

EXPLORING PATHWAYS FOR BRIDGING LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE WITH GLOBAL ADAPTATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

Report for the Second Adaptation Convening at the 8th Adaptation Futures Conference 2025
Under the Project 'Scaling the Nexus Approach – Adaptation and Loss & Damage'



Venue: Te Pae, Christchurch, New Zealand;



Date: 15 October 2025;



Time: 10:45-11:30 AM

SESSION OVERVIEW

The adaptation process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has evolved over time to integrate the values of locally led adaptation (LLA) and Indigenous knowledge. Yet, in practice, adaptation governance remains largely technocratic and top-down, where community knowledge is consulted intermittently but rarely embedded within decision-making structures. Across the Global South, numerous local, national, and thematic networks are already working on adaptation and resilience, but these efforts remain fragmented, operating in silos with limited collective influence on regional and global policy spaces. At the same time, financing, accountability, and monitoring systems often privilege formal actors and technical expertise, creating barriers for communities, particularly women, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized groups, to meaningfully shape adaptation priorities.

This gap highlights the need for a regional platform that does not create another standalone network, but would connect researchers, practitioners, policymakers, intermediaries, and local and Indigenous Peoples communities across countries, enabling lived experiences and local knowledge to more systematically inform adaptation discourse, financing, and policy frameworks at higher levels.

A convening titled 'Exploring Pathways for Bridging Local and Indigenous Knowledge with Global Adaptation Policy Frameworks' was organized by International Centre for Climate Change under the project titled "Scaling the Nexus Approach: Adaptation & Loss and Damage" to unpack how adaptation platforms can move beyond consultation toward shared governance, how financing and accountability structures can be reoriented toward local institutions, and how intermediary actors can bridge the persistent gap between UN processes and community realities. This would help lay the foundation for designing this proposed regional platform.

The session began with an introduction from Mr. Savio Rousseau Rozario, Program Coordinator, Locally Led Adaptation Program, and ICCCAD's representative to AF2025. After setting the tone by Mr. Rozario, Ms. Towrin Zaman Raya, Senior Research Associate and Project Manager of the CECG project from ICCCAD, presented the objectives and outcomes from the scoping for the project, which included the impacts and necessity of developing the adaptation network. The presentation also highlighted that, instead of creating new networks, there needs to be a stocktake of the existing networks, an extensive assessment leading to a platform of "Network of Networks." Such an initiative would support connecting researchers, policymakers, and practitioners across the Global South to advance locally grounded adaptation and resilience solutions. Furthermore, the presentation also discussed how adaptation practitioners from local levels, including indigenous and local communities, could directly inform the adaptation policymaking at regional and global levels through such platforms.

The presentation was followed by an interactive discussion session, expanding on expand upon distinct perspectives including - the nexus between multilateral entity and adaptation interventions at local level; indigenous perspective on transformational shift needed to integrate local voices in global decision-making process; practical local and community led pathways to highlight local case studies to the world; importance of direct access to funding resources for local communities being empowered; the intricacies of UN processes and how they can be more inclusive.

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Laura Kuhl, Associate Professor, Northeastern University, Boston, USA

Topic: Addressing gaps in local communities' inclusion in various national, regional, and international platforms on climate change adaptation and resilience

The discussion highlighted that, to address the gap regarding community representation and inclusion, there needs to be a shift from technocratic, donor-driven systems toward locally rooted decision-making. This means institutionalizing meaningful participation of marginalized groups (such as women, Indigenous peoples, landless households, and informal workers) not just as "beneficiaries" but as co-designers and governors of adaptation processes. Platforms must invest in local knowledge systems, use accessible languages and formats, and recognize community-based organizations as legitimate actors alongside governments and experts. Flexible financing mechanisms that channel resources directly to local institutions, combined with accountability frameworks that prioritize downward accountability over upward reporting, are essential. Ultimately, closing these gaps demands reframing adaptation platforms as political and social spaces in which equity, voice, and local agency are central, rather than purely technical instruments for managing climate risk.

Adiba Binte Kamal, Program Coordinator, ICCCAD

Topic: The tools and pathways in supporting and sustaining the platforms

To support and sustain the adaptation platforms, the essential element is creating local ownership. Key tools also include participatory governance mechanisms, community-led monitoring and learning systems, open-access climate and socio-economic data, and flexible financing instruments that allow platforms to adapt over time. Pathways to sustainability involve embedding platforms within existing local and national institutions, building the capacities of community-based organizations to convene, negotiate, and manage resources, and fostering horizontal learning networks across regions and countries. Crucially, sustaining these platforms depends on trust-building, long-term donor commitments beyond short project cycles, and accountability structures that prioritize responsiveness to community needs rather than compliance with external agendas.

Hla Thoaching Marma, Local & Indigenous Community Representative

Topic: Local inclusion in various platforms, challenges and barriers, and lived experience

Local inclusion in adaptation and development platforms across the Global South is widely recognized as essential, yet in reality, it remains constrained by structural challenges, power imbalances, and everyday realities of lived experience. Platforms often privilege formal actors, technical expertise, and dominant languages, which marginalize women, youth, Indigenous groups, and the poorest households whose knowledge is experiential rather than documented. Barriers such as time poverty, social norms, digital divides, and mistrust shaped by past extractive interventions limit meaningful participation, turning inclusion into a symbolic exercise rather than real influence. From the perspective of local communities, engagement is frequently experienced as consultation without decision-making power, where priorities are pre-defined, and benefits are unevenly distributed. These lived experiences highlight that inclusion is not just about access to platforms, but about transforming how authority, resources, and recognition are shared within them.

Saqib Huq, Managing Director, ICCCAD

Topic: The UN process in support of the platforms and the role of intermediates such as ICCCAD

Within the UN climate governance architecture, particularly under the UNFCCC, various processes such as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the Global Goal on Adaptation, and constituted bodies like the Adaptation Committee provide formal support and legitimacy to adaptation platforms by setting norms, mobilizing finance, and facilitating knowledge exchange. However, these processes often operate at national or global scales, creating gaps between policy formulation and local realities in the Global South. Intermediary organizations such as the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) play a critical bridging role by translating UN frameworks into context-specific action, amplifying local voices in global forums, and supporting multi-actor platforms that connect communities, governments, researchers, and donors. Acting as knowledge brokers and conveners, such intermediaries help navigate power asymmetries, build local capacity, and ensure that community experiences inform global adaptation agendas, thereby making UN-supported platforms more inclusive, grounded, and effective.

KEY RECOMENDATIONS

The discussion session was followed by a question-and-answer (Q&A) session, in which the participants provided their comments and recommendations, which are as follows:

1. Recenter adaptation platforms around local governance and shared power

Adaptation platforms should formally embed community representatives, particularly women, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized livelihood groups, as co-decision-makers rather than consultees, ensuring that authority over priorities, design, and resource allocation is genuinely shared.

2. Enable direct and flexible financing for local institutions

Donors and UN mechanisms should expand funding windows that channel resources directly to community-based organizations and local intermediaries, with flexible modalities that reflect local timelines, risks, and adaptive needs rather than rigid project cycles.

3. Strengthen intermediary organizations as long-term bridges

Intermediary institutions such as ICCCAD should be systematically supported to act as knowledge brokers, conveners, and translators between UN processes and local realities, helping to amplify lived experience in global forums while supporting capacity-building and trust at the community level.

4. Redefine inclusion, monitoring, and accountability frameworks

Platform accountability and learning systems must prioritize downward accountability and value experiential and qualitative knowledge alongside technical indicators, ensuring that success is measured by community-defined outcomes and lived improvements.

5. Invest in trust, capacity, and horizontal learning over time

Sustaining inclusive platforms requires long-term commitments to relationship-building, strengthening community convening and negotiation capacities, and fostering peer-to-peer learning networks across regions, allowing platforms to evolve as social and political spaces rather than fixed technical tools.