

The Gathering Storm

Adaptation Gap Report 2021

As the world looks to step up efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions – efforts that are still nowhere near strong enough – the sixth edition of UNEP's *Adaptation Gap Report: The Gathering Storm* finds that the growth in climate impacts is far outpacing our efforts to adapt to them.

The world needs to step up efforts to adapt to the irreversible impacts of climate change.

- Current promises under the Paris Agreement point to global warming of 2.7°C by the end of the century.
- Adaptation can reduce climate risks, which accelerate with temperature rise. However, residual climate risks remain, and adaptation costs increase with climate risk.
- While strong mitigation is the best way to lower impacts and long-term costs, raising ambition in adaptation is critical to keep existing gaps from widening.



Adaptation is being increasingly embedded in policy and planning across the world.

- 79% of countries have adopted at least one national-level adaptation planning instrument (a plan, strategy, policy or law) – an increase of 7% since 2020.
- 9% of countries that do not have such an instrument in place are developing one.
- At least 65% of countries have one or more sectoral plans in place.

Implementation of adaptation actions is growing slowly worldwide.

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows that the top ten donors funded more than 2,600 projects focusing on adaptation between 2010 and 2019.
- Projects are getting bigger, with more attracting funding in excess of USD 10 million.
- The low rate of monitoring and evaluation systems is a concern: only 26% of countries have such a system in place. However, another 36% of countries are developing one.

But the finance needed to implement adaptation plans is still far short of where it should be.

- The costs of adaptation are likely in the higher end of an estimated USD 140-300 billion per year by 2030 and USD 280-500 billion per year by 2050 for developing countries only.
- Climate finance flowing to developing countries for mitigation and adaptation planning and implementation reached USD 79.6 billion in 2019.
- Estimated adaptation costs in developing countries are five to ten times greater than current public adaptation finance flows. The adaptation finance gap is widening.
- The opportunity to use COVID-19 recovery stimulus packages to back adaptation finance and implementation is being missed (see factsheet on the impact of COVID-19 on adaptation).

Despite some progress, further ambition is needed in financing and implementation.

- The world needs to scale up public adaptation finance, through direct investment and overcoming barriers to private sector adaptation.
- More and stronger implementation of adaptation actions is needed to avoid falling behind on managing climate risks, particularly in developing countries.
- The world also needs to consider higher-end climate scenarios projected by the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in its global efforts to enhance adaptation financing and implementation.