

# Democratic practices in climate change adaptation

Synthesis report



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November 2025



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# Acknowledgement

*We wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Eric Hubbard, who sadly passed away during the preparation of this report. His insights and encouragement were fundamental to the development of this work, and he will be greatly missed by those who knew and worked with him. We also wish to thank Saara Nokelainen of DEMO Finland, Rafael Jimenez Aybar, and Michael Nevin for their helpful comments on earlier drafts. Finally, we extend our appreciation to the interviewees and community members who generously gave their time to help us develop our understanding of their countries and the adaptation programmes within them.*

# Executive summary

## Trialling a framework for environmental democracy in climate

Climate adaptation is now at the forefront of global environmental policy, demanding urgent and transformative changes within societies to achieve development that is both resilient and sustainable, and just. The inadequacy of committed and delivered funds for climate finance in the most vulnerable countries underscores the need for effective adaptation that takes an integrated, multi-sectoral approach. International frameworks—including the Global Goal on Adaptation Framework (COP28), funding instruments such as the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund, and LDC-led programmes like the Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience —are putting these principles into practice.

The principles of Environmental Democracy establish citizens' rights to a stake in environmental issues, prioritising participation, transparency, and justice. These three pillars align with calls for recognitional, procedural, and distributive justice, as well as locally led approaches, to ensure the effectiveness of climate adaptation. The Environmental Democracy in Adaptation Framework is designed to explore how these principles have been implemented in adaptation programmes in The Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia. The methodology combined stakeholder interviews, document review, and community engagement to explore how environmental democracy principles are currently integrated, how delivery might be improved, and how effective the EDA framework is in articulating these principles.

## Main findings

The application of the EDA framework across six countries revealed significant insights into the state of environmental democracy within climate adaptation programmes.

- **Participation:** Although formal mechanisms for stakeholder engagement are often in place, the depth and inclusivity of participation vary. Community involvement in planning and decision-making remains frequently limited by power asymmetries, a lack of technical capacity, and resource constraints. Effective inclusion of women, youth, and marginalised groups remains inconsistent. Critically, while there has been progress in enabling citizens and communities to identify and advise on specific investments, the strategic direction of adaptation programmes remains outside their control.
- **Transparency:** There is a growing recognition of the need for transparent processes; however, information about adaptation planning, funding allocations, and project outcomes is not always accessible to all relevant stakeholders. Language barriers, technical complexity, and the lack of robust knowledge management systems hinder public access to critical information about the project. Furthermore, climate information that integrates local knowledge and is disseminated in useful formats is often patchy, depending on the emphasis placed on it by donors or governments. The presence of a strong national

meteorological agency influences the quality of climate information in adaptation programmes.

- **Justice:** While many programmes have functioning and well-established mechanisms for redressing specific grievances, accountability, and the monitoring and evaluation needed to support them, they remain poor. Accountability relies on top-down reporting processes, with limited opportunities for communities to provide feedback on what is working and what is not, or to hold officials accountable for their decisions in a regular and meaningful manner.
- The highest-scoring funder was the World Bank through its International Development Assistance funding. Working through existing government systems, its recent programmes emphasise subsidiarity, establishing strong institutional legacies for delivery, and locally owned financing processes. However, many of its programmes are relatively new, and the proof will be in the quality and detail of delivery.
- Funder regulations and operating structures play a significant role in determining the integration of environmental democracy. For example, international intermediaries implementing on behalf of the GCF limit the inclusion of communities in strategy direction-setting and the management of implementation.

Despite advances, persistent gaps remain in the mainstreaming of environmental democracy principles. The research indicates that simply embedding participatory language in policy is not enough; genuine transformation requires reshaping institutional cultures, financing, and accountability mechanisms to centre community agency.

## Recommendations

Stakeholders may derive a wide range of recommendations from this report. Adaptation requires a "whole-of-society" approach, in which stakeholders across society work together to create the conditions for transformative change towards resilient societies. This means that parliamentarians and those who support them can focus on creating environments for deeper participation and partnerships with communities. For funders, the regulations that guide funding delivery must be adjusted to create opportunities to go beyond consultation with communities on their priorities and to facilitate integration into strategic processes.

- **Deepening participation:** Institutionalise participatory processes that give real decision-making power to communities, especially marginalised groups. Invest in capacity building and leadership development at the grassroots level. There is scope for consideration of recognitional, procedural, and distributive justice principles at each stage of the project cycle.
- **Enhancing transparency:** Establish proactive disclosure protocols for adaptation plans, budgets, and outcomes, using accessible formats and languages. Support community-led monitoring and evaluation of adaptation projects.
- **Advancing justice:** Review accountability procedures to encourage bottom-up accountability. This might be achieved through regular reporting to community meetings, or through active

methods in which citizens audit the delivery of programmes, or have representatives integrated into key review, quality assurance, and decision-making processes.

- **Scaling locally led adaptation:** Provide direct funding and flexible resources to locally led initiatives, enabling experimentation and context-sensitive solutions. Elevate local knowledge and priorities in the design and evaluation of adaptation policies and projects.
- **Adopting and refining frameworks:** Encourage broader adoption of the EDA assessment framework, coupled with ongoing refinement based on user feedback. Integrate its use into funding criteria and reporting requirements for adaptation finance.

By embedding environmental democracy at the heart of climate adaptation, programmes can become more effective, legitimate, and resilient, ensuring that the communities most affected by climate impacts play a leading role in shaping their futures.

# Introduction

The necessity of urgent and large-scale climate adaptation is well established. No less than fundamental transitions of key systems are required to achieve climate-resilient development that is equitable and sustainable (IPCC, 2022). Within these transitions, climate adaptation requires just, multi-sectoral, integrated efforts to have a greater likelihood of feasibility, impact, and success (ibid.).

To facilitate a move towards climate-resilient development, a “Newly Collective Quantified Goal” (NCQG) of \$300 billion annually by 2035 was agreed at UNFCCC COP29, with developed nations leading the effort to mobilise it. Recognising the gap between funds needed for a comprehensive climate response and the funds made available by countries responsible for escalating climate risks, the same decision features an aspirational goal of £1.3 trillion. However, the amounts currently flowing for climate change adaptation remain insufficient. While adaptation finance needs are estimated at \$215-387 billion/year, total adaptation flows stood at \$74 billion in 2022, and only 20% of that went to the highly vulnerable Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (UNEP, 2024; CPI, 2024). There remain good reasons to believe that meeting the NCQG will present a significant challenge. Cuts to overseas development assistance budgets, ongoing conflict in Europe, and international trade wars undermine the capacity and willingness of developed nations to commit sufficient finance for direct investment or, at the very least, sufficient to leverage that of the private sector at scale.

With the quantity of climate finance insufficient, the quality and effectiveness of climate finance for adaptation are of paramount importance. Evidence suggests that locally led approaches and the application of distributive, procedural, and recognitional justice are key enablers of adaptation effectiveness (Soanes et al., 2021; IPCC, 2022). Locally led approaches centre on an understanding of differentiated community priorities, power dynamics between groups, and environmental contexts in the planning and delivery of adaptation programmes (Soanes et al., 2021). The application of recognitional, procedural, and distributive justice principles ensures that different groups within communities are adequately represented in adaptation planning, that planning processes are inclusive and facilitate groups in properly articulating their needs and concerns, and that there are fair outcomes during and following the implementation of adaptation interventions (Wijsman & Berbés-Blázquez, 2022). A recent study on adaptation effectiveness in East Africa repeatedly highlighted the importance of local ownership, technical capacity, and local ideas for sustainable and contextually embedded interventions (Atela et al., 2024).

International recognition of these principles is growing. The Global Goal on Adaptation Framework, agreed upon at COP28 in Dubai, stipulates that adaptation should be “based on and guided by ... locally led adaptation”, alongside science-based targets and local and indigenous knowledge (UNFCCC, 2023). The Adaptation Fund has opened a Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) window, and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) has expressed its commitment to Locally Led Climate Action (GCF, 2025). Numerous development agencies, governments, and civil society organisations (CSOs) have also subscribed to the LLA principles – a set of 8 principles developed with practitioners by the Global Commission on Adaptation – including the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth

Development Office (FCDO), Irish Aid, Government of Uganda, and other developing country governments (WRI, 2025).

These key enablers of adaptation effectiveness align with the three pillars of Environmental Democracy—participation, transparency, and justice (Greene, 2023). The Environmental Democracy pillars establish citizens' rights to a stake in environmental issues. They are embedded in numerous international conventions, including Article 6 of the UNFCCC, the 1998 Aarhus Convention, and the 2018 Escazu Agreement (WFD, 2020). The Environmental Democracy in Adaptation (EDA) assessment framework is designed to facilitate an exploration of environmental democracy principles within the context of adaptation (Pertaub & Greene, 2024).

The remainder of this paper documents how environmental democracy has been applied in climate adaptation programmes in six countries: The Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia. The research questions guiding this report are:

- How have climate adaptation programmes integrated environmental democracy principles to date?
- How might adaptation and democracy stakeholders better deliver environmental democracy in adaptation programmes?
- How effective has the EDA framework been in articulating environmental democracy in climate adaptation programmes?

## Organisation of the paper

This paper is organised into five sections as follows. Section one provides an introduction that offers a global understanding and perspective. Section two offers an overview of the EDA framework. Section three outlines the methodology for the study, and section four presents and discusses the findings from the assessments. The fifth and final section offers conclusions and recommendations for climate finance stakeholders.

# The EDA framework

The environmental democracy in adaptation (EDA) framework provides guidance for evaluating climate adaptation programmes and assessing their adherence to principles of participation, transparency, and justice. The framework is based on a literature review of effective adaptation and environmental democracy (Greene, 2022; Pertaub & Greene, 2023). The framework offers 14 indicators of environmental democracy, split across seven broad principles (See Fig. 1). Indicators are qualitatively assessed using guidance from the framework, with evaluators using their judgement and contextual knowledge to allocate scores. Scores can be allocated from low to high, with “low-medium” and “medium-high” options a possibility when a programme demonstrates features from both rankings. This approach enables a "traffic light" system, where low scores are coded red, and high scores are coded green. In rare cases where insufficient information is available to make a reasonable assessment against an indicator, a “not enough data” grading can be used.

Table 1: EDA framework ranking system

High
Medium-High
Medium
Low-Medium
Low
Not enough data

The framework focuses on process rather than outcomes. It explores how programmes are constructed and delivered to ensure environmental rights, justice, and participatory governance of climate risks. This approach means it can be applied to programmes that are currently in operation as well as those that have been completed. Drawing on climate adaptation literature, this approach operates on the assumption that strong participatory governance, transparency, and justice will increase the likelihood of more durable and impactful adaptation outcomes, while also reducing the risk of maladaptation.

The framework relies heavily on the IPCC (2022) suggestion that transformative approaches are required to address climate risks. While there are many ways to define transformation, the EDA framework adopts an equity framing. In this framing, transformative adaptation necessitates ongoing evaluation of assumptions, beliefs, and judgments by project implementers, and it requires programme design that empowers grassroots actors "empowered within and through the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects" (Taylor et al., 2025).

A deliberately high bar is set to achieve “high” scores. The framework rationale is that only programmes that create this kind of reflexive approach to implementation, in which local stakeholders are fully engaged in multiple aspects of the programme, can achieve higher scores. At its core, the EDA framework rewards programmes that create more equitable relations between states and citizens.

	Environmental Democracy Pillar	Framework Principle	Indicator
Adaptation Theme	Participation	Commitment to Participation	Vision
			Resourcing
		Devolution & Subsidiarity [1]	Subsidiarity
		Representativeness & Inclusion [2]	Legitimate Participatory Institutions
			Addressing Structural Inequalities
		Participatory Program Operations at the Local Level [1] [4] [5] [6]	Program Priorities and Strategic Objectives
			Choice of Interventions and Investments
			Management of Implementation
			Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation
		Capacity & Resource [3]	Sustainable Participation
	Transparency	Transparent Information [7]	Program Information
			Climate Information
	Justice	Protection of Rights [2] [7]	Appeal and Redress
Accountability			

Figure 1: The environmental democracy in adaptation framework

# Methodology

The following methodology was used to apply the framework in each country. First, a desk review of legislation and policies related to adaptation was conducted to understand the enabling environment for environmental democracy principles in the context of adaptation. Since local institutions are central to adaptation, the review included policies relating to devolution and the nature of local structures involved in adaptation decision-making and implementation. The EDA framework was applied to these policies. Where possible, a policy expert was interviewed to validate findings and provide additional detail.

Second, climate adaptation programmes being implemented in the country were reviewed, focusing on domestic and international adaptation and resilience-focused programmes from bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as climate funds. While mitigation objectives were not excluded, adaptation-focused programmes were prioritised in the search. The following criteria were used to select two to three adaptation programmes for in-depth review in each country:

- The project must have the potential to be meaningfully influenced by parliamentarians.
- The project must cover multiple districts/regions within a country.
- The project must have a minimum value of £1,000,000, with a preference for higher-value programmes.
- The project must have adaptation as the primary focus.
- The project must be three years in length or more.

Each selected programme underwent a desk review of available documents related to the programme, including proposal documents, performance reports, evaluations, news, press releases, and secondary literature such as NGO commentary and project evaluations.

Supplementary interviews with key informants who have experience implementing the programme were then conducted to add nuance to the assessment and address outstanding questions that emerged from the desk review. Informants were selected using available networks, with an effort made to find interviewees from both national and local levels. Community-level interviewees were also engaged in a small number of cases. Some informants were requested to share written feedback on questions, which was permitted. All informants were given the right to anonymity. Respondents were provided with drafts of the evaluation of their project for additional feedback and clarification.

*Table 2: Interviewees per country*

Country	No. Interviewees
The Gambia	6
Kenya	7
Nigeria	1

<b>Sierra Leone</b>	9
<b>Uganda</b>	8
<b>Zambia</b>	9
<b>Total</b>	41

## Limitations:

Some limitations arise due to methodological choices made during the application of the framework. For some projects, researchers were unable to obtain interviews, including those in Nigeria and the Kenya Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Kenya. Therefore, the strength of evidence varies across countries. Researchers opted to offer anonymity to interviewees to encourage greater freedom to share both positive and negative perspectives. This may have introduced a bias into responses. The limited budget available means that engagement at the local or community level was often not possible. While researchers on some specific projects were able to speak to community groups, most interviewed programme or government officers associated with the programme, introducing additional risk of bias. Finally, as the assessment is qualitative, with evaluators across six countries, some aspects of the framework may have been interpreted and applied slightly differently in each case. The lead author has sought to ensure uniformity of application through comment and discussion with each author throughout the review process.

# Findings and discussion

The following section presents findings and reflections emerging from the application of the EDA framework in six countries. It begins with findings from the enabling environment review, followed by noteworthy indicators in the participation, transparency, and justice pillars, respectively. The wider literature is included where relevant to offer insight into the identified trends or patterns.

## Enabling environments

Policies reviewed typically included key country climate-relevant documents, such as Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans, as well as sectoral plans and strategies, climate change legislation, environmental legislation, and devolution policies.

Table 3: Summary of ratings for country enabling environments.

	Zambia	Uganda	Kenya	The Gambia	Nigeria	Sierra Leone
Indicator	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
Vision	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium-High
Resourcing	Medium	Medium	Medium	Insufficient Data	Low-Medium	Medium
Subsidiarity	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium to High
Legitimate participatory institutions	Medium	Medium	Low-Medium	Medium-High	Medium	Low to Medium
Addressing structural inequalities	Medium	Low - Medium	Medium	Medium high	Medium	Low to Medium
Programme Priorities and Strategic Objectives	Medium	Low - Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium to High
Choice of interventions and investments	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low-Medium

<b>Management of implementation</b>	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low-Medium
<b>Monitoring, learning, evaluation</b>	Low	Low	Low	Low-Medium	Low - medium	Low
<b>Sustainable participation</b>	Medium	Insufficient data	High	Low	Low	Low to Medium
<b>Programme information</b>	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
<b>Climate information</b>	Low	Medium	Medium-High	Insufficient data	Low to medium	Low
<b>Appeal and Redress</b>	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Medium to High
<b>Accountability</b>	Low	Low	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Low	Medium

**Countries tend to score higher on indicators relating to vision, resourcing, subsidiarity, legitimate participatory institutions, and addressing structural inequality.** Lower scores are typically observed for indicators related to the details of delivery, including management of implementation, MEL, appeal, redress, and accountability. However, the distinction is not clear, and there are typically counterexamples. For some indicators, there is no clear pattern, such as sustainable participation, citizen choice of interventions and investments, and climate information. High or "medium-high" scores are not standard across any aspect of country policies, with some indicators, such as MEL and Accountability, scoring particularly poorly.

Nigeria provides a valuable example of the contrasts in democratic practice in different aspects of adaptation-enabling environments. Nigeria's approach to participation is broadly consultative. Documents underline the importance of engaging communities in shaping adaptation investment choices. Similarly, there is a reasonable recognition of the differentiated impacts of climate risks on men and women, as well as a commitment to institutions that have some level of legitimacy among communities – i.e., through their inclusion of traditional leaders. However, despite recognition of the need for broader inclusion and identification of local priorities, final decision-making in practice is typically made by government authorities. While communities are "engaged" or "consulted", the management and assessment of investment value remain top-down, often or at least poorly articulated in policy documents. The National Climate Change Policy identifies communities as recipients of awareness-raising and national programmes, rather than active participants in adaptation processes and project cycles. The idea that communities might have a role in managing delivery of adaptation investments, in MEL or accountability, has not shaped policy development in any meaningful sense.

Similarly, Zambia scores highly for its vision and subsidiarity indicators, based on the active decision-making role played by communities in the “Constituency Development Fund”, which allocates a portion of the national budget to invest in local development priorities. Local, elected Ward Development Committees (WDCs) are also responsible for leading the implementation of the National Adaptation Plan. Drawing on Arnstein's ladder of participation (1968) as a guide, which offers eight levels of participation ranging from “manipulation” to “citizen control”, Zambia’s documents suggest partnership and some level of delegated power to communities and their representatives. However, in practice, MEL frameworks and accountability procedures are largely top-down, with limited scope for communities to ensure that feedback is acted upon, contribute to assessments, or identify areas for future learning.

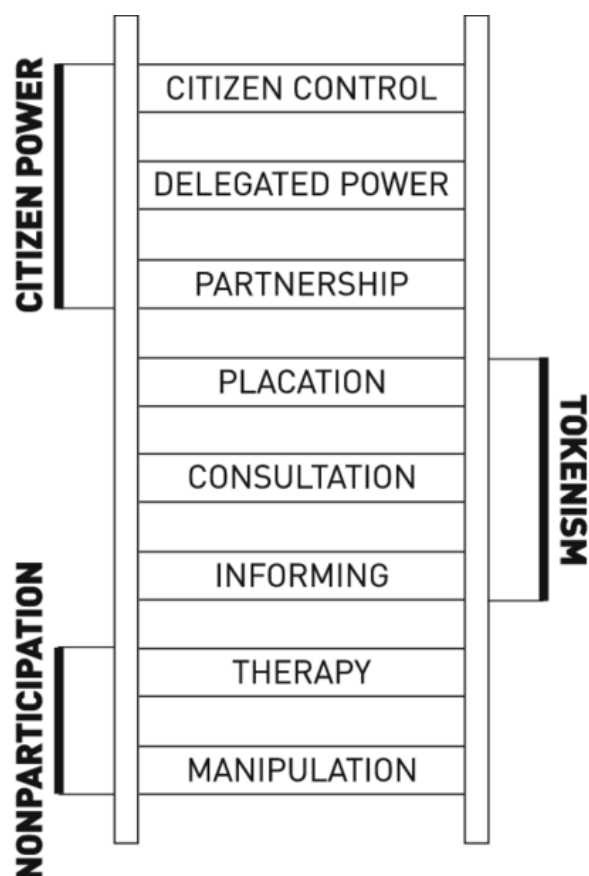


Figure 2: Arnstein's Ladder of Participation. Graphic from “Vardouli (2015)”.

**The scores reveal a gap between policy ambitions and actual practices on the ground.** The wider literature highlights that clear mandates for local institutions to manage and lead local development are not explicitly stated in legislation, with devolution remaining largely theoretical (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2019; Rugeiyamu & Msando, 2024). The lower and medium scores for key aspects of the management and delivery of adaptation indicate gaps in

policy and legislation on how communities and their representatives can participate in these areas of the project cycle. This has an impact on adaptation effectiveness, as evidence suggests that greater citizen participation in these areas leads to greater ownership of investments, integration with local priorities, and the development of home-grown strategies (Thornton et al., 2019; Crick et al., 2018).

Kenya stands out as an exception to the broader trend, scoring highly on indicators such as appeal and redress, climate information, sustainable participation, and choice of interventions and investments. This is in part due to Kenya's 2010 Constitution, which emphasises citizen participation as a key plank of decision-making on local development. It also devolved both financial and legislative powers to subnational counties, offering them substantial capacity to make context-specific decisions on local development. Further, its devolution has been in part defined by its exposure to climate risks – the first five-year plan for implementing Kenya's overarching Vision 2030 strategy, following the constitutional reform process, was called "Ending Drought Emergencies in Kenya" (Elmi & Birch, 2013). It has also benefited from significant long-term donor support to its meteorological agencies, which prioritises the "co-production" of climate information, drawing on indigenous and local knowledge (Carter et al., 2019; UK Government, 2024). It is the only country to have a "climate risk management framework", establishing principles for early warning systems and the development of climate information services. However, there is also reason for caution relating to these high scores. As one interview respondent pointed out, Kenya has been effective at developing a wide range of policies, in the respondent's opinion, to generate international approval. However, the level of effort and funding towards implementing them in practice is varied. Translating ambitious policies into county action is not simple, and some policies are therefore prioritised over others.

**For some indicators, there is a correlation between enabling environment scores and programme scores.** An emergent question is the extent to which enabling environments are shaping the design and implementation of climate programmes. In the same way that policies or regulations establish rules for how MEL, accountability, or participation should take place, adaptation programmes should follow suit, because donors, funds, and implementers alike are bound by country legislation. Our assessment methodology only partially addresses this question, because policies and regulations are not always well implemented or enforced. It is also because our review of policies takes place in 2025, while the programmes reviewed date from 2012 to the present. Even where policies were established, we are not able to ascertain how long it took to establish systems for implementation and enforcement.

However, some examples stand out. Kenya has had a relatively sophisticated CIS approach dating back to its early five-year plans and 2016 climate-resilient management framework. Correspondingly, as described below, its climate programmes score "medium-high" or above for climate information services. Similarly, The Gambia scores highly for legitimate participatory institutions in its policy environment, as it does across the adaptation programmes we reviewed. Conversely, Zambia and The Gambia both have limited enabling environments for climate information services, and all their climate adaptation programmes correspond with scores no higher than a "low-medium". The implication is that climate programmes require a strong country meteorological agency and the country's willingness to invest in CIS to ensure that adaptation

programmes succeed in integrating it into delivery. There is a need for further research to articulate how enabling environments influence – or fail to influence – climate programmes to understand the relationship more clearly.

**Similarly, scores for accountability and MEL are uniformly low or low-medium across country enabling environments, and the same is true across the adaptation programmes reviewed.** There are some exceptions, notably KCCAP in Kenya, ACRoSAL in Nigeria, and LIFE-AR in Uganda. Each has a slightly different approach to a greater democratic process, facilitating transparency and accountability. KCCAP enabled civil society organisations to carry out research and report publicly on progress, alongside a public audit. The more recently developed ACRoSAL and LIFE-AR intend to use community-level meetings as opportunities for local reporting and feedback collection (Interview Responses, 2025). Our research does not identify the reasons why specific countries struggled in these areas. The broader literature suggests several factors, including narrow political priorities and incentives, prioritization of upward donor reporting processes, and limited technical capacity (Coger et al., 2021; Atkher & Evans, 2024).

Adaptation programmes typically have higher scores on most indicators than the country's policy environment in which they operate. The projectised nature of adaptation projects can create greater scope for experimentation. Indeed, funds increasingly hope to see transformations and a “paradigm shift” as an outcome of their interventions, bringing with it the implication that programmes will adopt approaches that push beyond the current expectations of the enabling environment.

## Adaptation initiatives

We reviewed seventeen adaptation programmes across six countries, detailed in Table 3. Initiatives were selected from 2012 onwards, with some ongoing to this day. The framework enables the assessment of ongoing projects due to its focus on processes and design rather than outcomes.

*Table 4: List of adaptation initiatives reviewed*

Programme name	Value (inc. co-financing)	Development Partners	Timeframe
<b>Gambia</b>			
Climate resilient fishery initiative for livelihood improvement (PROREFISH)	\$25m	Green Climate Fund, FAO, Government of the Gambia	2023-2028

Rural integrated climate adaptation and resilience (RICAR)	\$10m	Adaptation Fund, World Food Programme Government of the Gambia	2022 - 2027
Ecosystem-based adaptation in The Gambia (EbA Project)	\$25m	Green Climate Fund Government of The Gambia United Nations Development Programme	2017-2025
<b>Kenya</b>			
Kenya climate change adaptation project (KCCAP)	£10m	Adaptation Fund	2016-2020
Financing locally led climate action (FLLoCA)	£200m	World Bank IDA, Denmark, Sweden, Government of Kenya	2021-2026
Towards ending drought emergencies (TWEENDE)	£34.5m	Green Climate Fund, Government of Kenya	2020-2025
<b>Nigeria</b>			
PROPCOM MaiKarfi	£46m	UK Aid – Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office	2012-2021
Agro-climatic resilience in semi-arid landscapes (ACReSAL)	\$750m	World Bank IDA, Government of Nigeria	2021-2028
<b>Sierra Leone</b>			
<b>Food systems resilience programme (FSRP)</b>	US\$135 million	World Bank	2022–2027

<b>Resilient urban Sierra Leone project (Freetown Tree Town component)</b>	US\$3 million	World Bank + GEF	2021 - 2026
<b>Adapting to climate change-induced coastal risks management project</b>	US\$10 million  (GEF - \$3.9 million, co-financing \$6.3 million – Government of Sierra Leone, UNDP)	GEF-LDCF, implementation by UNDP	2018 - 2023
<b>Uganda</b>			
Enhancing resilience of communities to climate change through catchment-based integrated management of water and related resources in Uganda (EURECCCA)	Grant: USD 7.759 million	Adaptation Fund	6 years  (Originally May 2017 to April 2021 - extended to June 2023)
Least developed country initiative for effective adaptation and resilience (LIFE-AR)	Grant: £10 million, with additional fundraising.	Multiple bilateral donors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FCDO</li></ul> Irish Aid	10 years  2021 to 2030
Strengthening adaptive capacity and resilience of communities in Uganda's watersheds- Awoja catchment (SACRIAC)	USD 9.7 million	GEF – LDCF	June 2022- June 2026
<b>Zambia</b>			
<b>Transforming landscapes for resilience and development (TRALARD)</b>	US\$ 87.2 million (initially US\$ 100 million)	World Bank (International Development Association)	2019 - 2025
<b>Building the resilience of local communities in Zambia through the introduction of ecosystem-based adaptation into priority ecosystems,</b>	US\$ 6.185 million + US\$15.4 million co-financing	Least Developed Countries Fund (Global Environment Facility)	2021 - 2025

including wetlands and forests (EbA)			
<b>Strengthening climate resilience of agricultural livelihoods in agro-ecological region project (SCRALA)</b>	US\$32 million + US\$105.27 million from GRZ	Green Climate Fund, Government of the Republic of Zambia	2018 - 2025

## Participation indicators

To achieve high scores in participation indicators, programmes must demonstrate evidence of partnerships with citizen groups and committees, or ceding control of decisions, budgets, and strategic direction to them. High scores require active shifts in institutional mindsets and practices to ensure that different groups are recognised in the process, that processes are inclusive and offer an equal voice to all participants, and that outcomes from a programme are distributed fairly. Appropriate resources and technical expertise are necessary to facilitate this shift, and power differences between groups should be acknowledged and utilised to inform the design of participatory processes. By contrast, lower scores are allocated for top-down decision-making, excluding communities or their representatives, or having processes with a limited understanding of how power dynamics in communities might create specific profiles of and vulnerabilities to risk.

*Table 5: Characteristics of high-scoring initiatives against each indicator*

Indicator	Description	High-scoring characteristics
<b>Vision</b>	Gauges the type of interaction that citizens have with the project	Partnership, delegated power, or complete citizen control of the interventions by local, community-centred institutions
<b>Resourcing</b>	Assesses the sufficiency of financial resources for activities required for environmental democracy	Resources sufficient for widespread consultations and flexibility to carry out further engagement if needed
<b>Subsidiarity</b>	Gauges the spatial scale of decision-making on adaptation interventions in the project	Decision-making taken at the lowest possible appropriate level, with communities integrated in all stages

<b>Legitimate Participatory Institutions</b>	Assesses the acceptability of institutions used by communities in practice	Integration of customary, traditional, or cultural leaders. Communities accept the institutions' leadership.
<b>Addressing structural inequalities</b>	Assesses the extent to which participatory processes address structural marginalisation	Specific, targeted efforts to understand vulnerabilities of certain groups and ensure priorities are acted upon, while contributing to long-term efforts to change accepted behaviours
<b>Programme priorities and strategic objectives</b>	Gauges input into high-level decisions such as sectoral focus areas, budget allocations, or adjustments to unforeseen events.	Inclusion of communities and/or their representatives in high-level decision-making meetings and strategic interactions with other programmes or agencies
<b>Choice of interventions and investments</b>	Assesses how intervention decisions are made and finalised	Communities have the freedom to determine investments or interventions based on local priorities, with no higher authority or limitations
<b>Management of implementation</b>	Assesses how service delivery is managed	Communities and their representatives engaged in oversight, procurement, and management of investments
<b>Monitoring, evaluation, and learning</b>	This indicator measures the extent to which communities and their representatives can participate in MEL processes, from setting programme or project indicators to the collection and interpretation of data.	Higher scores are awarded when communities can decide on indicators, contribute to data collection, interpretation, analysis, and the generation of learning.

## Key findings

**While there is recognition of the need for democratic and meaningful participation of citizens in adaptation decision project cycles, it has been challenging to deliver in practice.** Indicators relating to vision, resourcing, subsidiarity, and legitimate local institutions primarily relate to the institutional setup envisioned, built upon, or created by adaptation programmes. Scores on these indicators are typically medium or high, based mainly on the project documents' descriptions of the necessity for community consultation and inclusion in institutions related to adaptation investment decision-making.<sup>1</sup> Such principles are well-established enough that many climate funds require them in submitted proposals.

For example, “strengthening adaptive capacity and resilience of communities in Uganda’s watersheds – Awoja catchment” has a highly consultative and even placatory vision for participatory engagement. Stakeholder committees are established to enable citizens to share their aspirations and priorities, and to advise on project implementation to some extent. In another case, The Gambia’s EbA project aimed to develop community-managed ecosystems, with the intention of co-developing sophisticated protocols for community-based ecosystem management, thereby indicating some delegation of power to citizen-led institutions.

In contrast, scores relating to practical and tangible integration of communities into key aspects of the rest of the project cycle are more varied. Most programmes have taken a more consultative approach to engaging communities in choosing interventions and investments, rather than one that places greater control in local hands. Through project preparation workshops and meetings in advance of proposal development, or through consultation with communities during implementation, most programmes allow communities to advise on specific investment decisions. However, final decision-making authority often remains with project implementers or government authorities.

One programme, rural integrated climate adaptation and resilience (RICAR) in The Gambia, attempts to find a compromise by providing communities with a “menu” of possible investments to choose from. Interviews revealed that both the menu was flexible and shaped by community input, and also that implementers could veto community decisions. The risk with “menu-based” approaches to citizen consultation is the exclusion of options that might seem unusual to menu designers but make sense from the perspective of holistic local approaches to risk management or vulnerability reduction. The production of a menu also risks reproducing “hegemonic” priorities that reflect prevailing orthodoxy rather than local knowledge and expertise about how to address local priorities. Such local knowledge may be drawn from indigenous or traditional knowledge, or hard-won lived experience (Rahman et. al 2023). That being said, the community’s understanding of climate risks and adaptation options also determines the value of a menu-based approach. For example, where knowledge of local issues is high but knowledge of climate risks is low, communities may select projects that do not take a risk-informed approach to adaptation or development. A menu can help ensure that funds are spent on adaptation projects. The implication is that menu-based approaches, at the very least, require community input and the possibility of

flexibility, given the significant contextual changes that occur from place to place, if they are to remain democratic.

## Strategic direction setting and managing the details

**Generally, communities had little or no say in the oversight and management of adaptation investments within their locality.** Procurement, quality assurance of service delivery, and other key management decisions typically rest with implementing NGOs or government agencies. This is often dependent on rules set by the fund provider. All GCF projects score “low-medium” because the fund’s due diligence processes make it very difficult to hand over control of investment management. Conversely, World Bank IDA projects, such as TRALARD and ACRoSAL, which work through all the systems in local government authorities and experiment with more community-driven management processes, are far stronger in this regard. FLCCA Kenya offers less control to communities for procurement and oversight, but this is due to recent centralised regulations that explicitly exclude communities from observing or voting on the selection of service providers for investments.

The value of citizen oversight of adaptation intervention management, including procurement, delivery, and quality assurance, lies in its potential to yield more sustainable outcomes, reduce corruption risks, and increase transparency and accountability (Steinbach et al., 2022). Projects in Tanzania and Kenya have demonstrated the value of citizen oversight in the long-term quality and delivery of adaptation investments (Crick et al., 2019; Greene, 2019).

**High-scoring programmes offer financial control of budgets to community committees, enabling them to plan against a budget known in advance based on internal decision-making processes.** LIFE-AR Uganda, FLCCA Kenya, and ACRoSAL in Nigeria adopt this approach, involving traditional leaders and multiple community representatives in community-appointed or elected committees. These programmes establish local representative bodies that integrate a wide range of stakeholders and offer them budgets to plan against, as well as meaningful control over much of the project cycle process. Establishing these committees also impacts other indicators, as they create a long-term space for ongoing participation in the future.

**Medium or low scores are typically found for the indicator relating to programme priorities and strategic objectives.** For example, in PROREFISH and the EbA Project – both GCF projects in The Gambia – community representatives or CSOs are only included in steering or technical committee meetings on an ad hoc basis. In Kenya’s FLCCA programme, CSO representation has been included at a strategic level, but only after significant lobbying by programme stakeholders and halfway through the programme. Some medium scores are awarded because a project included communities and their representatives in setting the strategic direction at an early stage, such as SCRALA in Zambia. However, even in this example, community participation is not systematised in high-level planning and adaptive decision-making. In LIFE-AR Uganda, the governing “national platforms” feature local government authorities as well as “umbrella” organisations that represent multiple NGOs, although not necessarily those from the local level where the project is based (LIFE-AR, 2025).

These relatively poor scores reflect a critique of adaptation programming and a risk identified by Rahman et al. (2023) in the following passage:

*“Even if local actors are consulted on agenda setting, the control over resources by non-local actors still gives them de facto control over the discussions and contributes to distributive injustice. Though the ideals of the LLA approach make it unlikely that local actors will be entirely excluded, there may also be a persistent accepted marginality in the interaction whereby inequality in the valuation of cultural traits renders local actors subordinate. Finally, representational injustice risks being reproduced in LLA as non-local actors exert power through agenda setting and hegemonic control.”*

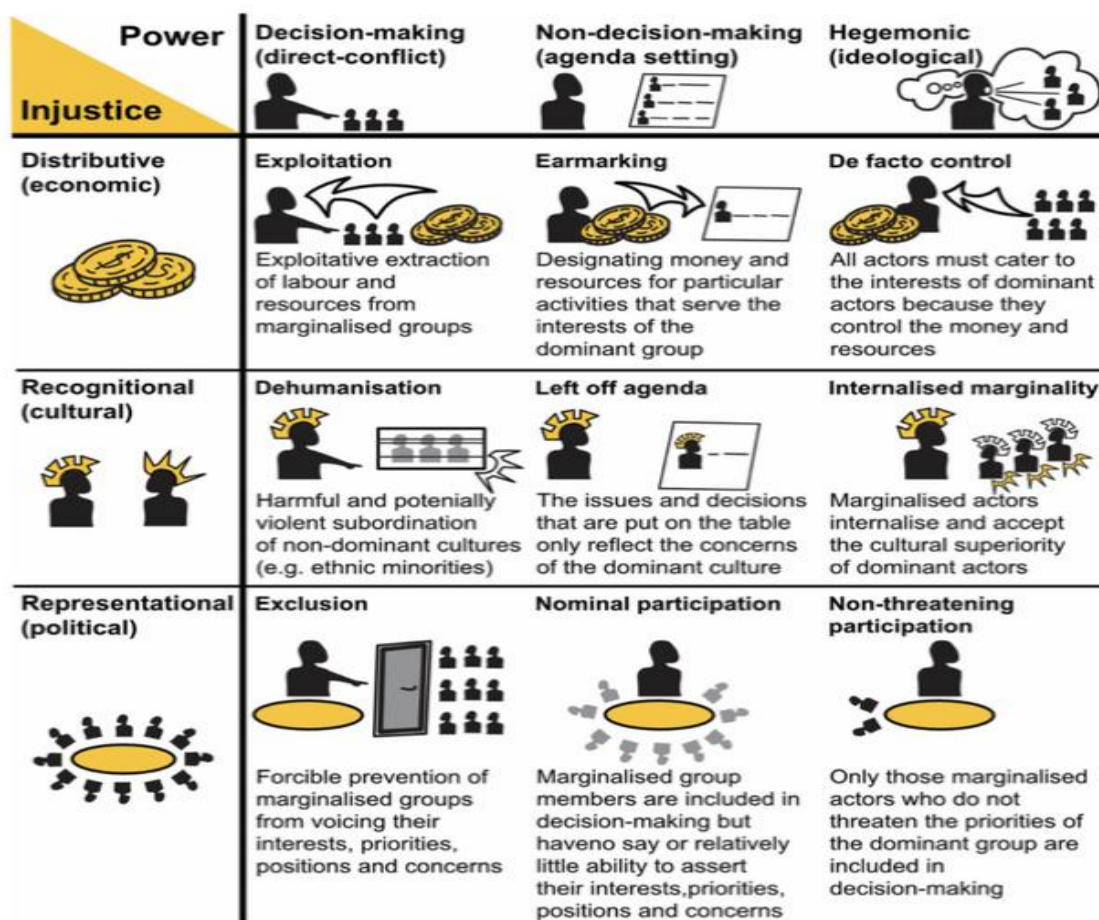


Figure 3: Rahman et. al, 2023. Locally led adaptation: promises, pitfalls and possibilities

In the case studies we reviewed, low to medium scores for this indicator suggest that control of the agenda is often exercised by non-local actors, including international agencies and government partners, with oversight of programme delivery.

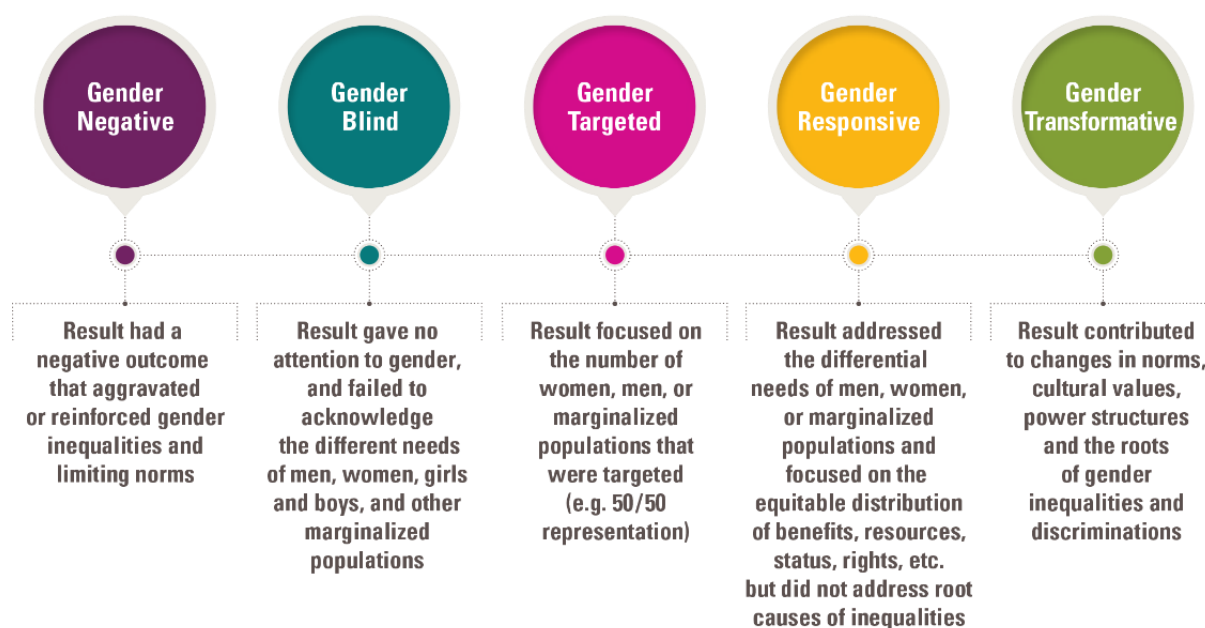
In project development processes where a government agency or large NGO develops and submits a proposal to a climate fund, a more democratic process rests on the quality of

consultations in advance of project preparation. However, community engagement processes are not always clearly documented, detailing mainly the locations and numbers of participants in various workshops. The nature of inclusion is rarely precise, nor is the level of detail discussed with communities. Some projects, such as PROREFISH Gambia, covered multiple villages in a short ten-day period, raising questions as to the quality of the consultation process. The project is then developed over a period of years during which contexts and local priorities can change. It is therefore important that if communities are not to be offered a budget to control, there must be multiple opportunities for them to inform the investment selection process and make adjustments. If transformative adaptation is rooted in shifting power to vulnerable communities, integration of those communities into strategic and not just local decision-making is critical. This can enable them to challenge hegemonic conceptualisations of "effective" adaptation and ensure that local priorities and understanding of these priorities are brought to bear at the highest level.

**Most programmes have been developed with at least an awareness of the structural inequalities that shape vulnerability for marginalised groups.** The degree of awareness and its operationalisation in practice vary significantly. Higher-scoring programmes conducted some form of participatory gender and/or power analysis to understand the nature of inequality within the operating context. Some programmes used participatory processes to enable communities to articulate specific groups who may be more vulnerable due to socially ascribed identities. Others attempted to identify power dynamics between pre-ascribed groups such as youth, women, and people with disabilities. For example, the PROREFISH programme conducted a detailed gender assessment, undertaking its surveys with a clear understanding of the need for a mental shift in the gender roles of men and women. None of the programmes adequately seek to understand and address intersectional risks, i.e., the specific patterns of vulnerability created by individuals due to more than one marginalising social identity. LIFE-AR Uganda intends to use a climate resilience assessment that identifies specific challenges faced by young and older men and women, but without much further refinement.

Several strategies are employed to respond to structural inequalities, but no programmes achieved the highest possible score, indicating a fully "transformative" approach. Some programmes, such as the World Bank's TRALARD and ACRESAL, enable people from marginalised groups to self-organise and access funding to support adaptation or development initiatives. Others, such as FLCCA in Kenya or Zambia's EbA project, focus on ensuring that women or young people hold leadership roles in decision-making processes or attempt to ensure that their perspectives receive appropriate attention. The highest-scoring programme, RICAR in The Gambia, aims to support women in taking on businesses that would have otherwise been beyond their reach. In doing so, they have sought to address the drivers of exclusion, including unequal land tenure and cultural perspectives on land ownership, and have conducted training sessions to ensure women's integration into the ownership, management, and maintenance of adaptation investments.

## The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



Source: Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, IEO, UNDP, 2015

Figure 4: Gender results effectiveness scale. (UNDP - Independent Evaluation Office, 2022)

Using the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale in Fig. 3, most of the programmes reviewed are considered responsive to structural inequalities rather than transformative. They seek to actively support marginalised groups by prioritising them for adaptation activities, but it is not always clear how they are transforming power structures over the long term. One programme, The Gambia EbA project, is interesting because it carried out its gender analysis during the programme. The KPMG review, based on a significant number of focus groups and interviews, criticised the initial design as effectively gender-blind, making strong recommendations that pushed towards a responsive/transformational approach. It is not clear to what extent its recommendations were taken on board.

**Monitoring, evaluation, and learning is one of the poorest-scoring indicators across all the climate programmes reviewed.** Inclusive and participatory MEL supports more effective adaptation by enabling communities to articulate the conditions for success of a programme, in particular drawing on their knowledge of power relations at the root cause of vulnerability (Eriksen, 2021)

Most programmes we reviewed rely on traditional MEL systems, with evaluation frameworks drawn from the funder or donor, with some citizen support for data collection or feedback collection. Data is collected by implementers or by independent evaluators as part of periodic reporting, mid-term or end-line review processes. The notable outlier is LIFE-AR Uganda, which utilises the Tracking Adaptation and Measuring Development (TAMD) approach, the same one used in early pilots of Kenya's FLCCA programme. TAMD supports community committees that have selected adaptation

### Box 1: Case study: LIFE-AR Uganda

One of the highest-scoring programmes is the Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience in Uganda. As part of a wider programme led by the LDC group, Uganda has been given the freedom to design its own finance delivery mechanism and governance structure.

The LIFE-AR Uganda model utilises elected community committees, Parish Climate Change Committees established in legislation, and includes special representatives for marginalised groups. The PCCCs are responsible for consulting communities on climate priorities, identifying investments, and overseeing procurement and delivery. PCCCs are offered technical support by local government authorities, and their members are included in local authority climate adaptation decision-making processes. PCCCs plan against an annual budget that is known in advance, and are limited only by strategic investment criteria agreed upon beforehand.

investments to develop corresponding theories of change to assess progress (Rai et al., 2015). It also tracks progress within local institutions across key indicators of climate risk management. Members of citizen-led committees and local government authorities are also invited to MEL Workshops, where they can articulate learning and make recommendations for future improvements together.

Poor scores for MEL reflect a wider challenge across the adaptation sector, and in overseas development assistance more widely, of insufficient funding, resources, and technical capabilities for MEL, particularly at the local level. Adaptation MEL is already technically challenging due to the extended timeframes required to understand success, uncertain climate futures, and the multiple change processes occurring in the same locality as any one adaptation intervention (Bours, 2014). The problem is exacerbated by the need for donors, including those utilising climate funds, to justify their efforts through outcome tracking – including outcomes valued by the international community (Coger et al., 2021). Meanwhile,

engaging people in MEL processes requires additional funds for workshops that develop indicators, support them in tracking change and attributing causes, and create tools and manuals for local actors to facilitate their participation. As such, it is not surprising that many programmes chronically undervalue this aspect of ED.

## Governance structures for environmental democracy and participation

**Indicators for subsidiarity and resourcing have little relationship to other indicators in each programme.** Most programmes score “medium” or “high” for subsidiarity and resourcing, but that does not necessarily mean they score highly in other indicators. Broadly, subsidiarity scores are higher because many programmes reviewed choose to work through local institutions, including governments or community-based groups focused on livelihoods and natural resource management. The World Bank IDA programmes are powerful because they are tied to working through government systems, and this tends to include considerable institutional strengthening of

local institutions as part of their financial package. For example, FLCCA Kenya has sought to build county capacity for climate risk management in advance of its country-wide scale-out, albeit with mixed success. The two GEF projects score poorly because interventions were selected mainly by central government project designers.

Regarding resourcing, high rankings do not have a significant impact on the quality of participation elsewhere. There are a few clear explanations for this finding. One might be that a high resourcing budget does not necessarily override limitations imposed by implementers or their partners. That is, having abundant funds for participatory activities does not change the fact that communities may still be excluded from procurement processes or strategic direction-setting by law or regulation. Another possibility is that it is easy to allocate abundant resources to limited participatory processes and still achieve a high score, indicating a potential flaw in the framework.

### Box 2: Participation case study: Freetown, The Treetown, Sierra Leone



Freetown the Treetown is an initiative initially funded by the GEF Trust Fund in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and run by the municipality of Freetown. The project aims to plant five million trees, alleviating a range of climate hazards including heat stress, landslides, and flooding, while also generating carbon credits.

To facilitate partnership and a measure of delegated power to communities, the project works through community-based organisations. In applying to participate, CBOs must demonstrate their local credentials and legitimacy to a selection panel that itself includes community members. CBOs then oversee inclusive, participatory risk assessments, tree selection with locals, and management of tree planting, maintenance, and monitoring. A sophisticated digital system facilitates this, although face-to-face meetings between the CBOs and communities are also essential.

When significant events require strategic adjustments, CBOs are canvassed before decisions are made by the municipality.

The scores suggest further work is needed to refine these indicators and the methodology for assessing them. Greater access to and analysis of budgets may be necessary to understand fully how resources have been allocated to participatory activities. Budgets were not always readily available, and researchers had limited guidance on how to review their relevance to the EDA framework. For example, it is not always clear how to score a project that received a large grant for project preparation, but then had limited resources for ongoing community engagement during the project.

We have less confidence in our scores for legitimate participatory institutions. Legitimacy is in the eye of the beholder: the perceived legitimacy of a specific institution can vary depending on the

issue it is deciding on, can change over time, and may be substantially different across different sections of a community. Our assessment is necessarily external and makes generalisations about the characteristics of legitimacy, such as the inclusion of local, cultural, or indigenous leaders, the inclusion of multiple marginalised groups, and the capacity to represent contextual nuances. These characteristics are heavily context-dependent. Further engagement with communities would be necessary to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of legitimacy in each project's case.

**Scores for “sustainable participation” were higher across most projects.** Most projects aim to enhance capacity-building in some way for government and community-level institutions, which leads to higher ratings. Some projects have actively sought to engage local universities and training institutions to develop training programmes and diplomas based on the learning in the programme. In principle, this can enable them to provide capacity support once external organisations have left. Others are built almost entirely around capacity-building efforts. PROPCOM-MaiKarfi, Nigeria, and a component of the EbA Project, The Gambia, sought to build the capabilities of local people to participate in value chains; as such, these aspects are built around sustainable participation. FLOCCA Kenya and LIFE-AR have both invested considerable time in building the capabilities of county governments to establish Ward Climate Change Planning Committees that are inclusive and, crucially, have been solidified into county legislation.

## Transparency indicators

Table 6: Transparency indicators

Indicator	Description	High-scoring characteristics
<b>Programme information</b>	Gauges the extent to which information about the programme's design, activities, and outcomes is accessible to the public.	Programme information is publicly available in formats relevant to stakeholders. Consideration is made for the different knowledge requirements of various stakeholders, and implementers have the mandate and resources to disseminate information appropriately. Information about positive and negative outcomes emerging from the programme is shared.
<b>Climate information</b>	Gauges the extent to which climate information is made available and accessible. Climate information encompasses not only broader climate	Climate information is an active investment, tailored to meet the needs of different stakeholders. CIS takes a co-production approach. Information combines local and indigenous knowledge as well as lived experience

	literacy but also details about long- and short-term climate hazards.	with science-based data to produce locally relevant forecasts and advisories. Consideration of uncertainty and risk shapes information dissemination processes.
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**Programme information scores are generally medium to low – no programmes achieved a medium-high or a high score.** Scores for programme information were low because programmes failed to properly consider how to disseminate information in formats accessible to multiple stakeholders – particularly communities with low literacy levels. Local language translations of written documents were typically not available. While oral information sharing does occur, i.e., through workshops or radio broadcasts, there is little evidence of the systematic use of these methods throughout the project's life. Updates on programme information to the local level are typically sporadic and ad hoc. Evidence of translating emerging outcomes, such as mid-term reviews or final evaluations, into local languages or disseminating them through validation workshops was not available. Stakeholder engagement plans, when available, were often associated with a higher overall programme score, as they implied a level of consideration for different stakeholder communication needs and strategies for meeting them at the outset.

A recurring challenge has been the development of digital information systems and websites that are accessible to diverse communities. Programmes such as EbA Gambia and FLCCA Kenya have sought to establish digital platforms to create one-stop shops for sharing various types of information. These were often not fully operational, at least by the halfway point of the project. A better example is ACRoSAL Nigeria, which features newsletters, reasoning for engagement in specific states, and links to various social media platforms more accessible to community members. However, these are still broadcast in English rather than Nigerian languages, and the information appears to be oriented towards promoting programme successes rather than providing complete transparency of outcomes, trade-offs, and approaches. Some programmes – particularly World Bank IDA programmes working through devolved government systems, have also seen counties establish their own websites to share information, but the available information is currently very basic.

The authors generally found that programmes were selective about the information shared. Budgets were only sporadically available; information about workshops, how they were carried out, who was consulted, or sampled, and how, is not generally easily accessible. This makes understanding the quality of various processes, such as consultations on investment selection, challenging in some cases. Some projects were reluctant to give interviews, requiring high-level authorisation for them to take place. The Green Climate Fund has a freedom of information process that enables specific requests to be made, but this process takes some time and does not seem accessible to more local stakeholders.

Reasons for relatively poor performance on this indicator did not emerge directly from the research. However, for project proposers, incentives to meet high standards of transparency are not

necessarily strong. The policy environment in all countries is "medium" or less, indicating that there is no regulatory compulsion towards the full engagement of local stakeholders in information-sharing processes. Such processes may also be viewed as expensive, and a lesser priority compared to adaptation investments by programme designers. Regular travel to potentially remote areas, translation of documents into local languages, and high-functioning digital tools are expensive to develop and maintain.

On the supply side, some funds do not prioritise transparency considerations in programme assessments. The Adaptation Fund template proposal documents request proposals to include information on how "lessons learned" will be disseminated, but not on how project information, emerging outcomes, or MEL data might be shared (Adaptation Fund, 2022). GCF programmes require a "stakeholder engagement plan" in the Annex, but it is unclear how detailed this needs to be (GCF, 2022). The World Bank's IDA and GEF require clearer stakeholder engagement plans, specifically outlining how information will be disseminated to different participants. This suggests the importance of fund proposal assessment processes, as programme information scores for programmes associated with the latter two funds tend to be higher.

### Box 3: Co-production in climate information services

Co-production refers to the engagement of multiple stakeholders, including the users of climate information services, in generating, interpreting, disseminating, and learning from those services.

"Co-production processes go beyond consultation and are iterative, sustained processes of relationship building, empowerment, capacity building, development of shared understanding and joint outputs" (Jacob et.al, 2025)

**Most programmes also struggled to apply co-production principles to the delivery of climate information, despite the plethora of policies and papers available on the importance of these principles.** The best examples emerge from Kenya, where counties have been developing strategies for climate information service delivery under the FLCCA programme, drawing on data as well as participatory resilience assessments that canvas the lived experiences of climate hazards. County-level CIS strategies are developed and tailored to local contexts, allowing counties to utilise available information dissemination systems, such as radio, SMS broadcasts, as well as more traditional means of

communication. Indeed, one of the earliest programmes reviewed (the Kenya Climate Change Adaptation Project) sought to downscale forecasts while utilising a community-based information and dissemination system and using community forums to share information.

Medium scores could generally be attained using community-based participatory vulnerability and resilience assessments, which at least informed programme planning and occasionally informed advisories shared with communities. The use of these types of assessments ensures information and advisories are grounded in local experiences and adapted to the context.

**However, the focus of climate information improvements was on data-driven approaches, expanding weather stations, or enhancing the capabilities of meteorological agencies.** For example, the EbA project in Zambia included provisions to develop early warning systems and

agricultural advisories, but these were based entirely on data-driven forecasting. Some programmes did hold community meetings and appointed local champions to participate in information dissemination – a form of coproduction. However, their strategy appears to have been to disseminate information generated by a meteorological agency, rather than to integrate local experience and knowledge into that information.

Long-term scenario planning was an unusual approach, mentioned in only a few cases. The lack of meaningful consideration of multiple possible climate futures and implications of uncertainty suggests a considerable weakness across climate programming. Interventions have not been stress-tested against possible events, leaving a greater risk of maladaptation.

**Box 4: Good practice in delivering climate information services**

“Towards Ending Drought Emergencies” a GCF funded project in Kenya has a sophisticated early warning and climate information dissemination system. Indicators of drought are identified through modelling and live monitoring of land, soil and vegetation health, incorporating community perspectives. SMS messages integrate signs from indigenous forecasters as well as scientific information, and community groups supported to disseminate warnings.

**Achieving higher scores can be challenging for several reasons.** Our case studies date back to 2012, before co-production was more widely recognised as a valuable component of CIS. However, Kenya’s KCCAP and TWENDE projects both score highly despite dating back to this period. Indeed, there appears to be no general improvement in programmes over time.

Aside from the limitations of enabling environments already noted, the wider literature indicates a host of reasons why adaptation programme implementers might score poorly when co-production is a criterion. Jacob et al. (2025) highlight limited financial resources, technical capacity, and a lack of trust between communities and external organisations. A tendency among stakeholders to prioritise and centre “scientific” knowledge and data over local knowledge and experience has also historically led to reduced priority to integrating local perspectives.

*Table 7: Examples of good practice in delivering climate information services*

Climate information services: good practice for deepening environmental democracy	Project
Participatory vulnerability and resilience assessments are carried out regularly by trained government officials.	FLCCA Kenya, LIFE-AR Uganda
Community information and dissemination meetings, using government extension officers and agricultural committees	SCRALA Zambia, TRALARD Zambia, EbA Gambia

Development of LGA-level climate information service delivery strategies, with feedback from communities	FLCCA Kenya
Participation of government officials in participatory radio stations, with community questions and answers through phone communication and SMS messages	SCRALA Zambia Eba Gambia
Automated weather stations to provide localised climate information that can be combined with local knowledge for tailored local advisories	TRALARD Zambia
Drama performances through local community, religious, or traditional gatherings to convey information	KCCAP Kenya
Exploration of possible long-term scenarios combining digital information with local perspectives through participatory scenario planning activities	TWENDE Kenya
Advisories based on digital and indigenous knowledge sent by SMS to affected communities	TWENDE Kenya
Training district officials in participatory forecasting and communication, including developing localised advisories	LIFE-AR Uganda
Climate vulnerability and capacity assessments combining community lived experience with existing climate models and projects for different scenarios	Freetown The Treetown, Sierra Leone

## Justice indicators

Table 8: Justice indicators

Indicator	Description	High-scoring characteristics
<b>Grievance redress mechanism</b>	Gauges the quality of systems in place to resolve specific issues raised by people negatively affected by the project	Independent mediation is available for people or organisations who claim damages because of the project.  Context-appropriate measures are in place as a first point of communication at the local level.

		Efforts to ensure relevant communities are aware of the mechanism are in place.
<b>Accountability</b>	Gauges the systems in place to facilitate accountability of project stakeholders	Bottom-up accountability is integrated into tools and structures used by the project. Communities can hold decision makers accountable, provided opportunities to engage with them directly, or integrated into reporting processes.

**GRM scores tend to be high, particularly when an international agency implements the programme.** For example, the GCF projects run by agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the United Nations Environment Programme, or the World Bank IDA programmes. These programmes go beyond simple phone lines and email-based grievance collection measures, starting at the local level and utilizing existing traditional or local government systems as the first point of contact for emerging issues. This reduces the onus on communication and encourages the use of a specific hotline or contact address, allowing people to use systems they are familiar with. For example, PROREFISH Gambia has a significant component in building the capacity of local fishing groups. Grievances are initially raised through the local group's structures and can then be escalated to local government authorities, which may include traditional leaders. If the issue is still not resolved, it is then escalated to programme implementers and higher levels of government. This approach is easier to access for communities and less challenging to manage for programme authorities.

The higher scores on this indicator may be due to the establishment of GRMs being a specific, technical process. GRMs are specific to the project for which they are developed and follow a clear set of standards and procedures outlined in well-established, publicly available manuals. Particularly when international agencies drive programmes with repeated experience in setting up a GRM, they appear more likely to have a high score.

Where we have less data is as regards the extent to which communities are aware of the existence of GRMs in practice, as most of our interviews were conducted with implementers.

**Evidence of strong, bottom-up accountability mechanisms was minimal across all the projects reviewed.** Most programmes relied on traditional reporting mechanisms, in which local actors reported upwards to superiors, who in turn produced reports for donors or the accredited entities responsible for delivering the programmes. Some programmes offer opportunities for feedback from communities, but this is not equivalent to encouraging regular reporting “downwards” to communities and viewing them as participants rather than beneficiaries.

Higher-performing programmes employ several strategies. The World Bank’s ACRoSAL takes an NGO led approach. Regular feedback and communication are supported by local NGOs and safeguarding specialists, who can ensure that information is provided without fear of repercussions. Townhalls and surveys enable regular engagement with communities on how the programme is being implemented. LIFE-AR Uganda works through government systems. Its main decision-making body at the local level, the Parish Climate Change Committee, is regularly canvassed and able to provide feedback. Sub-county and district officers (higher levels of local government) are also regularly informed of progress. KCCAP in Kenya, a programme which scores less well in other metrics, opened itself up to scrutiny, with comprehensive national audit reports and a critical review from Transparency International.

The gap between scores for establishing grievance redress mechanisms and scores for accountability more generally is striking. In some cases, programme documents appear to see GRM as sufficient for accountability. However, the EDA framework distinguishes between the two indicators. GRMs are triggered in response to specific issues arising as a negative consequence of a programme activity. The use of GRMs draws from the original environmental democracy framing of justice, focusing on the opportunity for people to use the courts to claim compensation or regulatory change. While this is an element of accountability, the EDA framework introduces programme accountability as a broader concept that encompasses the systems by which information about the programme is generated and reported. Approaches with a high level of citizen-led or bottom-up accountability score higher on the basis that such a process entails transparency and relies on people being democratically empowered.

Several drivers may be undermining the scope for a more engaged adaptation programme accountability. Fisher et al. (2024) identify limited political capabilities and the inherent uncertainty of adaptation outcomes over time as particular challenges in the context of uncertain climate futures. The wider literature is replete with possible reasons why states, donors, and climate funds might not have sufficient incentive to insist on stronger, bottom-up accountability mechanisms.

## Comparing the performance of climate funds on environmental democracy

A simple scoring exercise, in which scores from low to high are assigned a value of 1 to 5, allows for a comparison of the performance of funds in relation to the EDA framework. Our sample size is not large enough to draw concrete conclusions about each fund – for example, the GCF has funded a total of 104 projects, and we review only 4. However, some trends are worth noting.

## Climate finance programmes reviewed

Table 9: Number of programmes reviewed in each country, separated by funder

	Green Climate Fund	Adaptation Fund	Global Environment Facility – LDCF	World Bank IDA	Bilateral / Other	
Gambia	2	1				3
Uganda		1	1		1	3
Nigeria				1	1	2
Sierra Leone	1		1	1		3
Zambia	1		1	1		3
Kenya	1	1		1		3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>

Table 10: Average scores, organised by funder

	Average Score	No. Projects	Range
<b>Green Climate Fund</b>	41.2	4	41-42
<b>World Bank - International Development Association</b>	49	4	45-50
<b>Global Environment Facility – Least Developed Countries Fund</b>	32.5	4	32-52
<b>Adaptation Fund</b>	34	3	28-39
<b>Bilateral/Other</b>	40	2	24-56

The scores indicate how funders apply environmental democracy principles. World Bank and GCF projects show slight variation in scores, while most GEF programmes scored 32 or 33, except for the FTT project, which scored 52. Consistent scoring across reviewers supports the framework’s reliability. Adaptation Fund projects have a slightly wider score range, and the two bilateral programmes scored very differently, likely due to their contrasting types and implementation times. The scores suggest that the conditions and characteristics of how funders select and deliver programmes appear to have an impact on scoring.

**World Bank IDA programmes score relatively highly, albeit with weaknesses on MEL and Accountability.** They excel in subsidiarity, vision, and sustainable participation. This is likely because World Bank IDA funds are disbursed directly through government financial management systems and existing country institutions. Integrated as they are into wider national programmes and with a financial scale significantly larger than other programmes, they have greater potential to create institutional shifts in how planning and budgeting occur. This is clearest within Kenya's FLCCA programme, which sees each county develop legislation and procedures that firmly establish the approach within the counties' democratic governance systems.

World Bank IDA programmes are also of significantly larger value than other funds. ACRoSAL has a total value of \$700 million, FLCCA a value of \$200 million, and TRALARD \$87.2 million. This scale of funding means that there is more available for institutional strengthening on skills such as participatory planning – often a significant barrier to institutionalising innovative new approaches to adaptation planning and budgeting. ACRoSAL has an entire \$80 million budget devoted to capacity strengthening, and FLCCA began with a country-wide capacity-building effort.

**In two of the three World Bank IDA programmes reviewed, lessons were drawn from previous programmes that had piloted the approach.** However, the way this learning is applied can impact its quality. Zambia's TRALARD built on a previous Climate Investment Fund's Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience project. This project demonstrated the value of decentralised decision-making and "climate risk investment planning". TRALARD built on these experiences, using the same project implementation units that were already embedded in local provincial administration structures. In TRALARD's case, preserving institutional memory has facilitated improved performance.

Kenya's FLCCA programme built on a pilot in 5 counties known as the County Climate Change Funds (CCCFs), initially funded by the UK's FCDO and other seed funders. In contrast to TRALARD, one reason for the slightly lower scores in the FLCCA programme is the way the programme was scaled out. Organisations with expertise and experience gained through developing the CCCFs were unable to access World Bank IDA or government funding to provide capacity-building support. While counties were trained on the approach, the quality of the training was not always sufficient, and county performance has subsequently been poor in establishing functioning community committees with a clear sense of their role and responsibilities. Some counties that were trained by more experienced stakeholders have been able to move quickly toward establishing ward-level climate change planning institutions, and with an approach more aligned with EDA framework principles.

Table 11: The highest scoring initiatives. FLCCA, ACRReSAL, and TRALARD are all World Bank IDA Funded. Bilaterals have supported LIFE-AR but use similar approaches to community partnership to FLCCA.

**FLCCA ACRReSAL TRALARD LIFE-AR**

Indicator	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
Vision	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Resourcing	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
Subsidiarity	Green	Green	Green	Green
Legitimate participatory institutions	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
Addressing structural inequalities	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Program Priorities and strategic objectives	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
Choice of interventions and investments	Yellow	Light Green	Green	Green
Management of implementation	Yellow	Light Green	Green	Green
Monitoring, learning, evaluation	Light Orange	Red	Red	Light Green
Sustainable participation	Green	Yellow	Green	Light Green
Programme information	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Climate information	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Appeal and redress	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
Accountability	Light Orange	Yellow	Red	Yellow
	50	50	51	56

**GCF Projects appear to have less scope to establish processes aligned with those needed for high scores across the board.** GCF programmes in our sample tended to achieve subsidiarity through working less with local government and more with community-based natural resource management groups or farmer groups, which also enabled greater legitimacy. These very local groups are on the frontline of facing climate risks and often are the leading institutions that affect local livelihoods day-to-day, making them locally legitimate and appropriate for decision-making. GCF programmes score highly in terms of sustainable participation due to the substantial volume of capacity building they offer.

However, the trade-off appears to have been a loss of inclusion in the management of implementation and integration, with communities and their representatives being excluded from strategic decision-making. The exclusion from managing the delivery of adaptation interventions may be due to a lack of trust in these local institutions – such as NGOs or community-based organisations- to handle funds or oversee procurement processes. This is the case despite occasional co-funding by governments and high-level support from government agencies.

It is also noticeable that GCF projects, such as those of the Adaptation Fund and GEF, tend to score no higher than “medium” on the indicator “choice of interventions and investments.” This means that communities are typically consulted on their preferences and priorities, but that implementing stakeholders have the final say. On some occasions, this main consultation was conducted during the preparation of proposals, with further revisions once the project was underway. This consultative approach is not necessarily always problematic, but it reduces the likelihood of community ownership of the process. A pre-programme consultation may take place years before the investment is made, allowing ample time for priorities to shift.

Similarly, GCF and Adaptation Fund projects tend to score poorly in terms of integrating communities into the strategic direction-setting of programmes. As already discussed, exclusion from these spaces of strategic direction setting, adjustment, and oversight cedes power to those holding pre-existing assumptions rooted in traditional, top-down models of governance. There is evidence that this process is improving. In Sierra Leone, Save the Children, with GCF funding, is building on learning from a previous coastal project to carry out an in-depth public consultation process with greatly expanded inclusion and participation efforts.

**Fund policies and proposal evaluation criteria play a significant role in shaping the design of adaptation processes and the aspects of adaptation that need to be considered.** For example, proposals for GCF funding must demonstrate how they will ensure community participation and contribute to “paradigm shifts” and transformation. Procurement, financial, and strategic management procedures also have a significant influence on the governance processes used by accrediting entities. A clear example of how these policies can affect a programme was demonstrated in The Gambia EbA project, where a change in GCF policies led to the project commissioning a review of how it was addressing gender imbalances. The consultant labelled the project “gender blind”, making several far-reaching recommendations for how to adjust the approach to consider gender dynamics, and significantly improving its approach to structural transformation.

Similarly, participatory MEL is not typically a feature of many programmes. This is even though some funds, such as the GCF, include features like participatory monitoring in their governing instruments (Mutimba et al., 2019). While proposals require descriptions of MEL processes, participatory aspects beyond monitoring – i.e., enabling communities to support generation and sharing of learning – are not emphasised to the same extent. The requirement to adhere to the MEL framework of a particular fund, already well-defined in various templates, can also hinder efforts to develop MEL processes from the ground up, using democratic processes.

**Programmes driven by bilateral agencies have the potential to pilot new approaches that climate funds can take up.** Uganda’s LIFE-AR, part of a wider programme including five other countries, has been piloted by the FCDO, Irish Aid, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and, until recently, USAID. The programme has a ten-year time frame, is partnered and led directly by the LDC Group, and in each country has been given time to establish its own governance mechanisms and select its approach to delivering finance for adaptation investment. LIFE-AR is built on five principles that shape and guarantee inclusive, participatory, and country-led decision-making. This approach has seen Uganda develop a programme scoring high on most environmental democracy metrics, integrated into country systems, experimenting with greater participation in MEL and accountability, and with a high level of community choice. The independence and capacity to take risks of bilateral agencies can facilitate innovation and forward-thinking approaches. However, the suggestion from the limited sample we have is that high scores for environmental democracy require time, patience, and long-term investment.

# Implications for climate finance stakeholders

The findings from the study suggest that climate adaptation programmes are not facilitating environmental democracy to the extent possible. The trend – albeit with exceptions - is that while communities are recognised in principle as valuable contributors to some adaptation-related decisions, the scope for them to shape strategy, challenge wider assumptions, and ensure local, unequal power dynamics are addressed is limited. Their ability to hold implementers accountable through MEL processes or accountability processes is highly restricted. The implication is also that many adaptation initiatives are not yet transforming systems in ways that embed locally led decision-making and oversight of adaptation or incorporate greater equity and justice into the way programmes operate. Programmes generally remain focused on technical adaptation interventions rather than efforts that centre long-term equity and justice across project cycles.

## Enabling environments

Policy environments in vulnerable countries have the potential to play a crucial role in ensuring that climate adaptation programmes strive for higher standards. Most countries in our study establish the principle that communities should at least be consulted on their priorities and that local institutions should be a key part of the adaptation process. However, country devolution and climate policies are largely silent on creating meaningful feedback or bottom-up accountability processes and typically exclude citizens from the management of adaptation investments once they have been selected. As a result, even where donor money is channelled through government systems, there is no political or legal compulsion to integrate communities into decision-making processes. Furthermore, some donor policies, such as those of the GCF, prioritise fiduciary risk management, aiming to keep expenditure and procurement processes within tightly controlled institutions and their pre-established processes. This contributes to the exclusion of communities from the details of adaptation delivery processes, reducing transparency and capacity for local ownership and quality control.

National-level decision-makers have several levers available to deepen the enabling conditions for environmental democracy in adaptation. They must recognise that stakeholder “consultation” is not sufficient for a locally led or transformative outcome. Instead, shifting power to local actors in whatever form needed for them to lead adaptation processes with national-level capacity support and oversight is likely to be more effective. In practice, this means working with accredited entities that seek to implement projects to establish reliable systems for local decision-making, oversight, and accountability throughout the entire adaptation project cycle. Removing regulations that exclude communities from procurement processes can reduce costs and ensure greater ownership and local oversight over service delivery.

They could also insist that community representatives are included in strategic decision-making committees relating to the project on a regular, rather than an ad hoc basis. This might require capacitating those representatives to consult communities in advance of strategic-level meetings to ensure their input is relevant and up to date.

## Transparency and accountability

Establishing minimum standards for transparency in adaptation programmes might also be a “quick win”. Standards should require the dissemination of information in multiple formats to a variety of stakeholders, as well as detailed reporting on the community consultation processes used to design the programme. Practically, the development of adequately resourced stakeholder consultation and communication plans that actively consider the information needs of different groups in project target areas can support greater transparency and accountability. A national portal for registering and standardised reporting for all adaptation projects would facilitate greater transparency and accountability. Legislation can further establish citizens’ rights to hear from project implementers regularly about progress and challenges, thereby encouraging a culture of accountability in which implementers must answer to climate-vulnerable citizens.

In relation to climate information, reliable systems for delivering climate information services via functioning and well-equipped meteorological agencies provide the basis for climate adaptation programmes to do the same. Investing in the capability of meteorological agencies to carry out participatory “co-production” exercises with the same skill as they can interpret and communicate climate data lays the groundwork for other funded programmes to build from. Kenya’s well-developed Meteorological Department, supported by years of investment from donors, may have contributed significantly to the strong performance in all the adaptation programmes we reviewed.

Few projects achieved the highest scores for disseminating programme or climate information. Despite widespread recognition in the literature and in many policies of the value of local and indigenous knowledge to climate information, systems for integrating it into climate information services remain limited in our sample. Top-down approaches to disseminating climate information are the dominant ones. Regarding programme information, funds that require stakeholder information plans appear to perform better when they have a range of accessible resources for communities to access regarding the project. However, it is also true that reaching non-literate and rural communities is highly challenging, making it difficult to achieve high scores.

While scores for GRM systems tend to be high, regardless of the enabling environment, scores for wider accountability are poor. We believe that this is because GRMs tend to be discrete and issue-focused processes, clearly defined within existing funder frameworks and focused on clearly identifiable issues arising from project activities. Accountability processes for an adaptation programme are more nebulous, and high scores require communities to have regular opportunities to understand progress and relate it to lived experiences. There is a distinction in the processes required to identify and respond to specific and clearly definable issues, as GRMs are designed to do, versus seeking greater efficiencies and improvements in a project more broadly. The latter has wider cost and workforce implications that implementers may not be willing – or do not have

sufficient incentive- to bear. Furthermore, since almost all initiatives are implemented in collaboration with government partners, bottom-up accountability tools need to be integrated into existing government institutional systems. Incentives may not be sufficient to make this happen without a concerted effort by implementing or local NGOs.

The EDA framework highlights that a combination of bottom-up and top-down accountability is required. Some programmes reviewed leave local decision-makers without meaningful oversight roles. This makes it more difficult for them to find synergies between climate and other ongoing programmes, and risks eroding trust in institutions such as local government. Their knowledge of local conditions, community dynamics, and existing networks suggests that they should be key links in any accountability system. For example, in LIFE-AR Uganda and FLCCA in Kenya, the programme has focal points at each level of governance, ensuring that official support can be provided and that duplication or conflict between different investments is avoided.

## Participation

In the design and delivery of climate adaptation initiatives, higher levels of citizen participation, including partnership and citizen control, are unusual. While many projects consult with communities on their adaptation priorities either before or at the early stages of a project, few properly enable community oversight, management, or ensure that information about the project is shared appropriately and sufficiently. Engagement of communities in participatory MEL has been minimal, with largely top-down processes that satisfy the needs of funders rather than communities. Examples of stronger performance in participation indicators are evident when projects utilise existing systems and institutions, but enhance them by establishing community-led committees with responsibility for selecting investments, procuring service provision, and contributing directly to assessing the quality and impact of their initiatives.

Critically, few programmes were able to claim a high score for inclusive approaches that address the structural drivers of vulnerability. While projects often recognise typically marginalised groups – women, young people, and people with disabilities - they rarely explore other marginalised groups that might be context-specific, such as language minorities or the elderly. Intersectionality is rarely a key concern. Therefore, while there are steps toward procedural justice by integrating certain representatives into decision-making, efforts toward recognitional justice seem more rudimentary and not tailored to each context. Further, the shifting of power to marginalised people remains sporadic. There are examples of women being promoted to leadership positions and training being offered to change mindsets on gender roles; however, it is challenging to envision how transformative changes in equity can occur within the scope of relatively short-term programmes.

Almost all the programmes reviewed relied on significant capacity-building components that sought to embed new ideas and initiatives into local or national planning and delivery. It is not always possible to assess how effective these have been, as programmes are ongoing. In The Gambia, efforts to embed ecosystem planning protocols and introduce new types of businesses were struggling four years into the programme. Many programmes had also taken the positive step of working alongside local educational institutions to embed new skills in teaching and training.

Further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these efforts. Similarly, further exploration is needed to assess the legitimacy of various local stakeholders and committees involved in supporting adaptation decision-making. Our research can only make assumptions as to what makes committees for adaptation decision-making legitimate in the eyes of communities, without spending time talking to those communities.

## Co-Benefits of democratic approaches

Enhancing environmental democracy to facilitate effective adaptation is also likely to have positive co-benefits. One stand-out area may be in reducing the risks of corruption. Integrating community members into the management, procurement, and monitoring of adaptation investments can put pressure on local contractors to keep costs down while maintaining a decent quality of materials and construction. A systematic review by the World Bank (2017) has identified the mechanisms by which this can happen, by incentivising improved performance from politicians, as well as through informal pressures between community members and well-known local contractors. However, the provision of information and inclusion in monitoring processes is critical for this to take place. Implementers and governments must actively provide both information and opportunities for local stakeholders to participate in community monitoring and anti-corruption efforts.

This is particularly the case when locally influential individuals – such as landholders and business owners - have a stake in the outcome of the investment. New research in Bangladesh has shown how the inclusion of individuals with collective power equal to that of local politicians and local contractors (who can often be the same person) can increase local monitoring and reduce resource leakage (SOAS ACE, 2025). This “horizontal” monitoring, which relies on informal local social networks, can enable formal vertical anti-corruption measures to work more effectively.

A second co-benefit may be strengthening community cohesion and social capital, which can, in itself, increase adaptive capacity to climate risks. Increasing opportunities for community members to discuss local issues, identify shared priorities, and take ownership of the response may create stronger social networks and a potential for collective mobilization towards shared goals. However, there are caveats in that gender needs to be actively taken into account in the construction of participatory processes (Zulu et al., 2025).

## Deepening environmental democracy

In bringing about the necessary progress toward environmental democracy in adaptation, positive steps are being taken through the UNFCCC process and the significant climate funds. For example, the Global Goal on Adaptation recognised community-based, ecosystem-based, and locally led adaptation, and major funds are explicitly recognising Locally Led Adaptation in their strategies moving forward. The Adaptation Fund’s Locally Led Adaptation Window Project Formulation Grant, supporting \$150,000 to \$250,000, is a significant step.

They must consider how this translates into the delivery of funded adaptation initiatives in practice. However, our review shows that integrating citizens into processes historically managed by governments has been a considerable challenge, and efforts by climate funds need to recognise community engagement beyond the selection of investments and across the project cycle. Procurement, quality assurance, and accountability have traditionally been the preserve of government officials or implementing agency staff. However, it is in these processes that the details of specific interventions can be adjusted to a particular context, or where community feedback can correct errors in service provision. Community engagement here can foster ownership, and with it, sustainability and opportunities for innovation.

Further research could explore the outcomes emerging from adaptation initiatives with strong environmental democracy programmes. Understanding how high ED scores affect community ownership of adaptation, the sustainability of adaptation investments, power relations within and between communities, and between communities and government, and critically, how they impact adaptation outcomes, would build awareness of the value of proper integration of ED.

# Recommendations to improve environmental democracy in adaptation

*The final section presents recommendations for climate adaptation stakeholders derived from our study.*

## Climate funds

- **Accountability:** Integrate bottom-up accountability considerations into the review of proposals. Programmes should be expected to explain how they will resource and facilitate reporting to communities. Reporting should include both positive and negative outcomes, findings from evaluations, and the active collection of feedback, which is then discussed in high-level forums. To further reinforce accountability, integrate citizen representatives into steering committees on a permanent rather than an ad-hoc basis. This may be achieved through NGOs that canvass community opinions in advance, or by directly inviting citizen representatives to participate.
- Greater investment is needed in participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning approaches. However, enabling communities to identify what needs to be measured most would create greater focus on the drivers of vulnerability
- Project Preparation and Readiness Facilities that support programme design need to enable more than a few short workshops in a sample of villages, but also facilitate in-depth power and intersectional analysis, as well as the exploration of climate risks and possible solutions. The up-front effort will pay off through better value and grounded adaptation investments.
- Use funds to innovate with locally led approaches that transfer financial and oversight power to local stakeholders. Bottom-up institutional set-ups that link to existing institutions can ensure that they do not create parallel processes.

## Bilateral donors

- The best-performing programmes have learned from experimental forerunners. Continue to seed-fund progressive and innovative approaches with the express intention of linking them to more sustainable funding streams and local institutions.
- Use programmes as an opportunity to trial bottom-up accountability tools such as social audits, feedback gathering sessions linking communities and implementers, and integrating communities or their representatives into steering committee decision processes

- Enable long-term programmes that extend beyond five years to facilitate long-term, transformational institutional change. The strongest performing programmes have more extended time frames or expand directly on previous work.

### **Elected representatives: National parliamentarians and local representatives - councillors, members of county assemblies (mcas)**

- Multilevel collaboration between members of national and local chambers of representation can enhance the effectiveness of adaptation efforts, through accountability, coordination and financial oversight. WFD recently supported the climate finance oversight work of the Senate of Kenya by preparing innovative Climate Financing Oversight Guidelines and Tools informed by environmental democracy principles of transparency, participation, and accountability. The tools promote transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, and are also applicable at the devolved County Assembly level. Oversight bodies such as the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Controller of Budget (CoB), as well as CSOs active on climate finance oversight, can also put them to use.
- Some programmes integrate local institutions and representatives into their governance architecture, which provides an immediate degree of institutionalisation of the programme's aims. In Kenya, climate priorities identified by ward adaptation committee members are integrated into the County Integrated Development Plans, which are signed off by elected Members of County Assemblies (MCAs).
- In Uganda, the LIFE-AR (Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience) programme works closely with Parish Climate Change Committees (PCCCs), elected by community members to identify, plan, and oversee adaptation projects relevant to their local context. Members of the PCCCs receive training in project proposal writing, monitoring, and facilitating community consultations. Elected District Councillors approve their proposed budgets for adaptation investment.
- Parliamentarians should prioritise locally led climate adaptation, using their legislative power to establish Climate Change Acts, Public Participation Bills, and Local Government Reform that solidify partnerships with communities for adaptation planning and respond to local priorities and needs.
- Elected representatives at the local level can play a significant role in representing the climate adaptation priorities of different groups within their constituencies. It is critical that they ensure procurement is inclusive and facilitate learning from adaptation investments to inform future investments. They should collaborate and coordinate with fellow elected representatives rather than compete for funding. Further, they can support oversight and transparency of climate finance, ensuring procurement is inclusive, and that learning from adaptation investment informs future investment, in collaboration with CSOs.
- Related, MPs can push for greater transparency in adaptation finance flows, advocating for budget tracking and harmonised reporting from donors, and exploring structured multi-level

collaboration for adaptation oversight with Members of local chambers of representation (Councillors, MCAs).

- MPs should seek to understand and champion local adaptation priorities, highlighting where adaptation programmes are failing to deliver in their localities. Recognising that investing in the right projects can be more important than the amount invested in a specific region is key.
- The value of an in-person visit where meaningful questions are asked about inclusion cannot be underestimated. MPs and local representatives can ensure that members of marginalised groups are included and that their priorities are acted upon. Also, they can verify that information about the project's successes, failures, and emerging trade-offs is being widely disseminated.

### Political parties

- Political parties can raise the issue of localisation of climate finance up the national agenda, challenging the temptation of ruling governments to have funds centrally directed by national ministries.
- Use legislation to embed citizen ownership of decision-making about climate finance in local and national processes. They might do this with the support of the community and citizen-led groupings. While Climate Change Acts are an important tool, legislation on local government reform, devolution, and public participation are additional opportunities to do so.
- Raise awareness of the value and potential of climate finance among the public, building coalitions of civil society and the private sector, demanding climate finance that is sufficient and structured in ways that facilitate democratic oversight and control
- Ruling parties can also play an important role, using party manifestos to demonstrate a commitment to creating an enabling environment for locally led, environmentally democratic adaptation programmes

### Accredited entities

- Higher performing programmes have typically worked through existing institutions. Accredited entities should seek to work through existing systems, strengthening them in ways that might accommodate greater citizen choice and control.
- If not already working directly through local government institutions, ensure that there are strong networks and connections with them to ensure coordination and integration into local planning initiatives.
- Consider community-based partners with in-depth knowledge of local-level challenges. Such organisations have a higher chance of understanding and being able to address structural marginalisation that is deep-rooted and requires legitimate local institutions to address.

## NGOs, CBOs, and democracy supporting organisations

- Advocate for locally led and environmentally democratic approaches to adaptation, arguing for their greater effectiveness, value for money, and sustainability. This may be through research demonstrating the value of participatory processes, or by amplifying the voices of citizens who can articulate local priorities throughout the project cycle. Building coalitions to push for transparency and accountability, particularly with locally elected representatives, is a particularly impactful approach
- Support implementing entities to carry out bottom-up accountability processes, including social audits, town hall meetings, and transparent information sharing
- Monitor ongoing climate adaptation projects and utilise the EDA framework and LLA principles to assess how well they incorporate principles of localisation, procedural, recognitional, and distributive justice. If possible, seek to join steering committees of such programmes to provide advice, guidance, and support for bottom-up accountability processes.
- Act as a watchdog, highlighting the extent to which adaptation projects implement ED principles, for example, using a scorecard system or traffic light system like that used in this paper. Collaborate with political parties and parliamentarians to enhance their understanding of the benefits of a just approach.

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# Annex: All programme scores, organised by fund

	Green Climate Fund			
	PROREFish Gambia (2023).	EbA Gambia 2017	TWENDE Kenya 2020	SCRALA Zambia 2021
Indicator	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
Vision	Yellow	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow
Resourcing	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Light Orange
Subsidiarity	Light Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
Legitimate participatory institutions	Yellow	Light Green	Green	Yellow
Addressing structural inequalities	Yellow	Yellow	Light Orange	Yellow
Programme Priorities and Strategic Objectives	Light Orange	Light Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Choice of interventions and investments	Light Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Management of implementation	Light Orange	Light Orange	Light Orange	Light Orange
Monitoring, learning, evaluation	Light Orange	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Sustainable participation	Light Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Programme information	Light Orange	Light Orange	Yellow	Yellow

Climate information				
Appeal and Redress				
Accountability				
	42	40	42	41

Adaptation Fund			
	RICAR Gambia (2022).	KCCAP Kenya 2016	EURECCA Uganda 2017
Indicator	Rating	Rating	Rating
Vision			
Resourcing			
Subsidiarity			
Legitimate participatory institutions		Not enough data	
Addressing structural inequalities			
Programme Priorities and Strategic Objectives			
Choice of interventions and investments			
Management of implementation			
Monitoring, learning, evaluation			
Sustainable participation			

Programme information			
Climate information			
Appeal and redress			
Accountability			
	35	28	39

World Bank				
	FLCCA Kenya 2021	ACRESAL Nigeria (2021).	TRALARD Zambia 2019	Sierra Leone FSRP 2022
Indicator	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
Vision				
Resourcing				
Subsidiarity				
Legitimate participatory institutions				
Addressing structural inequalities				
Programme Priorities and Strategic Objectives				
Choice of interventions and investments				
Management of implementation				
Monitoring, learning, evaluation				

Sustainable participation				
Programme information				
Climate information				
Appeal and redress				
Accountability				
	50	49	50	45

**GEF - LDCF**

**EbA Zambia (2021).**

**Uganda SACRIAC 2022**

**Sierra Leone FTT 2023**

**Sierra Leone ACCICRMP 2018**

Indicator	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
Vision				
Resourcing				
Subsidiarity				
Legitimate participatory institutions				
Addressing structural inequalities				
Programme Priorities and Strategic Objectives				
Choice of interventions and investments				

Management of implementation				
Monitoring, learning, evaluation				
Sustainable participation				
Programme information				
Climate information				
Appeal and redress				
Accountability				
	32	33	52	32

## Other

Uganda LIFE-AR 2021    Nigeria Propcom 2012

Indicator	Rating	Rating
Vision		
Resourcing		
Subsidiarity		
Legitimate participatory institutions		
Addressing structural inequalities		
Programme Priorities and		

Strategic Objectives	Yellow	Red
Choice of interventions and investments	Green	Red
Management of implementation	Green	Red
Monitoring, learning, evaluation	Light Green	Red
Sustainable participation	Light Green	Yellow
Programme information	Yellow	Yellow
Climate information	Yellow	Yellow
Appeal and redress	Yellow	Yellow
Accountability	Yellow	Yellow

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