



# SUBMISSION TO THE UNFCCC GLOBAL STOCKTAKE

Input to Technical Dialogue 2 (COP27)

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The Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) is committed to achieving a new paradigm of action-oriented research to inform effective adaptation to reduce the risks from climate change, particularly for countries and communities that are most vulnerable – at the scale and urgency demanded by science. The ARA has 157 members representing research institutions, non-governmental and grassroots organisations, private sector firms, intergovernmental organisations as well as philanthropic and bilateral funders.

The ARA Secretariat is pleased to submit this update to our initial submission containing a compilation of views of ARA members and ARA micrograntees obtained through a survey and interviews/focus groups, as well from discussions at sessions of the [Regional Resilience Hub](#) events held for Africa, South Asia and Latin America (19 September – 13 October 2022). This submission is made in partnership with ARA members that collaborated with us in collecting views from the ground, specifically the Climate and Development Knowledge Network, the International Institute of Sustainable Development, the Global Resilience Partnership and South South North.

All these engagements focused on better understanding the adaptation realities on the ground and how practitioners and researchers are currently able to contribute data and measures from the ground to the Global Stocktake (GST). This submission is focused on the adaptation aspects of the GST but touches on issues of finance, fairness and equity. The submission is structured in two parts: first we present what adaptation progress practitioners are seeing on the ground, and second we focus on considerations for the integration with national systems to feed into adaptation measurements in the GST.

## Key points

- There is an urgent need for adaptation at the local community level; not only in response to future projected changes and risks, but also in addressing the losses and damages already happening.
- Local communities are already responding to climate change impacts using grassroots approaches that use their local and traditional knowledge to reduce

vulnerabilities and address risks – although these are mostly reactive coping strategies they are building resilience.

- There is a lack of sectoral integration and government coordination, partnerships are limited, and appropriate capacity and resources are not readily available. This impedes locally led adaptation actions and present barriers to scaling up adaptation planning and implementation.
- Some adaptation projects at the local levels are assessing adaptation impacts on human wellbeing, but are not investing in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) for adaptation (often due to short term project cycle funding and lack of relevance to local community).
- Where local adaptation projects have a MEL system, they are generally collecting information on output-based indicators instead of outcome indicators.
- Feeding evidence from local actions into national systems require functional vertical integration and coordination.
- Understanding and utilising learning frameworks at the local level would allow the gathering of lessons learned and information-sharing.
- Using and expanding systems at national level to be able to aggregate information from adaptation projects already happening in some contexts needs further financial and capacity support.

## **1. What are practitioners observing?**

The ARA sent out a survey for “On the Ground Views for the Global Stocktake” to its members in August 2022, which gathered fourteen responses. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. In parallel interviews with nine of the ARA microgrant recipients were conducted in August and September. Focus-group style interviews were conducted with four ARA members in late September to gather additional insights to supplement the analyses of the survey results. This section shares the insights from these engagements to provide an on the ground perspective of what progress is being made to adapt to climate change.

### **1.1 What is the state of adaptation actions?**

Communities are already undertaking the difficult task of adapting to climate change impacts and increasing resilience. At community level, there are many examples of adaptation, although community members do not frame their actions in the climate jargon used in UNFCCC (e.g. do not distinguish between adaptation and development). Of the individuals engaged, many are still observing predominantly reactive or coping adaptation interventions where individuals on the ground are taking action to ensure survival. Sufficient research data is missing to be able to evaluate adaptation progress in many contexts, and how it can be scaled up.

Many of the respondents agreed that in order to ensure adaptation actions produce positive outcomes for the local communities and people’s livelihoods, these actions must be cross-sectoral and holistic in nature – recognizing the importance of ecosystem health and ecosystem services to biodiversity and community wellbeing and livelihoods.

Adaptation actions that are designed through an inclusive, participatory, and open process - driven by local communities, planned and implemented with traditional, practical and Indigenous knowledges, and follow a bottom-up approach - tend to yield the best and the most equitable results for people of all genders and social backgrounds (due to higher level of ownership, acceptability to communities).

*“Local people know it best. The farmers know how the weather changes, how harvest time has changed, and how the phenology is changing. Talking to local people gives a good base of understanding of what is happening on the ground ... adaptation actions need to not only look at the hard data, but talk to the local people, ask what their needs are, what they are looking for, and what challenges they are facing as well.” (Om Katel, Royal University of Bhutan)*

The solutions that are proposed (from external actors) are often out of context and inappropriate for the cultural, geographical, ecological or socio-economic context. Measures cannot simply be transferred from elsewhere and approaches that have worked globally or in certain areas need further work before being able to be successfully applied, especially in certain developing country contexts. Civil society actors are often more successful than governments in reaching the most marginalised, but their efforts are fragmented and not at the scales needed for impact.

Actions that are fragmented and do not take a holistic, cross-sectoral, ecosystem approach (i.e. a large proportion of the actions currently taking place) have the potential to cause negative impacts elsewhere or in future. Solutions are often haphazard and further exacerbate the problem (e.g. further cutting of mangroves, overfishing).

The most observed negative impacts (potentially maladaptation) from the respondents include: 1) adaptation measures for agriculture that result in negative impacts in another area, sector or group (e.g. women, marginalised actors); 2) unfair and unsustainable resettlement or displacement practices as a result of development interventions; 3) grey infrastructures particularly relating to flood risk management and water management; and 4) afforestation.

On the other hand, views and perspectives on what counts as transformational adaptation are contested on the ground and disconnected from the science of transformation or systems change. Viewpoints differed on what makes for transformation ranging from: involvement of local communities; adopting nature based approaches; direct financial access; avoiding trade-offs, maladaptation and ensuring sustainability; and radically different development pathways. The breadth of views and the increasing formal scientific literature on transformation should be considered in defining what transformational adaptation is in the UNFCCC context.

## **1.2 What is missing to make better progress?**

Those engaged with were asked what they thought was missing in terms of adaptation actions happening in the communities they are working in. Their feedback suggests that conceptual understanding of what constitutes “adaptation” remains low among subnational-level decision-makers and practitioners. Notably, the lack of consideration of future and transboundary risks

and vulnerabilities renders most actions status quo disaster risk reduction measures, not adaptation measures. This highlights the importance of awareness-raising, capacity-building, and collaboration for decision-makers, practitioners, local communities, and other key stakeholders and rightsholders to co-create sustainable, adequate responses.

Sufficient adaptation finance from different sources, as well as mechanisms to ensure local level actors' access to adaptation financing, are urgently needed for more locally led adaptation projects and their scaling-up. Resources need to reach the local levels where they can have a real impact on the most vulnerable and where climate champions are located (e.g. Kenya's decentralised model allows for budget to reach the county and ward levels for the implementation of Integrated County Development Plans).

Lack of coordination between different ministries, agencies, departments and sectors, as well as between funders, are posing barriers to adaptation planning and the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation. Effective coordination strategies could prevent duplication of efforts and wasted resources, and achieve synergistic adaptation actions that coherently and effectively address the needs of the local communities. What is needed are long-term, systems-level, structured, nuanced and deep perspectives and approaches to adaptation.

*"Most of the work on climate action planning that is happening is at a level which really doesn't touch the ground, and the work largely coping, at times adaptation that is happening on the ground is really not able to carry its voice up there. So we need to find those conduits to connect these two scales. In the cities of the global south, institutional frameworks are quite archaic. By design they choose to operate at a certain scale, one that is at a distance from the ground, hence the gap." (Anjali Karol Mohan, Integrated Design)*

Rights-based and participatory approaches and good governance are needed to ensure adaptation planning and implementation are just, inclusive, equitable, and effective. Adaptation interventions targeting local communities can achieve greater impacts if the rights of the vulnerable and marginalised groups are safeguarded. Addressing not just the climate but also socio-economic resilience of communities is essential, to ensure that people's primary needs (such as food security) can be met.

As mentioned in the previous submission, building a learning system and embedding it in governance structures is crucial to meet the continuously changing circumstances and threats. A culture of learning, using a range of learning modalities is needed. Moving away from a focus on publications and toolkits, to undertaking a range of actions and learning from these is crucially needed.

"We're already awash with toolkits and guidebooks on climate adaptation that local leaders don't read (because these publications aren't reaching them), can't read (because they may not have enough bandwidth) and will not read (because they are long and sometimes complicated). And then we wonder why little is happening on the ground. Well, they're not downloading the Pdfs. We need a different, more

targeted, and more empowering approach.” (Dr Renzo Guinto, St. Luke’s Medical Center College of Medicine)

### 1.3 ARA’s learning from locally-led microgrants

In 2022 the ARA rolled out 25 microgrants of GBP 10,000 per project to explore burning adaptation issues in local communities. The projects were led by organisations based in the Global South. Although focused on a very local scale these grants were able to involve and work with the most marginalised (women, girls, indigenous, rural, informal settlement, underserved, isolated local community members, “the ignored”). The co-creation processes showed an example of how to scope and implement adaptation actions and why collaborative processes at such local scales are so critical. Stakeholders who were involved in these processes showed enthusiasm for continuing these types of interventions across the whole spectrum of sectors, from local government actors to community members, civil society organisations, researchers.

Better adaptation actions and solutions can be co-developed with the people intended to use them by strengthening expertise at the local level (including local communities, local government, community organisations and civil society).

*“Unless we are prepared to understand community dynamics and identities - as well as whom an intervention is aimed for - we would be reinforcing existing vulnerabilities rather than alleviating them. We must be prepared to go through the complexity and messiness of these processes, otherwise, our interventions will keep widening inequalities.” (Nwamaka Okeke-Ogbuafor, University of Leeds)*

## 2. Aggregating local adaptation into national and global indicators

The ARA survey “On the Ground Views for the Global Stocktake” asked what is being measured to assess adaptation progress and what data are already being collected at the local level as well as if this information is being fed into national systems.

### 2.1 What is being measured?

Local-level adaptation projects are measuring adaptation impacts on human wellbeing through a variety of methodologies, indicators, and metrics. However, outcome indicators are still not common, and the learning component is largely missing. Many of the indicators used on the ground for wellbeing are related to socio-economic resilience, service delivery and health benefits. A common challenge remains lack of funds for longer term impact monitoring. Once projects are completed there is often little follow up.

Developing monitoring evaluation and learning (MEL) systems for adaptation at the local level continues to face significant conceptual, technical, and capacity challenges. Researchers and implementers are looking to international donors

and funding agencies for more investments to support MEL for adaptation at the local-level.

They are also looking for opportunities to contribute and shape the processes that will emerge from the Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme on the Global Goal on Adaptation to create consolidated yet representative guidance.

There is a need for frameworks that capture the impacts of adaptation interventions on various social groups as well as their aspirations and innovations. Such frameworks could include community-led indicators that better frame and organise local voices to gain traction in the national adaptation planning processes. For example, qualitative methodologies focused on gathering stories from local communities on how adaptation interventions positively or negatively impact their lives and livelihoods could yield valuable insights for evaluating and assessing adaptation progress and outcomes.

Other methods such as linking indicators with the SDGs, using proxy indicators such as disaster insurance claims, and economic cost-benefit value assessment could be suitable for long-term adaptation progress monitoring and evaluation.

Building the capacity of local actors in MEL is imperative for scaling up MEL for adaptation. The respondents cautioned that it must start simple, as to avoid overburdening actors who are already underfunded and are overwhelmed with obligations and requirements. The indicators developed need to be useful for the local people and correspond to local priorities.

## **2.2 Scaling up local actions into national systems**

Information sharing, learning exchanges, and open access data and information are pillars of horizontal and vertical integration. Local actors have the desire to share their experiences, challenges met, lessons learned, and best practices with others, and allow the vertical scaling up of their adaptation actions. Unfortunately, there were few cases of integration into national systems and even less to formal UNFCCC reporting.

More capacity, resources, and means of sharing are needed to bring information from the local level into the national and international sphere. Municipal level actors appear more engaged in what is happening on the ground but also mostly lack the mechanisms to pass this information onto the national sphere. Overcoming data aggregation challenges will also be a key factor in scaling up vertical integration.

A strong focus on indicators that work internationally runs the risk of entrenching top-down approaches at country-level, which are in turn disconnected from their local realities and the contexts in which adaptation is happening. Yet overcoming data aggregation challenges will also be a key factor in scaling up vertical integration.

## **2.3 Building further capacity of national systems**

Further capacities are required to operationalize national and subnational systems for information compilation, sharing, and learning. Breaking down siloes and removing barriers to information sharing are key priorities in operationalizing national and subnational registries of adaptation actions.

Different tools that collect information about climate adaptation actions sub-nationally could include a digital platform that enables stakeholders to pin their actions on a map, which could also help actors on the ground find synergies with others' activities and projects.

Local-level practitioners are urging more capacity-building and financial support to develop and operationalize MEL systems for adaptation, in order to gather important data for evaluating adaptation actions and learn from past implementations. This information is crucial for information exchange, mutual learning, and replication.

Local communities and the most vulnerable groups' views and perspectives must be incorporated into national registries, and the registries reflect what is meaningful for improving and scaling up adaptation actions at the local levels in order to maximize their utility to the local communities

Please contact [ara@southsouthnorth.org](mailto:ara@southsouthnorth.org) should you have any queries.

## **Annex 1: List of interview, survey respondent organisations**

- Asociacion Pop No'j, Guatemala
- Fundacion Comunidad, Panama
- National University of Agriculture, Benin
- University of Leeds, UK
- Centre d'Innovation Technologique et d'Entrepreneuriat, Haiti
- St. Lukes Medical Centre, Philippines
- Universidad del Rosario, Argentina
- Slumdweller International, Kenya and South Africa
- Integrated Design, India
- CarbonCare InnoLab, China
- Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier, Denmark
- Global Innovation Fund, UK
- The Higher Ground Foundation, UK
- Indian Institute for Human Settlements, India
- Independent Researcher, Ethiopia
- International Platform on Adaptation Metrics
- The Institute for Social and Environmental Transition–International, USA
- Nepal Water Conservation Foundation, Nepal
- Newcastle University Business School, UK
- Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan