

Key messages

Knowledge and experiences from the 13th International Conference on Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change

The Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) conference is the leading forum for CBA practitioners to share solutions, experience and learning, while developing the ideas that will inspire greater climate ambition.

The 13th CBA conference brought together over 300 experienced practitioners — grassroots representatives, local and national government planners, policymakers and donors — to discuss how to build a climate resilient future. Delegates discussed issues central to implementation of the Paris Agreement including: finance, technology, informed policy, gender and monitoring and evaluation.

Getting to resilience by 2050

The CBA conference held a '2050 Talanoa' — a participatory dialogue — to explore how communities can be supported to shape a climate-resilient future by 2050. Three key principles emerged:

- Think beyond siloed sectors and programmes and towards integrated policies that deliver long-term, transformative benefits built on community involvement from the start. This will need investment in systems that promote multi-sector dialogue, feedback and collaboration built on local experience and 'facts on the ground'.
- Integrate climate change into education so that everyone can think critically about how to build resilience.
- Build financial mechanisms that deliver large-scale finance to the community level with the necessary systems to ensure accountability.

The participants concluded that a climate-resilient future will require more than just the involvement of local communities, but also their control and ownership of the resources on which they depend.

Conference sessions added greater detail and specificity to the discussions. The emerging messages below are targeted at the climate adaptation community and aim to create the conditions for a just transition to a climate-resilient future.

Climate finance

This theme explored the means and mechanisms for enhancing the flow of climate finance, at scale, to support effective adaptation:

- Donors and climate funds must streamline climate finance access for the Least Developed Countries and their communities. The administrative process needs to be faster and more efficient, for vulnerable countries to act with urgency.
- Organisations innovating to deliver climate finance to the local level must build on existing systems rather than create parallel ones. Doing so builds local ownership, capacity and legitimacy. This requires an acceptance of short term risk for the benefit of long term, sustainable returns.

- Private sector entrepreneurs must be engaged as partners from the beginning of new programmes to identify opportunities to scale up investment across many, aggregated local-level businesses — turning a profit while benefiting the most vulnerable.
- Climate risks are borne mainly by those without ability to respond. The UNFCCC must advocate for greater sharing of risk by donors and investors, encouraging national financial institutions to think beyond immediate returns and towards long-term sustainability.
- Digital communication can be a valuable tool but must not echo the top-down information flows of the past. It can open up space for information to flow both upwards and downwards, facilitating feedback and dialogue between different actors. But misinterpretation across languages and media is common, so strategies must be cross-communal and iterative to contextualise information and build trust.
- Young people can be empowered to be agents of change — helping to build resilient communities through raising awareness and upskilling.

Adaptation technology

This theme explored how both existing and emerging technologies can be harnessed to build climate resilience:

- The success of new technologies in vulnerable contexts depends on the institutional capacity of those implementing them and local technical expertise, as much as the quality of the technology itself.
- Implementers of new technologies should seek to build on existing local knowledge and experience, instead of diverting funds and attention away from them. Doing so can enable communities to shape innovation in a 'bottom-up', context-relevant way. New technologies can be adapted by communities to enhance local control and support them to become empowered environmental protectors.
- Gender analysis is key to the development of new technologies, products or systems that have impact. Without it, implementers risk increasing gender inequality, workloads for specific groups, generational conflict or greater dominance by those who are already powerful.

Informed policy engagement

This theme considered how lived experience and learning generated through experiences of local climate action can best inform the policies of the most vulnerable countries:

- Gender transformative policies will depend on the ability of women to meaningfully make their voices heard through formal representation and collective action. Government must create such spaces and use gender responsive indicators to measure success.
- Development of National Adaptation Plans must be owned and driven by countries guided by social movements and civil society — not dominated by multilateral agencies and consultancies.
- Adaptation must go beyond individual or siloed projects to recognise that we need effective policies to enable adaptation at scale. Policies can create the conditions for sustainable community-led adaptation, but to do so they must harmonise across government.

Gender

This cross-cutting theme examined how to achieve transformative gender responses in climate action at local, national and international levels:

- 1 Gender-focused outcomes:** devise methods to measure change focused on gender responsive indicators and the collection of gender-disaggregated data. This will require expert input to think innovatively about measurement and metrics.
- 2 Intersectionality:** gender-related challenges intersect with other inequalities, such as age or ethnicity, that exacerbate the lived experience of climate vulnerability and the challenges of enhancing climate resilience. These intersections need to be examined as part of the gender analysis.
- 3 Underlying drivers of gender inequality:** in addition to gender and power analysis, climate resilience interventions need an understanding of the underlying drivers of inequality between women, girls, men and boys in different contexts. This understanding is key to designing resilience processes that are responsive to structural inequalities and gender norms.