



# *Resilience of Communities Outlook*

*Resilience for All: Enabling  
transformative implementation*

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# 8<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum

## *Resilience Outlook*

# Resilience of Communities

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## **Table of Contents**

Summary .....	1
Current Status of Communities' Resilience in the Region .....	2
Spotlight on Locally Led Adaptation .....	3
Barriers Associated with the Five Enablers of Resilient Communities .....	4
Opportunities to Support and Catalyze Transformative Actions .....	8
Conclusion.....	11
Annex.....	12
References.....	13

## Summary

The Asia-Pacific region is already gravely impacted by extreme weather events and the effects of climate change, which are projected to increase in intensity and frequency. Communities<sup>1</sup> are on the front lines of these impacts, with the most vulnerable disproportionately impacted. While they have the keenest awareness of the issues at hand, they simultaneously have the least capacity to adapt. Communities, households and individuals do not experience these impacts equally, due to strong differentiation based on factors such as gender, socio-economic status, disability, and geography.

The concept of locally led adaptation is gaining momentum in the region and offers great potential to balance power dynamics and rectify historical injustices, while building community resilience and empowering local actors. There are also broader discussions in the adaptation and development communities on how locally led adaptation is being implemented, and in conjunction with parallel development of the systems transformation approach.

The barriers to enhancing communities' resilience are complex, interlinked, and often rooted in structural inequalities. These include limited decision-making power, weak institutional frameworks, a focus on short-term development priorities rather than long-term sustainable development and climate action, lack of locally relevant data, inaccessible climate information and inadequate consideration of Indigenous and traditional knowledge. Across the board, there is a lack of funding for adaptation and a lack of financial devolution at local levels, with emerging adaptation technologies frequently beyond the reach of many communities.

This outlook proposes four opportunities for transformative action to enhance communities' resilience – which will be further examined at the 8<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation (APAN) Forum: 1) Fostering local innovation and entrepreneurship for locally-led adaptation without borders; 2) Valuing Indigenous and traditional knowledge, innovations and practices; 3) Promoting Locally led, Community-based and Nature-based Solutions and 4) Lengthening and enhancing the flexibility of adaptation financing.

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<sup>1</sup> We are deliberately making the term 'communities' broad in this outlook and generally consider any groups, populations, associations, etc., operating at the sub-national level. However, as we discuss in this outlook, the definition of communities and the power dynamics among different members that constitute them have a significant barrier on the way in which locally led adaptation is practically supported. So, the definition must be agreed on in a case-by-case basis in a given location.

## Current Status of Communities' Resilience in the Region

Over the last 50 years, a million lives have been lost in Asia and US\$ 1.2 trillion have been reported in damages due to weather, climate and water extremes.<sup>1</sup> Disasters as a percentage of GDP by region are by far the highest in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>2</sup> For example, the unprecedented floods in Pakistan from June to August 2022 exacerbated by climate change, affected 33 million people (one in seven Pakistanis), displaced 8 million people, took the lives of 1,700 people (of which one-third were children), and resulted in US\$ 31.5 billion in loss and damage.<sup>3</sup> These extreme weather events are occurring amid a sense of urgency in the Asia-Pacific region for enhanced global action on climate change, with recent advances in the discourse on loss and damage funding at COP27. At the same time, with insufficient global reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, some countries in the Asia-Pacific region are facing catastrophic climate change projections and are asking existential questions, with increasing climate-induced migration, and concerns regarding climate security. The Government of Tuvalu, for example, is planning to create a digital nation to address these concerns.<sup>4</sup>

Results of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) provide unequivocal evidence of the need for both urgent global mitigation action and regional adaptation efforts. The report finds there is an increased likelihood of heat waves across Asia, along with droughts and floods in some regions.<sup>5</sup> Monsoon patterns are changing, tropical cyclones are severely impacting Pacific islands and glaciers are melting at unprecedented rates in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region.<sup>5,6</sup> Water stress is increasing due to both climatic and non-climatic drivers in almost all regions of Asia.<sup>5</sup> Across the Asia-Pacific region, climate change is expected to affect marine and terrestrial ecosystems, with impacts on ecosystem services cascading across both natural and human systems.<sup>5,6</sup>

These impacts on communities in the Asia-Pacific region are far-reaching and differentiated by factors such as geography, gender and vulnerable groups (e.g. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, ethnic minority groups, female-headed households, youth, persons with disabilities), with climate change exacerbating existing inequalities.

Women experience and are exposed to climate change impacts and disasters differently than men.<sup>7</sup> For example, gender-based violence has been demonstrated to increase after extreme weather events and with increases in mean temperature.<sup>8,9</sup> Yet, gender is not well-mainstreamed in climate change adaptation policies, with women's groups often lacking access to climate finance due to patriarchal formal and informal governance systems in certain countries. These challenges arise from a combination of factors including limited funding track record, inadequate resources and lack of access to education or training.<sup>6</sup> Other vulnerable and marginalized groups are also disproportionately impacted by climate change, such as poorer populations in urban areas that inordinately experience the impacts of urban heat exposure.<sup>5</sup> In the face of these

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<sup>2</sup> A 1°C increase in annual mean temperature is associated with a 4.5% increase in the prevalence of intimate partner violence (Zhu et al., 2023).

exacerbated and systemic inequalities, giving vulnerable groups and communities a meaningful seat at the table is essential to ensuring no one is left behind.

Communities are on the frontlines of climate change impacts. Despite possessing the best understanding of critical issues to be prioritized and often a wealth of Indigenous and traditional knowledge to draw on, local actors typically have the least capacity or power to adapt to these impacts.<sup>10</sup> The eight principles of Locally Led Adaptation (Annex 1) were developed to address this imbalance and to “shift the status quo from current top-down approaches to a new model where local actors have greater power and resources to build resilience to climate change”.<sup>11</sup> Developed by the Global Commission on Adaptation, this set of eight principles is intended to guide programming, funding and practices, and has been endorsed by more than 100 organizations.<sup>3</sup> These principles serve as valuable indicators of an alternative approach to resilience building, offering a crucial critique of the conventional paradigm dominated by elites within donor agencies, international organizations and national governments.

The remainder of this outlook delves deeper into Locally Led Adaptation, explores barriers to communities’ resilience, and proposes opportunities for both bolstering community resilience and granting them greater empowerment.

## Spotlight on Locally Led Adaptation

The principles of Locally Led Adaptation (Annex 1) are beginning to gain momentum in the Asia-Pacific region and are being integrated into policy and planning approaches. For example, Bangladesh’s National Adaptation Plan (NAP) explicitly integrates approaches to scale up locally led adaptation and empower local governments for locally led adaptation.<sup>12</sup> The Government of Nepal is enabling a community-driven approach to adaptation planning through Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPAs) developed by Village Development Committees or municipalities.<sup>13</sup> Under this approach, local communities analyze vulnerability to climate change, identify priorities, and integrate them into the district- and national-level development plans – a good example of locally led adaptation. The national government has committed to disbursing financial resources for adaptation to the local level and has provided guidance for the development of LAPAs.

The principles emerged as an alternative to the prevailing global climate finance architecture in which donors wield disproportionate authority in determining which adaptation activities to finance and in setting the benchmark for success. Locally led adaptation has the potential to effect transformation in community resilience and to confront, or at the very least, shift historical power imbalances.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, for vulnerable communities to genuinely benefit from the concept of locally led adaptation in a meaningful manner, discussions must transcend the realm of ethics, abstraction and philosophy. A more profound and critical examination of this concept

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<sup>3</sup> See Coger et al. for practical recommendations for supporting the principles of locally led adaptation for funders, governments, grassroots organizations and intermediaries, and more broadly, all actors involved in locally led adaptation.<sup>14</sup>

becomes imperative. We need to impartially and carefully evaluate the execution of locally led adaptation.

Among the areas requiring ongoing critical examination are injustices and power dynamics at the local level.<sup>15</sup> Local actors manifest diversity and are not impervious to the sway of power imbalances. Curiously, prevailing discussions on the principles often lack a comprehensive discourse on how to effectively address these disparities. A critical perspective is needed on who at the local level is involved in agenda setting and decision-making to avoid exacerbation of marginalization of some groups to the benefit of local elites and to ensure no one is left behind.<sup>15</sup>

Another area that warrants thorough examination pertains to potential tradeoffs between locally led adaptation and the imperative for systems transformation. This transformation is considered essential not only for meaningful adaptation, but also for the realization of transformative sustainable development. Intrinsically, locally led adaptation comprises intricately localized, independent endeavors by empowered local actors. Conversely, the objective of systems transformation is to effect change on a broader, more expansive scale in response to the climate crisis that affects ecosystems, food systems, and the like – a notion that might inherently clash with the core tenets of locally led adaptation.

Given the growing popularity of locally led adaptation and wide usage, there is a potential danger of diluting the essence of the concept. This could lead to the indiscriminate labeling of any project involving local engagement as locally led, unless these issues are seriously examined.<sup>15</sup>

## Barriers Associated with the Five Enablers of Resilient Communities

While the barriers below are organized by resilience enablers, it is clear that these interplay across enablers. Cross-cutting solutions addressing multiple barriers are needed, rather than a silo-ed approach.

This section discusses barriers to adaptation, which must be distinguished from limits to adaptation. While barriers can be overcome, limits cannot.<sup>16</sup>

This discussion of barriers is not exhaustive and does not include, for example, psychological, social cohesion, individual perceptions, education, or cultural aspects, which are also important aspects in adaptation.

### Policy and Governance

Weak institutional frameworks, inadequate governance structures, and limited decision-making power can impede locally led adaptation efforts and the resilience of communities. Communities may face challenges in coordinating with higher-level authorities, accessing relevant information, and having their voices heard in decision-making processes.

There can be a lack of coordination between levels of government (the duty bearers), with sub-national levels often not included in the development of top-down designed adaptation policies.<sup>17</sup> A study in the Maldives, for example, found that power is often not devolved to local councils,

though local councils are best positioned to support contextually relevant adaptation and support communities, meaning they lack the ability to raise funds or implement development plans.<sup>18</sup>

Engagement of key stakeholders (e.g., civil society, NGOs, community-based organizations) and rights holders in existing climate governance architectures, particularly within national structures, remains patchy and ad hoc, creating a further barrier to effective and inclusive community resilience. A study in Fiji found, for example, that women are often underrepresented in decision-making processes on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management at the community, national and international levels.<sup>7</sup>

The definition of “local” thus needs to be assessed much more critically if the principle of locally led adaptation is to be operationalized. In many countries, the most local administrative units (e.g., communes, councils) are often dominated by local elites, often male, who can dominate discussions, leaving out the diverse perspectives of the most vulnerable. The fact that a program is designed, implemented and evaluated by the most local unit of administration does not automatically ensure impactful or equitable adaptation results. However, given that many societies encompass unbalanced power dynamics at the baseline, as described above, the locally led adaptation approach may still deliver empowerment, a critical ingredient to resilience, which the programs designed under the conventional paradigm may fail to deliver. But if this is the motivation for promoting locally led adaptation, it means that one is applying a different success metric.

The COP27 Decision 16 urged the Board of the Green Climate Fund to “continue incorporating indigenous peoples’ and local communities’ interests, perspectives, knowledge and climate priorities into its decision-making.”<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, Indigenous scholars and organizations remain marginal to key negotiations and full intercultural recognition has not been achieved. Addressing these gaps can promote the transformational change that many have called for.

There is often a lack of systemic mechanisms for these stakeholders and rights holders to contribute to or shape national or global strategies, decisions or processes that affect their futures, or even to be informed about these. Overall, there is an absence of integration of local communities’ views at the national and global levels.

Inflexible or inadequate policies, regulations and legal frameworks can create barriers to locally led adaptation. Outdated or conflicting policies, lack of supportive legislation, language, and bureaucratic hurdles may hinder community-driven initiatives and limit their ability to access necessary resources.

## **Planning and Programming**

There is often an emphasis on short-term development priorities rather than long-term climate-action and resilience building. This leads to a deficiency in forward-looking, learning-oriented processes.<sup>5</sup> A study of adaptation activities in urban areas in Asia found that 65% of the 180 interventions studied were reactive rather than proactive in nature,<sup>20</sup> with missed opportunities for risk prevention and preparedness.<sup>5</sup>



National adaptation planning has yet to adopt the location-based framing for adaptation. Such planning is often at the 'regional' perspective, which is a good start, but has not quite reached the local or community scale yet, limiting the ability to be truly supportive of the principles of locally led adaptation. There is a predominant "check-box" engagement and consultation mentality driven by donor requirements rather than genuine recognition that inclusive adaptation planning results in more resilient outcomes. There can be an 'elitism' among experts and institutions that often informs the manner in which plans and programming are designed and measured, which impacts the way in which adaptation planning is occurring. Together this culminates in limited accountability to the most economically and politically marginalized people.<sup>5</sup>

Communities frequently lack technical expertise and skills needed for designing and implementing adaptation projects. Insufficient training, technical support and access to specialized knowledge can hinder local civil servants or practitioners' ability to develop and manage effective adaptation measures. There can be a lack of capacity of civil servants at the district and community level to learn about climate change adaptation, where one person is often already responsible for many topics (e.g., agriculture, extension, economic development), making it difficult to add climate change adaptation to their desk.<sup>17</sup>

## **Science and Assessment**

There is a lack of baseline data, climate projections (with the most recent suite of emissions scenarios) and projected impacts and risks in certain sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific region, including especially small settlements, small islands and remote mountain communities.<sup>5,6,21</sup> Lack of weather or climate information or weather forecasts has been identified as a barrier to adaptation, for example, among subsistence and smallholder farmer communities in Nepal.<sup>22</sup> In the Pacific, downscaled data is critical for small islands given the high geographic diversity, particularly along coastal sites, which are not well represented in global gridded datasets.<sup>6</sup> In the Maldives, there is an identified lack of data availability on vulnerable groups, and some data and indicators are only available at the atoll level, not at the island level.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, there is limited availability of disaggregated data, including gender data, across the Asia-Pacific region. In order to fully understand the vulnerability and impacts of climate change, and how these are patterned geographically and by vulnerable groups, disaggregated data (e.g. by gender, age, disability, ethnicity) collection and analysis is needed.<sup>7</sup>

Even where relevant information about climate scenarios, risks and solutions is available, it is often not in a format easily applicable to the local context or accessible by end users including community members and practitioners. One of the pillars underpinning climate services is accessibility, which includes, for example, local language, format (e.g., making climate data available for download in .csv files that can be opened in Excel rather than file formats that require programming languages to access), and contextual information. To date, information on climate change is often presented in formats that are not legible outside academia or bureaucracy.<sup>23</sup> This lack of data and information points to a broader science-to-planning practice disconnect, including inadequate information sharing, which has, for instance, been identified as a barrier to adaptation in the Philippines.<sup>24</sup>



There is a prevailing perspective among some in the scientific community that Western science is the only approach for informing climate change adaptation planning, ignoring the value of Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge.<sup>21</sup> Extensive research has demonstrated the value of Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge for local resilience and effective local solutions (see also Section 3 - Opportunities).<sup>5,23,25</sup> Relying exclusively on top-down Western science to inform resilience building can disregard the opportunity to learn from a wealth of knowledge tested over generations, but also overlook communities' perceptions of critical climate risks which may differ from common perceptions, as found in a study of communities' perceptions in Tonga, Tuvalu and Samoa.<sup>26</sup>

## **Technologies and Practices**

Emerging adaptation technologies and practices are still beyond the reach of many communities, from risk assessment tools to adaptation cost-benefit analyses to climate-smart agriculture techniques.<sup>5</sup> A range of issues are constraining the uptake of technologies and practices, from lack of technical knowledge, lack of information, and lack of access to finance for these often prohibitively expensive technologies.

Weak institutional links and extensions have been identified as barriers to accessing technology, thus impeding effective adaptation efforts. This is evident in various contexts, such as, for example, for agriculture or animal husbandry practices in the eastern Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, among farmers in mountain communities in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region, and notably in Nepal. In the latter case, limited adoption of agricultural technologies, including climate-smart practices, agrichemicals, plastic tunnels, and greenhouses, is observed among subsistence and smallholder farmer communities.<sup>21,22,27</sup>

The remoteness of some communities, such as on some Pacific islands or in mountainous regions of the Hindu Kush Himalaya, represents a particular challenge for material-dependent adaptation technologies and practices, given the high cost of transportation and logistical challenges.<sup>21,28</sup> A lack of investment in local infrastructure (e.g., transportation, irrigation, energy) in such remote communities also reduces opportunities for adaptive capacity.<sup>21</sup>

As discussed in the previous section, Indigenous and Traditional knowledge, practices and solutions also provide valuable insights and approaches for adaptation that are too often disregarded.

## **Finance and Investment**

Funding for adaptation is inadequate globally. Furthermore, there is a lack of financial devolution to local levels.<sup>5</sup> Most vulnerable populations only benefit from a fraction of the adaptation finance that is made available globally. A study of the Laamu Atoll in the Maldives found that lack of funding and financial resources is the most commonly cited barrier to adaptation at the atoll level, hindering the ability to start or sustain adaptation projects.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Phuong et al. find an imbalance in the distribution of financial resources in Viet Nam, with funding going to the national-level or to donor-driven small pilot projects, demonstrated by the lack of human resources for implementing adaptation at the local level.<sup>17</sup> Donor- or government funding allocations can

undermine decision-making authority of communities. This contradicts the principles of locally led adaptation, where local communities should possess the ability to prioritize allocations based on their specific needs.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond accessing finance, a critical issue for local communities is tailored support to enhance capacity to absorb financing and to manage and communicate transparently on the funding received. Strict fiduciary standards and management rules can be barriers to local communities receiving support for financial capacity building, in addition to procurement processes and financial management track record requirements. Funding for adaptation is typically provided by global climate funds or bilateral entities as time-bound project financing governed by a rigid results-based framework. Under the “predict-and-act” approach, international funds expect adaptation projects to demonstrate a clear climate rationale, which requires significant domestic capabilities to develop granular impact-based projects and translate these into local actions. The locally led adaptation principle “providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily” aims to address these barriers through simpler access, longer-term and more predictable funding for communities.

## Opportunities to Support and Catalyze Transformative Actions

New approaches and paradigms are needed to enhance community resilience. The remainder of this section outlines four priority opportunities to support and catalyze transformative actions for communities’ resilience.

### **Fostering local innovation and entrepreneurship for locally led adaptation without borders**

Innovation and entrepreneurship are vital for fostering locally-led climate change adaptation. By developing and sharing new technologies and business models, communities can enhance their resilience and capacity to adapt. Climate-resilient agricultural practices, efficient water management systems, renewable energy solutions, early warning systems, and climate information tools empower communities to address climate challenges effectively. The Asia-Pacific region is at the forefront of such technological innovations and advances that can contribute to community resilience. Encouraging entrepreneurship in adaptation stimulates economic growth and job creation, as entrepreneurs identify market opportunities and develop innovative products and services to meet adaptation needs, leading to economic benefits and increased resilience.

Moreover, innovation and entrepreneurship attract financial support for adaptation initiatives, with impact investors, philanthropic organizations, and climate finance mechanisms funding scalable solutions with positive impacts on communities. Collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders, including youth, entrepreneurs, researchers, and local communities, foster the co-creation of solutions and the exchange of ideas and technologies, empowering communities to take charge of their adaptation pathways. Additionally, successful practices can be scaled up through entrepreneurship and innovation, enabling effective solutions to be replicated across

similar contexts and countries facing similar climate risks. Entrepreneurs act as champions, disseminating knowledge and supporting the adoption of successful adaptation practices.

By integrating innovation and entrepreneurship into climate adaptation strategies, communities can thrive amidst the challenges posed by climate change. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports locally-led action through initiatives like the Adaptation Innovation Marketplace (AIM),<sup>4</sup> which fosters entrepreneurship and promotes scalable adaptation solutions from local innovators worldwide, assisting 46 organizations from 32 countries in scaling up their innovative adaptation solutions.

### **Valuing Indigenous and traditional knowledge, innovations and practices**

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities generally possess a wealth of traditional knowledge and a strong understanding of local climate change issues and possible solutions. Many Pacific islanders, for example, have developed innovative local adaptation solutions building on traditional knowledge, given the aforementioned challenges of relying on externally imported technologies and materials.<sup>28</sup>

Adaptation planning has frequently overlooked and undervalued traditional or Indigenous solutions that have been tried and tested over generations and built upon a detailed understanding of local ecological conditions. Where Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities wish to record their Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge and potentially share these outside of their community, non-conventional approaches such as oral storytelling and visual media have proven valuable. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, this approach is used for both sharing local climate change adaptation strategies and documenting community traditions and processes which may otherwise be disregarded.<sup>23</sup>

There are also opportunities to explore the coproduction of knowledge, bringing together both Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge and Western science.<sup>25</sup> For example, in rural communities of Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan, NGOs have supported the combination of local knowledge with expert opinions on climate change impacts for disaster risk reduction and management.<sup>21</sup> The UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) Work Programme is also working on the braiding of Western science and Indigenous and Local Knowledge, in response to the Paris Agreement.

### **Promoting Locally led, Community-based Nature-based Solutions**

Community-based approaches have proven effective in enhancing resilience. Encouraging active participation and empowering local communities to identify their vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities can lead to more inclusive and contextually appropriate resilience strategies. Strengthening community networks, fostering social cohesion, and promoting local leadership can further enhance resilience at the grassroots level. For example, in the “Reducing the vulnerability of Cambodian rural livelihoods through enhanced sub-national climate change

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<sup>4</sup> <https://adaptationinnovationmarketplace.org/>

planning and execution of priority actions” project funded by LDCF and implemented by UNDP, target communes were empowered to actively integrate climate change adaptation and gender into local planning and programs.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to diverse ecosystems, providing opportunities for Nature-based Solutions (NbS)<sup>5</sup> to enhance resilience. Protecting and restoring ecosystems, such as mangroves, forests, and wetlands, can provide multiple benefits, including flood control, water purification, and climate regulation. Integrating nature-based approaches into infrastructure development, land-use planning, sustainable livelihoods, and coastal protection can strengthen community resilience.

Brought together, community-based adaptation can strengthen local ecosystems, which in turn can provide benefits for community resilience.<sup>25</sup> Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge can be used to inform NbS among communities, with research suggesting that such initiatives perform better than when such knowledge is not integrated.<sup>6</sup> In Fiji, for example, Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge was used as part of an Ecosystem-based Adaptation assessment to determine which coastal native species could reduce coastal erosion and flooding.<sup>25</sup>

### **Lengthening and enhancing the flexibility of adaptation financing**

Recognizing that adaptation is inherently an iterative learning process and that working with the most vulnerable communities is a long-term process often without immediate tangible results, there are opportunities to reform and advance international climate finance rules. To best support communities, greater prioritization can be placed on the provision of patient capital to allow for more flexible programming and learning, while still maintaining transparency, international fiduciary standards and accountability. More effort can also be shifted to monitoring and transparently reporting on the progress of long-term resilience building, rather than the current emphasis on requirements for Least Developed Countries to spend excessive resources developing adaptation proposals to meet stringent requirements. Moreover, communities can be integrated in the monitoring process to ensure among other requirements, that adaptation projects are meeting locally defined needs.

The UNDP Small Grants Program (SGP) is one example of a community-focused funding initiative that has supported over 25,117 projects in 133 countries. Since 1992, the SGP has provided US\$ 684 million in small grants to community organizations to conserve biodiversity, manage lands sustainably and adapt to and mitigate climate change. The grant is managed and implemented by the communities themselves, which better fits the communities’ needs. To reduce the language barrier for communities (e.g., for illiterate local communities), SGP also has the flexibility to receive video project proposals.

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<sup>5</sup> "Nature-based solutions are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits" <sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

These four opportunities are aligned with the principles for locally led adaptation that address structural imbalances to empower communities. It is possible that we can promote these principles by doing our work differently and better, for instance, strengthening safeguard approaches and considering communities as partners, not recipients. We can also do better in terms of community consultations and hearing community needs. Where there are entry points with national governments on plans and policies (e.g. NAPs, NDCs), we can strive to increase the engagement of communities while ensuring transparency and accountability mechanisms.

A fundamental challenge in locally led adaptation is scaling. While programs like UNDP's SGP are powerful in providing, funding and decision-making over that funding to communities, they are not able to address systems level considerations. In operationalizing locally led adaptation, we simultaneously need to consider how we can ensure sustainability, scaling and impact, for example, by integrating community-driven initiatives into local, regional or national government plans and policies.

The resilience of communities should be at the heart of climate action. Mainstreaming local action is imperative since climate action must eventually come from the local level or be implemented through the local level.

The principles for locally led adaptation have rewritten the narrative on community resilience, cast a critical light on existing financing and decision-making structures and charted a new way forward. How these principles are implemented in practice, how they interact with other development priorities, and how they can be strengthened are among the questions to be further explored and discussed at the 8<sup>th</sup> APAN Forum.

## Annex

### Principles for Locally Led Adaptation

- 1. Devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level:**  
Giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritized, designed, implemented; how progress is monitored and how success is evaluated.
- 2. Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, people who are displaced, Indigenous Peoples and marginalized ethnic groups:**  
Integrating gender-based, economic and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action and encouraging vulnerable and marginalized individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.
- 3. Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily:**  
Supporting long-term development of local governance processes, capacity and institutions through simpler access modalities, as well as longer term and more predictable funding horizons to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions.
- 4. Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy:**  
Improving the capabilities of local institutions to ensure they can understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate solutions and facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project-based donor funding.
- 5. Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty:**  
Informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local, traditional, Indigenous, generational and scientific knowledge that can enable resilience under a range of future climate scenarios.
- 6. Flexible programming and learning:**  
Enabling adaptive management to address the inherent uncertainty in adaptation, especially through robust monitoring and learning systems and flexible finance and programming.
- 7. Ensuring transparency and accountability:**  
Making processes of financing, designing and delivering programs more transparent and accountable downward to local stakeholders.
- 8. Collaborative action and investment:**  
Collaboration across sectors, initiatives and levels to ensure that different initiatives and different sources of funding (humanitarian assistance, development, disaster risk reduction, green recovery funds, etc.) support each other, and their activities avoid duplication to enhance efficiencies and good practice.

Source: World Resource Institute (<https://www.wri.org/initiatives/locally-led-adaptation/principles-locally-led-adaptation>)

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