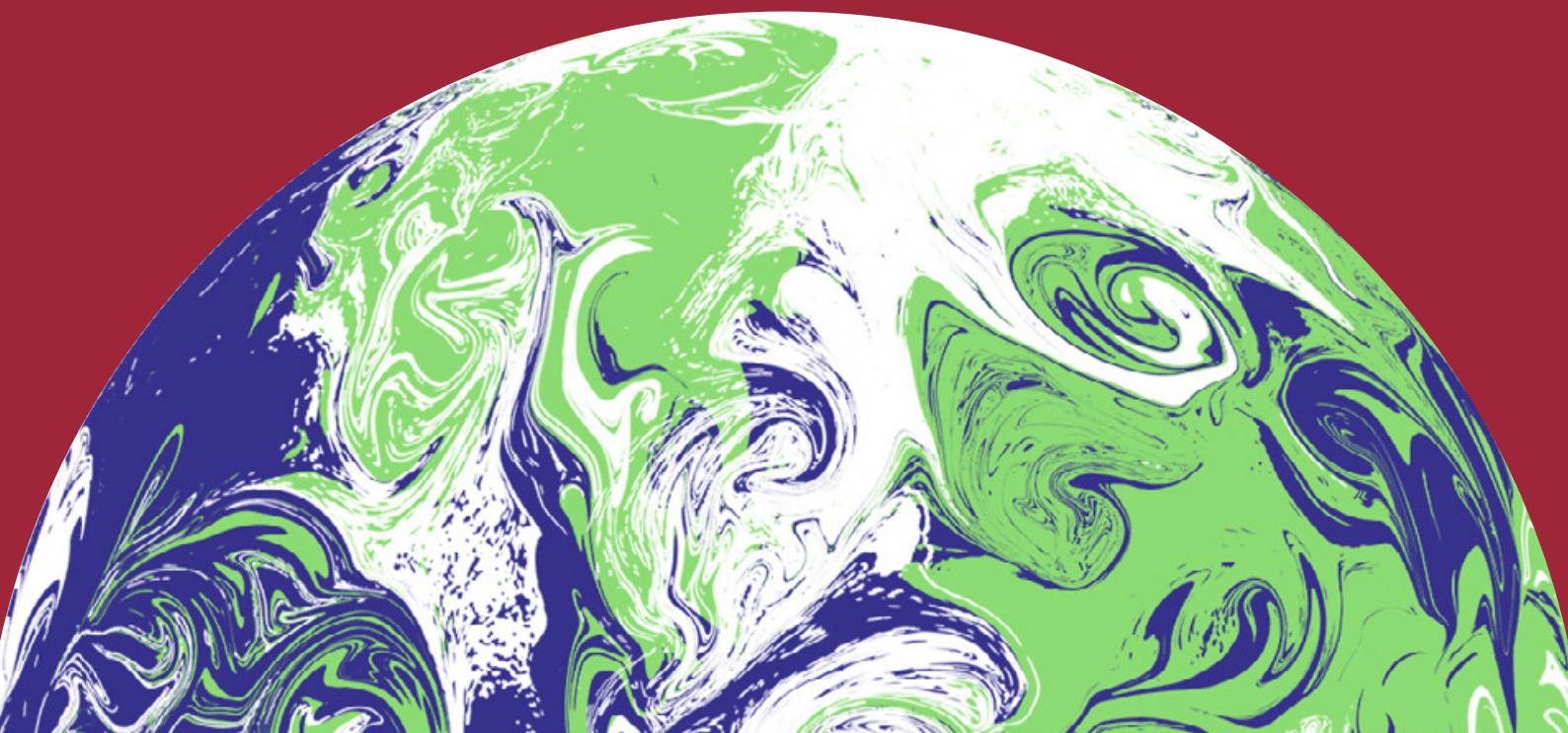# COP26 CATALYST
FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Final Recommendations on Capacity Building for

Transparency and Reporting

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE UK 2021

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

Wilton Park

These recommendations were developed by the COP26 Catalyst Action Group on Capacity Building for Transparency and Reporting, which includes representatives from the countries and organisations shown below.

**Government
of Lebanon**

**Government of
Malawi**

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations
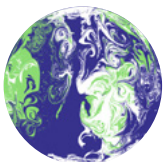
GGGI

ICAT   INITIATIVE FOR
Climate Action
Transparency

Partnership on Transparency
in the Paris Agreement

iied   International Institute
for Environment
and Development

ghg management
institute

COP26 CATALYST FOR CLIMATE ACTION

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Introduction and general approach

Under the terms of the Paris Agreement, all countries will transition their climate reporting to the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) by 2024. This represents a major stepping up of climate transparency, which will require significant capacity building, especially for developing countries.

Climate transparency is for everyone and stands to benefit the whole of society. Everyone – including Governments, international organisations and non-governmental actors, such as businesses, investors, NGOs, and academia – has an important role to play. Capacity building is key to enabling universal participation in the ETF and realising the benefits of it. We need to work collectively to inspire and motivate our colleagues to strengthen capacity well in advance of the first reports due under the ETF by December 2024. At the same time, full implementation of the ETF will also be key for other relevant processes under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, including the Global Stocktake. Capacity building for transparency should therefore lead to outcomes that deliver on both national and international priorities.

We must also call donors and capacity building providers to action to improve and strengthen the accessibility of their services to meet the new demands on countries. **Action on all of these recommendations can begin with immediate effect, though some will take several years to implement in full.**

At present, many developing countries face barriers and challenges in meeting current reporting provisions under the Convention. These must be addressed if we want to successfully implement the ETF by all countries. The current processes under the Convention form the basis for future reporting on transparency under the Paris Agreement. For this reason, experience and lessons learned from implementing the current reporting provisions are fundamental for a timely and successful implementation of the ETF.

Developing countries need support to transition effectively from the current reporting framework under the Convention towards the ETF and then to continue to implement the ETF in the long term by improving reporting and building national capacities.

The following recommendations were developed by the COP26 Catalyst Action Group on Transparency and Reporting. They focus on how capacity building can be improved to better prepare countries for the ETF. Following COP26, the Action Group developed these recommendations further by providing additional background, context, and proposed actions.

The recommendations and proposed actions included within this document are intended to build upon – and suggest ways to enhance – existing capacity building efforts. While recognizing that the responsibility for improving practices and coordination must be shared between all stakeholders, we will identify against each recommendation specific stakeholder groups that are best placed to move the agenda forward. Considering lessons learnt and best practices. They will continue to be relevant over a longer time-period but implementation should start as soon as possible.

Glossary

These recommendations identify a number of actors as primary target audience that will have a role in their implementation. The following provide a working definition as to whom these refer to in the context of solely this paper. Some actors are attributable to more than group of actors, depending on their specific role in a given case.

Governments/Parties: Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) both from developing and developed countries.

Recipient countries: Countries receiving capacity building support - generally developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Donors: International funding mechanisms, financial institutions and climate funds, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank and Green Climate Fund, as well as Governments contributing climate finance either via multilateral funds or bilaterally.

Capacity building providers: Organizations, programmes, initiatives, cooperation agencies and others that implement capacity building projects or major programmes or contribute to their implementation.

UNFCCC secretariat: United Nations entity tasked with supporting the global response to climate change and facilitating the intergovernmental climate change negotiations, including supporting the bodies of the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

Civil society and academia: Non-state actors and stakeholders, including those that traditionally did not focus primarily on climate change, for example, from the private sector, the scientific community, including academia and universities, and other stakeholder groups and constituencies (e.g. youth, women, gender, indigenous peoples).

Action recommendation no. 1: **Profile, political buy-in and ownership**

Issue: Transparency is often misperceived as a purely technical issue with little relevance to the political level. Hence, political buy-in is in many cases not sufficiently high to enable a country to meet its transparency requirements. In many cases, this results in insufficient resources and personnel being allocated for transparency at the national level, which, in turn, affects the capabilities and quality of the country´s reporting. In addition, the corresponding processes under the UNFCCC, such as the International Consultation and Analysis (ICA) and review processes and their results, remain within the technical community with little appeal to political levels, both nationally and internationally.

Headline Recommendation: Governments need to significantly raise the profile and visibility of climate transparency and recognize its additional benefits, to help policymakers and citizens understand that transparency is not simply a technical exercise. Transparency and reporting will offer broad benefits across our economies and societies. Coordinating agencies need communication strategies that highlight domestic and international opportunities, and that engage ministers and other political actors. Emphasizing linkages with other national priority issues can help to build or strengthen political will and national ownership – which will be vital to ensuring each country builds their own effective transparency framework. Strong engagement with the reporting and review processes under the current measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) framework will identify capacity gaps and needs ahead of the transition to the ETF.

Main actors: Governments, UNFCCC secretariat, capacity building providers.

Recommendations and possible actions:
Governments need to recognize transparency as a priority for implementing the Paris Agreement with benefits for numerous national purposes beyond technical reporting. This needs to elevate transparency to look beyond just GHG emissions and make links to key development priorities, and understand the national benefits for informed and better policy-decisions across sectors. It will be a key requirement to dedicate sufficient funds and human resources in the respective government agencies and institutions to build own capacities to implement the ETF on a continuous basis. Therefore, national stakeholders need to be incentivized and empowered to generate political buy-in at the highest political level. Also, building stronger links between major multilateral initiatives and county governments can help achieving wider ownership of transparency objectives.

A number of concrete actions can help achieving these objectives and enhance participation by all countries:

i.   Organizing **high level/ministerial events on transparency** which may:

   • Be organized, for example, by regions and with high-level participation to communicate the needs and national benefits of engaging in general and early in the process of transparency.

   • Be used as platform for sharing high-level announcements, e.g. with regard to support available.

ii. **Increase engagement in current transparency processes** under the Convention, as a means to start building capacities for the preparation of the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) through a learning by doing process. Motivate as many countries prepare their first Biennial Update Report (BUR) and benefit from the experience opportunity to undergo the ICA process. Activities may address concrete barriers that have prevented countries from preparing the first BUR and initiate facilitation of support in an easy and non-bureaucratic manner, as needed. The high-level events mentioned above could serve as a platform to this end.

iii. Develop a **communications strategy** for both international and national levels that would:

- Establish linkages between transparency and political issues, especially Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and communicate the importance of robust transparency systems for their fulfillment and success.

- Identify and communicate more clearly the multiple benefits, both domestic and international, of investing in robust national transparency systems and engaging in the MRV and ETF process. Such benefits include: access to finance (i.e. transparency as pre-condition to mobilize resources), participation in mechanisms under Article 6, improved environmental monitoring and national policy-making, improved basis for national development, data-based policy and decision-making and support in needs assessment and access to capacity building.

- Develop an ETF National Benefits Communiqué that national experts can use as a tool to communicate with their respective decision-makers and policy-levels.

- Develop accessible outreach materials that translate reports of highly technical nature and their results into easy and understandable language for different types of target audiences, including the public, NGOs, academia, and governmental agencies, highlighting linkages of such results to relevant for respective government institutions.

- Mainstream transparency objectives and benefits into overall climate change communications strategies and messages

- Include communications strategy or modules in capacity building programmes.

Action recommendation no. 2: **Sustainability of approaches to capacity building**

Issue: Capacity building is generally provided on an ad-hoc project basis with a short-term objective outcome, such as the generation and delivery of a report, and with the support of external consultants. This approach generally does not help to build the national ownership and sustained capacities needed to allow countries to report self-sufficiently a continuous basis.

Headline Recommendation: Capacity building providers should commit to programmatic support packages with a long-term perspective that fosters continuity and sustainability, and that supports countries to retain capacity that is enhanced. Capacity building should be an iterative, 'learning-by-doing' process that empowers countries to identify and assess their own needs and priorities and should include monitoring and evaluation processes to enable improvements over time. Wherever possible, the use of international 'fly-in, fly-out' consultants should be avoided; building sustained capacity within each country should be prioritized.

Main actors: Donors, capacity building providers and recipient countries.

Recommendations and possible actions:

- Approaches to offer capacity building for transparency should move from current ad-hoc project cycles towards more programmatic, continuous and sustainable approaches that will retain country capacity in the long-term. Both donors and capacity building providers should focus on the need to make reporting under the Paris Agreement a continuous exercise, and adjust their capacity building programmes accordingly.

- As a means to foster continuity and sustainability of capacity building activities and results, project curricula should include mechanisms aiming at retaining capacities and enabling the country to engage with its own capacities in the long term. For example, to identify ongoing capacity needs, run their own technical training in-house and transfer knowledge into institutional memory to allow continuous training over time.

- To ensure long-term sustainability, capacity building for transparency needs to establish both: (1) the necessary institutional and data infrastructure, and (2) capacities to maintain such infrastructure for regular reporting with own national resources (see also recommendation no 6).

- Capacity building should also empower countries strongly to identify needs and priorities and plan improvements. Both in the context of transparency and the country´s national circumstances, development and policy context. Such an approach would help to make capacity building an iterative, learning-by doing process that takes into account the country´s individual level of capacity and experience. Driven by the country´s needs and priorities, this will also help to increase national ownership.

Action recommendation no. 3: **Enhanced coordination of capacity building at all levels**

Issue: Support for capacity building is often fragmented, and criteria and application procedures for funding differ across donors, making applying for support a complicated and resource consuming process. The process itself requires knowledge and capacity to undertake. For the receiving countries, it is often a challenge to find the necessary resources, time and personnel to handle and coordinate numerous projects and receive the maximum benefit from them. Capacity building providers may not always be fully aware of the existing capacity building projects in-country. Opportunities are missed and duplication occurs, leading to resources not being used as effectively as they could be. This knowledge may sometimes not be available in-country, for example, if projects are coordinated by different national institutions or ministries. In these ways, coordination presents a challenge at all levels.

Headline Recommendation: All stakeholders would benefit from improved coordination at national, regional and international levels. Enhanced coordination between capacity building initiatives can increase impact and efficiency and help to avoid duplication. Joint and complementary activities and pooled funding can make capacity building more comprehensive. Streamlining application procedures helps to make initiatives more accessible and inclusive. Regional Transparency Hubs are a proven means of fostering peer learning, knowledge sharing and networking.

Main actors: Donors, UNFCCC Secretariat, recipient countries, capacity building providers and civil society.

Recommendations and possible actions:

All actors should engage in **enhanced coordination efforts at all levels**, including donors and capacity building providers, regarding their activities and the countries themselves to facilitate coordination at the national level. Actions to support this include:

- Establish new or enhance existing mechanisms to improve coordination within the donor and capacity building provider community. These should coordinate activities and online resources for knowledge sharing and streamline application procedures. Thereby avoiding duplication, creating synergy and making the available support more accessible and faster. The application process could be supported by, for example, developing a common application format and reducing processing times.

- Encourage joint and complementary capacity building activities by capacity building providers, as well as pooled funding, thereby creating larger funding packages, which would make capacity building more comprehensive and less fragmented.

- Empower recipient countries to facilitate coordination at the national level, including through enhanced knowledge sharing and collaboration across government institutions with responsibilities for climate projects. To guide countries´ selection of donors and capacity building projects, countries should be encouraged to take into account their capacity gaps and needs assessments in the project application processes.

- Enhance the understanding and linkages of ETF projects to other climate projects. For example, on NDCs or adaptation, in a way that allows projects to be implemented in a mutually supportive manner

Action recommendation no. 3: **Enhanced coordination of capacity building at all levels**

Establish **Regional Transparency Hubs** as collaboration, coordination and training centres of capacity building on transparency in the region, which would:

- Serve as access points for capacity building in the region

- Enable peer-to-peer learning, sharing of experience and knowledge, and networking

- Enable a large number of countries with similar circumstances to benefit from available resources with less administrative application procedures

- Address region-specific issues in a more focused, systematic and holistic way, taking into account the links between transparency and other climate projects, such as on NDCs, adaptation, and finance

- Enhance political buy-in for transparency within the region

- Provide support to national experts to enhance capacities in their respective countries (e.g. "technical expert reviewers" to act as providers of support/train the trainers)

As a first step, develop a **´blueprint´ for the proposed Regional Transparency Hubs,** building upon and replicating successful examples of already existing hubs, which in turn could be replicated and adjusted to the various regions. In addition, individual countries in the regions could be supported to start taking a leading role in their region and act as ´champions´ for transparency.

Resources

Practical examples for **regional hubs**: Latin American Network for on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (RedINGEI); Caribbean MRV Hub.

Practical experience for **coordination among capacity building providers**: UNFCCC's MRV/Transparency Group of Friends (GoF).

Action recommendation no. 4: **Approaches and thematic focusses of capacity building**

Issue: Largely, the current capacity building landscape addresses and supports existing transparency provisions which some countries already have experience in reporting (through BURs). However, the ETF contains a number of new reporting provisions that for many developing countries are entirely new, and hence, experience is limited. Countries are at varying stages in reporting via BURs, undergoing the ICA process and building domestic capacity for transparency. Some have no reporting experience yet. The capacity building community must be mindful of these different starting points, and should focus first on bridging the gaps between the Convention and ETF frameworks, and on those countries needing the most support.

Headline Recommendation: Capacity building programmes should widen their scope to integrate support for reporting on new elements under the ETF, including tracking of progress against both adaptation and mitigation components of NDCs, carbon markets, and reporting on climate finance needed and received. These should consider that countries have different levels of capacity and experience, and hence different starting points. Capacity building providers should develop guidance materials on all components of the BTRs – particularly those that were not present in the previous framework (BURs). As the ETF develops over time, so should the capacity building around it. High quality reporting will also lead to a more comprehensive assessment of progress at the time of the Global Stocktakes.

Main actors: Capacity building providers and donors.

Recommendations and possible actions:

- If we want to make capacity building more strategic and tailored to countries' needs, we must, as a first step, **empower countries to identify and assess their own capacity needs and priorities**. The capacity gaps and needs assessments undertaken by the countries provide a good basis to identify capacity building needs for transparency within the country´s overall national circumstances, development and policy context and could guide the countries in identifying suitable capacity building projects for transparency.

- Systematic support on themes and common challenges, which can be provided at large scale, will continue to be relevant. In particular, capacity building providers should develop and update **guidance materials on all main components of the BTR under the ETF.** Many resources, training and guidance materials exist which should be built upon and updated. Capacity building providers could also produce guidance on how countries can make the best use of their existing reporting infrastructure, frameworks, expertise or peer knowledge in transitioning to the ETF. To ensure no knowledge is lost, those countries who do have some starting point can make the best use of that and share their experience with those countries that are just starting.

Action recommendation no. 4: **Approaches and thematic focusses of capacity building**

- While all components of the BTR need to be addressed, **special focus should be given to those that did not participate in the BUR process,** developing additional guidance to include tracking of progress of NDCs, projections, carbon markets, reporting on adaptation and climate finance received. Consideration should be given to the need to report according to the agreed common reporting formats, tables and outlines under the ETF.

- **A series of webinars,** focusing on the new element of the BTR, should be developed and be made available at large scale, ideally in various UN languages. Making these available online and downloadable so that they can be played offline would ensure maximum accessibility to transparency experts in different time-zones and with different connectivity.

Resources

Practical examples of existing guidance materials and tools are available online on the website of, for example, the Partnership on Transparency under the Paris Agreement (PATPA)[1], the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT)[2], and others.

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1. https://transparency-partnership.net/ : Updated: Biennial Update Report (BUR) Template; Biennial Transparency Report Guidance and Roadmap Tool (together with FAO); NDC Handover Checklist; Projections of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Removals: An Introductory Guide for Practitioners; National benefits of climate reporting; Guidance for policy makers on NDCs and the ETF

2. https://climateactiontransparency.org/

Action recommendation no. 5: **Improving accessibility and searchability of capacity building resources**

Issue: Capacity building for transparency is provided by a number of capacity building providers, through numerous programmes, initiatives and activities. Funded by a variety of donors or groups of donors. In many cases these activities generate a vast amount of resources and products. Such as web portals, guidance materials, knowledge products, templates, tools and webinars - which are publicly available on respective organisations' websites. However, despite the mass of resources available: finding information or support within the complicated landscape of capacity building providers and initiatives can be challenging, and these useful resources may not reach their intended users or beneficiaries.

Headline Recommendation: Capacity building providers need to improve the accessibility and searchability of online resources. While knowledge portals exist, providers could do more to consolidate resources so they can be accessed from a single entry-point that is well-publicised, interactive and easy to search. Translation (into UN languages at a minimum) should be prioritised to encourage in-country technical personnel to use knowledge products. Named focal points could help providers to implement quality control, ensure that resources remain up-to-date and ensure that all major capacity building initiatives on transparency are included.

Main actors: Capacity building providers, UNFCCC secretariat.

Recommendations and possible actions:

- Within the community of donors and capacity building providers, c**reate new (or enhance existing) freely accessible online resource and knowledge sharing platforms.** These could serve as a first entry point for countries and technical experts when searching for capacity building or support for transparency.

- Platforms should be easily accessible and function in an interactive manner as an online-toolkit, providing a menu of available capacity building programmes and initiatives, tools, resources, and examples and good practices. They should also facilitate networking and access to support.

- Regional transparency hubs could also have an important role in facilitating and promoting this at a regional level (see also recommendation no 1).

Resources

Examples of accessible capacity building resources are available on the website of, for example, the Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT)[3], the UNFCCC secretariat[4], and others.

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3. https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/capacity-building-initiative-transparency-cbit : Global Coordination Platform (https://www.cbitplatform.org/)

4. https://unfccc.int/ : Momentum towards Universal Participation in the Enhanced Transparency Framework; GHG Help Desk; Experts database; Advancing the Global Work on Climate Transparency

Action recommendation no. 6: **Institutional frameworks as basis for implementing the ETF**

Issue: Current capacity building approaches and funding focus primarily on the delivery of national reports supported by international consultants. Countries do not have the necessary institutional frameworks to enable them to make reporting a continuous and routine process that improves over time. Furthermore, capacity and institutional memory are not sufficiently retained. Many countries face serious challenges in obtaining the necessary data for their GHG inventory and tracking their NDC, often due to weak or non-existent institutional frameworks and mandates.

Headline Recommendation: Continuous reporting requires a strong institutional framework, which in some cases will need new legal mandates. All countries can better harness existing institutions (and create new institutions where necessary) to mainstream climate reporting across government, civil society and the private sector. New advice, guidance and support will be needed to help countries build robust institutional arrangements to meet ETF requirements. With support, governments should plan to set up sufficient capacity to operate transparency frameworks and focus the use of external support on creating the physical, institutional and knowledge infrastructure. Capacity building providers can offer support to national institutions involved in data collection, sharing, archiving and reporting. Relationships between data providers need to be strengthened, creating networks of technical experts across contributing institutions. Trainings should build upon existing infrastructure in order to integrate climate reporting, and to provide data management guidance and tools.

Main actors: Governments, donors, capacity building providers and civil society, international organizations and specialized UN agencies.

Recommendations and possible actions:

i. Develop capacity building activities and trainings, adjusted to countries´ needs and building upon existing efforts, that enable countries to:

•   Collect, manage and archive data and statistics, targeting national agencies with data responsibilities in the country (e.g. national statistical offices), and enhancing their role to enable data transfer, including through legal mandates, where necessary. This could be supported through developing templates and protocols that are generally applicable, as well as data management guidance and tools.

•   Develop sustained institutional arrangements for climate reporting, with clear roles and responsibilities for data collection, sharing and reporting. Where possible, build upon and integrate climate reporting into existing structures that already have legal mandates.

•   Integrate processes for evaluation and improvement over time into the reporting and review cycle. For example, "Technical review experts" from the UNFCCC process could bring home their experiences from the reviews and contribute to the evaluation and improvement of the reporting of their own country.

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1. https://transparency-partnership.net/ : Updated: Biennial Update Report (BUR) Template; Biennial Transparency Report Guidance and Roadmap Tool (together with FAO); NDC Handover Checklist; Projections of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Removals: An Introductory Guide for Practitioners; National benefits of climate reporting; Guidance for policy makers on NDCs and the ETF

2. https://climateactiontransparency.org/

- Operate and maintain the existing transparency infrastructures and capacities on a continuous basis.

- Engage traditionally non-climate focused institutions and stakeholders in the data collection and transparency process. Improve understanding of the co-benefits of robust and consistent data for countries' national priorities, such as tracking of NDCs or as prerequisites to participation in the Article 6 mechanism and related activities.

ii. Support countries to develop their own national trainings and 'training-the-trainers' models. Enable training of relevant stakeholders traditionally not responsible for transparency issues, such as within government institutions, academia, civil society, NGOs and the private sector.

iii. Create a network of technical experts at the national level with the necessary skills to contribute to the national transparency system. This would help to retain national capacities and institutional memory (e.g. government officials, researchers, private sector).

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3. https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/capacity-building-initiative-transparency-cbit : Global Coordination Platform (https://www.cbitplatform.org/)

4. https://unfccc.int/ : Momentum towards Universal Participation in the Enhanced Transparency Framework; GHG Help Desk; Experts database; Advancing the Global Work on Climate Transparency

Action recommendation no. 7:
Whole-of-society participation

Issue: Transparency and reporting in most countries is mainly handled within given, relevant government institutions. Ministries of Environment and related institutions usually have a good understanding of the UNFCCC processes, as well as the purpose and requirements of transparency provisions under the UNFCCC. However, this knowledge is often not transmitted to other parts of society, both within and outside government structures, and relevant data and information may remain untapped in the country´s transparency efforts..

Headline Recommendation: Governments and capacity building providers should support whole-of-society participation in the transparency process. This includes statistical agencies, finance and economic departments, academia, non-governmental actors, sub-national governments, and the private-sector – all of whom can contribute to and enrich data gathering for climate reporting. It is particularly important to involve stakeholder groups historically not represented in government, as well as those whose primary focus is not climate change.

Main actors: Governments, capacity building providers and civil society.
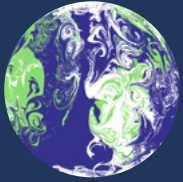
Recommendations and possible actions:

Enhance the participation of stakeholders and actors to create greater support for and ownership of the national transparency process, by:

- Engaging non-state actors, in particular academia and youth, in capacity building efforts - both as recipient and providers of capacity building. This could be undertaken, for example, through trainings and outreach materials on transparency by the agency in charge of overall reporting.

- Making enhanced use of available knowledge, e.g. within the scientific community, to address country-specific issues and improve the quality of reporting over time (e.g. development of country-specific emission factors or assessment of vulnerabilities). For example, stakeholders from relevant communities could be involved in the QA/QC activities as part of the reporting process, thereby enhancing their engagement.

- Integrating relevant stakeholder groups into a country´s institutional arrangements for transparency – eg. academia/universities, the private sector and other stakeholder groups, as required by the country context.

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