NEITHER ENOUGH, NOR ADEQUATE

A participatory assessment of the barriers to local access for climate finance in the Sahel.

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Access to climate finance is a prominent feature of the debate for the upcoming COP29 decision to set a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance. Countries, communities and groups representing marginalised groups who are most impacted by the climate crisis are in urgent need of scaled-up, accessible and adequate climate finance. Findings from participatory research conducted with more than 100 organisations in the Sahel show that there are still numerous challenges to address in terms of how climate finance mechanisms are designed, how capacities need to be supported, how decision-making spaces affecting climate finance need to be more inclusive, and how gender, intersectional and geographical fragility factors shape unequal access to climate finance.

In order to effectively bridge the climate finance access gap, rich countries need to make an urgent commitment to undertake concrete and bold actions to address climate finance access barriers for local actors in climate-vulnerable contexts.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

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Cover photo: Djelika is a farmer in Bana, Mali. She has been engaged in a project to reverse land degradation by encouraging smallholder farmers to grow trees on their farms and revive existing ones. Diafara Traoré/Oxfam

1 INTRODUCTION

Countries from the Global South, especially those that are most vulnerable to climate change, are paying the cost of a climate crisis that they have not caused. When financially supported to assume these costs, they are even becoming further indebted, due to most international climate finance currently being provided in the form of loans.[1] As they are already confronted with the worst impacts of the climate crisis, their people and communities are facing a huge gap in accessing international climate finance that is supposed, first and foremost, to be for these countries.[2] 2024 represents a key year for global efforts to dramatically increase the ambition in providing climate finance for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage to countries in the Global South, as a response to the mounting impacts and needs experienced by these countries, the cost of which they are mostly covering with their own resources.[3] At COP29, a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) should be agreed, to be implemented after 2025.[4] Apart from increasing the global climate finance goal to be provided each year to Global South countries more than ten-fold according to their real needs,[5] this goal should also essentially include dedicated features to address qualitative aspects ensuring that climate finance is not only sufficient, but effective and needs-based. It should furthermore address elements such as gender mainstreaming, human rights, participatory, inclusive and locally led approaches and debt justice. One of these qualitative elements refers specifically to the conditions that allow recipient countries and their communities to access climate finance effectively. This paper provides first-hand information describing the challenges and barriers faced by Sahel countries, which mirror the challenges faced by Global South countries that are most vulnerable to climate change. It places a particular focus on the gaps to be addressed so that organisations, structures and institutions representing populations who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis and suffering its worst impacts can gain sustainable and equal access to international public climate finance.

CLIMATE FINANCE: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY VULNERABLE COUNTRIES

The global commitment by developed countries to deliver US$100 billion a year from 2020 to 2025 has proven to be insufficient in addressing the scale of needs and the exponentially rising impacts of the climate crisis faced by countries from the Global South.[6] Today, estimates of such needs can be considered closer to an order of magnitude of trillions rather than hundreds of billions (more than ten-fold).[7] Not only is this goal insufficient: it has not been met and its real value has been largely overreported by providers. According to the OECD, in 2020 and 2021, officially reported finance fell below the US$100 billion target ($83.3 bn and $89.6 bn, respectively), while in 2022 it was apparently met for the first time, reaching a level of $115.9 billion.[8] However, according to Oxfam's own estimates, the true financial effort of climate finance provided by rich countries is much lower than what is officially reported. The Climate-Specific Net Assistance[9] could be down to one quarter of officially declared figures, at $20-25bn in 2021 and $28-35bn in 2022.[10]

When looking at the quality of provided climate finance, Oxfam's analysis of published figures also shows significant imbalances between the type of finance provided and the real needs of the countries that face the worst impacts of the climate crisis. Globally, only one quarter (25%) of public climate finance in 2019–20 was in the form of grants, while more than half of finance flowing to LDCs was provided as loans. For the same period, only 33% of the total climate finance went to adaptation.[11] When looking specifically at the West Africa/Sahel region, which covers the countries included in this study, 62% of the climate finance flowing to the region between 2013 and 2019 was in the form of debt instruments (which increased 610% during the given period).[12] According to another Oxfam study of Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS),[13] over half of climate financing came in the form of loans and 9.4% was non-concessional loans.[14] Yet, all these countries commonly face significant humanitarian needs, meaning they are stricken by multidimensional crises and ever-recurring cycles of impacts and further financial needs.[15]

Reported figures also show that insufficient finance is flowing to the countries suffering the worst impacts of the climate crisis and current finance flows are far from fulfilling their specified needs. In 2019–20, only 23.1% of the total climate finance provided went to LDCs and SIDS.[16] For West Africa/Sahel countries, the total climate finance provided by rich countries between 2013 and 2019 only represented 7% of their total climate finance needs as expressed in their NDCs and only 18% of their adaptation needs.[17] These figures provide a strong illustrative example of the existing challenges in making climate finance reach the countries that most need it.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY?

To bring about lasting and transformative climate action, international climate finance flowing to Global South countries must, as far as possible, become directly accessed and managed by civil society organisations and local communities who are already leading on climate solutions in their contexts. These may be first responders in community responses to disasters, leaders in disaster risk reduction and environmental conservation, or facilitators of inclusive community participation processes for jointly prioritising climate finance expenditure.[18] [19]

However, there is still a lack of transparency about how much climate finance reaches the local level. Climate finance providers are not yet required to report on how much international public climate finance is reaching frontline communities and actors at the local level, making it difficult for civil society to independently track and verify existing finance flows.[20] Previous research has found that only 7% of climate finance is transparent enough to be tracked to the local level, while only 10% of that is committed exclusively to delivering locally led climate action.[21] [22] Research conducted by Oxfam in the West Africa/Sahel region has also shown that **only 0.8% of the directly reported recipients of climate finance could be confidently defined as locally based institutions and organisations.** This indicates the level of exclusion that these actors still face in directly accessing and managing climate initiatives from international public finance.[23]

Current international and national climate finance mechanisms have also proven to present significant barriers to access and constraints on delivery, especially for nationally and locally based actors in the most climate-vulnerable countries in the Global South. Multilateral climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) still present several access challenges for national and local actors,[24] despite their efforts to streamline access procedures.[25] Most of their finance (80%) is currently flowing to international access entities,[26] while direct (nationally based) access entities only receive 20% of the funds.[27] Several accessibility challenges have also been reported for other climate finance instruments and their access channels. Bilateral climate finance providers lack transparency on how climate finance is accessed (including dedicated policies and guidance) and their access processes are not always harmonised. Access to their finance resources is highly determined by these providers' unilateral definition of their funding priorities according to several varying criteria set at their discretion. There are challenges related to the operational models of multilateral development banks in their access modalities, which were referred to by recipient countries as "complex", "slow", and "rigid", while these countries are also pushing for greater concessionality.[28] [29]

During recent years, the international climate finance debate has put the spotlight on the challenge and urgency of improving accessibility,[30] and there is growing political will to address this issue in the UNFCCC negotiation processes. The 2050 Vision of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group aims to reach 70% of the global climate finance flows supporting local-level action by 2030.[31] Addressing the accessibility features of climate finance became part of the NCQG mandate coming from the COP26/CMA3[1] decision in Glasgow.[32] Prior to that, in 2021 the COP26 presidency already bolstered the debate around the challenges linked to accessibility, including in ministerial meetings,[33] by setting up a Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance that proposed a set of principles and recommendations,[34] [35] commissioning research for a Climate and Development Ministerial event[36] and including it as part of a decalogue of proposed actions in its Climate Finance Delivery Plan.[37]

During the almost three-year process following COP26 of technical deliberations on the NCQG through the Technical Expert Dialogues (TED) under the Ad Hoc Work Programme on the NCQG, the issue of accessibility has been a prominent part of the debate. In 2022, a whole TED was dedicated to discussing the access features of the goal, providing a number

[1] Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

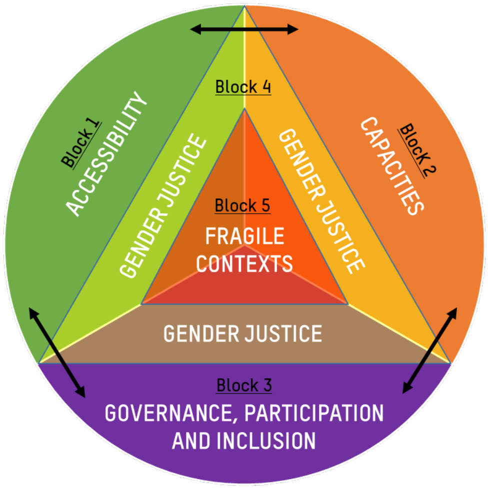
of recommendations to be proposed for adoption at COP29 in 2024 and by climate finance providers.[38] Throughout the whole process, negotiating groups from the Global South and non-Party stakeholders have constantly emphasised in their interventions and submissions the need to address access features to the NCQG. They have brought several proposals to the debate, such as: simplifying and harmonising access procedures and modalities; facilitating direct access mechanisms (including financing to subnational actors, local communities, Indigenous peoples and women); reducing co-financing conditionalities; addressing access dis-enablers (i.e. high cost of capital, high transaction costs, capacity constraints, and indiscriminate assumptions of corruption); or providing sufficient and adequate readiness support for climate finance access.[39] [40] [41] [42] [43] [44] Many voices from civil society are also placing an increasing focus on and advocating for specific attention to be paid to climate finance access barriers in fragile and conflict-affected states, including addressing key aspects such as rethinking and readjusting donor risk appetite or providing more flexible, longer-term funding opportunities following localisation approaches.[45] [46] [47]

All of the above demonstrates that there is a high momentum to support strengthening access to climate finance for climate-vulnerable nations as well as for communities, local CSOs and groups experiencing marginalisation in this key year (2024) for international climate negotiations. The present report aims to bring first-hand information from national and local actors to strengthen the debate on the accessibility issue, focusing on the key challenges organizations are facing. It also presents a set of recommendations on how different targets and the NCQG decision should address these challenges.

2 MAIN BARRIERS AFFECTING ACCESS TO CLIMATE FINANCE

The following sections are based on the synthesis of information gathered from four country workshops that took place between September 2023 and February 2024 in four Sahelian countries: Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad. The workshops involved a wide range of participants from different types of organisations and structures that provide a representative picture of the actors affected and/or particularly concerned by challenges related to accessing to climate finance. In the next sections, these workshop participants are referred to as "knowledge groups".

The following sub-sections are structured in five analysis blocks that represent the key dimensions affecting and shaping access to international climate finance for countries and communities in the Global South.



ACCESSIBILITY OF CLIMATE FINANCE MECHANISMS

MAIN BARRIERS FACED BY NATIONAL AND LOCAL ACTORS

The extent to which climate finance is accessible for climate-affected countries, especially for organisations and communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis, is largely determined by how climate finance providers design their mechanisms and procedures for applying for and obtaining funds. Key factors include how eligibility criteria are established, the complexity of the processes involved in developing project proposals and securing grants, and how effectively information about funding opportunities is communicated, and made understandable and accessible to all rights-holders.

1) **Complex application procedures and implementation requirements**

Local actors, particularly in the Sahel, face significant barriers in accessing climate finance due to the complexity of existing mechanisms and application processes. These include factors such as the complexity and the poor accessibility of application forms, the bureaucratic requirements of application processes (i.e. the need to provide endorsement letters, administrative documents, financial statements, environmental and social safeguards, etc.), and the complex and lengthy procedures involved throughout the process. This complexity disproportionately favours larger, well-established organizations and many local actors end up becoming dependent on intermediaries, which adds extra layers of bureaucracy and reduces the funds reaching local communities. Even when they receive funding, usually as implementers for projects managed by larger entities, they face stringent requirements that limit their capacity, particularly due to the cumbersome administrative conditions for fund disbursement and for the approval of operations – imposed by both international finance providers and recipient governments – which civil society actors have cited as causes for project implementation delays and poor financial absorption. Such conditions can turn out to be detrimental to the quality of project implementation and management, which can in turn affect the reputation of local implementing entities with climate finance providers.

Good practice case | Oxfam's ELNHA programme

There are also positive examples where finance providers have put a special effort into making sure that access procedures to funds are inclusive and enable equal access chances for local actors. In Oxfam's ELNHA programme,[48] which promotes responsible local and national humanitarian leadership, the application process was designed to be mindful of applicants' time and resources. This approach included shortlisting organizations based on an initial call for expressions of interest to avoid wasting time for those unlikely to succeed, translating application materials into primary local languages, holding workshops to familiarize pre-qualified organizations with required templates and processes, and conducting regular mappings of organizations interested in receiving grants.

2) **High project implementation experience requirements**

Funding calls for proposals usually demand extensive project management experience, including experience with managing large budgets, which makes it hard for smaller, newer organizations to qualify. Local entities frequently lack the financial management history and staff capacity required by providers. Additionally, some knowledge group participants stated that, even if these circumstances are met, in many cases, the lack of consolidated records and learning documents on past projects limits their ability to justify their experience. In turn, exclusion due to limited experience further reduces the opportunities for younger organisations to gain experience despite their expertise and existing potential, while more consolidated entities end up being prioritised.

"Western organizations get trained and come to Senegal, win the projects and run their activities – whereas local and national organizations can't even get access to funding."

Civil society representative, Senegal

3) **Limited access to information**

Access to information is another key factor determining the possibility to access climate finance. The information dissemination channels and resources allocated to raise awareness and strengthen capacities on climate change and climate finance are particularly limited in local and rural contexts, especially where Internet and electrical power access are in short supply. Even when the conditions are met, participants stated that information is not centralised, but rather dispersed and difficult to access, hindering their ability to benefit from these opportunities. Additionally, local actors often lack knowledge of international climate funds and their access mechanisms. This is especially the case for multilateral climate funds, for which information such as existing accredited entities in their countries or access mechanisms is mostly unknown. Rights-holders such as local administrations and youth organisations also indicated that their presence is usually limited in spaces where such relevant information is often shared (such as national or global climate events, workshops, meetings). They consequently miss out on key information, while in the spirit of competitivity, information is often retained by a smaller number of actors and not widely shared.

4) Language barriers

The language in which relevant information and documentation is shared poses another significant barrier for equal opportunities in accessing climate finance at the local level. Funding information, documentation and calls for proposals are often in English, making access difficult for non-English-speaking local actors. Many organisations cannot afford the cost of external translation services and end up relying on lower-quality translations (online engines), which can lead to a loss of information. In addition, the proposals written by these organisations often need to be translated from their language to the language required for submission, which can have a negative impact on the coherence of the proposal and significantly reduce the time available to formulate a competitive proposal (especially if requiring double translation, i.e. from a local language to French and from French to English). Finally, knowledge group participants also indicated that the spaces where this information is often shared (such as face-to-face meetings, webinars, etc) are also mostly exclusively English-speaking, further reducing their chances of staying on top of existing opportunities.

5) Co-financing constraints

Many funding mechanisms require co-financing, which presents another constraint for accessing funding opportunities. This is especially the case for smaller sized organisations, which often have a more limited financial capacity to meet such requirements. As opposed to larger international organisations, national and locally based organisations, and local administrations often do not have specific budget lines for co-financing, which poses a significant obstacle for accessing existing opportunities. Even if these conditions are eventually met, during the project selection processes, providers may still consider these organisations less capable of absorbing large amounts of financing, leading to rejection. Additionally, when it comes to accessing loans, SMEs, smallholder producers and community-based groups often lack the capacity to provide financial, land (such as title requirements) and material guarantees – with this particularly being the case for women – and are thereby excluded from funding opportunities.

Other cited factors – which also apply more widely to development and humanitarian funding – include:

- **Short deadlines for proposal development:** deadlines imposed by providers often represent an added difficulty for local and national actors to develop competitive proposals and provide the necessary documentation. In addition, challenges in accessing information and language barriers, as mentioned above, mean that opportunities often arrive late and need processing , further reducing the time available for proposal development.

- **Insufficient alignment between provider priorities and the local context:** during consultations, it has also been stated that some providers and even INGOs often impose their own objectives without considering the real needs of target communities, including the alignment of context analyses, the perception of climate impacts or the choice of implementation zones. The causes mentioned include the insufficient collaboration between providers and civil society organisations or how north-south government and geopolitical relationships are used exclusively to define the choice of development and climate priorities often reducing the visibility of the priorities of local organisations and communities.

- **Access through intermediaries reduces the amount of funds available for local actors:** projects implemented through intermediaries acting as lead entities, such as larger NGOs or international organisations, often implies large transaction and coordination costs, limiting the total amount ultimately destined to local communities.

- **Limited availability of national financing opportunities and decentralisation challenges:** Domestic (national and local) sources of finance are essential for boosting climate resilience, by promoting a better ownership of communities, sustainability and direct impact. However, in general, domestic climate finance windows remain insufficient, which impacts the ability of communities to finance their own initiatives. In most countries, development and climate funds established at the national level can also become difficult to access at the local level due to inefficient or incomplete decentralisation of the public administration and budgets, or to gaps in the transfer of resources and skills, limiting local governments' abilities to effectively mobilize and implement climate finance. Previous research carried out by Oxfam in Burkina Faso and Niger also corroborates these findings.[49] [50]

ACCESSIBILITY VARIES BY FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT

Based on consultations with the 107 organisations that participated in the four country workshops, we have assessed the level of accessibility of different funding instruments related to climate.

According to the results shown below (Table 1), in most cases, consulted actors have never accessed any climate or developing funding opportunities through the below-mentioned provider categories. However, this is especially the case for multilateral climate funds, where the vast majority stated that they have never gained any type of access to these funds or been engaged in any initiative. Funds from financial institutions, such as the World Bank or the African Development Bank, were also described as coming with limitations, due to finance flowing directly to the national administrations and the low proportion of funds that non-state actors can directly access. The most accessible types of funding instruments were traditional bilateral providers, followed by funds from the United Nations.

	Bilateral donors	MDBs and FIs	GEF	GCF	Adaptation Fund	United Nations
Have never gained access to, benefited from funds or worked with this donor	37%	48%	70%	69%	77%	40%
Have never directly gained access to funds but benefitted from isolated activities	7%	7%	4%	3%	3%	10%
I have directly implemented or benefited from several activities	9%	12%	4%	8%	4%	13%
I have had an indirect access / been engaged in the implementation or benefitted from	25%	21%	12%	11%	10%	17%
I have had a direct access - implementing or benefiting from projects	22%	12%	9%	9%	6%	20%

Table 1. Proportion of organisations indicating varying degrees of access finance to different funding instruments. Cells marked in green and red represent, respectively, higher and lower percentages of access to finance.

Multilateral climate funds are among the most inaccessible[51]

When considering multilateral funds like the GCF or the Adaptation Fund, restrictive accreditation conditions and the consequent lack of national direct-access entities in certain countries (e.g. Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad) are key barriers to accessing climate funds, especially for civil society. Even when these actors have the possibility of access via accredited entities, conventional application channels imply complex proposal development (i.e. the need to carry out several additional studies) and lengthy project validation chains.[52] On the other hand, in situations where national accredited entities exist (such as in Senegal[2]), their capacity to mobilise large amounts of climate finance is also much lower due to their limited size. In most cases, organisations at the national and local level have to rely on international accredited entities (such as United Nations institutions), implying higher transactional costs. Some civil society representatives also perceived international accredited entities as lacking inclusive approaches and prioritising work on their own portfolios. Despite ongoing efforts to increase national access to these funds (such as the GCF 'Readiness Programme' and the Simplified Approval Process, which has also been subject to criticism[53]), some participants stated that national priorities most often focus on larger projects (i.e. high infrastructure-related projects, multi-country projects or those with large private sector involvement), thereby excluding smaller structures and organisations from

[2] Senegal has two National Accredited Entities: Centre de Suivi Écologique and La Banque Agricole.

direct access.

Other climate-environmental funds like the Global Environment Fund have also been considered highly inaccessible for civil society. Some sources highlighted the large proportion of its funds going to international organisations (40% of the GEF projects have been awarded to the World Bank and UNDP[54]), while instruments such as its Small Grants Programme[55] still present challenges for smaller organisations due to their co-financing requirements.[56]

Good practice case | Burkina Faso: Efforts to strengthen national and civil society access to the GCF and identified challenges

The Executive Secretariat of the Green Climate Fund in Burkina Faso was created in 2018 as a structure directly attached to the Prime Minister's office. This structure is in charge of ensuring an interface between the GCF and the Burkina Faso Government and of contributing to the national mobilisation of GCF funds, including the submission of proposals for the GCF 'Readiness Programme'.

In 2019, this national structure created a Country Programme for the Green Climate Fund stating Burkina Faso's priorities for the next five years. In this programme, three main challenges were identified with regards to facilitating national access to the Fund: (1) Lack of scientific data; (2) Insufficiency and inefficiency of climate finance; and (3) Coherence of sectorial policies with the engagements of Burkina Faso for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Since 2018, the Executive Secretariat has also engaged in a nationwide structured dialogue with civil society and other national actors, supporting actions such as sharing information about existing national climate finance engagements, developing a pipeline of national projects, identifying main challenges and developing recommendations to be implemented. Thanks to these efforts, Burkina Faso has benefited from several financings from the GCF through multiple projects. In addition to the major initiative Desert to Power G5 Sahel Facility, eleven GCF-supported projects are found across the country. However, most projects have a regional scope, while only two (FP074 and FP093) are specific to Burkina Faso.

EXISTING AND REQUIRED CAPACITIES

MAIN CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS IN ACCESSING CLIMATE FINANCE

Climate finance providers set very high organisational capacity standards and requirements for allocating funding to organisations that are applying for funds. These include standards for project and programme management, accountability practices, demonstrated financial management capacities or human resources, among other aspects, which by design exclude many smaller-scale structures from gaining equal access to funding opportunities. Bridging the climate finance access gap for national and local actors involves identifying their key capacity challenges and taking targeted capacity and institutional building actions to address them, especially for local and community-based organisations that are leading climate action on the frontline. This includes ensuring they meet the necessary eligibility criteria, can develop competitive proposals, and have the proper organisational structure and technical expertise to implement climate projects and programmes effectively. The key challenges identified in the workshop consultations include the following:

1) **Underlying factors affecting accessibility to climate financing opportunities**: The elements listed below are some of the key structural pillars affecting the capacity of organisations to operationalise their institutional and fundraising activities effectively:

Institutional capacities (formal registration/legal status): One of the main challenges faced by many local and community-based organisations is the lack of formal registration in place, rendering them ineligible for most institutional funding opportunities. Without support and awareness raising, many organisations can struggle to adopt the necessary procedures and meet the bureaucratic requirements to complete their official registration and gain legal status in their operating countries.

Economic capacities: Local organisations representing the communities and collectives that are most impacted by the climate crisis often have limited economic resources, and consequently, a limited capacity to invest in human, material, financial and infrastructural resources and to build a robust structure and organisational functioning. Moreover, as outlined in an earlier section, one of the key factors affecting the eligibility of small-scale entities for institutional funding opportunities is the **lack of co-financing capacities to meet the requirements of providers**. In particular, for small-scale structures like women-led farmer organisations, the unavailability of sufficient financial guarantees to obtain loans is also a key limitation to investment in building their productive capacities and strengthening their climate resilience. Budget constraints also pose a challenge to the sustainability of projects led by local actors, as they often struggle to continue implementing project activities once institutional funding ends without follow-up resources.

Organisational capacities: Smaller entities often also encounter limited organisational capacities, such as having appropriate organisational structures and management systems or sufficient internal policies and procedures in place.[3] The absence of these policies and mechanisms leads to ineffective organisational functioning, including the capacity to fundraise, effectively manage and implement climate projects and ensure technical and financial donor compliance. Weak institutional governance[4] can also affect institutional transparency, accountability and integrity. These gaps can ultimately generate mistrust and lack of credibility, making providers become reluctant to finance local and national entities that do

[3] Human resource, code of conduct and ethics, finance, procurement, safeguarding, gender and equality, compliance, data protection, safety, or anti-corruption policies and procedures, among others.

[4] For instance, in some cases consulted actors referred to weak internal compliance by umbrella structures, and a lack of accountability towards their grassroot structures.

not have the appropriate organisational capacities, structures and transparency arrangements in place.

2) **Main capacity gaps for national and local organisations:** The following list highlights the key capacity gaps that require enhanced capacity-building and support efforts, as identified by the knowledge group participants. These gaps are categorized into four dimensions: fundraising, financial, technical and partnership building capacities.

Fundraising capacities

As outlined in an earlier section, local and national actors often have insufficient knowledge and expertise on existing climate-related funding opportunities, providers and application procedures, mainly due to insufficient information sharing and capacity building reaching the local level. As opposed to large organisations, these structures also often do not have sufficient fundraising capacities, principally due to their limited budgets and organisational structuring. This translates into a limited capacity to recruit qualified staff or consultants to take on the continuous and timely monitoring of funding opportunities, coordinating and writing robust project funding proposals or engaging with providers. This is especially the case for local organisations, small NGOs and municipalities.

When it comes to writing project funding proposals, local organisations often also face important capacity gaps that affect their fundraising opportunities, i.e. in developing logical frameworks, theories of change and indicators for monitoring or in their knowledge of national climate policies, strategies or local data on climate risks and impacts, serving to justify the relevance and alignment of their interventions. Finally, the poor integration of climate finance priorities and mobilisation strategies into local and municipal development plans further limits local capacities to mobilise funds.

Financial and funding compliance management

Weak financial and funding compliance[57] management capacities also represent a key barrier for the eligibility of local organisations to access funding opportunities and for sustainably implementing their activities. For instance, difficulties in elaborating and providing the required financial documents (i.e. multi-year financial track records, audits or financial statements) during project submission can result in project rejection. In addition, weak demonstrated capacities to absorb and manage substantive funding and budgets can also be a challenge for smaller-scale and younger organisations to access larger funds. Poor financial management of project funds, including weak capacities to elaborate financial reports and effective justification of expenditures, can affect their reputation and their future funding sustainability, including the potential termination of project contracts and the obligation to reimburse funds. These elements demonstrate the need for stronger financial and funding compliance capacity building for locally based and small-scale organisations.

Technical and project implementation capacities

Another key capacity constraint mentioned by consulted actors, particularly by smaller organisations, relates to meeting donors' expectations on the implementation and management of projects and programmes. This includes elements such as ensuring timely and efficient project implementation; efficiently coordinating and managing project activities, logistics and budgets; carrying out effective monitoring and evaluation; and following compliance procedures correctly or capitalising project learnings successfully. The inability to meet such standards can affect the image of implementing entities and consequently generate a loss of donor trust and exclusion from funding opportunities. Many locally based organisations also do not have sufficient technical expertise or dedicated staff specialised in climate and environment, limiting their ability to apply for climate-specific calls for proposals or to be included as implementing entities in large climate projects (which can consequently choose to work with contractors rather than with local expertise).

Weak partnership building and coordination among stakeholders

Stakeholder partnership and coordination is key to increase chances for entities with a limited operational size and capacity to apply for and obtain larger funds. Knowledge group participants flagged the need for stronger consortium building and coordination among actors when considering applying for funding opportunities, provided that many of them do not possess the necessary implementation capacity, experience and co-financing capacity by themselves. Youth-based and women-led organisations said they felt particularly excluded when project consortiums are formed, limiting their chances to gain relevant experience in implementing projects. To address this challenge stronger multi-stakeholder platforms should be built across different thematic and functional areas and geographic scales, in order to build the necessary knowledge, confidence and complementarity among actors. Stakeholders also must be strongly coordinated during project implementation, given that weak coordination negatively affects project impact, accountability and the effective visibility of implemented actions, ultimately affecting donor trust.

Good practice cases | Capacity strengthening to access funding

Oxfam has reported several positive experiences serving as recommendations for the future operationalisation of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage.[58] [59]

The Humanitarian Response Grant Facility, set up in Bangladesh and Uganda under the ELNHA programme, provided written feedback and recommendations for improvement to organisations that were not selected for grants. In addition, pre-selected organisations received training on proposal development, budgeting, reporting and quality standards, and technical advisers were made available and tailored mentoring was given to support organisations in need during project implementation.

The **Humanitarian Response Consortium** in the Philippines set up a quick response fund and an oversight committee in charge of updating capacity maps of its members serving to assess response needs, the availability of members, what course the mobilised funds will follow, what organization will lead the response and the composition of the rapid assessment and response team, among other things. Consortium members are proactive in sharing monitoring and assessment reports and are capable of deploying teams immediately, before a hazard such as a typhoon hits a community.

EXISTING CAPACITIES AND SKILLS TO BE FURTHER VALUED BY CLIMATE FINANCE PROVIDERS

National, local and community-based actors have diverse skills and expertise that represent an important added value for the deployment of effective actions and strategies aiming to strengthen climate resilience and to respond to loss and damage at the local level. According to consulted actors, these capacities are often neither included as criteria for selection nor fully recognised by finance providers in their priorities and strategies. These include the following:

- **Deep understanding of the local context.** Community-based and local organisations who are on the frontlines of climate change are better placed to understand climate risks and differentiated impacts and social, cultural and seasonal factors that shape project implementation. They also possess a better understanding of the local population and a better capacity to identify and engage with relevant rights-holders. Their knowledge and expertise of the local context also enables them to effectively monitor and report on project progress using both conventional and traditional methods, incorporating grassroots realities and impact measurement mechanisms like traditional climate indicators observed by farmers and elders.

- **Locally adapted and traditional climate knowledge and expertise.** Existing local solutions and approaches based on local and Indigenous knowledge, such as returning to and scaling up traditional practices contributing to strengthening climate resilience can be further promoted by finance providers and be complementary to existing approaches based on science. For example, local populations and farmers' organisations possess knowledge and expertise acquired from earlier generations in local adaptation and mitigation techniques such as sustainable land management, traditional soil restoration practices and biodiversity preservation.

- **Ease of information transmission and communication in local languages** spoken by rural populations, who can better recognise local CSOs as appropriate interlocutors and opinion leaders.

- **Their mandate as climate defenders and promoters**, including the personal involvement of community-based actors in project implementation and beyond (ensuring greater sustainability of actions) and the ability to mobilise members of grassroots communities.

- **Existent expertise from national-to-local technical services from the administration, academics, private sector and other actors**. This can potentially contribute to strengthening the technical, organisational and project implementation capacities of local actors. **In some cases, this is strengthened by the existence of stakeholder coordination**

platforms, such as natural resources governance forums and information sharing networks, which are essential for effective climate action.

- **Existence of groups representing and supporting the needs of the most marginalised groups.** In most local contexts there is the presence of women rights groups and organisations representing groups experiencing marginalisation, who are distinctly and unequally affected by the climate crisis. These groups have a better understanding of the specific climate impacts faced by these collectives and the most suitable specific solutions to address them.

CLIMATE GOVERNANCE: PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION IN DECISION-MAKING

Climate governance refers to the systems, processes, policies and institutions that guide decision-making and action to address climate change at various levels. It involves coordinating efforts among different stakeholders (governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector, and more) to plan and implement climate-related actions. Oxfam emphasizes that effective governance requires the full, meaningful participation and inclusion of the communities and social groups that are most marginalised and affected by climate change in decision-making shaping climate-related policies and actions. Access to climate finance by local communities, CSOs and structures representing groups experiencing marginalisation is directly influenced by how rights-holders participate and effectively engage in decision-making spaces and processes at different levels. We have focussed on how inclusion, participation and consideration of the specific needs and rights of rights-holders representing climate-affected communities and populations happens in the three following dimensions:

1) During the definition of provider strategic priorities

The strategic priorities of finance providers define how institutional funding will be spent, including which objectives and focus areas, geographies and target populations will be prioritised in the coming years. For this reason, the participation of rights-holders representing climate-affected geographies, populations and collectives during the process of defining such priorities is highly important to ensure that their priorities and needs are taken into account, properly resourced and that they have an equal chance in accessing finance.

The involvement of non-state actors, including Indigenous peoples, civil society and local organisations, in the process of defining the strategic priorities of development and climate finance providers is generally limited. While state actors and larger civil society or umbrella structures may have some level of participation through various bilateral and multilateral frameworks, grassroots organizations and those representing marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, have expressed feeling excluded or inadequately involved in these processes. According to consulted knowledge group participants, their participation, when occurring, does not allow for proper ownership and accountability of the strategies: it often takes place late in the process, limiting their ability to influence decisions, and it is typically more symbolic than substantive, with consultations often organised to support and flesh out pre-conceived 'donor' agendas rather than genuinely incorporating local perspectives. When consulting and validating their strategies, many providers often have recipient states as their main or only interlocutors. These position their national priorities, which may not necessarily represent the needs of most climate affected populations and groups.

For the case of multilateral funds such as the GCF, some countries (Senegal, Burkina Faso and Chad) play a role in organising consultations to elaborate national strategies and roadmaps (see Box on page 12). These consultations usually involve a stronger participation of civil society groups representing climate-affected communities and groups.

Finally, and as presented in the previous sections, the insufficient and inadequate dissemination of information by climate finance providers and the consequent insufficient knowledge acquired by local actors of existing providers and their strategies adds another barrier for their participation.

2) During the development of funding proposals for large climate projects

Equal and inclusive stakeholder participation is also key during the development phase of larger scale climate projects, this is the moment when the choice is made about which actions will be implemented and where the budget will be spent. As is the case for traditional development projects, providers most often require organisations submitting project proposals to carry out robust needs assessments and consultations with the target populations the project aims to work with.

According to the knowledge groups in the four countries, any consultation with and involvement of civil society and grassroots organisations – especially at the rural level and for those representing youth, women and people with disabilities – is more often superficial and limited to formalities. Their participation is frequently limited to technical aspects of project development based on specific thematic areas and participatory diagnoses, while they are more often excluded from areas such as participatory budgeting. **It is perceived that established organizations are usually favoured, while new or smaller organisations have less chances of participating in the development of funding opportunities and of being included as implementing partners, with traditional partners often being privileged**.

Nevertheless, some countries are already adopting more inclusive and participatory approaches. For example, Burkina Faso is progressively promoting greater stakeholder involvement, from the context and feasibility phase of projects to their implementation. Examples of inclusive stakeholder engagement during the formulation phase of climate projects include participatory approaches coordinated by UNDP, such as the PAMED project in Burkina Faso, where illiterate people were invited and given the opportunity to propose actions according to their needs, which were then included in the project development and implementation.[60]

Finally, during the project conception, state structures are involved and play a role in contributing to proposal development and signature prior to submission, as well as in effectively engaging with rights-holders. In many cases, their influence on which geographies and settings (rural vs. urban) to prioritise also determines who is involved in the process. Local authorities are usually also consulted during the diagnosis phase and involved in areas such as data collection relating to the context or the target populations.

3) During the development of national-to-local climate-related policies, plans and priorities

Stakeholder participation in the development process of public climate policies is key in order to ensure that interventions and action areas prioritised by governments are aligned with the needs of the most climate vulnerable communities and groups. In most cases, multi-year strategies and funding priorities developed by institutional finance providers strongly consider existing public policies and priorities, which in turn determine the types of actions taken and the actors involved.

Overall, across all four countries there is a general commitment to consultative processes that involve a wide range of rights-holders, including civil society and local organizations. These processes have led to positive outcomes, such as allowing rights-holders who are closer to the populations to provide inputs and have their views considered in national policy documents and strategies such as NDCs, National Adaptation Plans or national development plans. For example, in Burkina Faso the NDC Partnership has facilitated participative processes through regional consultations, while national civil society platforms also organise decentralised consultations and sectorial dialogues. In Senegal, a national climate change adaptation platform for agriculture, livestock and fishing was created based on a participatory stakeholder process. In Mali, the Ministry of Environment organises ad-hoc committees allowing for the engagement of civil society and non-state actors and to integrate their priorities in national policies. As a result, CSOs have been actively influencing on aspects such as local seeds, agroecology and mitigation ambition in national policies.

However, the inclusiveness of national processes and quality of stakeholder participation was also questioned in some workshops in a similar pattern to previous assessments.[61] In Chad, while local and women-led organisations are formally included in committees and consultations for the conception of policies and plans, testimonies point to their presence being figurative and their influence often limited. This includes the perception that decisions are already made before consulting with local actors, leading to a lack of meaningful participation. This issue is echoed in Senegal, where youth and women-led organisations reported feeling less engaged in national processes and where strategies and policies lack more ownership from local communities, although their participation in policy processes improves at the local level.

In summary, while there is widespread recognition of the need for inclusive climate policy development, the effectiveness of stakeholder participation varies, with notable challenges in ensuring that all voices, particularly those of marginalized groups, are meaningfully considered in the final policy outcomes.

HOW GENDER-BASED AND OTHER INTERSECTING FACTORS AFFECT ACCESSIBILITY

All the different elements affecting the accessibility of climate finance mechanisms for national and local organisations, which have been outlined in detail in the three previous sections, are shaped by intersecting factors of discrimination. Socially constructed differences and discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status and other intersecting factors unequally shape the opportunities of marginalised groups and the organisations representing them in accessing climate finance, resulting in their exclusion from equally benefitting from climate-resilient development.[62] [63]

During the workshops in the four countries, knowledge group participants carried out a cross-cutting analysis of how gender and intersecting factors affect accessibility to climate finance, with the following elements being highlighted:

<u>Underlying discriminatory barriers</u>

- **Socio-cultural stereotypes, norms and practices:** Structural discriminatory factors affect how the life and socio-economic opportunities of women, girls and other marginalised groups are shaped, especially at the rural level. Socio-cultural stereotypes lead to discriminatory practices towards women and girls (i.e. early school abandonment, the gendered division of domestic and care work or unequal employment opportunities) and to gender-based violence, all of which result in their exclusion from opportunities related to training, access to information and participation. Socially constructed stereotypes also exclude women from important economic and household decisions, even if they are the ones bearing most of the burden in agricultural and livestock production. These structural discrimination factors constitute key barriers to the leadership of women, limiting their potential for entrepreneurship, their self-confidence and their capacity to assume leadership roles in climate and development initiatives and ultimately in accessing climate finance.

- **Insufficient implementation of gender policies and strategies:** Knowledge group participants also emphasised the existence of gender policies and strategies that are not always sufficiently respected and applied in all the spheres they apply to. These include gender-balanced political representation, equal participation in decision-making spaces, tackling gender-discriminatory norms and practices and implementing gender-sensitive budgeting, planning and policymaking. **Women, young** people and people with disabilities face unequal representation in decision-making spaces at different levels**. When it comes to political representation, women are still systematically excluded from nomination to posts of higher responsibility, which is also affected by the lack of suitable candidates due to unequal education opportunities for women. Women, youth and people with disabilities also referred to their poor participation in municipal development decision-making structures and in the development of large climate and development projects and strategies, including in budgeting decisions, where their expertise and income-generating activities relevant for climate and environmental action are usually not sufficiently integrated.

Main barriers affecting climate finance access opportunities

- **Unequal access to land and natural/productive resources:** The lack of secure and formal access to land for some marginalised groups, especially women, can be a blocking factor for obtaining finance instruments requiring financial guarantees, such as loans.[64] In addition, in order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of different types of activities which can be implemented in a climate project (i.e. reforestation activities, and construction of wells or other infrastructure), it is often required that beneficiaries of these activities formally own the land. Women and their representative structures struggle most with these challenges as they have unequal access to land. As an example, a recent analysis of climate projects carried out by ActionAid found that women and youth were excluded from a tree planting project due to not having access to land title deeds.[65] This is especially the case for displaced women, who represent the majority of displaced people due to conflict in the Sahel.[66] Even when women do have secure access to land, in many contexts they are left with the marginal and unproductive land.

- **Weak access to financial services and loans:** Women and women's organisations face more difficulties in accessing loans from banks and micro-finance institutions due to factors such as their lack of financial collateral (including land), rooted cultural biases or their limited structuring and financial capital. Financial structures and traditional banking services often exclude women from financial services, prioritising profitability in ways that make it difficult for women to meet credit allocation criteria, particularly due to challenges linked to formal land access or lack of financial guarantees.[67] Their insufficient knowledge about financial systems and mechanisms and the remoteness and lack of accessibility of financial institutions are additional challenges, resulting in many women opting instead to resort to informal financial services.[68] The same challenges can apply with opportunities for accessing climate finance, such as small-scale, low-interest loans that can be transformed into substantive investments for women agricultural producers to boost their productivity, economic opportunities and livelihoods.

- **Impossibility for small-scale organisations to financially take on high project co-financing requirements:** Small-scale organisations, especially those represented by women, young people and people with

"We are not involved in the design – we even receive the documents late – without enough time to make amendments. We tick off, point out parts where our concerns are forgotten. They come down with documents that have already been put together and make decorations to make it look like the document has been approved – but these documents do not reflect a true representation."

Representatives from women's rights organisations, Chad disabilities typically have more limited financial capacities to respond to co-financing requirements, often leaving them out of financing opportunities. Co-financing requirements are usually the same regardless of the size of the organisations that apply, making them not flexible enough for smaller organisations to have equitable chances.

- **Limited access to information for rural women:** Unequal access to information for rural women is caused by structural discriminatory factors stemming from unequal access to education. The lower level of literacy and access to basic formal education for women and girls[69] affects their opportunities to take on accessible information on existing opportunities related to climate finance effectively. For information shared digitally, this is particularly exacerbated by the lower digital literacy level of many rural women, which limits their access to information and to market, training and networking opportunities. Finally, language barriers also play a key role: many rural women only speak local languages, while typically the available and shared information is mostly in English, or at best in French.

- **Unequal access to capacity building opportunities:** Knowledge group participants stated several structural disenabling factors contributing to this, such as limited higher education training opportunities for women and girls from rural areas in fields such as science, technology or engineering, unequal access to training scholarships, or in some cases even the prohibition by their husbands to undertake trainings. These factors ultimately affect capacity building opportunities on climate, development and climate finance. This translates into capacity challenges for women and their organisations, such as weaker technical and financial management capacities or the capacity to elaborate robust and competitive climate funding proposals, all of which exacerbate their barriers in accessing to climate finance.

- **Lack of formalisation of grassroots structures:** Due to their limited capacities and lack of support, many small-scale structures representing women, young people and people with disabilities do not have a formal registration and official legal status, affecting their eligibility for institutional funding opportunities. In addition, their lack of consolidated experience in climate and development projects is often an added barrier for their access to climate finance.

CHALLENGES IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

Fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS), and particularly contexts affected by armed conflict, chronic insecurity and multi-factorial fragility (including food and nutrition insecurity and climate vulnerability) pose numerous challenges for the implementation of climate and development projects, resulting in several questions that can be raised: Do implementation risks and difficulties in monitoring project/programme implementation exacerbate barriers to accessing climate finance in FCAS? Could a 'no-regrets' approach to climate finance, integrated with humanitarian actions in response to climate disasters, be a game changer for long-term adaptation? Should we avoid losing valuable years of climate action by waiting for more stability?

The Sahel region has always been the setting of intercommunity conflicts between agricultural producers and pastoralists. However, with growing insecurity due to increased armed conflict and the spread of terrorism, many geographical zones have become locked and inaccessible for entities typically operating and implementing projects in these areas. Even if organisations may be able to operate in these zones, nowadays it has become increasingly challenging for many of them to carry out their activities due to the impossibility of commuting without incurring high security risks. This is making it increasingly difficult for all organisations, and especially for women and women's organisations, to implement activities due to their higher exposure to security and violence risks.[70] These threats also drive up the cost of implementation, for example due to the need to cover security costs, or the lack of infrastructure meaning that certain operational costs, such as car rental, are higher. In addition to direct security threats, the sustainability of implemented projects might also be affected by the potential displacement of the project target communities.

Even if multilateral funds such as the GCF[71] and the World Bank[72] have been making increasing efforts to address challenges in funding climate action in fragile and conflict affected settings, finance providers are generally still reluctant to fund climate and development projects in such settings, with restrictions that apply either to specific regions or to whole countries.[73] This is exacerbated by the geopolitical context of countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, where recent military takeovers have changed the geopolitical landscape of the region and affected diplomatic relations[74 75] Countries such as France)the main bilateral provider in the region[76 77]), Sweden or Denmark have decided to suspend or to phase out their development aid from countries like Mali, Burkina Faso or Niger.[78 79 80 81 82]

As an illustrative example, some knowledge group participants stated having been impacted by the cancelation of already granted projects due to the geopolitical context. Oxfam found similar trends in other parts of the world, with the World Bank, for example, putting a hold on their operation disbursements in Myanmar, following the military seizing power in February 2021.[83] According to some participants, the reasons stated by providers for their reluctance to provide finance to conflict-affected settings include the impossibility to properly carry out field monitoring or the perceived risk of their financed activities potentially contributing to fuelling further conflict. There is also a large risk around legitimacy when operating in areas of high fragility, where the authority over a certain area is not clear. Non-state actors such as armed groups could see an opportunity in using climate action, or climate finance, for legitimacy aims and gains, which in itself can also affect the security risk. National restrictions can add an additional barrier for the implementation of projects. For example, in Burkina Faso, the State authorities are very vigilant about any funds flowing to conflict-affected municipalities, under the assumption that past finance flows have ended up funding illicit activities, leading as a result to the need for funds to be spent under the surveillance of the State.

"In some occasions we organise 2–3-day meetings between farmers and pastoralists for them to express their views, find common solutions and develop agreement documents signed by both groups of actors. This has created positive conditions for an improved concerted management of natural resources (land, water)."

Civil society representative, Chad

Keys for success

Knowledge group participants identified several approaches and solutions to help overcome barriers to accessing climate finance in these settings. Drawing from their programming experiences, some emphasized the value of collaborating closely with local NGOs for effective project implementation. Local organisations are also trusted by the communities, and can therefore play a much better role in terms of conflict sensitivity. There is also the added value of local actors in supporting local development plans – particularly those that consider the needs of communities living in fragile contexts and include resource mobilization strategies. Despite these arguments in favour of the role of local actors, Oxfam's research findings still show that less than 1% of the international climate finance flowing to the West Africa/Sahel region was directly going to local organizations.[84]

Knowledge group participants also highlighted the need for providers to adopt needs-based approaches focusing on conflict-affected populations, stressing the urgency of not leaving them behind, given their heightened exposure to insecurity, forced displacement and mounting food insecurity. Similarly, 'area-based' approaches can play a crucial role in addressing humanitarian and development needs at the same time. This includes responding to climate-related disasters, as well as preparing for and adapting to future changes over the long term. These needs and area-based strategies are essential for implementing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and ensuring effective climate action.

Challenges related to access to climate finance in conflict-affected settings can be different depending on the type of conflict. Knowledge group participants stressed the need for providers to unblock climate finance by adopting context-specific approaches. For instance, zones affected by armed conflict pose the challenge of urgently addressing immediate humanitarian needs. However, local peace, conflict sensitivity, social cohesion approaches and building on the expertise of local partners in implementing land, concerted natural resource and water management solutions can support communities to build back and recover sustainably from shocks. Geographical zones exposed to terrorist attacks can require approaches such as adopting robust risk management mechanisms, conflict sensitivity approaches or having effective information sharing, communication and coordination mechanisms for project implementation through the territorial presence of state and civil society agents. Areas affected by inter-community conflict (i.e. land-based conflicts between farming and pastoralist communities) can, on the other hand, require setting up conflict management committees and improving governance systems by inclusively engaging all rights-holders in land and natural resource management and development planning. In all of these cases, readiness efforts focusing on improving the capacity of local actors to identify and respond to funding opportunities can be one of the most effective approaches serving to unblock climate finance in fragile settings.

Effectively implementing climate and development programming in these settings requires adopting an integrated humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus approach (HDP Nexus). This approach presents the opportunity to simultaneously tackle systemic problems such as food insecurity and access to basic needs, and address systemic factors of climate vulnerability that lead to further fragility, such as competition over increasingly scarce and/or degraded resources – particularly land.

For development providers, who tend to be more risk-averse, climate action may not always be feasible in certain areas or under specific circumstances. However, humanitarian action is still taking place, demonstrating that operations can continue. This is largely due to the design of both the climate finance and humanitarian systems, as well as the conditions attached to funding. In fragile contexts, a more 'no-regrets' approach would be more appropriate.[85] [86]

Successful implementation approaches mentioned by knowledge group participants usually include working at the same time on the following aspects when implementing funded programmes in fragile and conflict affected settings:

1. Promoting concertation mechanisms and structures for inclusive and participatory land governance and natural resource/landscape management, including capacity building for local actors, in particular women and youth-led organisations.

2. Promoting social cohesion within/between communities and between internally displaced populations (IDPs) and host communities – including setting up social mediation structures and promoting the role of women and youth – and working on the socio-economic insertion of IDPs.

3. Supporting climate- and conflict-vulnerable communities with climate-resilient farming, sustainable natural resource, ecosystem and water management and sustainable agricultural intensification, with the objective of improving livelihoods and climate resilience while alleviating pressure over land.

4. Supporting the development or reconstruction of shared and inclusively managed socio-economic infrastructure (water and sanitation infrastructure, renewable energy, shared social services), including setting up management committees for shared infrastructure.

In addition to operational considerations, structural reflections on how climate finance could function more effectively in these contexts include exploring how donors can implement effective monitoring through local organisations, how risks can be mitigated to attract more and better finance, and how sudden shocks in governance can be addressed. Finally, project implementation in these contexts requires adopting a conflict sensitivity and safe programming approach. Some of the risk management strategies employed by implementing entities include establishing ad-hoc committees dedicated to risk management and adapting interventions to rapidly changing environments. Other strategies involve ensuring comprehensive and up-to-date security assessments before travelling, temporarily relocating staff to work remotely from secure areas, avoiding the handling of physical cash or collaborating with the media for increased awareness on the security situation.

Successful cases from Chad and Burkina Faso | Participatory climate and natural resource management initiatives in conflict-affected settings

Civil society partners in Chad and Burkina Faso have shared several positive and successful experiences where they have addressed the root causes of conflict and vulnerability linked to the management and use of natural resources. These examples include:

PAMELO (Livelihood Improvement in Western Chad project): A project born in response to the Boko Haram conflict in the Lake Chad region and its neighbouring provinces (Kanem, Bahr el Gazel). Lake Chad used to be a key breadbasket region creating many agricultural and commercial livelihood opportunities for its communities, but the sudden outbreak of the insecurity situation due to terrorism led to many negative impacts, including the forced displacement of young people to gold-mining areas or to the Mediterranean and the increased workload of women in charge of household and livelihoods activities. The project has contributed to overcome such challenges by strengthening youth employment opportunities and by providing finance to women to create income-generating activities.

PADL-GRN (Local Development and Management of Natural Resources Support Program): Implemented in the Salamat region, one of the main breadbasket regions in Chad, the project is articulated around the objective of resolving inter-community tensions around the use and management of natural resources. The programme has built new ponds, equilibrating the pressure over existing natural resources, and has promoted the role of youth associations in the protection of climate-impacted natural resources in the Zakouma park, where climate and anthropogenic pressure has affected the wildlife equilibrium.

Design and Implementation Guide for Climate Projects in Fragile Contexts in Burkina Faso: Developed in 2021 by the Executive Secretariat of the Green Climate Fund, this guide presents a practical roadmap to improve the implementation of climate projects in fragile areas. It is based on an analysis of climate risks, such as floods and droughts, which are worsened by the increasing insecurity in Burkina Faso and it advocates for an integrated approach involving the state, local communities, civil society, the private sector and financial partners. It highlights principles to strengthen resilience and promote an efficient allocation of resources, including a diversification of funding through national and international channels such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

3 CONCLUSIONS

Improving access to climate finance at all levels is a key priority for Global South countries in their efforts to address the negative impacts of the climate crisis on climate vulnerable communities and to sustainably build their economies. The importance of lifting climate finance access barriers has progressively become a key part of the international diplomacy (UNFCCC) debate on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance to be agreed at COP29. Aside from demanding a more ambitious quantitative goal, negotiating groups from the Global South are now strongly advocating for qualitative aspects of climate finance to be considered, particularly ensuring that it is adequate, needs-based, accessible and accountable.

This study has highlighted numerous barriers in accessing climate finance that particularly affect civil society organisations and institutions representing communities who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis in the Sahel region, whose countries are ranked among the world's most climate vulnerable[87] and who face urgent needs for scaled up adaptation, and loss and damage finance.

Climate finance mechanisms are often designed in ways that limit the opportunities for small-scale and locally based organisations and there are many challenges with making sure sufficient information reaches these actors in an adequate way, consequently excluding them from obtaining and implementing climate funds. At the same time, these organisations often face significant limits due to insufficient institutional, administrative, financial and technical capacities that are key for unlocking opportunities to accessing funds.

Unequal participation in decision-making spaces also affects their ability to influence key priorities on how funding is prioritised and spent, as well as to be included and participate in future finance opportunities, despite overall progress on the inclusiveness of national climate policymaking processes. All these challenges are particularly felt by structures and organisations representing women, youth, people with disabilities and other intersecting factors of socio-economic discrimination, unfairly excluding them in their chances to access existing and future opportunities.

Geographical areas affected by multi-dimensional fragility and conflict are further left out by providers in their climate finance priorities, due to their aversion to risk, their lack of trust regarding the use and impact of funds and due to geopolitical reasons, leading to further exposure of their communities to the impacts of climate, conflict and food insecurity. Therefore, in these settings, the risk of not providing sufficient finance is even higher.

While the findings of this study are based on the analysis of the situation of four countries in the Sahel, they strongly echo the global challenges related to local access to climate finance.[88] [89] Addressing all these challenges requires climate finance mechanisms and providers to invest substantially in readiness efforts contributing specifically to lifting access barriers to climate finance for national and local actors, especially those representing social and economic groups already driving effective climate solutions in their contexts and communities, while placing a particular focus on areas impacted by conflict and multi-dimensional fragility.

Effectively designed climate finance mechanisms and readiness efforts must also address systemic discriminatory elements that unfairly reduce finance access opportunities for organisations representing women, youth and other marginalised groups, and must be accompanied by stronger institutional and governance systems at national and local level addressing discriminatory laws, social norms and practices.

The evidence presented in this paper should also inform the operationalisation of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) which was adopted at COP27 in 2022, particularly as the fund is currently developing policies and procedures on access to funding and on the participation of civil society and other right-holders in the decision-making of the fund.

COP29 presents an opportunity to steer the delivery and implementation of future climate funds flowing to Global South countries, by placing an emphasis on qualitative aspects that ensure an improved effectiveness and impact of disbursed climate funds. This will only be possible if mechanisms are designed effectively to ensure that the delivery of funds reaches local communities directly, empowering them in their management, implementation and social accountability efforts.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations stemming from the consultative assessment with national and local actors in the four countries of this study are presented below. These recommendations can contribute significantly to strengthening the accessibility of climate finance for national and local actors, thus supporting key objectives such as the 2050 LDC Vision for 70% of global climate finance flows to support local-level action.[90]

RECOMMENDATIONS	TARGETS
(1) Facilitate direct access mechanisms and adapt eligibility requirements and access criteria **for nationally and locally based organisations:** **Facilitate direct access** for local actors and frontline communities, including by **developing specific funding quotas** and **creating dedicated direct access funding windows** for national and local CSOs, umbrella farmers' organisations, organisations representing groups experiencing marginalisation (women, youth and people with disabilities) or municipal administrations, with balanced geographical representation and prioritising LDCs and SIDS. **Reduce co-financing requirements** and create flexible co-financing schemes based on the nature of different types of actors, particularly their size and capacity. Eliminate co-financing requirements for small and locally based organisations. Past learnings from Oxfam have also shown that administrative costs (indirect cost recovery) should also be adequately covered to best facilitate long-term and sustainable local capacities for funding access.[91] **Adapt the experience requirements of calls for proposals to become more inclusive for local and small-scale organisations**, by reviewing the number of projects, years of experience and size of previously implemented climate and development projects.	Climate finance providers (bilateral, multilateral, finance institutions)
(2) Streamline access procedures and requirements for national and local organisations **Reduce the complexity of funding proposal requirements by facilitating simplified and more accessible mechanisms for local organisations.** This may include streamlining project templates, reducing the number of administrative and technical documents required and adapting funding proposal development deadlines. **Adapt calls for proposals to the official languages of countries from the Global South** (French, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic and other official languages) **and allow the submission of funding proposals in these languages.** Provide support for translation to/from local languages. Put in place dedicated staff who are available to support local actors and respond to their specific requests during open call for proposal periods. **Multilateral climate finance providers** (GCF, Adaptation Fund, GEF and FRLD) should streamline eligibility requirements and application processes for the accreditation of local and national organisations.	Climate finance providers (bilateral, multilateral, finance institutions)

(3) Strengthening local and national climate finance preparedness by providing tailored information sharing, capacity building and technical support services for national and local NGOs, CSOs and CBOs. Climate finance providers and other actors can provide tailored readiness support (financial and technical) for national and local NGOs, CSOs and CBOs including: • Capacity building/conceptual training on climate change, climate finance and its instruments and access modalities; • Technical support in the development of funding proposals for climate projects, including translation services to national and local languages; • Technical, administrative, financial, organisational and project implementation capacity building and institutional strengthening; and • Supporting small-scale organisations in addressing underlying barriers for their funding eligibility (i.e., institutional and organisational strengthening, support for formal registration, etc.).	Climate finance providers National administrations International organisations and NGOs National NGOs and CSOs
(4) Support equitable and efficient access to information on climate finance opportunities for local actors and climate vulnerable communities. Readiness support efforts improving access to information can include: • Providing financial and technical **support for the creation, strengthening and organisation of national CSO/NGO platforms** and mechanisms **to engage collectively in the monitoring of funding opportunities**; • **Information sharing on climate finance opportunities**, including the timely sharing and explanation of calls for proposals and their access procedures. Information should be shared through accessible communication channels such as radio broadcasting, newspapers or the creation of tailored internet content (social network, videos, podcasts). It should be translated into local languages and in accessible and comprehensive formats and should follow a gender-responsive and intersectional approach (considering levels of literacy and digital literacy, offering tailored support for people with disabilities, etc.).	Climate finance providers (bilateral, multilateral, finance institutions) National and local administrations National NGOs and CSOs
(5) Facilitating local-to-national and cross-border stakeholder networking and exchange platforms among CSOs, NGOs, local/national administrations, and other actors – facilitating joint resource mobilisation efforts and consortium building ahead of potential climate funding opportunities, helping to strengthen the capacity of smaller organisations, catalysing joint advocacy efforts and the exchange of experiences and information, and focusing on promoting stronger participation from underrepresented groups (women, youth, and people with disabilities).	All
(6) Improve the participation of civil society in the design and implementation of climate finance strategies, programmes and policies **Climate finance providers should facilitate the integration of the perspectives, needs and climate solutions of national and local CSOs/NGOs, CBOs and local administrations in the definition of donor strategic priorities, calls for proposals and implementation of climate finance programmes**[92] through upstream and participatory consultations with rights-holders, placing a special focus on the participation of organisations representing women, youth and people with disabilities. Accredited entities to multilateral climate funds should also strengthen their receptiveness to and support of proposals coming from local and community-based organisations when	Climate finance providers (bilateral, multilateral, finance institutions) National and local administrations

considering submitting project proposals for funding. **Governments and local administrations receiving international climate finance should foster participatory approaches in national-to-local climate governance** (climate and gender-sensitive policymaking, planning and budgeting) **and in international diplomacy** with the effective inclusion of **women, youth and marginalised groups** in order to define priorities and plans aligned with their needs.	International organisations and NGOs[93]
(7) Prioritise and develop adapted funding instruments and programmes for climate-vulnerable, fragile and conflict-affected areas In their strategic geographical priorities and calls for proposals, **climate finance providers should target specific funding for geographical areas that are particularly affected by fragility, conflict and climate impacts**, developing fit-for-purpose mechanisms that are based on bottom-up community approaches and that ensure long-term, sustained programming. **Supporting integrated climate resilience-humanitarian-peacebuilding approaches** that allow climate finance flows to be effectively dedicated and adapted to conflict-affected settings, including by mainstreaming social cohesion and peacebuilding efforts into climate programming.	Climate finance providers (bilateral, multilateral, finance institutions) International, national and local NGOs and CSOs, CBOs
(8) Strengthening knowledge management, learning, and documentation of successful climate-related practices and approaches implemented by local actors – especially from fragile and conflict-affected settings – **and developing robust external communication and visibility strategies**, serving to engage with providers and contributing to influence scaled-up funding for locally-led climate solutions.	National and local NGOs and CSOs, CBOs
(9) Create a facilitative environment for an effective channelling of climate finance initiatives and resources to the local level, including by **promoting effective territorial decentralization** of governance structures, decision-making and the transfer of economic resources to the municipal level and by **creating or increasing national-to-local budget envelopes dedicated to financing local and gender-responsive climate initiatives and activities.**	National administrations
(10) Engaging in advocacy and lobbying activities for enhanced and inclusive climate finance access at the local level and strengthened climate governance, targeting providers, international and domestic governments and engaging in international climate diplomacy.	National and local NGOs and CSOs, CBOs
(11) Improving gender policies and laws and strengthening their application, especially in areas related to participation of women in decision-making spaces, tackling structural discriminatory norms and practices, promoting women and girls' access to formal education and literacy in rural areas, or improving women's access to land, natural resources and financial services. Implementing information and awareness-raising actions targeting different levels and actors. Training national and local administration staff on gender, including gender-sensitive programming and budgeting.	National and local administrations
(12) Carrying out advocacy and awareness raising at different levels to address gender discriminatory policies, norms and practices, including for improved gender policies/laws and their strengthened application. Implementing programmes and activities aiming at strengthening the leadership of women, youth and people with disabilities (entrepreneurship, advocacy and participation in decision-making).	International, national and local NGOs and CSOs, CBOs

Specific recommendations for the NCQG

The post-2025 New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for international climate finance to be agreed at COP29 should:

1) **Incorporate all necessary provisions to enable the conditions for enhanced accessibility of international climate finance for national, local and community-based organisations** in climate-vulnerable countries, including those experiencing conflict and institutional fragility, following the above set of recommendations as examples of actions to be included in readiness enhancement efforts under the NCQG. Climate finance under the NCQG should also, to the extent possible, be predictable by following long-term funding and programme approaches rather than short-term project-based approaches.
2) **Secure a needs-based quantum to the scale of trillions** that specifically ensures the needs of LDCs and SIDS and most affected communities are effectively and adequately covered, encouraging these needs to be informed by participatory, bottom-up and inclusive needs assessments at the local/community level.
3) **Follow subsidiarity principles and aim for the most localised possible delivery of climate finance**, including by setting financing tranches at a scale and of a quality (such as small grant mechanisms) that increases the participation and climate finance decision-making of local civil society, including women and other marginalised groups.
4) **Be affordable to national, local, small-scale and grassroots organisations** by ensuring that co-financing requirements do not impose a financial burden and an eligibility barrier, and by applying flexible co-financing requirements based on the size and type of final climate finance recipients.
5) **Prioritise the provision of grant-based finance over loans**, particularly for adaptation, and loss and damage finance. Finance provided and mobilised under the NCQG should not contribute to worsening the debt crisis in Global South countries, particularly those that are already overindebted and/or fiscally constrained. Climate finance provided under the NCQG to Global South countries at high risk of debt distress or in debt distress should only be in the form of grants.
6) **Be participatory, inclusive and adopt locally led and community-based approaches** in all phases of climate finance disbursement and implementation cycles, ensuring sufficient and adequate representation and participation of women, youth, Indigenous peoples, local communities and people with disabilities, and by empowering communities in developing and implementing collaborative and bottom-up approaches to address their climate-related challenges.
7) **Ensure all climate finance flows are human rights-consistent, gender-responsive, intersectional, and conflict-sensitive** – ensuring all climate finance activities promote equality, take into account and prioritise the needs and rights of marginalised groups, systematically address gender inequalities and adopt an intersectional approach at all programme stages, ensure transparency and accountability towards communities and adhere to the do-no-harm principle.
8) **Include loss and damage in the Goal**, ideally in the form of a (regularly reviewed and adjusted) sub-goal expressed exclusively as grants.

For the Fund for responding to Loss & Damage (FRLD)

The Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), officially established in 2023 after the COP28 decision in Dubai, offers great potential to become a global example of building local leadership through facilitating enhanced access and shifting decision-making power towards local actors. Building on Oxfam's existing recommendations,[94][95] the Fund could specifically:

1) **Establish access modalities that facilitate direct access** to funding for frontline communities, local CSOs and groups experiencing marginalisation, including setting up a small-grant community access window within the Fund.
2) **Establish simplified funding application processes and agile, needs-based fund disbursement mechanisms** – including simpler application forms translated into local languages and promoting agile fund disbursement after a climate disaster, based on locally coordinated, bottom-up anticipatory action and loss and damage needs assessments following participatory processes, integrating in-depth gender and human rights analysis and considering all aspects of economic and non-economic loss and damage.
3) **Provide flexible and multi-year funding based on evolving needs** – including by operating through context-specific programmatic approaches contributing to achieving longer-term developmental objectives after a climate impact.
4) **Use multi-purpose cash** as a mechanism allowing finance to quickly reach affected people and communities and empowering local decision-making.[96]
5) **Have capacity-strengthening as part of its activities** – for example by allowing for specific assistance requests to be included as part of the application process to the Fund or providing feedback and recommendations for improvement to non-selected organisations.
6) **The Fund's governance needs to** have mechanisms in place through which affected communities can feed into the fund's operations (including through representation on the Board); ensure that affected communities are properly consulted on and included in the design of programmes; and be transparent in its decision-making and provide open access to information and ensure access to independent grievance mechanisms.

Annex I – Organisations and structures represented in the four country workshops

	Type of actor	Structure / Organisation	Country
1	National representatives – climate funds	National Designated Authority to the GCF	Burkina Faso
2		National Designated Authority to the GCF	Chad
3		National representative from the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA+)	Chad
4	Environmental ministry – administration, technical services and authorities	Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil National pour le Développement Durable (SPCNDD)	Burkina Faso
5		Ministry of Environment, Water, and Sanitation / UNFCCC Gender Focal Point	Burkina Faso
6		Focal point for Chad's NDC	Chad
7		Deputy Director General of Environment - Ministry of Environment, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development (MEPDD)	Chad
8		National Agency for the Great Green Wall - Chad	Chad
9		Agence de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable (AEDD)	Mali
10		Plateforme Verte des Femmes de la Grande Muraille Verte (PVF/GMV)	Mali
11		National Agency for the Great Green Wall - Mali	Mali
12	Other ministries	Ministry of Women and Child Protection / UNFCCC Gender Focal Point	Chad
13	Decentralised administration and technical structures	Municipality of Ouagadougou	Burkina Faso
14		Municipality of Ouahigouya	Burkina Faso
15		Municipality of Loumbila	Burkina Faso
16		Municipality of Toécé	Burkina Faso
17		Municipality of Kaya	Burkina Faso
18		Municipality of Koumra	Chad
19		Municipality of Bongor	Chad
20		Municipality of Moussoro	Chad
21		Municipality of Sio	Mali
22		Cellule d'Appui aux Elus Locaux (CAEL)	Senegal
23	Customary authorities	Jaraaf of Rufisque	Senegal
24	International NGOs / Civil society platforms	Climate Action Network (CAN) West Africa	Burkina Faso
25		Comité International pour l'Aide d'Urgence et le Développement (CIAUD)	Chad
26		Société de Coopération pour le Développement International (SOCODEVI)	Chad
27		SNV	Mali
28		Tree Aid	Mali

29	National and local NGOs, civil society organisations and networks	Secrétariat Permanent des ONG du Burkina Faso (SPONG)	Burkina Faso
30		Coordination pour un Sahel Vert (COSOV)	Burkina Faso
31		PACJA-Burkina	Burkina Faso
32		Association pour l'Éducation et l'Environnement (A2E)	Burkina Faso
33		Association Flam'bo	Burkina Faso
34		Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur la Gouvernance, les Industries Extractives et le Développement (CERGIED)	Chad
35		Association Lead Tchad	Chad
36		CAIDEL	Chad
37		AMASSA - Afrique Verte Mali	Mali
38		Convergence Malienne contre les Accaparements des Terres (CMAT)	Mali
39		Coalition des Alternatives Africaines Dette et Développement (CAD-Mali)	Mali
40		G-Force	Mali
41		Sahel ECO	Mali
42		Pôle d'Actions d'Intégration des Droits Humains en Afrique (PACINDA)	Mali
43		ONG Le TONUS	Mali
44		Association Malienne d'Éveil au Développement Durable (AMEDD)	Mali
45		Association Malienne pour la Promotion du Sahel (AMAPROS)	Mali
46		Association de Formation et d'Appui au Développement (AFAD)	Mali
47		Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégré (RADI)	Senegal
48		IED Afrique	Senegal
49		Dynamique pour une Transition Agroécologique au Sénégal (DYTAES)	Senegal
50		Publiez Ce Que Vous Payez (PCQVP)	Senegal
51		PACJA Sénégal / Action Solidaire International (ASI)	Senegal
52		Natural Justice	Senegal
53		Réseau des Associations pour la Protection de l'Environnement (RAPEN)	Senegal
54		Green Senegal	Senegal
55	Farmers' associations	Confédération Paysanne du Faso (CPF)	Burkina Faso
56		Coopérative Viimbaore / Naam	Burkina Faso
57		Union Provinciale Professionnelle Agricole de Nayala	Burkina Faso
58		Conseil National de Concertation des Producteurs Ruraux du Tchad (CNCPRT)	Chad
59		La Plateforme Pastorale du Tchad	Chad

60		Association des Organisations Professionnelles Paysannes (AOPP)	Mali
61		Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux (CNCR)	Senegal
62	Labour organisations / trade unions	Fédération Nationale des Jeunes Professionnels Agricoles du Faso (FNJPAF)	Burkina Faso
63		Confédération nationale des travailleurs du Sénégal (CNTS)	Senegal
64	Women's associations and women rights organisations	Association *Pootal Djama*	Burkina Faso
65		Women Environmental Programme	Burkina Faso
66		Voix des Femmes	Burkina Faso
67		Fédération Nationale des Femmes Rurales du Burkina Faso (FENAFER-B)	Burkina Faso
68		Association des Femmes Juristes du Tchad (AFJT)	Chad
69		Cellule de Liaison des Associations Féminines (CELIAF)	Chad
70		Réseau Femmes Africaines pour le Développement Durable (REFADD)	Chad
71		Coordination Nationale des Femmes du G5 Sahel (CN-PHG5)	Chad
72		Association des Femmes pour l'Autopromotion (AFAP)	Chad
73		Groupement Menda	Chad
74		Femmes et TIC	Mali
75		Fédération Nationale des Femmes Rurales (FENAFER)	Mali
76		Association des Femmes Pasteures de Barouéli (AFPB)	Mali
77		Dynamique Femmes	Senegal
78		Réseau de Communication et de Développement des Femmes du Sénégal (RECODEF)	Senegal
79		Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF)	Senegal
80	Organisations representing people with disabilities	Association des Femmes Albinos du Burkina (AFAB)	Burkina Faso
81		Réseau des Personnes Handicapées du Tchad (REPHAT)	Chad
82		Association Malienne pour la Protection des Albinos (AMPA)	Mali
83		Fédération Sénégalaise des Associations de Personnes Handicapées (FSAPH)	Senegal
84	Youth organisations and young activists	Coordination Nationale des Jeunes pour l'Environnement et le Climat (CONAJEC)	Burkina Faso
85		Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement	Burkina Faso
86		Activist from Global Youth Biodiversity Network	Burkina Faso
87		ISEC-Tchad	Chad
88		Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement	Chad
89		Coordination de la Jeunesse du Guéra	Chad

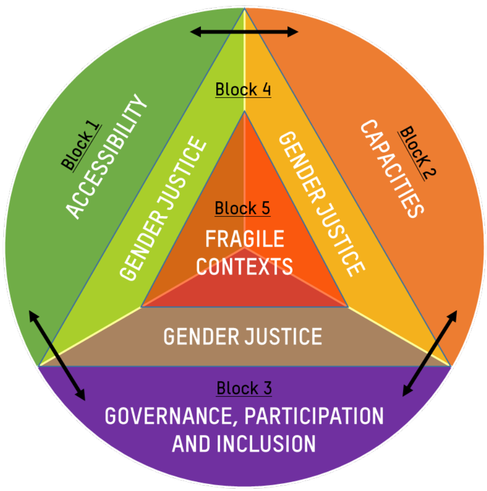
90		Fédération Nationale des Jeunes Ruraux (FENAJER)	Mali
91		Association des Jeunes pour la Citoyenneté Active et la Démocratie (AJCAD)	Mali
92		Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement	Mali
93		Action Jeunes et Femmes pour le Développement Durable (AJFDD)	Mali
94		Youth activist from CAD-Mali	Mali
95		Coalition 2250	Mali
96		African Youth Commission (AYC)	Senegal
97		Action pour la Justice Environnementale (AJE)	Senegal
98		ONG Jeunesse et Développement	Senegal
99		Social Change Factory	Senegal
100		Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement	Senegal
101	Private sector	PIC Energie SARL	Burkina Faso
102		Agrotech	Chad
103		Ets Mallah Ville Propre	Chad
104		Eléphant Vert Mali S.A.	Mali
105		Union des chambres de commerce, d'industrie et d'agriculture du Sénégal	Senegal
106	Financial institutions	Soro Yiriwaso	Mali
107		La Banque Agricole	Senegal
108	Media	Le Journal Vert du Mali	Mali
109	Other	Julien Koularambaye Koundja (environmental expert)	Chad

Annex II: Explanatory note on the research methodology

The research results outlined in **Section 2 "Main barriers affecting access to climate finance"** are based on the synthesis of information gathered from four country workshops that took place between September 2023 and February 2024 in four Sahelian countries: Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad.

These workshops involved 109 participants from 107 organisations and structures (see Annex 1), referred to throughout the report as "knowledge groups". They comprise state actors (central and decentralised administrations and technical structures); civil society (CSOs, NGOs or networks); farmers' organisations; community-based organisations (CBOs); organisations representing women, youth and people with disabilities; and the private sector. Inspired by Oxfam's Vulnerability and Risk Assessment methodology,[97] knowledge groups are defined here as a representative group of rights-holders who take part in a participatory assessment process and represent different categories of actors who are on the frontlines of climate solutions, are known to be affected by climate finance access/barriers and/or have an important role to play in improving the enabling environment for enhanced climate finance access. Knowledge groups are the principal source of knowledge of the information that is analysed from a participatory process and they have been part of the validation of the data and the analysis presented in this paper.

The analysis of the data – and the methodology of the workshops – was based on a research framework that looked at the following five dimensions shaping climate finance accessibility and their associated research questions. The research framework was partly inspired by the principles for Locally Led Adaptation[98] and specific guidance on their application to climate finance.[99] [100]



<u>**Main research question:** *What are the barriers and structural inequalities (gender and other intersecting factors) that hinder appropriate and equitable access to climate funds at the local level in Sahelian countries?*</u>

<u>**Block 1: Accessibility**</u> | **Research question**: *How do the mechanisms and procedures of climate finance providers facilitate or hinder access by organisations and institutions engaged in climate action at the local level?*

Block 2: Capacities | **Research question**: *To what extent are local capacities valued and to what extent do they facilitate – or not – access to climate finance by organisations and institutions engaged in climate action at the local level?*

Block 3: Governance, inclusion and participation | **Research question**: *To what extent are organisations and institutions engaged in climate action at the local level included and actively involved in decision-making on climate policies and projects?*

Block 4: Gender and intersectionality | **Research question**: *How are the barriers to accessing climate finance conditioned by gender inequalities and how do these hinder access to funds for organisations representing women?*

Block 5: Fragility | **Research question**: *What are the main barriers to accessing climate finance in fragile and conflict-affected settings?*

In Section 2, literature sources cited in the endnotes represent supporting evidence coinciding with the statements made by the knowledge groups, rather than elements referring exclusively to the cited source.

NOTES

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[4] Inter alia, decisions 1/CP.21, para. 53, 14/CMA.1, 9/CMA.3, 5/CMA.4 and 8/CMA.5.

[5] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that annual investment needs to mitigate climate change during the 2020-2030 period are between about $1.45 and $2.8 trillion a year for low and middle-income countries. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates climate adaptation finance needs for Global South countries to implement their domestic adaptation priorities (as expressed in their NDCs and NAPs) to be $387 billion a year by 2030. See IPCC. (2022). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 'Summary for Policymakers Headline Statements'. In: *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/resources/spm-headline-statements; and UNEP. (2023). *Adaptation Gap Report 2023: Underfinanced. Underprepared. Inadequate investment and planning on climate adaptation leaves world exposed.* Nairobi. https://doi.org/10.59117/20.500.11822/43796

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[10] J. Kowalzig, T. Cherry-Virdee, R. Bo Sørensen and S. Cutts. (2024). *CLIMATE FINANCE SHORT-CHANGED, 2024 UPDATE. Estimating the real value of the $100 billion commitment for 2021-22*. Oxfam. Retrieved 8 November 2024, from https://oxfam.app.box.com/s/q32guouexhj6proorwm8f14sv6nvan77

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[26] According to the Green Climate Fund ,"International Access Entities can include United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, international financial institutions and regional institutions. GCF considers these organizations to have the wide reach and expertise to handle a variety of climate change issues, including ones that cross borders and thematic areas." See: https://www.greenclimate.fund/accreditation (Retrieved 17 October 2024).

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[40] Submission by the Latin American and the Caribbean Independent Association (AILAC) for the Eleventh Technical Expert Dialogue and the Third Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Work Programme on the NCQG. Retrieved 19 September 2023, from https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/202408231650---20240823%20V5%20AILAC%20-%20NCQG%20Submission.pdf

[41] Submission by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for the Tenth Technical Expert Dialogue and the Second Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Work Programme on the NCQG. Retrieved 19 September 2023, from https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/202406041944---AOSIS%20-%20CC%20Finance%20-%20NCQG%20-%20Submission%20-%20Draft%20Elements%20-%202024-06-04.pdf

[42] Submission by the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group for the Eleventh Technical Expert Dialogue and the Third Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Work Programme on the NCQG. Retrieved 19 September 2023, from https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/202408051842---LDC%20Submission_NCQG_20240805_final%20.pdf

[43] Submission by the group SUR for the Eleventh Technical Expert Dialogue and the Third Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Work Programme on the NCQG. Retrieved 19 September 2023, from https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/202408061551---Group%20SUR%20-

%20NCQG%20-%20TED11%20and%20AHWP3.pdf

[44] Submission by the G77 and China group for the Eleventh Technical Expert Dialogue and the Third Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Work Programme on the NCQG. Retrieved 19 September 2023, from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/G77_and_China_Submission_NCQG.pdf

[45] T. Reeve and L. Walsh. (2023). *Forgotten Frontlines: looking at the climate finance going to fragile and conflict affected states in 2019-2020*. Op. cit.

[46] T. Alcanya and Y. Cao. (2022). *Breaking the cycle: practical solutions to unlock climate finance for fragile states*. Washington, D.C.: Mercy Corps. Retrieved 8 November 2024, from https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/breaking-the-cycle

[47] IRC. (2024). *How to Make the New Climate Finance Target Work for Conflict-Affected Communities*. Retrieved 8 November 2024, from https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/How%20to%20Make%20the%20New%20Climate%20Finance%20Target%20Work%20for%20Conflict-Affected%20Communities%20%28May%202024%29.pdf

[48] More information on the project *ELNHA: Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors* can be found in the following link https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/donors-partners/about-oxfam/projects-and-programs/elnha (retrieved 8 November 2024).

[49] Oxfam and PACJA. (2023). *Financement climatique au Burkina Faso: Etude participative sur l´état des lieux du financement du changement climatique et des contraintes rencontrées par les communautés pour accéder*.

[50] B. Yamba, and I. Maman. (2023). *Etude participative sur l´état des lieux du financement du changement climatique au Niger et des contraintes rencontrées par les communautés pour y accéder*.

[51] At COP28, the Adaptation Fund, the Climate Investment Funds (CIF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the GCF came together to elaborate on how their programming contributes towards the Global Stocktake, and on making financial flows available to developing countries in their path to low-emission, climate-resilient development. They put out a joint statement highlighting that the multilateral climate funds can contribute to reform of the international climate finance architecture. The four funds are committed to develop an ambitious and concrete action plan to enhance access to climate finance and increase the collective impact of their action, move towards harmonizing procedures to improve and streamline access modalities to finance, and develop a common concept of complementarity and coherence aimed at avoiding duplication of efforts, enhancing collaboration, streamlining processes, and ensuring they work together effectively towards common goals. The joint statement can be found here: https://www.greenclimate.fund/statement/enhancing-access-and-increasing-impact-role-multilateral-climate-funds

[52] In order to overcome this barrier, the GCF launched in 2017 a Simplified Approval Process involving a simplification of the process and documentation required to submit smaller (up to $25 million) projects.

[53] Devex. (2023b). *Why the Green Climate Fund's simplified approvals aren't that simple*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.devex.com/news/why-the-green-climate-fund-s-simplified-approvals-aren-t-that-simple-106527

[54] The GEF project database can be consulted in the following link https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/database (retrieved 9 November 2024).

[55] More information on the GEF Small Grants Programme: https://www.thegef.org/what-we-do/topics/gef-small-grants-programme (retrieved 9 November 2024).

[56] Devex. (2024b). *Why is so little climate finance going to local organizations?* Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.devex.com/news/why-is-so-little-climate-finance-going-to-local-organizations-107652

[57] Funding compliance refers to a specific management approach focused on the responsible and transparent use of funds or assets belonging to other parties, adhering to standards of transparency, integrity, and accountability. It is often applied in projects funded by development finance providers or international institutions. In the context of projects funded by climate funds, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), funding compliance aims to minimize financial risks and ensure that resources are used efficiently and in compliance with established standards.

[58] The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) is a recently established funding mechanism under the Financial Mechanism of the Convention (UNFCCC), following COP and CMA decisions in 2022 and 2023 mandating the establishment of new funding arrangements for assisting developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change in responding to loss and damage (inter alia, decisions 2/CP.27 and 2/CMA.4) and the operationalisation of the FRLD (inter alia, decisions 1/CP.28 and 5/CMA.5). Since 2024, the FRLD is starting to be operationalised under the hosting of the World Bank.

[59] L. Walsh. (2023). *Lessons learned for a loss and damage fund that is locally-led and gender transformative. Oxfam submission to the fourth meeting of the Transitional Committee*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/TC4_submission_Oxfam_25September2023.pdf

[60] The Programme d'Amélioration des Moyens d'Existence Durables (PAMED) is an initiative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), implemented by the Confédération Paysanne du Faso. Scheduled to run for 5 years (2020-2024), the project has 3 components. The first component relates to the sustainable management of natural resources and the resilience of agroforestry households, the second to the valorisation of agroforestry products, and the third to improved governance of natural resources.

[61] D. Pruett and C. Hill. (2024). *Climate Plans for the People: Civil society and community participation in national action plans on climate change*. Oxfam. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/climate-plans-for-the-people-civil-society-and-community-participation-in-natio-621594/

[62] J. Samuwai and E. Fihaki. (2019). *Making Climate Finance Work for Women: Voices from Polynesian and Micronesian Communities*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/2019Pacific-

Climate-Gender%20Report.pdf

[63] S. Habtezion. (2013). *Gender and climate finance*. Policy brief. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/PB5-AP-Gender-and-Climate-Finance.pdf

[64] L. Shalatek. (2024). *Climate Finance Fundamentals 10: Gender and Climate Finance*. Op. Cit.

[65] M. Stravens, P. Boev, M.T. Khan, A. Lutta, J. Zake, D. Anywar and A.S. van der Loeff. (2024). *Making climate finance work for women and marginalised groups*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://actionaid.nl/2024/04/22/report-making-climate-finance-work-for-women-and-marginalised-groups/

[66] UNHCR. (2022). *Global Report 2022*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://reporting.unhcr.org/global-report-2022

[67] L. Shalatek. (2024). *Climate Finance Fundamentals 10: Gender and Climate Finance*. Op. Cit.

[68] Ministère de la Femme, de la Famille et de l'Enfance, République du Sénégal. (2016). *Stratégie Nationale pour l'Équité et l'Égalité de Genre 2016-2026*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Senegal-Strat%C3%A9gie-Nationale-d%E2%80%99Equit%C3%A9-et-d%E2%80%99Egalit%C3%A9-de-Genre-2016-2026.pdf

[69] According to UNICEF, countries such as Senegal and Burkina Faso are considered to have gender parity in primary school enrollment (in 2017 and 2018, respectively). However, Mali and Chad are reported to not have yet achieved gender parity in primary enrollment. Overall, the Sahel region still shows some of the World's largest disparity rates. See: https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-disparities-in-education/#:~:text=More%20than%20two%2Dthirds%20of,more%20likely%20to%20be%20disadvantaged

[70] V. Infante. (2021). *Transforming the Systems that Contribute to Fragility and Humanitarian Crises: Programming across the triple nexus*. Oxfam. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/transforming-the-systems-that-contribute-to-fragility-and-humanitarian-crises-p-621203/

[71] The Green Climate Fund announced in its updated strategic plan that it will place emphasis on working with partners to reach fragile and conflict affected areas in line with GCF approved policies. The 2024–2027 strategy can be found here: https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/strategic-plan-gcf-2024-2027.pdf

[72] The World Bank Group has a Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (2020–2025), and its mid-term review argues that alongside efforts to support country-level strategy and planning, care should also be given to promote regional action to address climate, fragility and conflict concerns. It also mentions that work on climate change in such settings requires predictable and dedicated access to financing. The mid-term review can be found here: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/publication/fragilit-conflict-and-violence-mid-term-review

[73] Oxfam. (2022). *What can we learn? Case studies on the triple nexus in West Africa*. Oxfam. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/what-can-we-learn-case-studies-on-the-triple-nexus-in-west-africa-621483/

[74] Bloomberg. (2024). *Mali Expels Sweden's Ambassador as Development Aid to Stop*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-08-09/mali-expels-sweden-s-ambassador-as-development-aid-to-stop

[75] RFI. (2024). *Le Danemark ferme ses ambassades au Mali et au Burkina Faso*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.rfi.fr/fr/en-bref/20240826-le-danemark-ferme-ses-ambassades-au-mali-et-au-burkina-faso

[76] N. Martín Casas and A.R. Sanogo. (2022). *Climate Finance in West Africa: Assessing the state of climate finance in one of the world's regions worst hit by the climate crisis*. Op. cit.

[77] Main donors until 2022, the last year for which data is still available, while, on one hand, France has drastically reduced its aid to Burkina Faso and Niger over the past two years for diplomatic reasons, and on the other hand, unprecedented budget cuts have affected its Official Development Assistance in 2024, likely even more so in 2025.

[78] Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, Government of France. (2022). *Mali – Suspension of Official Development Assistance (16 November 2022)*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/mali/news/article/mali-suspension-of-official-development-assistance-16-nov-2022

[79] Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, Government of France. (2023a). *Burkina Faso - Communique issued by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (6 August 2023)*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/burkina-faso/news/article/burkina-faso-communique-issued-by-the-ministry-for-europe-and-foreign-affairs-6

[80] Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, Government of France. (2023b). *Niger - Communique issued by the ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (29, July 2023)*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/niger/news/article/niger-communique-issued-by-the-ministry-for-europe-and-foreign-affairs-29-07

[81] RFI. (2022). *Le Danemark suspend son aide au Mali*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220212-le-danemark-suspend-son-aide-au-mali

[82] Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Government of Sweden. (2024). *Swedish Embassies in Bamako and Ouagadougou to close; plans to establish new Embassy in Dakar*. Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://www.government.se/press-releases/2024/06/swedish-embassies-in-bamako-and-ouagadougou-to-close-plans-to-establish-new-embassy-in-dakar/

[83] T. Reeve and L. Walsh. (2023). *Forgotten Frontlines: looking at the climate finance going to fragile and conflict affected states in 2019-2020*. Op. cit.

[84] N. Martín Casas and A.R. Sanogo. (2022). *Climate Finance in West Africa: Assessing the state of climate finance in one of the world's regions worst hit by the climate crisis*. Op. cit.

[85] E. Fanning and J. Fullwood-Thomas. (2019). *The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: What does it mean for multi-mandated organizations?* Retrieved 9 November 2024, from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/the-humanitarian-development-peace-nexus-what-does-it-mean-for-multi-mandated-o-620820/

[86] V. Infante. (2021). *Transforming the Systems that Contribute to Fragility and Humanitarian Crises: Programming across the triple nexus*. Op. cit.

[87] Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN). (2024). *ND-GAIN Country Index*. University of Notre Dame. Retrieved 22 October 2024, from https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index

[88] According to research from IIED in 2019, only 10% of international climate finance is committed for local level climate action. Another research from Oxfam preceding this research report showed that, in the West Africa and Sahel region, only 0.8% of international climate finance could be labelled as "local". See: M. Soanes, C. Shakya, A. Walnycki and S. Greene. (2019). *Money Where it Matters: Designing Funds for the Frontier*. Op. cit; and N. Martín Casas and A.R. Sanogo. (2022). *Climate Finance in West Africa: Assessing the state of climate finance in one of the world's regions worst hit by the climate crisis*. Op. cit.

[89] Research from IIED and WRI has identified specific barriers for access to climate finance and provided specific recommendations on how to address them, which largely resemble the findings and recommendations of this study. See: M. Soanes, N. Rai, P. Steele, C. Shakya and J. MacGregor. (2017). *Delivering Real Change: Getting International Climate Finance to the Local Level*. Op. cit; and T. Coger, A. Dinshaw, S. Tye, B. Kratzer, M. Thazin Aung, E. Cunningham, C. Ramkissoon, S. Gupta, Md. Bodrud-Doza, A. Karamallis, S. Mbewe, A. Granderson, G. Dolcemascolo, A. Tewary, A. Mirza and A. Carthy. (2022). *Locally Led Adaptation: From Principles to Practice*. Op. cit.

[90] LDC Climate Change. (2019). *LDC 2050 vision: towards a climate-resilient future*. Op. Cit.

[91] L. Walsh. (2023). *Lessons learned for a loss and damage fund that is locally-led and gender transformative. Oxfam submission to the fourth meeting of the Transitional Committee*. Op. cit.

[92] Examples where these approaches have successfully worked include the dedicated grant mechanism under the Forest Investment Program, which has seats from Indigenous Peoples groups and local communities on the global steering committee, and each country program has a national steering committee which is established through consultative self-selection within the countries (and where Indigenous Peoples and local communities have a majority). See: https://www.dgmglobal.org/background (retrieved 6 November 2024).

[93] The Pledge for Change includes a more detailed set of pledges and recommendations to advance towards a more inclusive and accountable humanitarian and development aid system, including by promoting more equitable partnerships through promoting the leadership of national and local partners and by advocating for the aid and development sectors to incorporate structural changes in this sense. See: https://pledgeforchange2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/P4C-statements-2.pdf (retrieved 6 November 2024).

[94] Ibid.

[95] Oxfam (2024, forthcoming report): *Empowering communities: Lessons for the global Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage from a locally-led project in Kenya*.

[96] Learnings from Oxfam's past programming in Local Humanitarian Leadership in Kenya have shown that the move to more cash-based programming that is based on a harmonised and agreed approach and is led by partners has been a huge push towards increasing the percentage of funding that goes from Oxfam to local partners.

[97] Oxfam. (2016). *Finding Ways Together to Build Resilience: The Vulnerability and Risk Assessment methodology*. Oxfam. Retrieved 17 October 2024, from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/finding-ways-together-to-build-resilience-the-vulnerability-and-risk-assessment-593491/

[98] M. Soanes, A. Bahadur, C. Shakya, B. Smith, S. Patel, C. Rumbaitis del Rio, T. Coger, A. Dinshaw, S. Patel, S. Huq, M. Musa, M. Rahman, S. Gupta, G. Dolcemascolo and T. Mann. (2021). *Principles for locally led adaptation*. IIED, London. Retrieved 18 October 2024, from https://www.iied.org/10211iied

[99] D. Steinbach, A. Bahadur, C. Shakya, M. Thazin Aung, C. Burton, C. Gallagher, S. Mbewe, S. Greene, B. Regmi, A. Granderson, C. Ramkissoon, W. Kostka, L. Andon, T. Greenstone-Alefaio, G. Dolcemascolo, S. Gupta, A. Tewary, M. Lopez, J. Barnes, A. Mirza, M. Bodrud-Doza, F. Akhter, S. Rozario and C. Reyes. (2022). *The good climate finance guide for investing in locally led adaptation*. IIED, London. Retrieved 18 October 2024, from https://www.iied.org/21231iied

[100] T. Coger, A. Dinshaw, S. Tye, B. Kratzer, M. Thazin Aung, E. Cunningham, C. Ramkissoon, S. Gupta, Md. Bodrud-Doza, A. Karamallis, S. Mbewe, A. Granderson, G. Dolcemascolo, A. Tewary, A. Mirza and A. Carthy. (2022). *Locally Led Adaptation: From Principles to Practice*. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Retrieved 18 October 2024, from https://doi.org/10.46830/wriwp.21.00142

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