

Defining a Sustainable Vision for The Future: Low Emission Development Strategies

The term “low-emission development strategy”, or “LEDS,” first emerged in the context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate talks in 2008 and was specifically mentioned in negotiating texts at the 15th Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen in 2009. The Cancun Agreements in 2010 encouraged the elaboration of LEDS in the context of sustainable development; and this principle was reaffirmed in Durban in 2011. However, there is currently no internationally agreed definition of a LEDS.

Energy is the key factor of economic growth, and access to clean and affordable energy is one of the main prerequisites for sustainable economic and social development. However, production and consumption of energy is also the main source of global GHG emissions that are causing climate change. A LEDS describes how a country can transition to a sustainable development pathway that decouples economic growth from GHG emission-intensive actions. That is, a LEDS describes forward-looking national development plans or strategies that encompass low-emission growth while helping advance national climate change and development policy planning in more coordinated, coherent and strategic manner.

Why undertake a Low Emission Development Strategy?

Climate change is a defining challenge of our time. Science tells us that if immediate action is not taken to slow down – and reverse in a few years – the growth of greenhouse gas emissions, changes in our climate could have catastrophic consequences for the entire planet. We also know that the resultant negative effects will hit many of the poorest people in the world more quickly,

and will be felt more deeply in many developing countries. However to date, narrowly-defined projects aimed at either reducing GHG emissions or increasing climate resilience have dominated the climate change actions taken by most countries. This has resulted in the accumulation of many efforts, isolated in nature, to respond to what is a broad, crosscutting issue. The elaboration and implementation of a LEDS can allow policy makers to respond more effectively to climate change by through the design of a comprehensive policy and programmatic response that integrates low-emission and development planning, policies, and action across multiple sectors and levels (national, regional and local levels).

Changing to a low emission development pathway also offers other significant benefits, such as greater energy security and improved resilience to energy price shocks, improved health due to lower conventional pollutant emissions, and greater agricultural and land-use productivity. Instead of locking in high-carbon infrastructure, developing countries in particular have the opportunity to advance to new cleaner technologies such as wind and solar energy, low energy buildings, energy efficient industrial production and sustainable transport.

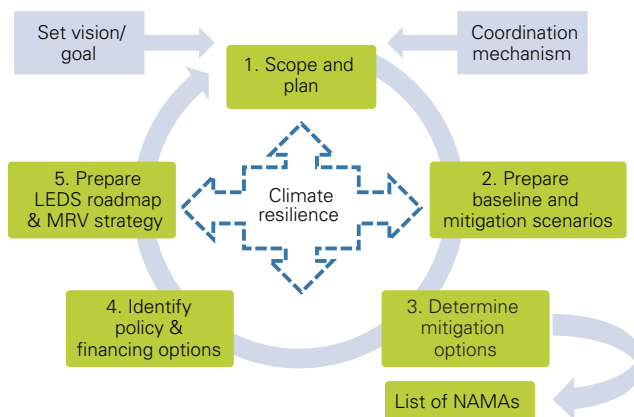
Approach to designing a LEDS

A comprehensive LEDS assumes a national, economy-wide approach, but a LEDS can also be designed and implemented at the level of a region or a sector. In such cases, potential “leakage” of GHG emissions should be considered during the boundary setting. It is critical that the LEDS is closely linked to existing sustainable development goals and strategies, poverty eradication and economic growth strategies. In addition to setting overall strategic goals, a LEDS should contain a concrete set of measures leading to GHG emission reductions, quantification of the corresponding emission reductions for each measure and an assessment of the financial requirements to implement them. For non - Annex I Parties, the

set of measures can be expressed as nationally appropriate mitigation actions (or NAMAs).

In 2010, UNDP defined five steps to elaborating a LEDS, as shown in the figure opposite. Most conceptual approaches for elaborating a LEDS follow very similar steps, according to analysis of the Low Emission Capacity Building Programme (UNDP, 2013). However, it is important to note that a LEDS is not a fixed process – each country should customise the methodology based on national goals and circumstances. For example, a top-down, economy-wide comprehensive LEDS often relies on macro-economic modelling and robust GHG emission scenarios. Therefore, some developing countries have elected to elaborate sectoral-level LEDS, which can be more easily aligned and mainstreamed with existing sectoral strategies, or to take a bottom-up approach of first identifying NAMAs in certain sectors and aggregating the results to achieve a national vision or target.

Key steps in preparing a LEDS



In 2010, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) identified several technical, institutional and policy lessons for designing LEDS based upon an analysis of seven countries:

1. Data on emission projections, mitigation potential and costs are not always readily available and can be a particular challenge for developing countries.
2. To maximize an efficient use of resources, producing a LEDS should build on existing related strategies and reports, including the experience gained during development of those reports.
3. The national GHG inventory is a fundamental step in understanding a national GHG emission portfolio and the underlying trends.

4. Inter-ministerial participation is required, with clear leadership. Actors should have clear roles and responsibilities. Stakeholder consultation supports widespread engagement.
5. In anticipation of funding for LEDS, it may be useful to set up a coordinated funding mechanism.
6. An important part of developing a LEDS is to identify policy options to support the LEDS, which involves examining an array of policy options and analyzing any barriers to implementation.
7. It is essential to align policies with national economic and development goals. Policies can have overlapping effects and it is also important to ensure policy coherence across sectors and ministries.

Useful tools and resources

- UNDP 2010: [How-to Guide: Low-Emission Development Strategies and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions: Eastern Europe and CIS](#) ([English](#) or [Russian](#))
- UNDP 2011: [Executive Summary: Preparing Low-Emission Climate-Resilient Development Strategies](#)
- OECD 2010: [Low-Emission Development Strategies \(LEDS\): Technical, Institutional And Policy Lessons](#)
- GIZ 2013: [LEDS Tool: Step-By-Step Guidance to a Long-Term Framework for Continuous Sustainable Development Cooperation](#)



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