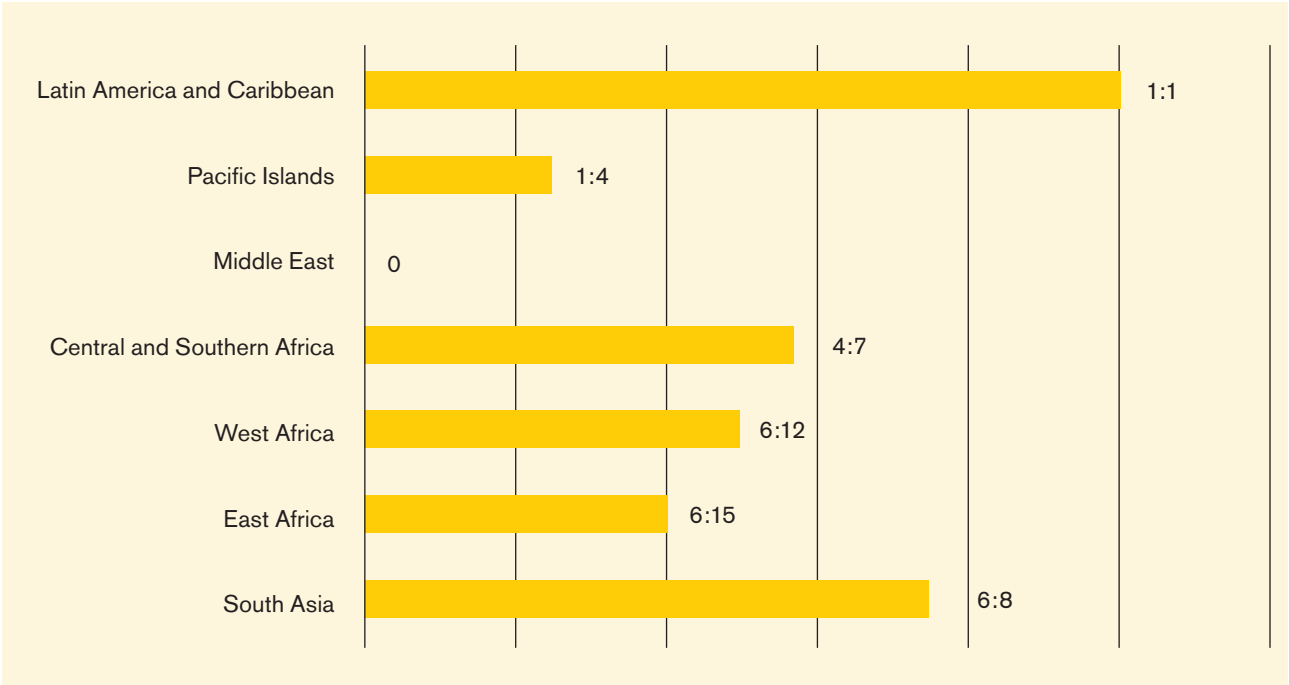
Our primary target participants for this research were senior representatives from government ministries covering the UNFCCC negotiations. We targeted senior officials because we needed people with long-term experience on their delegation to answer some of the questions.

2.1 Key informant interviews

We conducted the KIIs during the 10th and 11th sessions of the ADP, between 31 August–4 September and 19–23 October 2015. We contacted representatives before and during the sessions and arranged times to conduct the interviews in the morning, during breaks and once negotiations were complete for the day. Most of the interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and we recorded responses for personal use where the interviewee granted permission.

The questionnaire contained 21 questions: six multiple choice; five "strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree" statements; five qualitative or open-ended questions; and five that required single-sentence responses. A small team of researchers at IIED developed the questions, which were then reviewed by various stakeholders from UNEP and other organisations.

Figure 2. Ratio of collected responses from LDCs, by region



2.2 Online questionnaire

Given LDCs' limited capacity and assuming their delegations were significantly smaller than those of other parties in the UNFCCC, we made an effort to ensure their representatives had additional opportunities to voice their perspective. This is why we developed an online questionnaire using online forms, which we disseminated to focal points (FPs) across all 48 LDCs. The survey had 24 questions, including three extra multiple choice questions to attempt to reach a consensus on common statements made about the LDC group. Since most respondents to online forms do not often provide qualitative explanations, these three extra questions attempted to account for this.

Like the KIIs, a small research team at IIED developed the questions and submitted them to various stakeholders for feedback and suggestions. We received the responses analysed for this report between 5 and 19 October 2015.

2.3 COP 20 review

Since the experience of the representatives we interviewed varied significantly and because only 50 per cent of LDCs were able to provide responses, we also conducted a review of the COP20 participant list from the UNFCCC website. Although we considered using analysis of other years, the COP we chose needed to represent a typical number of delegates to ensure as few anomalies as possible. So we did not consider the participant list from COP 21 as, being an agreement year, we expected the delegations to be larger than usual.

Comparing our research participants' responses with the official COP20 participant lists can help us gauge whether the responses we received were representative of actual numbers. Inconsistencies may be a result of different interpretations of the questions and different levels of respondent experience.

Technical questions

This section gives an overview of the feedback we received from our 32 respondents from 24 countries. Our summary conceals the names and countries of respondents to preserve their anonymity. We then compare the responses we got with official COP20 statistics to reveal any bias in the study.

3

3.1 Delegation size

This section reflects the responses to three questions on delegation sizes.

Question 1: How many individuals are typically on your country delegation at a COP?

As we discussed in Section 2, where there were cases of overlap, we took an average from all the respondents from that country. As one respondent was unable to provide a response to this question, we tallied the averages across 23, not 24, countries.

Figure 3 shows the responses to Question 1; Figures 3a and 4 illustrate official COP20 statistics for the same.

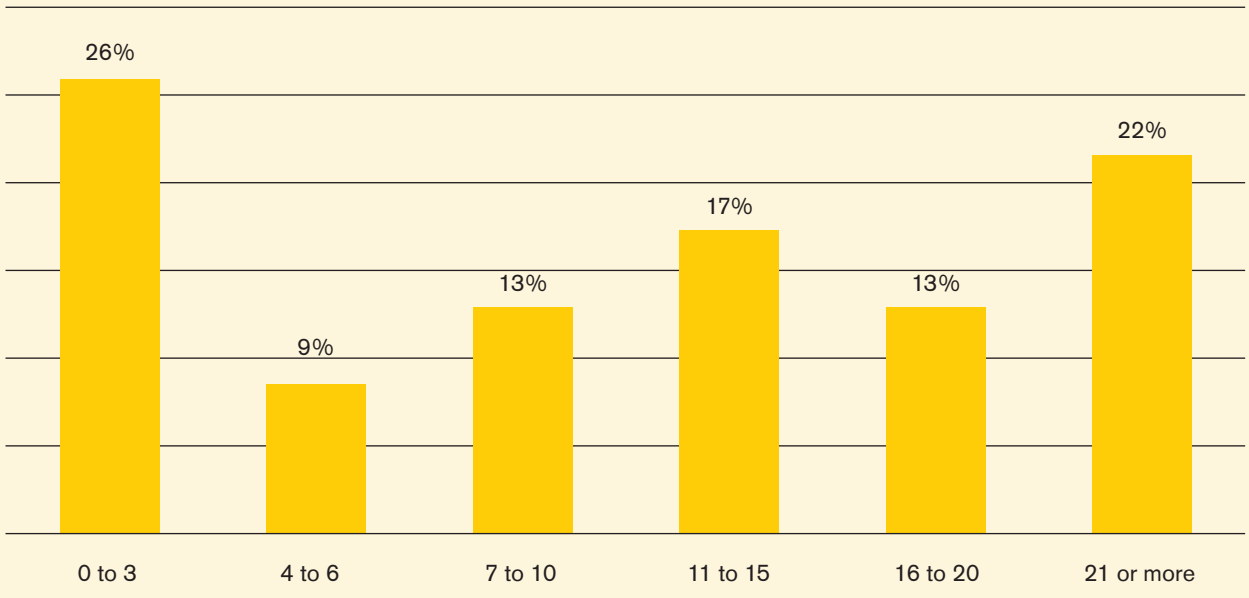
Based on these findings, it is apparent that most LDCs have delegations of fewer than 15 persons. Indeed, many have fewer than three representatives, particularly when we exclude non-governmental representatives from the data (see Figure 4).

Comparing our survey feedback with the official COP20 statistics, it is evident that our respondents were more likely to be members of larger delegations (of more than 16 persons). This was to be expected, given the limited capacity and/or time available that smaller delegations have, making them less able to participate in our research. According to official statistics from COP 20, we interviewed six of the 12 LDCs (50 per cent) with delegations of more than 20 persons. Of the 19 countries with less than six delegates at COP 20, we only collected responses from 7 out of 19 (37 per cent).

Although there are differences between respondents' answers to Question 1 and official participation numbers from COP 20, there are many potential explanations for this, including:

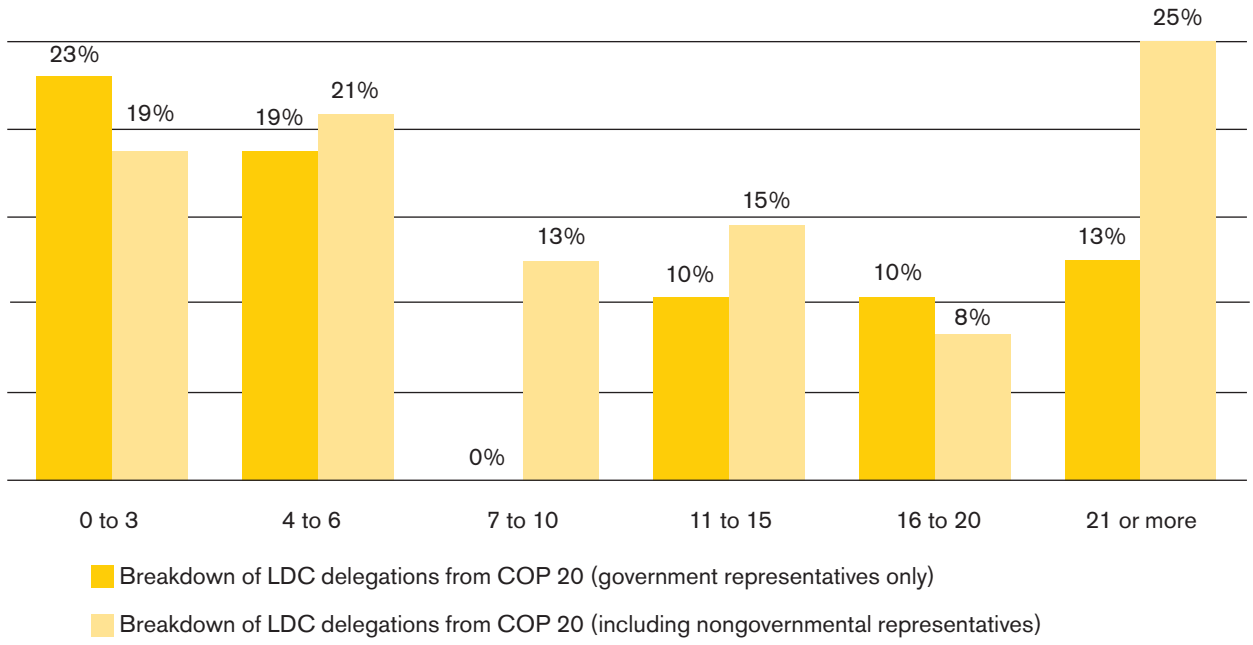
- Some respondents might only have accounted for government representatives, omitting participation by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), external experts and others who might have been included in the official count
- Delegation sizes are likely to differ from year to year, based on funding and government prioritisation
- Non-FPs may be unaware of the official delegation list
- Respondents may have averaged out the delegation based on the years they had attended, and
- Some respondents may not have had much experience on which to base their responses.

Figure 3. Typical size of country delegations at a COP



Source: survey data, based on 23 responses

Figure 4. Comparison of country delegation size data



Source: Official UNFCCC statistics available at: http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2014/cop20/eng/inf02.pdf

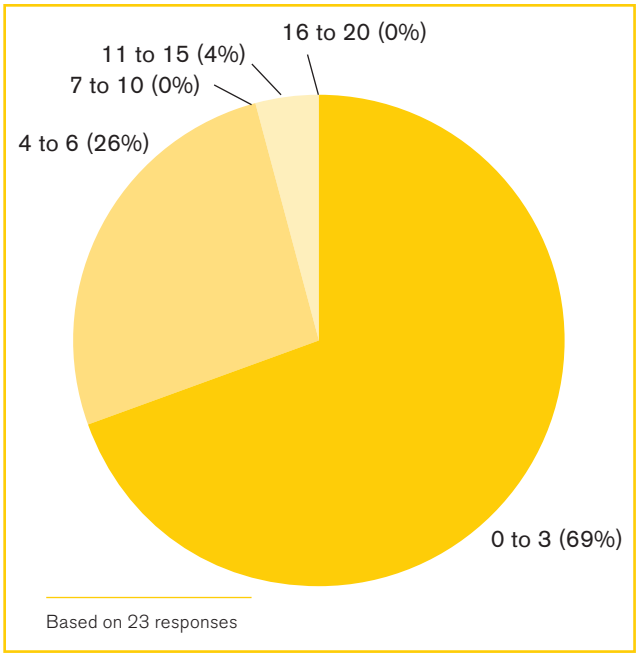
Question 2: How many individuals are typically on your country delegation at an intercessional meeting (subsidiary bodies, ADPs)?

Statistics on intersessionals are not made public, so we could not compare the results from Question 2 (see Figure 5) with official statistics. But it is interesting to note that 70 per cent (16 out of 23) of respondents stated their country delegation typically contains fewer than three persons at the UNFCCC intersessionals. No respondent stated their delegation had 7 to 10 delegates at an intersessional meeting.

A number of reasons might explain this drastic difference between the make-up of intersessional and COP delegations. These include:

- High travel costs to Bonn, Germany, where intersessional meetings typically take place – most countries will only send delegates who are supported by external sources; and it is likely that some LDCs have a policy not to send delegates to intersessional meetings without any donor support
- The UNFCCC secretariat provides financial support for only one to two delegates from each LDC for intersessional meetings
- The large number of intersessional meetings (particularly in 2015) made it difficult for countries to prioritise attendance
- LDCs might decide to participate on a rotational basis and/or use participation as an incentive to employees, and
- Not all respondents had frequented intersessional meetings, so they might not have had experience on which to base their responses.

Figure 5. Typical size of an LDC delegation at intersessional meetings



Based on 23 responses

Question 3: What is the average number of representatives funded by national governments to attend the negotiations (COPs, subsidiary bodies, ADPs)?

Based on the responses we received to Question 3, it is clear that financial limitations are one of the main barriers to governments sending negotiators and delegations to intersessional meetings and COPs.

Figure 6 shows that 70 per cent of respondents said that less than 25 per cent of their delegation was funded directly by their national government. It is important to clarify that most respondents took this exclusively to mean attendance at the COPs, since a similar number of people also claimed that their delegation at the intersessional meetings was less than 3 persons (see Figure 5).

3.2 Department or ministry involved in the UNFCCC process

To better understand different countries' structures for following the negotiations, we asked respondents four questions, through KIIs and the online survey.

Question 4: Under which ministry or department does the UNFCCC FP sit?

Since identifying the names of departments would disclose the identity of our respondents, we decided to identify departments' thematic areas instead. This reveals similar findings without disclosing specific country information.

Figure 6. Average number of government-funded delegates

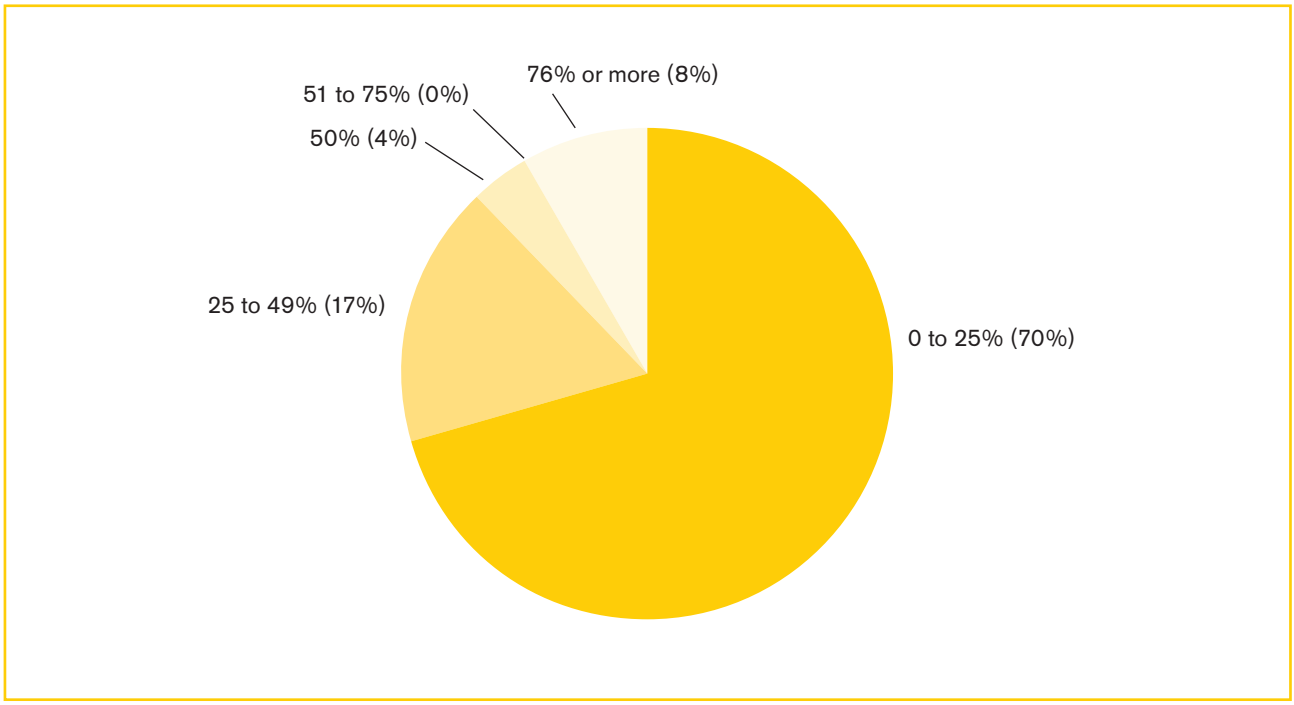
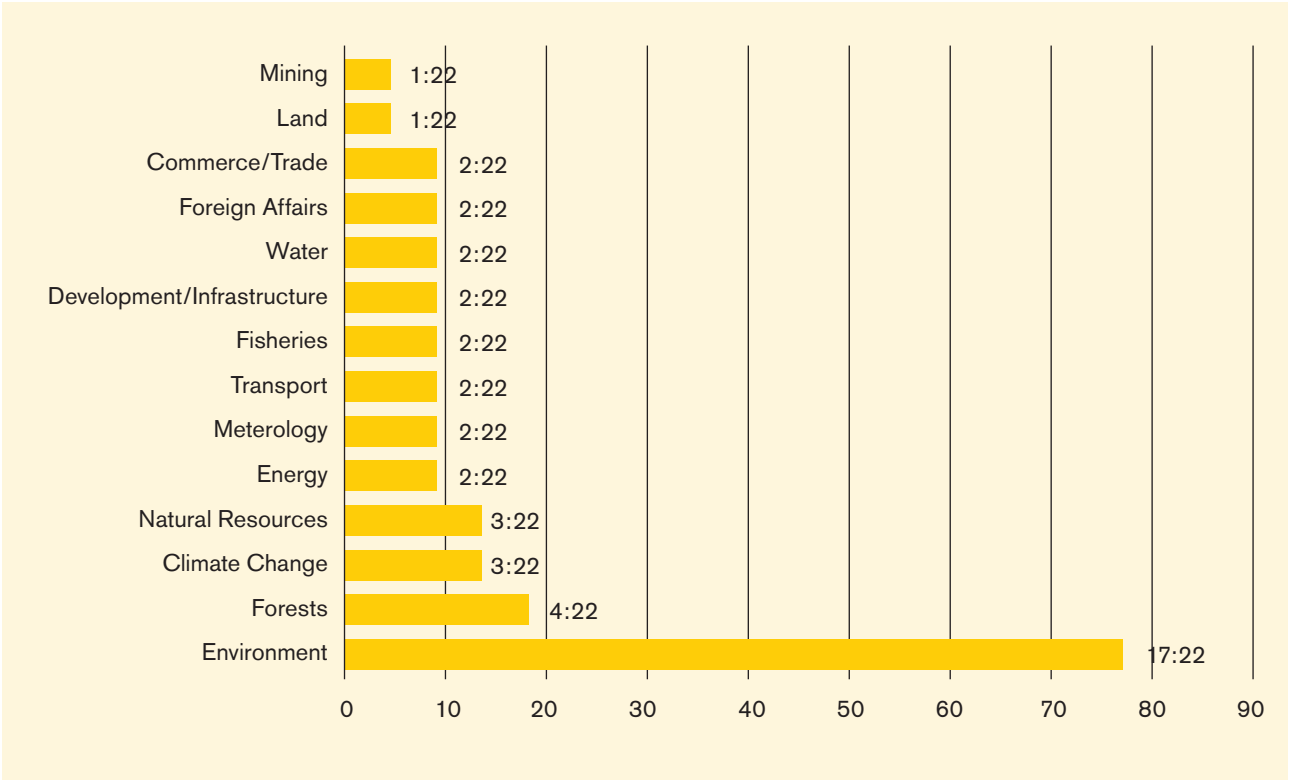


Figure 7. Department or ministry where the UNFCCC FP sits (number of respondents/total)



Each government designates a FP to channel communications with and from the UNFCCC Secretariat. If there is no designated FP, the UN may communicate through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the concerned minister – for example, the Minister for Environment – which might lead to delays in the delivery of communications to the concerned entity.

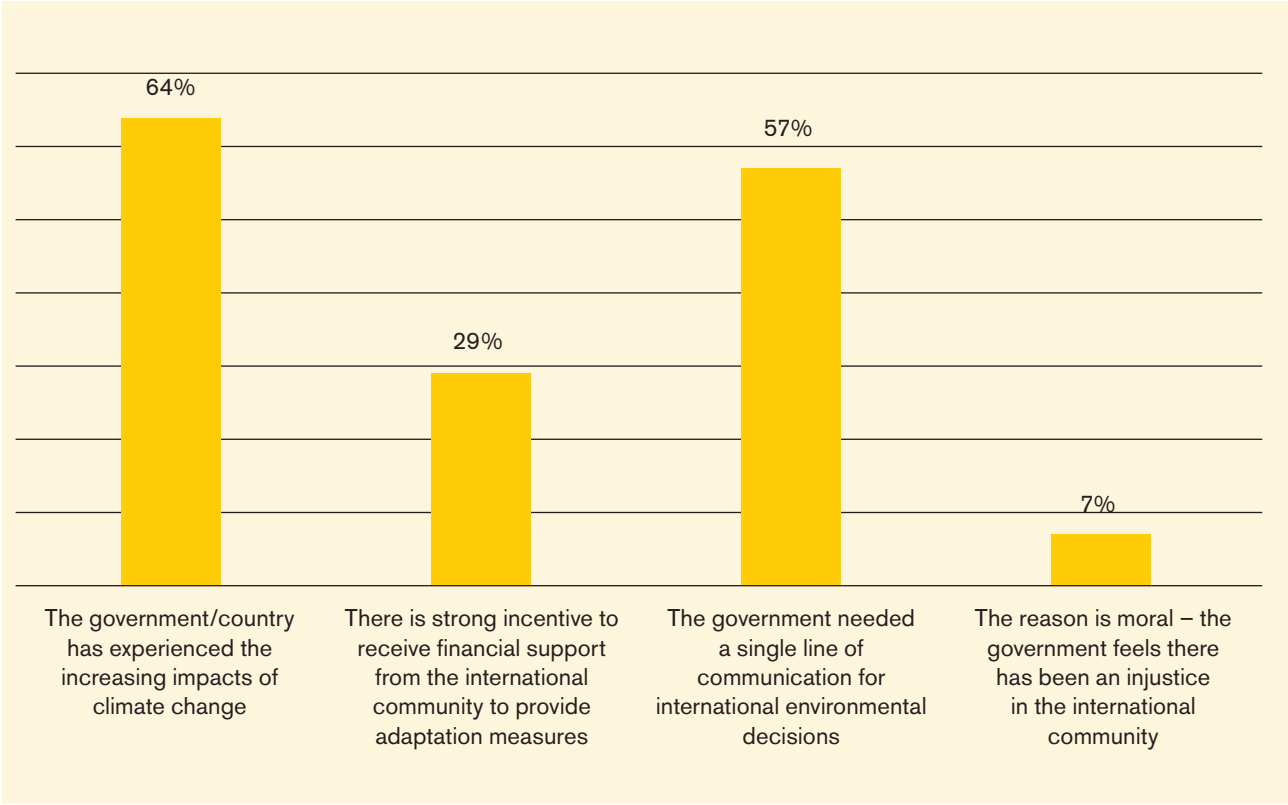
Only two respondents from the 24 countries mentioned that their FP sat in a higher council or commission under the head of state. For the other 22 countries, the FP sat in a combination of different ministries of which are included in Figure 7. In a number of cases, the ministry covered multiple thematic areas.

Unsurprisingly, the ministry with the greatest proportion of FPs was the ministry of environment or combinations of environment with other areas, such as forests, infrastructure or natural resources. Only five respondents did not specifically mention environment in the FPs' ministry name.

Question 5: What best describes the reasoning behind the establishment of this FP?

Individual countries' reasons for setting up a UNFCCC FP may have played a role in deciding where the FP position should be. Figure 8 shows responses to Question 5. This was a multiple choice question in the online survey, so reflects responses from the 14 respondents who completed it. Although a handful of countries selected multiple explanations for the establishment of their country FP, the chart would have largely remained unchanged if those responses had not been included. Ultimately, two main factors influenced the creation of the FP: their on-the-ground experiences of changing climate and the need to set up a single line of communication for international environmental decisions.

Figure 8. Reasons for establishing a UNFCCC FP



Question 6: What other ministries, departments or sectors are typically involved in the negotiations and other climate change issues at international level?

Respondents identified their ministries of energy, agriculture, foreign affairs and finance as being involved in UNFCCC negotiations or other climate change discussions at international level. Some also mentioned ministries that deal with planning, health, education and gender, among others.

Question 7: What other ministries, departments or sectors are typically involved in addressing climate change issues at national and local levels?

Similarly, respondents identified the ministries of agriculture, finance, energy and foreign affairs as addressing climate change issues at national and local levels, along with the Ministry of Environment. But these other ministries were involved to a lesser extent at this level than at international level. Respondents also mentioned ministries that deal with water, forestry, gender, health, meteorology, planning, transport, health and waste, among others.

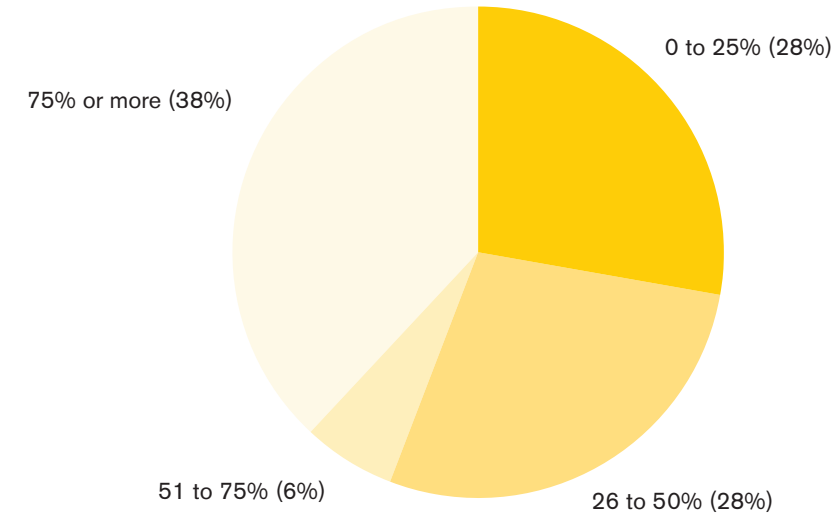
3.3 Percentage of work time devoted to climate change

Question 8: What percentage of your daily work is devoted to climate change?

Unlike developed country negotiation teams, which can devote significant time and resources to UNFCCC negotiations, the LDCs face additional challenges when attempting to translate decisions into national policies.

For Question 8, we considered all 32 responses, but respondents interpreted the term climate change differently: some took it as being only in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations; others as climate change impacts in their country or a combination of the two. Of interest is that respondents to the online survey generally devoted less than 50 per cent of their time to climate change, whereas most KII respondents said they spent more than 50 per cent. This could be a reflection of the number of negotiations that took place in 2015 and the amount of time that KII respondents spent travelling, preparing and reporting back from meetings and negotiations. Figure 9 shows the amount of work time all respondents devoted to climate change

Figure 9. Percentage of work devoted to climate change



Based on 32 responses

3.4 Communicating information

Question 9: How is information on upcoming sessions communicated between ministries and/or other stakeholders [within delegations and outside delegation's members]?

Communicating information between government officials on upcoming UNFCCC sessions is an important way to ensure that parties do not lose knowledge and maintain consistency in their position. Online respondents to Question 9 had multiple choice answers, whereas we asked key informants to elaborate as much as possible. Figure 10 represents the responses from the online questionnaire; the remainder of this section sums up some of the perspectives we gathered from the KIIs.

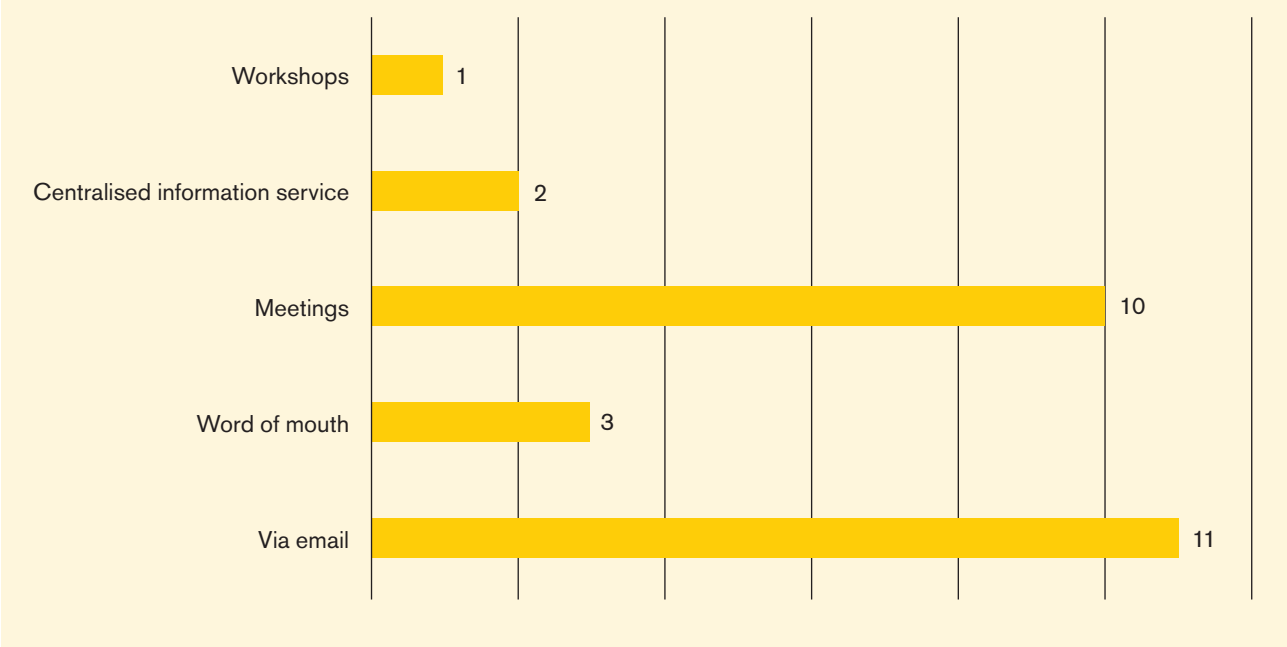
Figure 10 demonstrates that, according to the online responses, most LDCs shared information about UNFCCC meetings/outcomes via meetings and email.

All the key informants mentioned the importance of reporting back decisions and progress to the negotiating team at home. Many used these reports to update negotiators and other stakeholders before the next session. Several informants said the FP would call a meeting immediately before a session to deliberate and discuss their country position. All LDCs call a meeting before a COP, which might seek inputs and contributions from national and international stakeholders. It is important to note that since we received responses from LDC FPs and other negotiators, KII responses varied somewhat. This may be in part due to the fact that FPs are required to communicate via multiple channels and more rigorously than other negotiators from the country.

A recurring theme throughout the KIIs was the discussion of the pros and cons of rotating negotiators and static negotiating teams. On the one hand, having rotating negotiators and a more dynamic core team allows negotiating teams to pass down knowledge and give other government officials the opportunity to learn about global climate negotiations and the implications for their country. On the other hand, having a constantly dynamic team is time consuming. Most key informants favoured a more static core negotiating team, with many stating that this approach saved time while ensuring that critical negotiating points, contacts and relationships were not lost.

Although having a static team increased the pressure on them to deliver and accurately report back to their ministry and FP, many saw this as the better option. One interviewee said: "from time to time, when people change, there is a limitation in the information we are able to provide [to those that remain] … and [there are] limitations of human resources and co-ordination … Even if our country is vulnerable [to the impacts of climate change], co-ordination in the negotiating team is limited."

Figure 10. How information is shared before a UNFCCC session (responses from the online questionnaire)



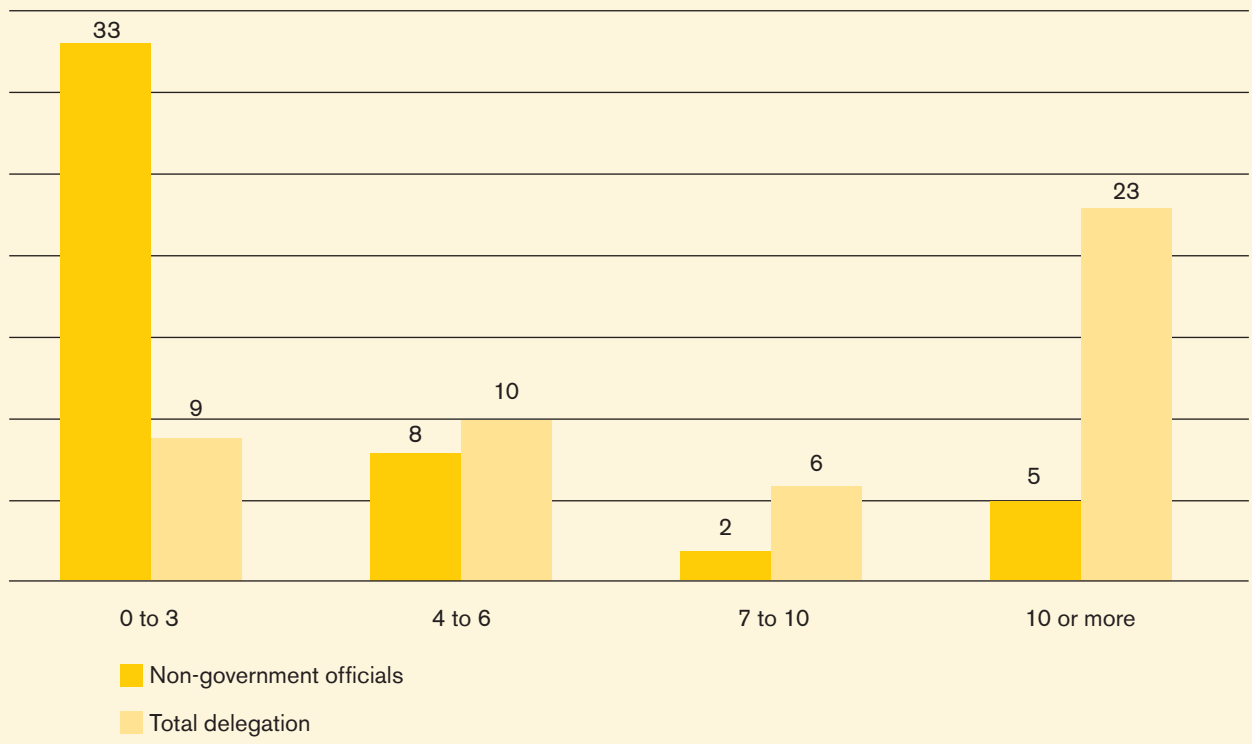
Since most countries (unsurprisingly) prioritise the COPs over intersessionals, they have a more concrete process for negotiating teams to share and receive information before the COPs than the other types of meeting. In the latter, the onus lies solely on negotiators to report back to their ministries with updates or information that may be adversely affected by delegations that are sent on a rotational basis.

Other group commitments – such as the Africa Group and the Alliance of Small Island States – also take time away from developing and finessing individual country positions. For some countries with limited human resources, respondents mentioned that group positions sometimes automatically become country positions. This was particularly so in countries that do not have enough people to cover all thematic areas. Respondents from countries that have headed groups in the past also mentioned that organising group positions can take precedence over country positions and as a result, the two often diverge.

Several key informants talked about co-ordinating with national NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders – either in one-to-one communications between negotiators and external experts, through workshops organised by the FP or entire ministry or department, or as advisory expert councils to the ministry. Figure 11 shows that more than 68 per cent of the LDCs (33 of 48 countries) had non-governmental representatives in their COP 20 delegation. This could point to the openness of governments to consider the opinions of other experts and stakeholders in their country position.

Reflecting on Figure 11, most LDC negotiations had less than three non-governmental officials on their delegation whereas countries with larger delegations (10 or more) had a greater portion of non-governmental representatives. While this finding may seem intuitive it is interesting to note that 12 LDCs had delegations of over 20 persons at COP20 and on average had 29% non-governmental representatives on their delegation (e.g. a delegation of 20 people would have, on average, 5.8 non-governmental officials). In contrast, of the 19 countries that had less than 6 person country delegations, on average had 37% representation from non-government officials. This demonstrates the higher reliance of support for smaller delegations to the negotiations and, in turn, a lower degree of institutional memory.

Figure 11. Number of non-governmental representatives in LDC delegations at COP20



Source: Official UNFCCC statistics available at: http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2014/cop20/eng/inf02.pdf

Opinions and perspectives

We also asked the LDC representatives a number of subjective questions. These attempted to elicit individual perspectives on statements about the interpretation, implementation, communication and challenges countries face when adapting UNFCCC decisions at the national level.

4

4.1 Understanding national-level processes and progress

This section presents the information we collected from 32 respondents. Their responses to the statements reflect their personal perspective on a number of issues often attributed to the LDCs. They show that most respondents feel positive about their government's progress in addressing climate change at the national level and, more importantly, about how they have reached this point.

The statements are all positive, and this may have influenced the way people responded to them. The results may have been different had the statements been posed in a neutral or negative way. For a future study, and if time permits, questions regarding similar topics should be posed in different ways to best ensure respondents genuinely agree/disagree with the statement. Respondents' responsibility as government representatives and officials may also have influenced their responses, as some could have been reluctant to disagree with the statements given their position and level of responsibility to the negotiations. This was likely the case for key informants who were active participants in the UNFCCC negotiations.

Comparison of the five statement questions highlights the differences between online responses and the KIIs. On average, the 14 respondents who completed the online survey felt positive (agreeing or strongly agreeing) about the statements 61.4 per cent of the time and negative (disagreeing or strongly disagreeing) about them 30 per cent of the time. The 18 key informants, on the other hand, provided positive responses to the statements 84.2 per cent of the time and negative ones 14.4 per cent of the time. Although it is difficult to draw comparisons, given the different thematic areas of the questions, several factors may explain these differences:

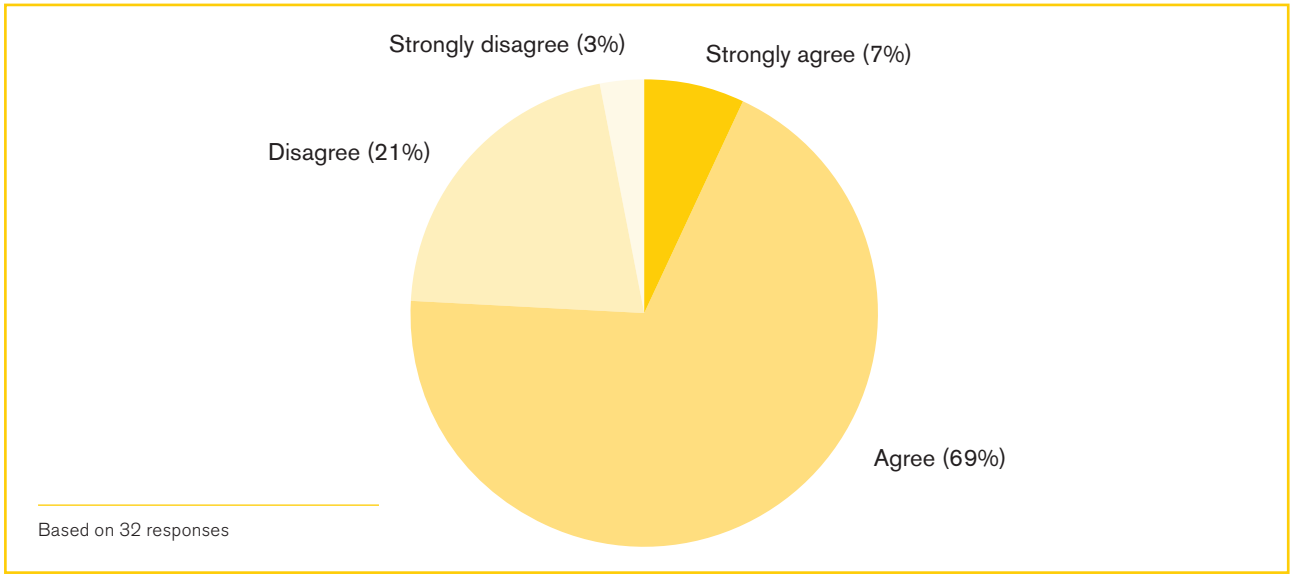
- Respondents may have felt more comfortable (and anonymous) providing online responses
- Government representatives and officials may have been reluctant to disagree with the statements in person
- Online respondents could not hear the statements out loud or ask for clarification, and
- Some respondents, who may not have had the experience to reflect on the statements, did not provide any response.

Question 10: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Outcomes from the UNFCCC are integrated with national development planning"?

Figure 12 shows responses to this statement, with more than 80 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing.

One key informant pointed out in interview that, as (s)he had limited experience in this matter, (s)he could only "consider developments at the national level and therefore was not able to reflect on how this has translated in practice, on the ground." For a more comprehensive understanding of how LDCs have integrated UNFCCC outcomes into development planning, a future study would need to interview local government officials, NGOs, community members and other stakeholders involved in local planning and implementation.

Figure 12. "Outcomes from the UNFCCC are integrated with national development planning"



Question 11: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Outcomes from the negotiations are reported back to the relevant ministries in your country in a timely manner"?

Figure 13 shows all the responses to Question 11. These responses were collected from 29 individuals while 3 stated they did not understand the statement. Since the government representatives who were present at the negotiations were responsible for reporting back to the ministries, it should come as no surprise that 25 key informants either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. It is important to note that some interpreted "outcomes" as only referring to outcomes from the COPs, which typically have a higher turnout of government officials from different ministries. Many key informants mentioned that there are often more formal procedures for communicating outcomes after COP negotiations than during intersessionals, where small delegations (of less than five persons) are responsible for reporting back to their ministry head.

Question 12: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Sufficient time is given between the development of government positions and the time of the negotiations"?

Figure 14 presents respondents' views on this statement, with most agreeing or strongly agreeing. As with the other statement questions, respondents were free to interpret it in more than one way: some assumed it included government positions prior to the intersessionals; others assumed it referred exclusively to the COPs. They also had different interpretations of what 'sufficient time' meant.

Some respondents also mentioned that government positions can change in the middle of negotiations; possibly as a result of changes to group positions. Overall, we considered this to be context-specific, depending less on the experience of respondents than on the country they represented.

Figure 13. "Outcomes from the negotiations are reported back to the relevant ministries in your country in a timely manner"

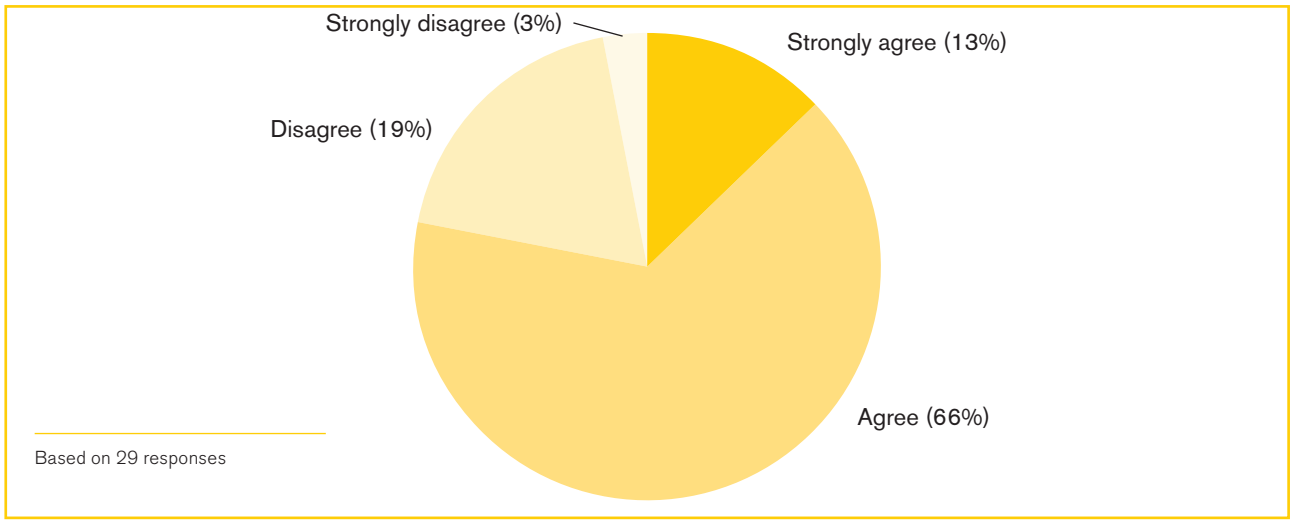
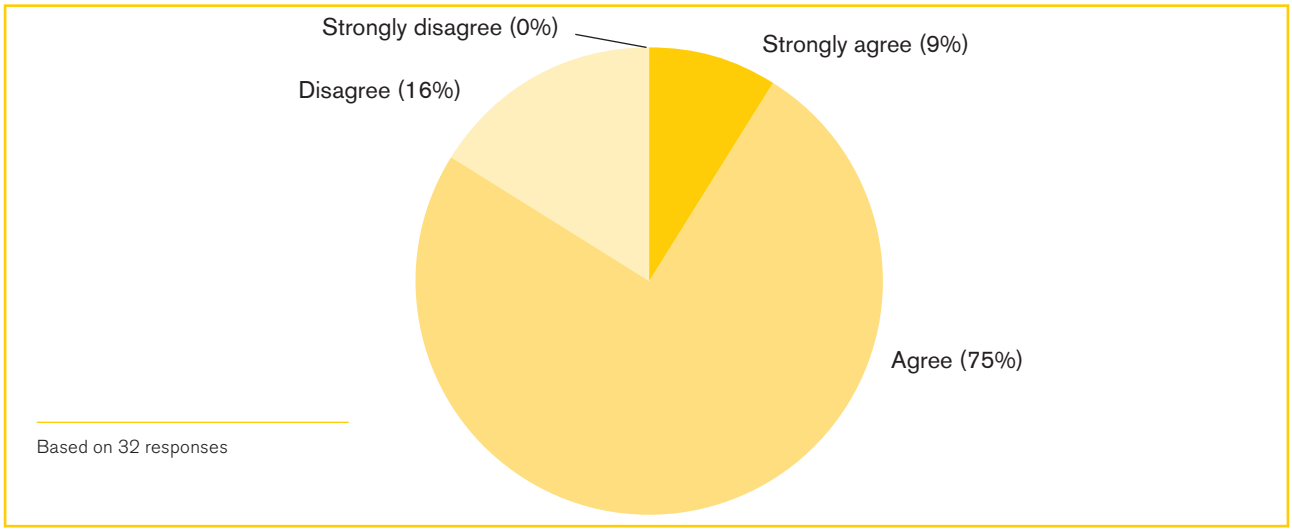


Figure 14. "Sufficient time is given between the development of government positions and the time of the negotiations"



Question 13: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Communication across ministries, departments or sectors on the implementation of negotiation outcomes is done on a regular basis"?

Figure 15 presents respondents' views on communication. Although most respondents mentioned that a number of ministries are involved in UNFCCC negotiations, responses varied according to a number of factors, including (but not limited to): government size; number of ministries involved; the country's geography; the number of negotiations per year (for example, 2015 had significantly more intersessionals than other years); time spent negotiating UNFCCC LDC Group positions; relevance of outcomes to the countries' sectors; and respondent's level of experience.

Question 14: Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "Domestic technological and scientific knowledge is used to inform and interpret UNFCCC outcomes"?

Figure 16 was made up from responses from 29 respondents: the remaining 3 mentioned they did not understand the statement. The figure shows that just over 30 per cent of respondents felt that domestic technological and scientific knowledge was not being used to inform and interpret UNFCCC outcomes. Of the remaining 70 per cent, some mentioned that there were differences between informing and interpreting outcomes; respondents who agreed with the statement commonly placed more emphasis on the latter.

Figure 15. "Communication across ministries, departments or sectors on the implementation of negotiation outcomes is done on a regular basis"

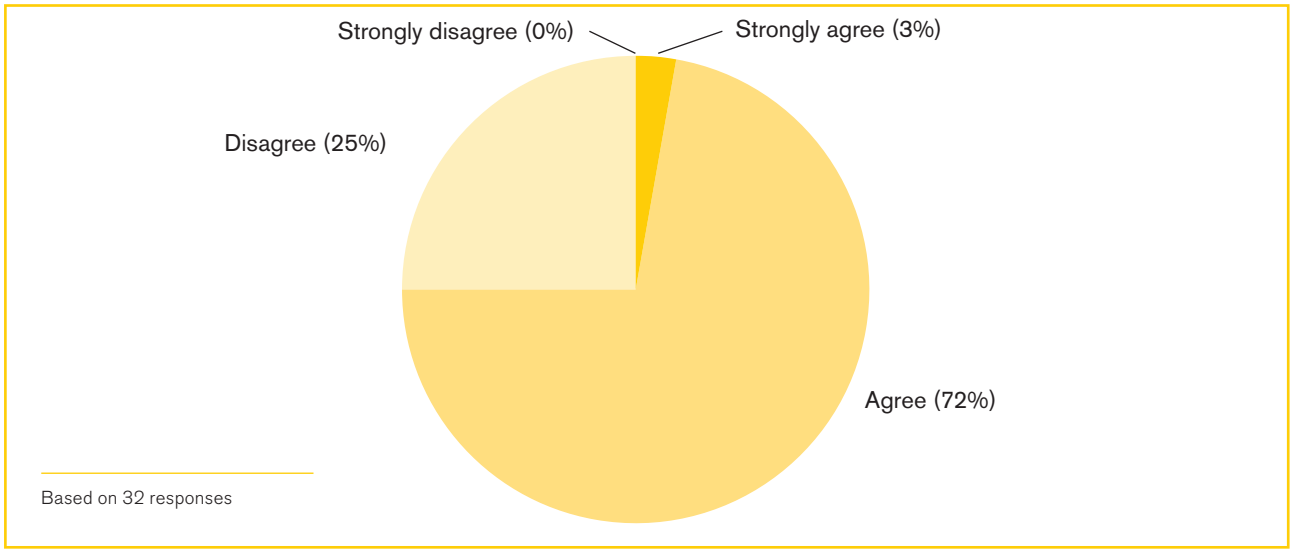
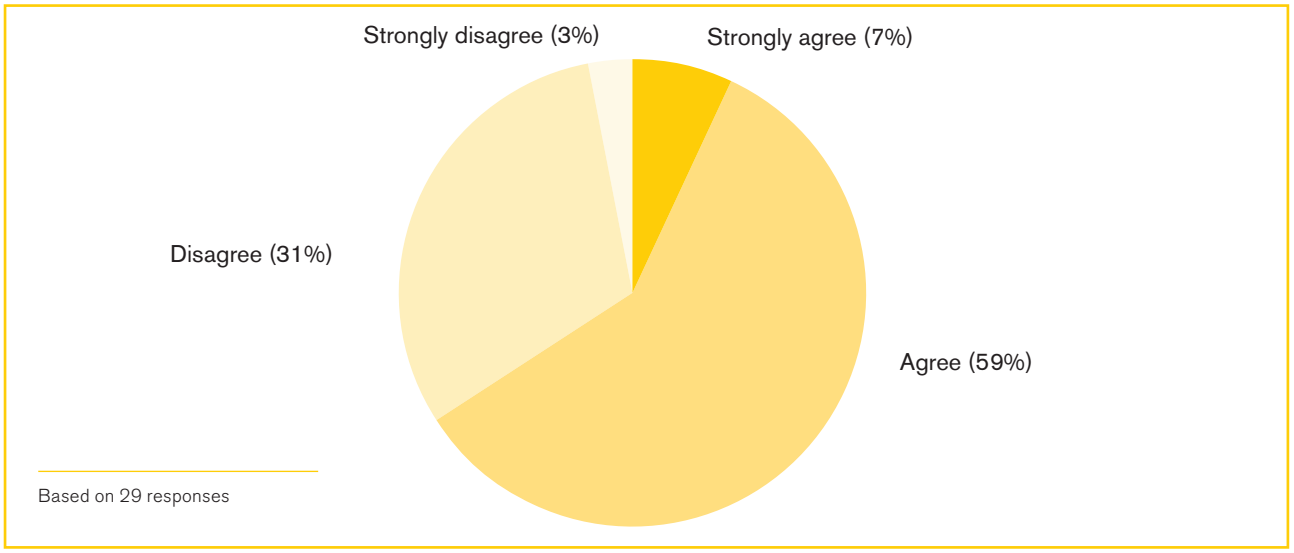


Figure 16. "Domestic technological and scientific knowledge is used to inform and interpret UNFCCC outcomes"



4.2 Barriers and challenges: transferring outcomes to national plans

Question 15: Please check all the barriers you see as contributing to the process of transferring UNFCCC outcomes to national development planning in your country.

In this section, we try to capture the barriers and challenges respondents said contribute to the transfer of UNFCCC outcomes to national development planning. The responses were rich, as Question 14 encouraged respondents to add their own barriers and challenges to the initial set of seven (marked in bold in Figure 17). So we have also included some qualitative responses in Box 1.

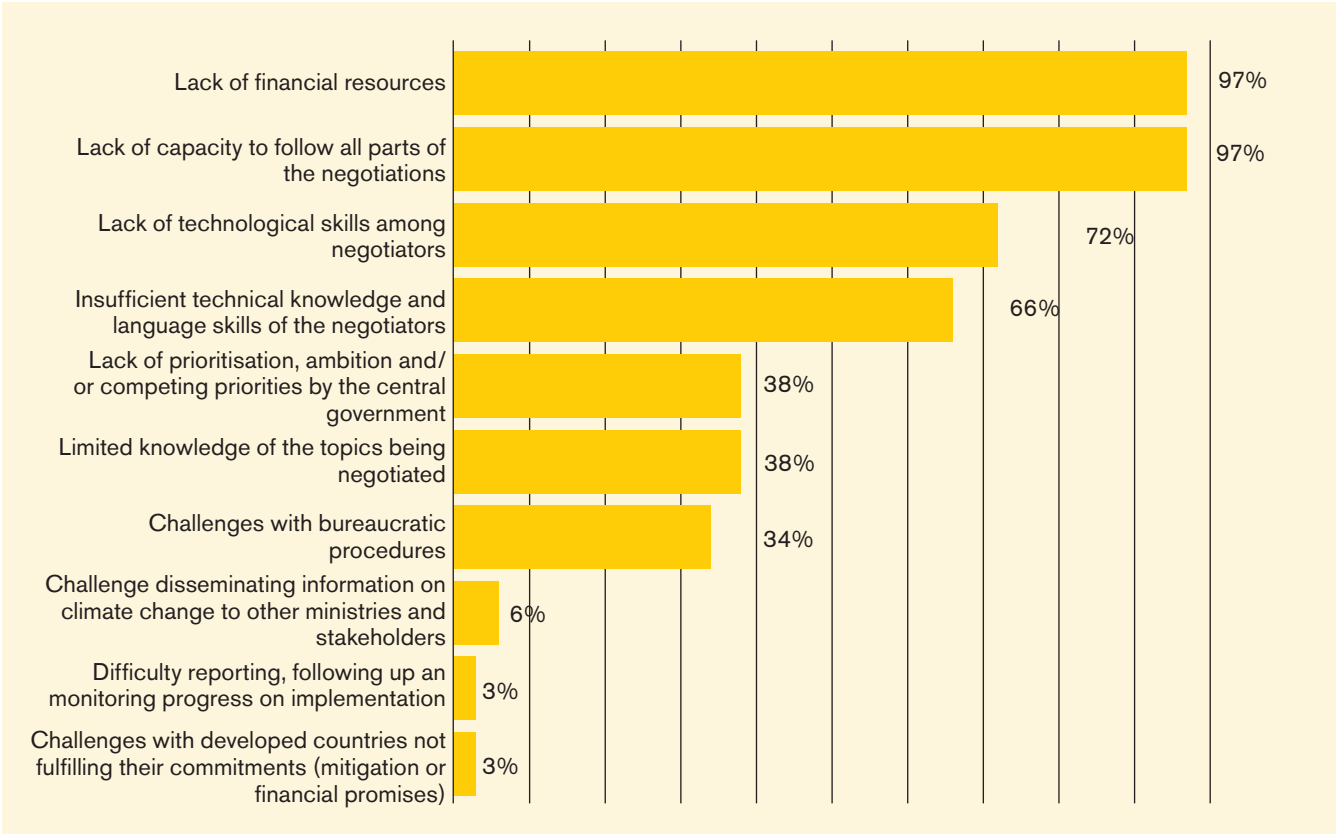
It is important to note that responses were not categorised in order of significance for individual negotiators and therefore the only weight we could give was in terms of the number of respondents who identified each challenge and barrier.

Interestingly, nearly all KIIs and online survey respondents identified the lack of both financial resources and capacity to follow all parts of the negotiations as challenges they faced. These two challenges are closely linked, since the lack of financial resources means most countries struggle to send negotiators, particularly to the intersessionals. Some respondents considered the lack of capacity to follow negotiations to include language barriers in terms of interpreting or the ability to read between the lines of the negotiation text and proposals. For many non-English speaking countries, language barriers included not only their ability to understand the text, but also the time taken to translate it.

Several representatives pointed out that private training for the UNFCCC prioritised English- and French-speaking nations, further marginalising LDCs that do not have bilingual government officials. Although a review of this training was not in the purview of this study, understanding how language barriers are embedded in the negotiations may be the basis of future research. Although the purpose of this study was not to reflect on the successes and limitations of training courses provided to LDCs, a handful of KIIs provided reflection. Specifically, respondents mentioned that:

- With training primarily in English, it was difficult to engage a large group of government officials
- Since training was limited to government officials, other experts and stakeholders who may have also found it helpful felt excluded from the process, and
- Sometimes the training distracted from the bigger issue that developed countries were not doing as much as they should to mitigate or provide more financial support for adaptation measures.

Figure 17. Barriers LDCs face when translating UNFCCC outcomes to national development planning



BOX 1. OTHER CHALLENGES THAT RESPONDENTS THINK CONTRIBUTE TO THE TRANSFER OF UNFCCC OUTCOMES TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

"National positions are not well incorporated into group positions (ie LDCs, Africa Group) because of time."

"The group position should be made after national positions, but I don't know who should have the prerogative to build something for the group."

"[Reflecting on national negotiation workshops] government officials, civil society and NGOs are all able to understand what is taking place at the UNFCCC and also have a fair bit of knowledge of climate change. The training is tied to progress already made at the UNFCCC through mock COP scenarios and therefore is only targeted at government officials ... We have many requests from local NGOs that they have funding for COPs, but we are unsure/unable to use this advantage."

"Language is an issue when training packages are only delivered in English ('prêt-à-porter'). Translation is not the solution: we could use these resources to improve the English capacity of negotiation teams instead … Also, it takes a very long time to translate materials from the international level to our ministers. Positions need to reflect local level communications."

"Some of us have followed the UNFCCC process for a long time and we have expansive knowledge and experience. New delegates will not have capacity in general … Co-ordination and facilitation between the line ministers remains an issue."

"We need to implement adaptation and mitigation measures and we cannot get this money in our country. We have identified the technological needs barriers yet we will struggle to meet our obligations to the UNFCCC. We have identified this in the national communications that show barriers of implementation. Addressing climate change has a lot of challenges … I have sought additional support, but most [of the other negotiators] have not done legal training for getting better at articulating their ideas. Negotiation background is an issue for our country delegation."

"Embedded reasoning behind the text is where we have problems. It is not so much the language but understanding the negotiations themselves."

"UNFCCC procedures are an issue, since it is a very time-consuming process."

"Commitment/willingness of the people is inadequate."

"Communication with high-level state officials is difficult for our country."

"The people implementing UNFCCC outcomes are the negotiators themselves … There are significant challenges with direct access: if you do not have the authority, your money will be under someone else's authority."

"We need to encourage countries to allow more easily accessible funding and to build the capacity of experts on how to elaborate and create projects on their own. It would be more beneficial to access funds and come back to the country to have an enabling environment to implement easily."

"In each ministry you have a representative from the Ministry of Finance who tracks finances on items related to the UNFCCC: you must send your request through him. You have a work plan to decide this. Our [autonomous] national environmental fund is managed by the executive board, [which] must authorise any transaction. This takes a significant amount of time."

"Over the past few years, the number of the negotiators has decreased. Little progress has been made on gender balance due also to limited funding for negotiators to attend negotiations."

"One of the challenges we face in implementing outcomes from the UNFCCC is for funding of technical people during the negotiations. Political leaders are not sustainable since they have other commitments and responsibilities."

"Even though [practitioners] know how to do climate smart agriculture (CSA), they need to do research. We need technology, capacity building and additional support from government and organisations."

"We need to strengthen commitment. Different ministries have limited knowledge of the agreements. We need financial support to build capacity and technology – without this, it is difficult."

"If you have additional sessions [in the negotiations], it will hinder the time available for national discussions: it is not black and white."

"Co-ordination is an issue. Our directorate is very small, less than ten staff members are responsible for the negotiations of the entire country. Sometimes I feel that most ministries do not take us seriously."

"After each session, there are COP meetings and every delegate [that was present] needs to submit a report. The outcomes are shared with rest of the government and NGO community."

"We need more projects with concrete activities to reduce vulnerabilities."

"We need to encourage countries to allow more easy access for funding and build [the] capacity of experts to elaborate and create projects.

"There is not enough preparation [before the negotiations]. This is partly because the government does not have its priorities to engage in this process: the agenda is not the priority."

"Finance needs to be accompanied by capacity building, communication skills, analysing and presenting, and even having the ability to analyse different positions."

"Lack of experience and knowledge among the negotiators makes a lot of difficulty for our negotiation team."

"One of the difficulties that my country faces in elaborating efficient national strategies has to do with the language barrier; there's an implicaiton for the government in terms of financing different activities or projects on adaptation or mitigation."

"Institutional stability is a very important factor to ensure the effective implementation of climate change national strategies."

"There exists a lack of public awareness and government awareness of climate challenges and impacts."

Conclusions and recommendations for further action and research

5

LDCs' human and institutional capacity to engage in and report back on negotiation outcomes varies from one delegation to another. This study is a first step towards exploring the arrangements and co-ordination mechanisms individual LDCs have in place to capture how they prepare for UNFCCC negotiations, report back, analyse, interpret and disseminate information on negotiation outcomes to their respective capitals. Our analysis identified three areas for further action and/or research.

1. Action: There needs to be higher LDC representation and participation in the UNFCCC negotiations. Although LDC delegations vary in size, most consist of fewer than 15 people – fewer than three when non-governmental representatives are excluded from the count. Delegations tend to be smaller for intersessional meetings than COP sessions.

   Our study confirms that financial limitations on sending representatives to negotiation sessions represent a leading barrier to LDC participation. LDCs heavily rely on external sources of finance to increase their number of government representatives in the UNFCCC process. There is a clear need for scaled up support for LDC delegations from external sources and the UNFCCC secretariat, particularly for intersessional meetings. But disbursement needs to be predictable and have long-term vision – for example, through bursaries for selected delegates to attend all negotiation sessions. It should also be targeted at technical experts, where possible. Such an approach could help government delegations improve their plans to participate in UNFCCC meetings, particularly intersessionals. It could also reduce the representative turnaround rate between sessions, ensuring continuation and building institutional memory and help build the capacity of junior negotiators. Efforts to increase the number of LDC government representatives should, of course, be complemented with support for capacity building and strengthening to engage in the negotiations. Addressing the language barrier is critical in this regard.

2. Action and research: There needs to be greater involvement and co-ordination between various LDC government ministries that engage in the UNFCCC negotiations. In LDCs, the environment ministries (or environment and other areas) have the greatest proportion of UNFCCC FPs. But representatives of other ministries – in particular foreign affairs, finance, agriculture and energy – are also involved in climate change issues at international, national and local levels.

   Although it is encouraging to see that a range of government ministries, departments and sectors take part in the negotiations or are otherwise involved in climate change issues, the extent of engagement from ministries other than environment remains unclear. Because this varies from country to country, we recommend further case study research on the benefits of, barriers to and challenges arising from adopting a whole-government approach to climate change decision making. Further research on national infrastructures that link climate change officials to heads of state or government or other decision-making bodies might also provide better understanding of whether these influence levels of delegation engagement in the UNFCCC process.

3. Research: Finally, there needs to be further case study research to share learning and practices across LDC delegations around co-ordination and communication of information on upcoming negotiations and their outcomes. This study found that ministries and other stakeholders usually share information on upcoming negotiating sessions via email and/or through meetings, especially before COP sessions. They usually communicate outcomes of the negotiation sessions through written reports. But we also found that these practices depend greatly on the composition of delegations.

   Respondents generally agreed that delegations made up of a core team of representatives who regularly attend the sessions face fewer difficulties in developing national positions and implementing outcomes. Although this puts greater pressure on the core team or FP, having a delegation whose composition constantly changes brings more challenges than benefits in terms of preparing for negotiations and hearing back about their outcomes. Our findings also highlight the benefits of involving and encouraging greater participation of national NGOs and the private sector in the negotiations in this regard.

Acronyms

ADP	Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
COP	Conference of the Parties
FP	focal point
KIIs	key informant interviews
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Notes

1 UNOHRLLS (2016) Criteria for Identification and Graduation of LDCs (http://unohrlls.org/)

2 UN (1992) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

3 GCF (2015) 3-minute Brief on the Green Climate Fund for Negotiators

4 www.wmo.int/pages/prog/dra/ldcs.php

5 Unlike the Group of 77 and China, the LDC Group in the UNFCCC is separate from the LDC Group that negotiates in intergovernmental processes at the United Nations headquarters in New York. In other words, the chairmanship of the LDC UNFCCC Group rotates independently from the LDC Group that is based in NY.

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) represent 48 of the 197 parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Not only are they the world's poorest economies, they are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Since 2001, they have acted together as the LDC Group in UNFCCC negotiations. But as well as providing assistance, this has aggregated individual country experiences, opinions and interests, creating challenges, particularly when trying to remedy individual countries' struggles to participate, monitor and implement decisions back home. This paper aims to address this disconnect by analysing LDC feedback on how they prepare, analyse, report and disseminate information on the UNFCCC negotiations.

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International Institute for Environment and Development
80-86 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NH, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
Fax: +44 (0)20 3514 9055
email: info@iied.org
www.iied.org

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