



Recife Statement from the 19th International Conference on Community-based Adaptation

The 19th International Conference on Community-based Adaptation (CBA19) was held in Recife, Brazil, from 12–16 May 2025. The event brought together over 400 participants from 63 countries for a week of discussion, debate and action centred on the overarching theme of *achieving just and equitable adaptation* and identifying ways to progress the locally-led adaptation (LLA) agenda in the face of a shifting international context.

The CBA conference is an annual event enabling practitioners, policymakers, researchers and donors to share the latest advancements in LLA, strengthen networks, and build capacities to address the growing impacts of climate change.

Over the five days of CBA19, 27 sessions were held under three core themes: locally led adaptation (LLA) in action, urban adaptation, and nature/adaptation. The programme also included lightning talks, “out of the box” sessions, and a shark tank process, which encouraged broader discussions and innovation.

In the final plenary of the conference, participants adopted the Recife Statement.

We, as a community of practitioners, researchers and activists, are dismayed by the lack of progress in bringing local voices systematically into climate action. Despite messages like those emerging from this conference having been communicated and amplified for years, we see little change in power structures and an increasing vulnerability of communities around the world. We respectfully request the COP30 Presidency and all actors in the UNFCCC, researchers, practitioners, civil society and other supporters of locally led action, to take heed of the multitude of calls for action and work to shift away from platitudes and commitments to a focus on the actions that need to be taken to ensure a just and equitable future for all.

Conference key messages:

1. Communities should define success and shape learning.

Existing monitoring and evaluation systems are extractive and often fail to provide clarity on what is happening at the local level. Programmes must enable communities to define what success looks like. We must shift away from technocratic assessments and towards human-centred approaches, designed by, with and for communities, incorporating diverse experiences, knowledge and learning.

2. Nature-based solutions should be expanded to include ‘local culture-based solutions’ to acknowledge the vital link between nature, people, and culture.

Policymakers and funders should recognise local and indigenous knowledge is central to nature-based solutions. This is critical for meeting the needs and priorities of the communities living closest to nature, and the values they attribute to it.

3. Responsive funding requires re-conceptualising risk and increasing trust.

Finance for adaptation needs to include a focus on the provision of direct, flexible, predictable and transparent funding to the local level. Climate funders need to trust communities and work with them to overcome traditional perceptions of risk - including simplifying overly complex rules and procedures that create barriers to access.

4. Integration of diverse knowledge systems within climate action.

This is fundamental for strengthening community resilience and just adaptation and needs to include bridging ancestral, traditional, Indigenous, scientific, technical, intersectional and popular knowledges – recognising the deep understanding and adaptive capacities already held by Indigenous Peoples, local and Afrodescendent Communities.

5. There is no climate justice without gender justice.

Women and girls in all their diversity are disproportionately affected by climate change and biodiversity loss. Space must be created within existing power structures for meaningful participation and the leadership of women in all forums. This should be part of a wider intersectional approach that considers the multiple dimensions of human identity and experience, such as age, diverse abilities, ethnicity and race.

6. Secure tenure rights.

Tenure and land rights for local communities, women, Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendent communities must be recognised. Security of tenure is critical for equitable and just adaptation and resilience - ensuring the most marginalised groups have the agency to act on climate change.

7. Redefining accountability to shift downwards to communities.

Accountability processes remain largely top-down and donor-driven. To enable equitable and just adaptation, financiers must be accountable to the people and communities at the forefront of climate change, and systems should be designed collaboratively.

8. Climate risk is socially constructed.

Perceptions of risk are shaped by discrimination, governance, and inequitable access to resources and services. We need to reshape the tired narrative that risk is natural in order to enable equitable, socially just and participatory risk reduction. This will require a wide range of perspectives and unusual collaborations.

9. “Business unusual” must be the new “usual”.

Shifting the traditional practices and adopting unconventional ways of working are essential for achieving just and equitable adaptation. This includes shifting decision-making power and embracing *participatory*, locally led processes that uphold *democracy and climate justice* by putting financial resources directly into the hands of communities.

10. Intermediary organisations have important roles to play in climate adaptation.

This includes bridging gaps between knowledge, policy and practice and in addressing bureaucracy, translation, and requirements. Intermediary organisations can and must use their position, access and influence to bring forward community voices and advocate for the locally-led adaptation agenda.

11. Prioritise equity and inclusion in urban planning and policy.

Urban planning policies and housing systems should dismantle systemic discrimination and spatial inequalities, which exacerbate climate vulnerabilities, especially in informal settlements. Adaptation planning and action should help address these issues by centring community perspectives, engaging with networks, and prioritising equity and inclusion.

We thank the following organisations that enabled practitioners, policymakers, donors and other participants to come together at CBA19 to share the latest advancements in LLA, strengthen networks, and build capacities to address the growing impacts of climate change.

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