

From Analysis to Action: Key Steps in Local Adaptation Planning

Lessons from the Locally-led Adaptation Learning Pilot in Zambia

Context

Local climate adaptation planning is paramount in addressing the increasingly urgent challenges posed by climate change. Statistics underscore the critical need for proactive measures: according to the World Bank, climate-related disasters have affected over 1.7 billion people worldwide in the past two decades alone¹. Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that without significant adaptation efforts, the impacts of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts, will worsen, exacerbating food insecurity, displacement, and economic losses. In this context, local adaptation planning emerges as a crucial tool for enhancing resilience and safeguarding livelihoods, infrastructure, and ecosystems.

For adaptation planning to be effective, there should be an integration of climate risk assessments, designing and implementation of community-driven solutions in a Local Adaptation Plan (LAP), and policy advocacy all planned and sequenced as part of the same process. The information gleaned from climate risk analysis can be effectively used to guide the creation and implementation of local adaptation plans, while opportunities for learning events and policy advocacy ensure sustainability and scale. This guide provides a practical case study of what this sequencing looked like throughout CARE's Locally-led Adaptation Pilot (LLAP) in Southern Zambia and provides insights on how practitioners can design adaptation planning processes from analysis to action. It also thereby offers insight as to types of investments needed from donors and governments.

¹ World Bank. (2021). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/publication/an-epic-response-innovative-governance-for-flood-and-drought-risk-management>

LLAP Sequencing

CLIMATE VULNERABILITY AND CAPACITY ANALYSIS

- Conducted in May 2022
- Worked with stakeholders and communities to assess climate risks, impacts, and capacities

LOCAL ADAPTATION PLANNING

- Conducted in October 2022
- Worked with initial CVCA group and built on CVCA findings
- Community members envisioned adaptation interventions
- Implementation plan developed

LEARNING EVENT AND POLICY ADVOCACY

- Conducted in May 2023
- Convened project participants and adaptation experts to share learnings from the local adaptation planning process
- Developed policy recommendations for locally-led adaptation in Zambia

ONGOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Ensuring implementation of LLAP activities in communities
- Working with local government and civil society partners to implement locally-led adaptation activities

Climate Change in Zambia

Temperatures in Zambia's Southern Province have warmed by 1.3°C since 1960 and the annual rainfall has decreased by 1.9 mm per decade since 1960. Southern Province is historically drier than other regions of Zambia and more prone to the effects of climate change, such as unpredictable rainfall patterns and flash floods that have become more pronounced. The impacts of this include increased food, water and livelihood insecurity. According to the Zambia meteorological department, the nearly annual episodes of droughts, dry spells, and flash floods are more frequent and intense – bringing serious consequences on livelihoods, infrastructure, water resources, energy, agriculture, and health. Increasing droughts and floods create a negative feedback loop with existing environmental crises, particularly soil erosion due to overgrazing and intensive agriculture, and widespread deforestation from charcoal production. Between 2022 and early 2024, the LLAP worked in Kalomo and Zimba districts in Southern Province to address these climate impacts increasing vulnerability in rural communities.



CVCAs

Climate vulnerability analysis is one of the first steps in climate adaptation planning to ensure that we understand not only the climate hazards communities are experiencing, but the specific intersections between effects such as droughts and floods and community-level impacts on gender inequality, food security, health, and more. CARE's tool for Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) helps gather community-level information along with broader-level information (territorial, regional, national) to gain a locally specific understanding of vulnerability to climate change and existing resilience capacities, paying particular attention to gender, ecosystem, and governance issues.

The CVCA exercise in the LLAP was conducted in May 2022, and comprised three main objectives:

- Facilitate a participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue process in target districts and communities, laying the groundwork for adaptation planning.
- Enhance the capacity of CARE staff and local partners to assess and understand climate vulnerabilities and capacities.
- Through primary and secondary data collection, analysis, and documentation, document insights

into climate vulnerabilities, risks, and capacities with a focus on qualitative information and factors affecting decision-making, particularly among women.

In each of the four CVCA exercises conducted across Kalomo and Zimba districts, roughly 150 community members were divided into groups based on age and gender, and facilitators generated discussion on climate risks and capacities using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools, such as seasonal calendars, resources mapping, and climate impact chains. Facilitators were drawn from various partners, including local government agencies, local and international NGOs such as Nutri-Aid Trust and the World Wildlife Fund, and community representatives. Key Informant Interviews were also used to better understand wealth profiles in the community, livelihood activities, and gender roles. Recorded outcomes were compiled into structured templates to document findings from focus group discussions and key informant interviews, aiding in the assessment of critical resources, hazards, and climate-related information. Following the end of the CVCA exercises, reports and summaries of the climate hazards, impacts, and capacities gleaned from the CVCAs were developed.



CARE Zambia

From CVCA to Local Adaptation Planning

Six months after the CVCA was conducted, CARE and partners visited the same communities to build on the CVCA findings and initiate a process to co-develop Local Adaptation Plans (LAPs) where communities developed and prioritized immediate actions to mitigate the climate impacts detailed in the CVCA. The initial CVCA exercise helped to lay the groundwork for the Local Adaptation Planning in a number of ways. LAP training participants were the same as for the CVCA to enable continuity, representing the same array of government sectors, CARE staff, and NGO partners.

The community participants selected for the LAP also remained the same as for the CVCA, in order to leverage existing knowledge of climate risks gained from the CVCA process and to further build trust and buy-in that CARE and partners were committed to working with communities. The LAP followed the same process as the CVCA with three days of training for facilitators, followed by three days of implementation in the four communities and a final consolidation training and planning day.

The table below outlines the steps of the LAP process:

Table 1: LAP steps and activities

Step	Activity	How
1. CVCA validation	Sharing and validating the findings from the participatory CVCA with the wider community and stakeholders	Presentation and discussion
2. Visioning	Community members and the whole community articulate their visions and create a consensus vision statement of their desired (climate resilient) future	Individuals and Focus Groups prepare visual drawings and statements
3. Prioritize adaptation strategies	Identification and prioritization of proposed adaptation strategies	Focus groups brainstorm and ranking
4. Screening strategies	Screening options for technical, economic and environmental feasibility, climate resilience and gender equality	Focus groups/ plenary analysis and scoring of options
5. Creating the LAP	Planning for operationalising the final list of priority options	Focus groups created planning table
6. Implementation and integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Finalisation, documentation of plans · Validation and hand over of LAP with community · Community implementation of plans · Integration of LAP into ward, district and sector plans and budgets and implementation 	Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Zimba District · Kalomo District · CARE / NGOs · Ward level

While water scarcity was one of the most prevalent challenges drawn out in the CVCA, the actions prioritized in the Local Adaptation Plans were primarily livelihoods focused and achievable in the short-term. Some of these interventions included native tree planting and reforestation efforts, improvement in veterinary services, and training in climate-smart agricultural practices. More infrastructure-focused water resource solutions, such as improved dams and boreholes, were largely absent from the Local Adaptation Plans. This contrast between the immediacy of water scarcity challenge and the interventions prioritized in the Local Adaptation Plans illustrates some of the challenges in adaptation planning. The LLAP only spanned two years, resulting in the prioritization of actions that could be resourced in the short term. However,

the close relationships cultivated with local government partners who were trained as facilitators have yielded early indications that long-term water investments are in progress. For example, the local water authority that was included in conversations during the LAP process is currently planning for the construction of larger and improved dams to help with rainwater capture and storage to better utilize water resources during flash floods for the dry season. However, some of these plans were already in place, so investments cannot be wholly attributed to the CVCA and Local Adaptation Planning processes. CARE is also working with communities to better link them to Zambia's community development funds that could finance boreholes and more localized interventions for rainwater capture and storage.

Locally-led Adaptation Learning Event

From May 10 to 12, 2023, CARE Zambia hosted a 3-day national learning event centered around Locally-led Adaptation. The event brought together a diverse group of over 60 stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, and community members involved in the LLAP, as well as national and international government and NGO staff from outside of the project. The objective of the learning event was to build on experiences from the LLAP, in addition to sharing and learning from good practices and approaches for implementing and scaling Locally-led Adaptation generally, co-creating recommendations for effective locally-led adaptation in Zambia, and strengthening relationships among adaptation actors in Zambia.

A core group of participants convened in the weeks following the learning event to prepare a brief of policy recommendations to improve locally-led adaptation in Zambia, which was then delivered to Zambia's Ministry of Green Economy and Environment to inform the development of Zambia's National Adaptation Plan. The learning event helped to build on and expand the impact of the LLAP in important ways:

- Giving community members in Kalomo an opportunity to directly share their experiences with policy makers on the CVCA and LAP process
- Providing a forum to share findings from the LLAP with leading adaptation professionals both from Zambia and internationally
- Creating a space for co-learning and collaboration where partners were invited to share their own experiences in adaptation so that the event was participatory rather than CARE-focused
- Develop policy recommendations that have greater weight urgency due to the buy-in and collaboration from workshop participants

As a result of the learning event, the process and findings from the LLAP informed national level policy while creating new opportunities for collaboration on adaptation in Zambia and internationally.

Recommendations

- 1. Budget for and design all steps in the process from the beginning while ensuring adequate time for each step.** The 2-year timeline for the LLAP proved to be restrictive, and additional time was needed to ensure implementation of the local adaptation plans.
- 2. Maintain continuity in community members and project participants throughout every step to build relationships, knowledge, and buy-in.** Community members had initially expressed distrust of development projects due to past experiences but continuing to work with the same communities throughout each step helped maintain momentum and build trust. Continuity also decreased the need for consistent training and re-training on local adaptation.
- 3. Prioritize meaningful participation and leadership of women and marginalized communities in every step.** Gender and age specific groups were maintained throughout the CVCA and LAP processes so that women felt they had safe spaces to share their concerns and aspirations, while plenary discussions were always held to ensure men and boys could also collaborate with and learn from women and girls. Experts in gender transformative approaches and organizations focused on gender equality were also invited to the learning event.
- 4. Leverage relationships to address budget constraints and ensure implementation of adaptation activities at various scales.** Longer-term community requests in the LAPs such as improved dams and health facilities were often out of the planned budget, so CARE collaborated with local government partners to embed some of these activities in their plans and budgets. The project team also connected the community with national sources of funding for community adaptation community projects.
- 5. Use diverse tools and invite multi-sector actors to stress integrated dimensions of climate risk.** Many of Zambia's climate challenges stemmed from ecosystems degradation, water scarcity, food insecurity, and health and nutrition. To adequately account for these different issues, participatory tools were used in the CVCA and LAP that directly inquired about these dimensions, and key stakeholders in these sectors were invited to help facilitate the CVCA and LAP and participate in the learning event.



Conclusion

The Locally-led Adaptation Pilot (LLAP) in Zambia has provided invaluable insights into the importance of sequencing Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) with Local Adaptation Planning (LAP) and learning to address climate change challenges at the community level. With the adverse impacts of climate change intensifying, especially in vulnerable regions like Southern Zambia, there is an urgent need for proactive, integrated, and community-driven adaptation strategies. The LLAP demonstrated that integrating CVCA findings into LAP processes not only has the potential to develop community resilience but also fosters ownership, participation, and sustainability. By engaging stakeholders across various sectors and prioritizing the leadership of women and marginalized communities, the LLAP ensured that adaptation planning was inclusive and responsive to diverse needs and vulnerabilities. The dissemination of findings through a national learning event

and subsequent policy recommendations underscored the potential of locally-led adaptation to inform broader policy frameworks and catalyze collaboration at national and international levels. Integration of findings from LAP also increases the chance for communities to receive much needed adaptation finance to implement the long-term solutions in the LAP in the future. Moving forward, it is imperative to uphold the principles of continuity, inclusivity, and integration while scaling up locally-led adaptation efforts to effectively address the complex and interconnected challenges posed by climate change.

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