

COP27 & Local Leadership for Global Impact

Reflections on the importance of anticipatory action in the climate negotiations.

Introduction

The Local Leadership for Global Impact project aims for communities to be more resilient to complex disasters. Funded by BMZ, this will be achieved through increased CSO capacity, locally-led disaster planning and amendments to systems to support all-of-society plans for complex disasters. Between 2020-2023, the project currently operates in Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar, as well as receiving input from communities in 50 countries around the world. It connects to the COP27 climate negotiations as it is in the international policy forum that the project seeks to influence change towards achieving the project aims.

This reflective paper has been developed from project learning and aims to unpack and provide evidence and examples of [GNDR's Call to Action for COP27](#), highlighting the call to action from the perspective of those most at risk of natural hazards due to climate change. Contributions have been made from members CSOs involved in the project, and hope others can listen to, learn from and act based on their experience of locally-led anticipatory action and response.

This briefing particularly evidences GNDR's call to action messages of:

- Listen and effectively engage with communities at the frontline of climate risk
- Invest at the local level
- Empower civil society to strengthen effective climate actions on the ground
- Create space for women leaders to meaningfully participate in decision making on climate change at all levels, promote inclusion across all levels of climate change decision making.

Global Reality

The nature of risk is changing, with its frequency, intensity and complexity increasing. 39,241 people living at risk of disaster in 50 countries were asked what the greatest risks they face are.¹ The majority stated that flooding and extreme weather events wreak havoc in their lives. The consequences on their lives are devastating: disease, crop damage, economic and livelihood loss, building destruction, loss of life, displacement and ongoing environmental effects are common consequences.

Those living on the frontline of the climate crisis are often not the ones who have caused it, yet they bear the brunt of its burden. In regards to what action should be taken, their voice is clear – the implementation of policies that address, mitigate and adapt to the risks they face must be improved, and there is an urgent need for progress to be made on the loss and damage debate.

Local stakeholders must be meaningfully included in climate decision making so that their experience on the frontline and knowledge are taken into account. They are both the people impacted the most and they have the capacity to strengthen decision making and implementation.

Despite the critical role of civil society organisations, local government and community leaders, 84% of local actors report not being included in assessing threats, preparing policies and plans, and taking action to reduce threats.² Women in particular are not systematically leading DRR despite having specific needs and knowledge on how they can be addressed. As the COVID-19 global pandemic highlighted, risk is now intertwined in all aspects of society and requires ‘whole of society’ engagement to be able to respond to pending crises.

Contingency planning is a precondition for governments and humanitarian organisations, enabling them to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. This is currently achieved with limited results. Involving civil society organisations and communities most at risk will strengthen anticipatory and early warning action that is essential to mitigate the devastating results of climate change, and reduce loss and damage.

¹ <https://vfl.world/explore-vfl-data/>

² **Views from the Frontline 2019 Report** - Why are people still losing their lives and livelihoods to disasters? GNDR and its members asked over 100,000 local actors about their perspectives of risk and resilience across 42 countries. <https://global-report.vfl.world/>

Local reality

Through the Local Leadership for Global Impact project, in collaboration with Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH)³, the following organisations have provided evidence of why the call to action is so important. They are:

- Ecumenical Committee for Social Development (CEDES), Mozambique
- Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD), Malawi⁴
- SAF/FKJM, Madagascar⁵

In Mozambique, response to disaster has largely forgotten people living with disabilities and they are unable to join current national early action processes. Policies highlight inclusion as a significant element, however without specific detail as to who needs to be involved and how the word “inclusion” remains rhetoric without action. This needs to change. Meaningful integration across all decision making levels on climate change including those less visible, less heard and most vulnerable is essential to ensure no one is left behind in tackling the climate crisis. Climate solutions should be considered by all societies and should be informed by any social capital. Therefore, it is important to extend the climate debate to all the communities including women, youth, persons with disabilities, etc.

“The knowledge and lived experience of people living with disability, the known history of events of communities themselves, their specific context and unique dynamic can only help planning processes.” Further, women leaders are excluded but they are the voice of their community and best placed to share information. “We need to maximise their involvement in the process. When meetings are too long or they are sent to cook half-way through it is not fair to them.” Leonardo, CEDES.

To achieve positive results we need to actively listen and effectively engage with communities at the front line of climate risk. GNDR and its members have developed a range of tools to achieve this. Whether [localising climate projections](#), centering decision making on [Views from the Frontline](#) or improving approaches to participatory vulnerability and capacity analysis, more can be done to listen and to ensure communities are represented, and participate, when decisions are made that affect them. Integrating local factors and perspectives within existing

³ <https://www.diakonie-katastrophenhilfe.de/en/home>

⁴ <https://www.cardmalawi.org/>

⁵ <http://saf-fjkm.org/>

anticipatory humanitarian action (AHA) frameworks, and ensuring inclusive processes enabling communities and civil society organisations to shape finance for AHA is vital and allow communities to develop their own action plans to improve preparedness at the local level.

CARD has supported local councils to involve communities in contingency planning processes at district level. "It is the community who are affected; they are the ones who know the problems faced. They have overcome impossible challenges and we need to learn from their experience, not impose ourselves on their context. The communities were supported in developing seasonal forecast based advisories and action plans. These are conducted by allowing communities to interact with meteorological department and local government officials to develop action plans guided by thresholds set with reference to area specific forecasts (amount of rain, wind speed, dry spell durations) for their communities." Mike Mwale, CARD, Malawi

We must invest at the local level. Finance for adaptation and loss and damage should be channelled through existing national structures and policies such as national disaster risk management policies, national adaptation plans and the nationally determined contribution (NDC). However, both public and private finance around this legislation must be directed to the local level. Decision making around how this finance is spent must be driven from the local level and be guided by local knowledge and expertise from those on the front line of climate risk. These funds should clearly integrate both humanitarian needs and disaster risks management.

In February 2022, Cyclone Ana induced floods left a total of 6,096 households displaced in Nsanje district alone. The households lost food stored in their reserves, utensils, livestock and other assets. Demonstrating their resilience, local community structures in Nsanje District, Malawi were able to respond on their own. Because of locally-led contingency planning in the months before the cyclone season, communities knew how to act. Local leaders were provided with microgrants (group cash transfers) and were successfully able to provide food relief to people who were in need of support but were left out by government and humanitarian agency intervention because they were missed during assessments or could not be reached due to access roads being impassable. including people who were displaced as an early response during the initial aftermath of the cyclone.

"Communities have the knowledge on how to deal with disasters that impact them but only lack the resources to put this knowledge into use. Stakeholders⁶ need to involve the communities in planning, and empower them to prepare and respond to foreseen hazards that affect them." Mike Mwale, CARD.

⁶ Stakeholders include humanitarian organisations, local organisations, local assemblies and private companies trying to prepare for disasters

“At the community level meetings with community leaders have been incorporated into meetings at the district level with the presence of provincial level delegates of the INGD. This is providing a channel for communities to communicate directly with INGD at these levels. Before the project we did not have the coordinators of the local community committees (CLGDRs).” Leonardo, CEDES, Mozambique

This cannot be achieved without effective early action that includes pre-positioned funds for locally-led anticipatory action and response. SAF-FJKM have analysed disaster management and climate policies across Madagascar. “One point raised during the gap analysis we conducted was that no contingency fund exists at the communal level. Communities lack the resources to act in time and for early action. We need to promote policy for the adoption of microgrants for community structures; we need stronger mechanisms in place for anticipatory action and earlier response, and more information provided through early warning systems (to reduce humanitarian impacts as much as possible).” Hasina, SAF-FJM, Madagascar

A coherence challenge remains to ensure all actions are based on the experience of the local communities and local communities need to be involved in early and anticipatory action. It takes time to establish a clear collective understanding with local authorities on what anticipatory action means, and the timing and types of early actions and anticipatory actions which need to be supported.

Very limited participatory coordination by established AHA actors with local civil society organisations on the establishment, development and strengthening of AHA frameworks - and sharing of AHA experiences and learning - exists. This coordination is generally limited to these AHA agencies own local partners, especially for AHA pilots. There are difficulties in establishing collaborative partnerships, and to take up opportunities, with established AHA actors beyond opportunities to engage in sessions for the transfer of knowledge and learning.

“There are informal practices at the community level, which is more efficient especially before, during and after the passages of cyclones. There are structures at the local level which need to be considered for better efficiency of action especially for anticipatory actions and emergency response actions...There are also coordination structures outlined within disaster management plans, but which do not exist in reality. These include committees at the communal level, local rescue teams. Some local structures should be established and incorporated for improved coordination in case of disasters, notably grassroots volunteers, local associations, and traditional authorities.” Hasina, SAF-FJKM, Madagascar]

“In Malawi CARD being a local organisation implementing its projects at the district level faces challenges to influence changes to key disaster related policies at National level. In order to overcome this challenge it has been working with the Civil Society Network on Climate Change

(CISONECC) which operates at all levels more specifically at National level. This has allowed interactions with National level departments such as Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) to be shared the gaps that local community involvement in disaster preparedness face and what policies being reviewed should consider.” Mike, CARD, Malawi

Locally-led anticipatory action and response sees results. In Mozambique, just as highlighted in Malawi, new local committees have responsibly managed microgrants in an accountable and transparent way for the benefit of those most at risk who previously did not receive assistance. There has been increased community mobilisation through autonomous early action and essential feedback from communities. Actions such as whatsapp groups connect individuals with technical experts leads to an ease of information exchange on contingency planning, disaster risk management and meteorological forecasts.

“A lesson learned during the implementation of the LLGI project was that in order to better carry out anticipatory action at the local level in order to truly carry the voice of the community, a strengthening of the partnership between the different actors and stakeholders is necessary. Notably through the establishment of a partnership agreement with national stakeholders at the beginning of the project to facilitate information sharing and inter-stakeholder relations. In this context, a partnership strengthening with key stakeholders such as the BNGRC, the Directorate General of Meteorology and APIPA has been established. The strengthening of cooperative links is therefore very necessary through partnership conventions or other forms of agreement in order to reach a consensus on information or data sharing. ” Reflections from SAF/FJKM

The change that we want to see happen

We call on member states and decision makers at all levels to amend international systems to support civil society organisations to plan for complex disasters and, in doing so, ensure local actors are engaged in processes that strengthen their own resilience. It is important to achieve this because we want world leaders and decision makers to champion localisation, risk-informed development⁷, and civil society-led collaboration as a means to achieving goals stated across international policy frameworks.

There is a need for development, climate and humanitarian actors to work together to realise early and anticipatory action. Emphasis on locally-led adaptation, through the suggested

⁷ Risk-informed development enables communities most at risk to be leaders and key decision makers of development, and their future. It empowers individuals and communities at risk to take action today and in the future to prevent risk and build resilience. It captures local knowledge and better understands the localised implications of various global and local factors influencing risk, and aims to ensure no one is left behind. It therefore can be used as an approach in development, humanitarian and disaster preparedness work.

actions mentioned in our contextual reflections, needs to be made to ensure the capacities of local NGOs and civil society organisations are utilised and they are able to lead.

GNDR members highlight that this could be achieved by national policy and resources for existing grassroots structures to strengthen their preparedness and enable engagement in coordinated anticipatory action. More availability and access to local forecasting data (specifically from meteorology departments and their weather monitoring stations) is sought.

Internationally, established AHA actors must partner with them to release the uptake of established AHA frameworks and research at the local level - especially within communities most at risk - which is something currently often overlooked. This could start to address coordination gaps at the local level.

If change does not happen, the lived experience of those most at risk will not be considered in decision making and planning for complex disasters and in early action. Instead of offering progress, anticipatory actions may not deliver vital life-saving action and climate induced hazards will continue to become disasters.

If change does happen, the most vulnerable communities will be prepared for future risks, be able to take up proactive measures to mitigate risk and build their own resilience through locally-led processes. If actions consider local risk and local capacities from the perspective of those most at risk, its potential for positive impact on the lives, livelihoods and assets is substantially strengthened.

Our [call to action](#) has been developed with members. GNDR is a network of 1400 civil society organisations around the world; this includes CARD, CEDES and SAF-FJKM who are championing locally-led early action in their work across southern Africa.

The evidence presented is based on what they, and communities at risk they are working with, have experienced and learnt through the '[Local Leadership for Global Impact](#)' programme. Join us.

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