Using Administrative Decentralization to Support Climate Change Action

Paul Smoke and Mitchell Cook

Decentralized Governance and Climate Change Conference

June 8, 9 and 10, 2022

Georgia State University | Andrew Young School of Policy Studies
International Center for Public Policy

World Bank Group
Governance

Subnational Government Role in Administrative Responses to Climate Change

- **Key climate change issues considered include:**
  - -Reducing or Avoiding Greenhouse Gas Emissions
  - -Transitioning to Low Carbon Local and Regional Economies
  - -Managing Physical Risks from Extreme Climate-Related Hazards
  - -Adapting to Slow Onset Environmental Change

- **Key administrative functions (linkages) considered include:**
  - -Regulatory Functions
  - -Operational Functions
  - -Information and Analytic Functions
  - -Collaboration Governance Functions

Underlying Assumptions

- **Climate change and decentralization policy can productively be shaped together** to create a more synergistic and reinforcing national policies and strategies
- Administrative decentralization includes a **large range of functions that operate in diverse intergovernmental systems and climate change conditions** and practices seem to vary widely without obvious patterns
- Diversity makes **generalization elusive**—this paper does not seek to be **prescriptive but to raise awareness** about how to think about decentralization's role in climate action

Intersection of Decentralization and Climate Change

- **Subnational governments have certain advantages** in advancing local development and some aspects of climate response in their jurisdictions
- Yet **some climate policies/actions need central leadership or guidance** given national priorities and externalities and the need to coordinate subnational jurisdictions
- **Getting the right balance in roles and relationships among levels** is the key to effective policies
- **Some subnational governments experiment with reforms to support climate action,** potentially offering lessons for national policy and other subnational governments

Challenges

- Administrative decentralization is necessary but not sufficient—**links to fiscal and political structures must be understood,** and complementary reforms are required
- **Weaknesses in administrative practices and capacity (**generally and specific to climate action) may be numerous
- Often **more focus on design than implementation of reform**—everything cannot be done at once, so **a careful strategy for implementation will typically be needed**
- **Political economy and bureaucratic dynamics** can create or influence any of these challenges

1. Regulatory Functions

- **Zoning and Land Use** (density control, siting public services)
- **Building/Infrastructure Codes** (alternatives to steel and cement, energy efficiency, electricity grid decarbonization)
- **Environmental standards** (air/water quality, solid waste management)

Common Reform Targets

- **Ambiguity or redundancy in responsibilities**
- **Standards may be inappropriate or outdated**
- **Inconsistency in standards that need to be more uniform**
- **Weak enforcement of regulatory requirements**

2. Operational Functions

- **Development Planning** (prioritize density/low carbon options/alternatives, meet regulatory standards, connect to climate risk/vulnerability)
- **Budgeting and Financial Management** (ensure infrastructure is financed in the development budget and provisions for operations and maintenance are made in the recurrent budget)
- **Procurement** (prioritize investment and operational decisions promoting fewer greenhouse gas emissions, sustainability, local resilience)

Common Reform Targets

- **Responsibilities fractured across levels/poorly coordinated**
- **Disconnect between planning and budgeting**
- **Lack of climate-relevant requirements and standards in planning, budgeting and procurement**

3. Information and Analytic Functions

- **Emissions Inventory, Environmental Impact, etc.** (identify actions/ provide a benchmark for assessment (domestic/international – e.g., NDC, NAP)
- **Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Analysis** (assess economic and social vulnerability to help target local action)
- **Outcome and Institutional Performance** (to monitor/enforce relevant standards and meeting climate and environmental objectives)

Common Reform Targets

- **Deficiencies in technology and capacity for collecting and managing data**
- **Lack of consistent standards for collection and measurement**
- **Fragmented data sources, unclear leadership and insufficient coordination of actors involved in information and analytic functions**

4. Collaborative Governance Functions

- **Intergovernmental Coordination** (mechanisms to promote vertical and horizontal coordination among government actors)
- **Multi-Actor Partnerships (**share information and coordinate public and private actors who could/should cooperate for effective climate change action)
- **Community Engagement** (formulating priorities for climate action and coping with impacts in specific locations/neighborhoods of a subnational government)

Common Reform Targets

- **Responsibility to coordinate climate action unclear or not respected**
- **Area-wide partnerships (horizontal collaboration)—are underutilized**
- **Participatory/community level activities for consultation, data collection and action not sufficiently developed or not effectively used**

Identifying, Designing and Implementing Reforms

- **Given variations in climate priorities, how they are manifested in specific countries/locations and the diversity of intergovernmental systems and other contextual factors, approaches to reform must establish:**
  - ***Which aspects of climate change action are priorities in specific places?***
  - ***Which type(s) of administrative policies and actions would be appropriate to deal with the priorities?***
  - ***Which actor(s) should be responsible for and involved in new or amended policies and activities?***

Table 7.1. Assessing Subnational Administrative Functions to Support Climate Action

1. Climate Change Priorities 2. Administrative Functions with Potential to Address Climate Priorities		3. Current Functions, Actors, Reform Areas, and Possible New Measures				4. Considerations to Assess Feasibility and Prioritize Actions			
	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (to inform the process of selecting reforms and judging feasibility) **FUNCTIONS** (climate action options)	1. Status/Quality/Performance	2. Responsibility for Policy/ Implementation	3. Collaboration/ Partnerships	4. Enforcement Authority	5. Capacity	6. Complementary Reforms	7. Feasibility of Reforms	8. Overall Scope for Support
Which climate change actions are the main priorities?	**REGULATORY** • Zoning and Land Use • Energy Efficiency Standards • Emissions Standards								
	OPERATIONAL • Development Planning • Procurement • Budgeting/Public Financial Management								
	DATA • Emissions Inventory • Vulnerability Analysis • Performance								
	COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE • Intergovernmental Coordination • Multi-Actor Partnerships • Community Engagement								

Making Decisions and Progress

- **Different actors need to take the lead or be involved**—some types of reforms must be undertaken or initiated by the **central government**, with appropriate attention to the roles and responsibilities of other actors
- Other reforms can be undertaken more independently (piloted) by **subnational governments**, although relevant national standards often need to be incorporated
- Many administrative reforms to support climate action—no matter what level of government takes the lead—require **collaboration**--data, inputs, feedback, or complementary action—from other governmental and nongovernmental partners

Thank You!