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# The Consideration of Future Risk trends in National Adaptation Planning: Conceptual Gaps and Empirical Lessons

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## Description / Abstract

Adaptation planning essentially is about the reduction of future climate risk. A sound understanding of potential future risk trends is therefore critical to examine adaptation needs and chart adaptation options. Future risk is shaped and defined not only by future changes in climatic hazards but by future trends in exposure and vulnerability. The latter, however, has received less attention in science and policy, despite the fact that for the near-term future such changes in socio-economic exposure and vulnerability might contribute more to risk alterations than changes in climate hazards, particularly in dynamic transition economies. Against this background, we analyze the latest generation of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for developing countries and comparable documents for other countries in order to examine whether and to what extent future trends in the different components of risk (hazard, exposure, vulnerability) have been considered and assessed in the process of adaptation planning. A total of 73 documents have been coded in detail. We find a grave mismatch which persists across different groups of countries, e.g. in terms of income levels, vulnerability and risk levels: While the vast majority of plans recognized the importance of future exposure and vulnerability trends on a conceptual level, only a small fraction of plans actually assesses them in a strategic manner. This leads to incomplete and imbalanced assumptions about future risk levels and adaptation needs. We examine the main challenges for more balanced assessments and discuss ways forward.

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