



Mitigation Action Plans & Scenarios

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Authors: Marta Torres, Harald Winkler, Emily Tyler, Kim Coetzee, Anya Boyd

Lacking definitions

LCDS and NAMAs are not new concepts (UNEP 2011), nor the term mitigation action. Several definitions can be found in the literature, but none that are unproblematic or unanimously accepted. The NAMA and LCDS acronyms were introduced, as such, to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate negotiation texts as part of the Bali Action Plan in 2007 and the Cancun Agreements in 2011 respectively. However, since then the negotiations talks have not delivered a clear definition for them.

One could argue that a definition is not needed. It is crucial to identify when a definition can improve the effectiveness of the design and implementation of climate policies. Research has found that it is important to identify the reason behind pursuing a definition in order to decide on an approach (Tyler et al. 2011). This partly explains the current range of interpretations and definitions.

Particularly on the NAMA concept, experts seem to agree that rather than pushing for a detailed definition, there may be an advantage in allowing flexibility for countries to pilot their own mitigation actions (ECN & Ecofys 2012). The same could be said for LCDS. The NAMA definition discussion has nevertheless emerged in the context of the NAMA registry and finance requirements by developed countries. It remains to be seen how this discussion will be concluded.

In this section we will explore the current definitions in the literature associated with the terms. Section 2, 'MA,

MITIGATION ACTION, NAMAs AND LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: Building a common understanding

Purpose

In order to implement effective mitigation actions, one needs to have a common understanding of what they are, and how they can be supported by domestic and international policy. Hence a set of working definitions is helpful. To date there is no broadly accepted definition of the Mitigation Action (MA), Low Carbon Development Strategies (LCDS) and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) concepts despite their generalized use. A common understanding at MAPS community level of these terms, and their subtle differences and diversity, has been requested. This common understanding is considered beneficial for the purpose of enabling implementation thanks to effective design processes.

This memo provides an overview of current interpretations and builds a common framework for the use of these concepts among MAPS practitioners. Such a proposal should not be seen as an imposition of terminology to the MAPS country processes, but hopefully will prove to be useful at country level too. Lastly, this work within MAPS aspires to inspire the broader climate and development community towards effective design and implementation of climate mitigation policies.

The actual interface between MA, NAMAs and LCDS is not addressed in this memo, but in upcoming research work under the MAPS programme.

NAMA and LCDS in the MAPS context', describes the MAPS approach in interpreting these concepts, and it is followed by a set of MAPS working definitions for each term.

MA: the omnipresent term

The term 'mitigation action' is commonly used in the climate change literature but hardly interrogated from a definitional point of view. It becomes clear that the current wide use of this term is directly related to its inclusive and vague nature. The term has not yet been identified as a specific concept, or proper noun, 'Mitigation Action' (MA). For MAPS purposes we will be making the term MA distinct. MA can embrace data collection, studies, research, strategy development, plans, policies, projects, pilot projects, programmes, the definition implementation and enforcement of regulation, capacity and institution building, provision of financial incentives, and awareness raising or campaigns among others (Tyler et al. 2011).

The definition of 'action' in the Online Oxford English Dictionary is 'the fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim'. This correlates well with general interpretation that MA is the fact or the process of doing something aiming at reducing GHG emissions. And important to note, this interpretation does not exclude any modality (e.g. policy-based actions).

'Mitigation options' is a concept that often replaces mitigation action in the literature. Above conclusions can apply for this term too, and no specific distinction between 'mitigation action' and 'mitigation options' has been identified from the revised written works.

NAMAs: actions under UNFCCC

Around the UNFCCC negotiations in Bali in 2007, there arose a need to describe actions that scale up from project-based initiatives and yet did not refer to policy. The term 'policy' (even though it is used in Sustainable Development Policies & Measures, SD-PAMs) raises concerns that, if a policy intervention were funded by another country, then control over a core function of government – that of making policy – would be lost. NAMAs were eventually agreed upon. As the Bali Action Plan refers to, NAMAs are considered voluntary actions by developing countries, strongly linked to support, and monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) of both action and support. The NAMA terminology essentially only has context and meaning in the context of the UNFCCC framework.

Mirrored in international negotiations, NAMA has served two different meanings: the overall deviation below BAU (or reduction in carbon intensity of GDP), and the individual actions (projects, programmes, policies) of a country. The latter are sometimes referred to as individual NAMAs, and deviations below BAU termed 'aggregate NAMA.' Submissions of NAMAs by developing countries to the Copenhagen Accord prove this dual meaning. The range of submissions includes project actions, policy instruments and sectorial and national-wide targets, among others.

In spite of these diverging interpretations anchored in the negotiation texts, the general understanding of NAMAs embraces the idea of 'individual NAMAs'. This can be seen in most definitions available in the literature regarding NAMAs. Ecofys states that NAMAs are policies, programmes and projects that are undertaken by developing countries to contribute to the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions¹. Further elaboration of the concept states that NAMAs are a new policy instrument which provides a mechanism for finance, technology and capacity-building transfer from developed to developing countries to support much needed up-scaling of efforts to mitigate climate change (Röser & de Wit 2012). UNEP highlights the meaning of NAMAs as vehicles to implement Low Carbon Development Strategies (UNEP 2011), elaborating that they can either represent action or require action (e.g. targets). Other sources find it useful to understand NAMAs as voluntary action, perceived as nationally appropriate by a developing country government, that leads to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to sustainable development in that country (Van Tilburg, Camron, Wurtenberger & Bakker 2011).

LCDS: climate and development

In addition to actions, Cancun decisions under the UNFCCC encourage developing countries to develop low-carbon development strategies or plans in the context of sustainable development (Cancun decision 1/CP.16, para 65). It also states that developed countries should develop low-carbon development strategies or plans (Cancun decision 1/CP.16, para 45).

¹ Definition available at <http://www.namadatabase.org/index.php/NAMAs>, accessed on 28 September 2012

Van Tilburg, de Coninck, Wurtenberger & Bakker (2011) present a comprehensive background against which the concept of Low Carbon Development Strategies (LCDS) has emerged, and how it has been taken up in the climate negotiations. It states the lack of an internationally agreed definition and explains how the original explicit link between NAMAs and LCDS is lost in the agreed decisions.

Whereas the LCDS term has a strong link to the climate negotiations context, various countries have designed and implemented integrated national strategies and policies (Van Tilburg, de Coninck, Wurtenberger & Bakker 2011), even before the term was included in the negotiation texts. It may appear that the LCDS concept therefore has significance beyond the international climate change negotiations.

MAAs are sometimes referred to as top-down approaches, and LCDS as bottom-up. This is not always a helpful distinction as it implies an 'either/or' situation and that is not always the case. Tentative LCDS definitions in the literature are generally forward-looking national economic development plans that include low-emission and climate-resilient economic growth, i.e. meeting development goals on a lower carbon trajectory (Ngara 2011).

MA, NAMA and LCDS in the MAPS context

Starting point

The lack of definitions is not perceived to be critical for the development of nationally-driven long-term Mitigation Action Plans and Scenarios (MAPS) nor for delivering shared lessons and building a best practice to accelerate low carbon development planning and implementation of mitigation actions. However, like any conversation, MAPS community collaboration needs to rely on a common understanding. This understanding of whether the focus is on individual MA's, or more on the overarching LCDS (or some combination of the two) may help in discussions between countries.

It is however important to be mindful of different players interacting within MAPS. In particular, one can expect different language among modellers, policy-makers and stakeholders. While MA will probably be a convenient term to make reference to the input of the analytical models, a

large number of stakeholders may prefer to use MA and NAMA concepts interchangeably.

In any case, countries are developing their own understanding of NAMAs, as well as LCDS through active policy-making and participation in national and international programmes and initiatives, partly in response to climate negotiations. The 'Insights into...' boxes provide insights into the use of these concepts by the MAPS countries based on documentation generated through their country studies and/or Mitigation Action case studies developed by their teams².

Insights into use of MA and NAMA concepts

COLOMBIA

The Colombian study (Monroy et al. 2011) avoids the definitional issue in the context of the national policy and reiterates current uncertainties and interpretations associated to these concepts in the literature, in particular about NAMAs. The study refers to NAMAs in the context of the international negotiations. It highlights that NAMAs are an interesting alternative (to CDM) because it takes into account the country's context and development priorities. The documentation generated by the Colombian Low Carbon Development Strategy alludes to the identification of alternatives, programmes and measures – with no explicit reference to NAMAs or MA. NAMA is therefore still strongly framed by its international context.

BRAZIL

Some MAs may become NAMAs, states the Brazilian case study (la Rovere et al. 2011). Thus, there is an explicit distinction between NAMAs and MAs. It further specifies that in the future these MAs may become candidates for financial support to NAMAs to be provided through UNFCCC mechanisms, which establishes a strong link between NAMAs and international finance.

² MAPS country case studies available at <http://www.mapsprogramme.org/knowledge-sharing/>

Insights into use of MA and NAMA concepts

CHILE

In the Chilean paper (Sanhueza & Palma 2011), there is an extensive discussion about the NAMA concept. It affirms that the prevailing notion of the NAMA concept is that these actions would be proposed by developing nations in order to significantly reduce green house emissions in sectors of their economies, below their Business as Usual emission scenarios. NAMAs cover both the effort to build capacities to reduce emissions as well as the measures themselves and may take the form of policies and measures, regulations, standards, programmes and even financial initiatives. NAMAs, as well, may cover one or more sector, or, alternatively there could be more than one NAMA for one same sector. The author speaks to identification of mitigation options to give fulfilment to it, including the modality of NAMAs. Therefore, NAMAs appear as a subset or modality of MAs.

'Mitigation options' is a central term in the Chilean MAPS process documentation. A specific objective of the process is to provide information about preferred NAMAs that could be implemented by the Government.

PERU³

Peru's study (Takahashi et al. 2011) establishes three categories of activities: existing MAs (understood as non-climate-driven actions that contribute to emission reductions), CDM projects and NAMAs. It explains the Peruvian concept of PRONAMI (National Mitigation Program) introduced by the Government. A PRONAMI would be developed at sectoral level, aligned with national policy objectives. It would comprise financial instruments as well as NAMAs and CDM activities (Takahashi et al. 2011). The authors make several references to the NAMA approach when discussing mitigation action. A proposal for a NAMA concept and design guided by the Government has suggested that NAMAs should be presented as a bundle of actions that are proposed to guarantee mitigation actions are implemented by removing previously identified barriers and to ensure their sustainability over time. This bundle of actions considers two types of actions: (a) mitigation actions: projects or measures that reduce emissions directly, and (b) support actions: projects or measures that support the mitigation actions by removing barriers and help to generate other economic, social and environmental benefits (Takahashi et al. 2011).

As regards to the LCDS concept, MAPS researchers define Low Carbon Development (LCD) in a paper exploring linkages between low-carbon development, mitigation and poverty in middle-income countries. It states that LCD is the process of socio-economic and human progress, which minimizes the output of GHGs. This process requires the participation of capable, free individuals in society as a whole. Individual freedom and capability depend on political, economic and social arrangements. The process cannot be left to the belief in self-regulating markets or government as a provider of public goods. Poverty alleviation is not a natural side effect of LCD, because its benefits are not equally distributed among the society. Individuals cannot access and participate equally, because opportunities are uneven. Therefore, LCD needs the will of the powerful as well as political interventions that address both market and system failures to ensure a more equal distribution and access to the opportunities and benefits of low-carbon development. Access, freedom and inclusion for poor communities to the low carbon economy are key to poverty alleviation (Wlokas et al. 2011). No definition precisely on LCDS has been established.

MAPS approach

It is easy to get lost in negotiating text, and that is not the focus of MAPS. One can therefore say in practical terms, and from a MAPS perspective, it would seem clearest, simplest and most helpful to focus simply on 'mitigation actions' (MAs) as core terminology. Indeed, this is reflected in the MAPS name already.

MAs would represent any activity that contributes to mitigation of greenhouse gases (GHGs), even when they were deployed for reasons of local sustainable development, rather than specifically for climate change purposes (Garibaldi et al. 2011).

NAMAs are more internationally focused, and immediately bring in the question of international support and MRV. In this sense MAs are distinguished from 'Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions' (NAMAs), which tend to be associated with international negotiations.

³ Interpretations in Takahashi et al. 2011 do not necessarily reflect the discussions that are currently taking place in the context of PlanCC (the MAPS country process in Peru) about the meaning of different terms, including the NAMA concept.

A common terminology with regard to the NAMA and MA concepts has been requested and is beneficial for the MAPS community. Still, it remains key to provide space for country-driven interpretations and country-specific terminology that suits all players within a particular MAPS country.

Moreover, NAMA working definitions and current interpretations could appear to be restrictive, whereas MAPS processes require robust and comprehensive inclusion of mitigation alternatives to build an evidence base for a long-term transition to efficient low-carbon economies.

When actions identified by MAPS processes are country-driven, aligned with national priorities and suitable to the local context, these may be easily considered 'nationally appropriate'. However, this does not necessarily mean that these MAs are directly referred to as NAMAs.

A distinction between MA and NAMA is relevant to MAPS beyond reflecting on existing interpretations and definitions. If MA would alternatively be interpreted as unilateral NAMAs, this would presuppose the international context drives the formulation and thinking of mitigation action in developing countries, which is not necessarily the case in MAPS countries.

From the proposed use of the NAMA concept in the MAPS countries, it can be concluded that all (individual) NAMAs can be considered MAs. MAs developed domestically may be submitted internationally as NAMAs, particularly if international support or recognition is sought for their implementation. Figure 1 illustrates when the NAMA concept may become useful in the context of MAPS.

With this, MAPS is suggesting an action-oriented approach, in a sense that the actions are at the centre and starting point of the programme. Once the action (and its costs, benefits, co-benefits) has been identified, the question of support and MRV arise.

For MAPS, actions may contribute to plans or scenarios – whether this is considered an LCDS process or not will depend from country to country. MAPS' conception to build an evidence base is that MAs build up to either a plan or a scenario. Surely there are cases where a scenario or plan (or an existing target) will identify the need for action, or greater action, and then the further action will be developed. Nevertheless, this approach needs careful process and research consideration to ensure actions are strategically identified and prioritized. Otherwise the risk is, as UNEP points out, that actions not being the result of strategic processes or careful national planning will not necessarily represent the most efficient or appropriate mitigation or adaptation responses – but probably the most immediately attractive for the policy maker or the individual project developer mostly driven by short-term perspectives (UNEP 2011). MAPS practitioners are using a combination of economy-wide modelling tools and a scenario framework design process (in addition to technology-based sectoral modelling) to be able to respond to this challenge.

At present, MAPS' International research team is further exploring the interface and linkages between LCDS and MAs, as well as the nature of LCDS. Figure 2 points out some of the characteristics generally associated with both concepts. However, overlaps and exceptions exist.

Insights into use of MA and NAMA concepts

SOUTH AFRICA

The South African case study (SAMA Paper) creates a new term: South African Mitigation Action (SAMA). The analysis of several planned mitigation actions has the objective, among others, of giving a relevant meaning to this term, if not unwrapping a definition, with a view to provide information that would be helpful to countries in implementing MAs. It concludes that SAMAs must certainly result in emission reductions. These reductions can be caused directly or indirectly. A SAMA is unlikely to be a plan, strategy or scenario. It concludes that arriving at a final definition of SAMA proves difficult, and it would ultimately depend on the purpose for having it.

FIGURE 1:
LINKS BETWEEN MITIGATION ACTIONS AND NAMA CONCEPTS FROM A MAPS PERSPECTIVE

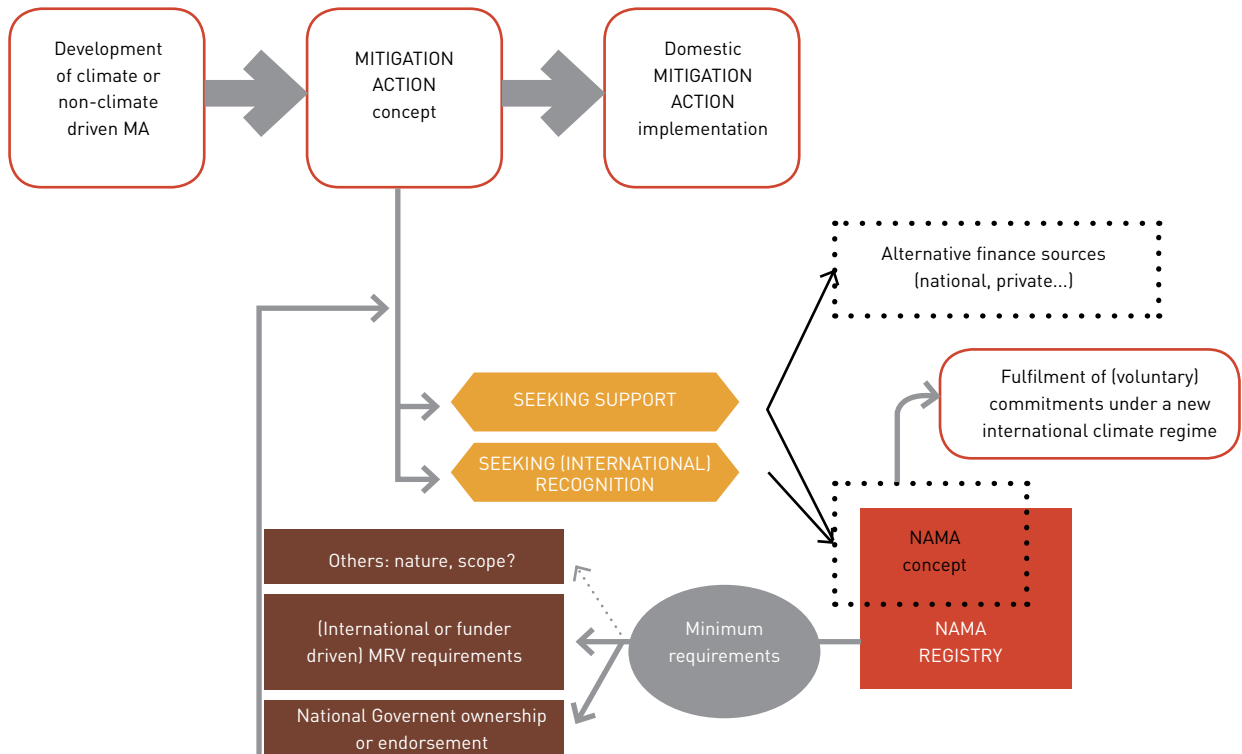
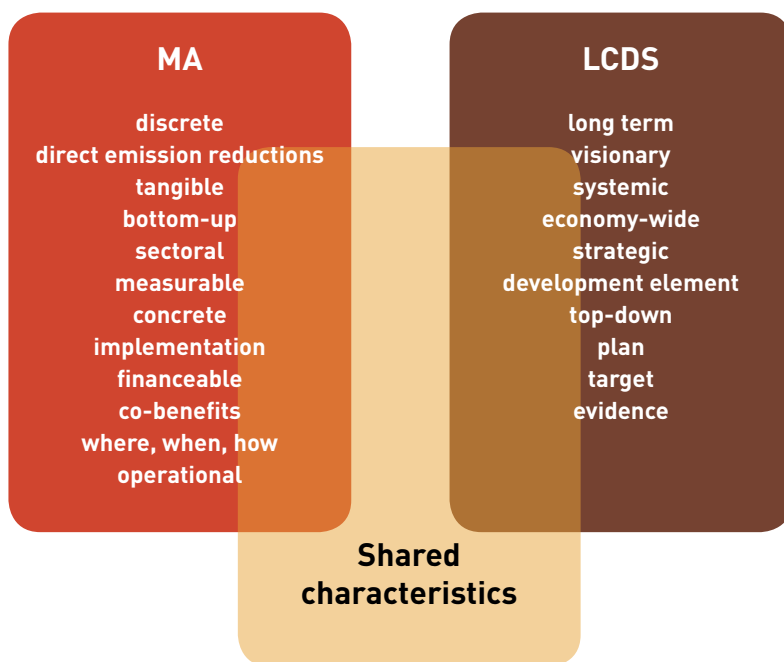


FIGURE 2:
TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS EMBODIED IN MA AND LCDS TERMS



MAPS working definitions

- ▶ **MA** is understood as any activity that contributes (directly and/or indirectly) to reduction of GHG emissions. MAPS understands MAs as including all kinds of mitigation actions in a country, because this suggests a more inclusive, bottom-up approach to identifying, understanding and supporting mitigation actions in developing countries. The MA term includes individual NAMAs as a sub-set or approach (but not aggregate NAMAs).
- ▶ **NAMA** is exclusive to actions seeking support and/or recognition in the international context. Therefore, (individual) NAMAs are conceived as an MA undertaken by developing countries utilising finance, technology and capacity building transfer from developed countries in the context of the international climate negotiations. Aggregate NAMAs refer to the deviation of GHG emissions below BAU (e.g. targets) concepts submitted under the Copenhagen Accord as NAMA.
- ▶ The **LCDS** term provides the context and long-term vision for a transition to robust economies that are carbon efficient, and thus, have minimized the output of GHG emissions. LCDS can include plans, scenarios or other planning tools to deal with the future.

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For more information

NAMA team

Anya Boyd, Kim Coetzee, Marta Torres, Emily Tyler, Harald Winkler

Contact: Marta Torres

marta.torresgunfaus@uct.ac.za

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MAPS Programme

Tel: +27 21 461 2881

Email: info@mapsprogramme.org

Twitter: MAPSProgramme

www.mapsprogramme.org



Mitigation Action Plans & Scenarios

MORE ABOUT MAPS

Mitigation Action Plans and Scenarios (MAPS) is a collaboration amongst developing countries to establish the evidence base for long term transition to robust economies that are both carbon efficient and climate resilient. In this way MAPS contributes to ambitious climate change mitigation that aligns economic development with poverty alleviation.

Central to MAPS is the way it combines research and stakeholder interest with policy and planning. Our participative process engages stakeholders from all sectors within participating countries and partners them with the best indigenous and international research.

MAPS grew out of the experience of the Government mandated Long Term Mitigation Scenarios (LTMS) process that took place in South Africa between 2005 and 2008. The LTMS, with its home-grown stakeholder-driven approach, its reliance on scenarios and the rigour of its research and modelling were key to its approach. The LTMS informed South Africa's position for Copenhagen and is the base of much of the country's domestic policy.

MAPS Programme
Tel: +27 21 461 2881
Email: info@mapsprogramme.org
Twitter: [MAPSPprogramme](https://twitter.com/MAPSPprogramme)
www.mapsprogramme.org