

Comments and Suggestions on draft Orissa Climate Change Action Plan (OCCAP)

The comments and suggestions on draft OCCAP are based on observations by Snehashis Sarkar, researcher at Centre for Development Finance (CDF), Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR). They do not necessarily represent the view of CDF or IFMR as a whole.

Orissa in its Climate Action Plan has identified and re-affirmed that maintaining a high economic growth rate is essential for increasing living standards of the vast majority of people of Orissa and India and reducing their vulnerability to the impacts of Climate change. Orissa Climate Change Action Plan (OCCAP) at a many places, talks about economic growth-oriented industrial, mining and power policy in Orissa which seems out of place in the Climate Change Action Plan document as they are known to defy the basic pillars of climate sensitive development – social equity, environmental integrity and development effectiveness.

Adaptation with the health hazards induced and intensified by climate change phenomena would entail speeding up outreach of healthcare services and establishing medical and diagnostic facilities in the far-reached rural corners of the state to enhance people's adaptive capacity in the health domain. Health and medical insurance coverage for all citizens in a phased manner should be an ideal climate change adaptation strategy and should find its place in the OCCAP.

The anticipated expansion of thermal power generation capacity from 4000 MW to 55000/60000 MW is definitely not an environment-friendly solution. Thermal power should make a part of renewable-heavy state energy portfolio, that too in a phased manner. The Plan does not lay down any target for enhanced capacity of renewable energy generation from wind, small and medium hydel power plants, biofuels and solar power. Rather it reaffirms a shift towards more coal based thermal power generation than the current hydel power-heavy energy portfolio of the state (refer section 4.3, p. 23). The pronounced bent towards more coal based thermal power projects is likely to increase social and environmental stress as regards water and other natural resources. It does not follow a carbon conscious development trajectory apparently. A Climate action plan should ideally lay out the targets for emissions avoidance qualitatively and emissions reduction quantitatively rather than emissions increase for forthcoming developments. OCCAP needs to address the energy supply issue more objectively in light of climate change and environmental sustainability and come out with a plan that

realises benefits from renewable energy certificate schemes rather than clean development mechanism in not-so-clean conventional energy units.

Under the head of Adaptation, the Water resources section says that there is huge demand for water from the energy, industry and agri sector and that water crisis is anticipated in Orissa because of erratic rainfall pattern. But, the focus on thermal energy would invariably aggravate the climate change risks to water resource availability and accessibility.

Under the head of 3.2.2 Mining under “Mitigation”, mining has been reckoned as an important component of Orissa’s economy but at the same place, forest-rich potential mining areas have been identified as important carbon sink. Emphasis on mining would definitely entail forest degradation thus more forest carbon loss and also imbalance the conservation status of forest dwelling indigenous and tribal communities’ culture and livelihood.

Under the head 3.2.2 Industry under “Mitigation”, it has been stated that as Orissa has substantial coal resources, the industry-centred economic growth will be coal based and thus a major emitter of carbon di-oxide in the foreseeable future. This seems a forced mitigation opportunity; first potentially creating the problem and then treating for the symptoms rather than treating the root cause of the problem. In this context, the OCCAP should promote more non-market policy solutions rather than resorting to market based mechanisms such as Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) too much.

Urban areas are already much densely populated than the rural areas. The towns and cities are expected to be more densely populated in future because of continued migration of labour as well as migration of rural people to these areas to have access to infrastructure and technical resources for better adaptive capacity in face of climate change effects. Preparing the Urban infrastructure would be a one-track, risky and inadequate strategy to manage this growing pressure on resources in urban localities. Development of infrastructure and livelihood opportunities has to be distributed and shifted steadily towards the rural areas. The priority areas for these developments would be the rural areas which have the maximum number of people migrating to cities every year. This strategy can be adopted in sync with the economic development and poverty reduction priorities of the states cost-efficiently. Furthermore, there would be immense potential *synergy* of this rural development strategy that would help achieve not only the seventh but also other Millennium Development Goals.

This is welcome and heartening that the Government of Orissa has reckoned Climate Change Adaptation as much more important than Mitigation, given the state's socio-economic demography and critical situation as regards climate vulnerability and that it takes "a pro-active, preventive and preparedness-oriented approach rather than a reactive approach" (refer sub-head 6.2 "Addressing both adaptation and mitigation" and "Overall approach" in chapter 6, p. 65).

The OCCAP classifies development issues into the following two major groups.

Climate intrinsic sectors: energy, forests, water, agriculture and coastal disaster

Climate add-on sectors: fisheries, health, industry, mining, transport and urban

The plan hints at preference of the former group over the latter for climate sensitivity or climate proofing of policy and organisational developments and also any other government initiative in the state (refer last sentence of the sub-heading "Climate intrinsic sectors distinguished" under "5.2 Findings"). Only the mitigation initiatives have been planned to take a carbon-sensitive path under "carbon-conscious development (p. 60)", despite Adaptation being stated as the key priority of the state and anticipated to be more prominent than mitigation in future state initiatives. This potentially leads to some contradiction at the implementation level and subsequent levels of Climate Action Plans.

In the sketch of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan, there has been no mention if participatory approaches would be followed in the M&E activities or not. Implementation monitoring can be effective only if local people and beneficiaries are employed in collecting data and contributing feedback. Local participation would also help incorporate bottom-up feed in planning and implementing climate actions in a locally appropriate manner. Orissa having one of the largest tribal and indigenous populations in the country should have this formal provision for including people from historically dominated and deprived social tiers as part of the OCCAP.