

# Future of Institutions

## DIALOGUE SUMMARY

**Title/topic:**

Institutional options and capacities to support transformative climate adaptation in Africa

**Organizers:**

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)

**Key takeaways:**

Despite being a low contributor to climate change, Africa is hard hit by its impacts. Current institutions working on the challenge do not appear to be making significant progress towards addressing the challenge, as they do not seem to have the required financial and human resource capacities to achieve results.

During the Dialogue, we learned that:

- Climate change continues to feature very low in the pecking order of government departments in Africa. As a result, not only are the domestic financial resources allocated to it insufficient, but the funding model being used at the international level seems to favor mitigation over adaptation. Many climate change institutions in Africa are thus underfunded. In addition, most climate financing is relatively short-term, despite climate change challenges being inherently long-term. As a result, many climate projects are left uncompleted.
- Many of the institutions working on climate change in Africa had low human resource capacity due in part to insufficient financing. Climate graduates also opt to work for international organizations, leaving a skills gap on the continent.
- There is lack of coordination among climate change institutions in Africa, leading either to duplication of efforts or lack of common vision in tackling climate change. This is the case whether they work within African countries boundaries or at regional levels.
- Climate adaptation and mitigation are still not mainstreamed in development policies of many African countries.

The Dialogue recommended the following solutions:

- *Strengthening research capabilities among African climate change institutions in Africa* to enable the acquisition of relevant data and recommendations, which can be used to campaign for climate change positioning in Africa's development landscape. Currently, decision-makers do not seem to apprehend the severity of climate change impacts on Africa's development prospects.
- *Revisiting the funding model of climate change institutions* to ensure these institutions are primarily funded from domestic sources. For that to happen in at a scale compatible with the severity of climate change impacts on Africa's development, the Dialogue recommended a strong domestic resource mobilization effort from African countries.
- *Building the capacity of early career climate change research champions*, in part by sustainably

- funding research, to address African institutions' human resource gaps.
- *Establishing climate change digital innovation hubs* which may help in collecting climate change-related data to support climate advocacy, policy formulation and policy implementation.

**The challenge(s):**

Global climate change has drastically intensified the risk and rate of natural hazards. Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to these impacts. Climate change contributes to food insecurity, population displacement, and water stress. While these risks result in abrupt hazards to humans and societies (e.g., infrastructure damage, displacement of people), responding to the impacts of climate change requires incremental and gradual changes in the behavior of people. The institutions that govern societies and technological advancements. Policies to foster sustainable and inclusive growth cannot therefore be divorced from the climate crisis for which Africa bears the least responsibility but the largest brunt. While there are huge challenges in terms of institutional innovation and transformation to meet climate action commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement, Africa's unique context of low baseline development, pre-existing climate vulnerabilities, limited energy access, and high reliance on climate-sensitive sectors, both poses challenges and creates opportunities to build better and greener. There was unanimous agreement among Dialogue participants that climate change represents one of Africa's main development challenges, even though the continent contributes the least to greenhouse gas emissions. Institutions created to address climate change lack the required capacity (e.g., finances, human resources) to achieve the expected results.

**Insights for the Future of Institutions:**

Applying an institutional lens to the climate change challenge in Africa, Dialogue participants argued that climate change continues to feature very low in the pecking order of government departments in Africa. Allocated domestic financial resources are insufficient. The funding model used by international development partners favors mitigation over adaptation. As a result, many climate change institutions in Africa are under-funded. Moreover, climate change mitigation is funded with relatively short-term resources, even though the challenges are long-term by design. Many of the projects are thus abandoned.

Dialogue participants agreed that the current climate change situation in Africa is due to the low capacity of institutions dealing with the problem. Current institutions do not understand the role they have to play to help the continent achieve green growth and sustainable development, because they lack research and advocacy capacities due to their inadequate funding. Dialogue participants also argued that African climate change institutions lack coordination across institutions, as well as with other country and regional development institutions in Africa. This disconnect leads to duplication of efforts and/or a lack of common vision in tackling climate change issues. It is thus more difficult for these institutions to tackle the climate change problem.

The Dialogue further noted that some institutions which are critical for climate change are currently nonexistent in Africa. Namely, there are no institutions working on climate data collection (i.e., digital innovation hubs). The absence of this critical segment in Africa's climate change institutional landscape makes it more difficult to collect reliable data for use in advocacy and to inform policymaking.

**Solutions:**

- *Ensure reliable and sustainable funding of African climate change institutions.* African countries are urged to take the lead in the funding their effort to address climate change challenges, including the institutions they have created to this effect, by prioritizing the climate change challenge in development plans and enhancing domestic resource mobilization. This could be

achieved by designing policies that allow the private sector to close the funding gap, for example through offering incentives and higher returns to private investments in climate change. Dialogue participants also recommended that African countries pursue innovative financing mechanisms such as green and resilience bonds. Investing in climate change makes economic sense, because every United States dollar invested into climate adaptation could result in a 4- to 5-fold return.

- *Invest in capacity development* of climate change institutions, early career researchers, and government / public sector officials, to allow them to engage in the long-term climate research and actions that the challenge requires. There is a need to bypass barriers between the researchers in the global South and the resources available in the global North, to allow African researchers to initiate research leading to bottom-up solutions. Dialogue participants further proposed that national hazard warning and early warning systems need to be developed. Currently, Africa lacks reliable institutions in these critical areas. Effective institutions of this nature would reduce the gap between early warning and early response.
- *Encourage cooperation and coordination among institutions* involved in tackling climate change problems. There is a need for coordination of all climate change institutions, whether they operate at local, regional, continental, or international levels, as well as coordination between climate change institutions and other country, regional, and continental development institutions. Strong coordination between technical experts and decision-makers will improve climate policies and their implementation.
- *Enhance planning*, including by identifying processes to effectively integrate climate adaptation into all strategic policies. Climate change must be treated as a clear and present threat for Africa's sustainable development to improve cooperation among the various institutions.
- *Avoid duplication of knowledge generation by creating a marketplace for climate research*. While significant knowledge on climate change adaptation was developed across Africa, normative barriers (e.g., requiring research to be published in specialized journals) prevented widespread dissemination.
- *Include climate change and environmental protocols in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) protocol* to enable African countries to manufacture in compliance with climate requirements. Currently, there is little indication on how this agreement will help the continent tackle climate change challenges.

**Participants:**

- Christopher Gordon, University of Ghana
- Bruce Hewitson, Climate System Analysis Group
- Bakary Kone, African Capacity Building Foundation
- Nagnouma Kone, Global Green Growth Institute
- Amos Makarau, World Meteorological Organization
- Daniel Makokera, Moderator
- Cheikh Mbow, Centre de Suivi Écologique
- Antony Nyong, Global Center on Adaptation Africa
- Kevin O'Neil, The Rockefeller Foundation
- Jane Olwoch, Southern Africa Science Service Center for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management
- Noncedo Vutula, Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance