Envisioning the future of the CBA conference series

Learning from the past 20 years to shift from principles to practice



CBA

Local solutions inspiring global action

Authors

Aaron Acuda is a researcher at IIED.
May Thazin Aung is a senior researcher at IIED.
Paul Mitchell is a senior associate at IIED.

For more information about the CBA conference series, please contact:
May Thazin Aung, may.thazinaung@iied.org

Published by IIED, November 2026

Acuda, A, Aung, M and Mitchell, P (2026) Envisioning the future of the CBA conference series: learning from the past 20 years to shift from principles to practice. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London.

www.iied.org/22768g
Download more publications at iied.org/publications

International Institute for Environment and Development
44 Southampton Buildings, London, WC2A 1AP, UK
www.iied.org

IIED publications may be shared and republished in accordance with the Creative Commons AttributionNonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Under the terms of this licence, anyone can copy, distribute and display the material, providing that they credit the original source and don't use it for commercial purposes or make derivatives. Different licences may apply to some illustrative elements, in which instance the licence will be displayed alongside.

IIED is happy to discuss any aspect of further usage. Get more information via www.iied.org/Creative-Commons IIED is a charity registered in England, Charity No.800066 and in Scotland, OSCR Reg No.SC039864 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England No.2188452.

Cover photo: participants at CBA20 hosted by SEED Philippines Urban Agri-Farm learned how urban agriculture can be implemented in dense cities as a strategy to address food insecurity and climate challenges. Credit: Marcelle Mardon/IIED

Summary

The Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change (CBA) conference is the leading global platform that brings together communities and practitioners, including governments, researchers and funders, to advance locally led adaptation (LLA). Over 20 years, CBA has evolved from defining community-based adaptation to championing climate justice, decolonisation, and transfer of power and resources to local actors. The conferences have been instrumental in developing the LLA principles, fostering a global community of practice, and influencing climate finance and policy, while promoting equitable adaptation through learning, accountability and partnerships.

This report provides an overview of the CBA conference series, its history and evolution. We also introduce a new vision for the conference series, and identify the partnerships and milestones needed to build on the last 20 years and implement the next stage of the series.

The CBA conference series

The annual CBA conference is the only practitioner-oriented global adaptation conference that creates a platform for those most affected by, and responding to, climate change from local to global levels. CBA conferences prioritise lived experience, with evidence from and perspectives of local practitioners, including community representatives, researchers, civil society organisations (CSOs) and local governments. These groups meet with policymakers and funders to build networks for peer learning and collaboration, as well as share their lived experiences, knowledge and evidence of LLA in practice to inform action.

The aims of CBA conferences include:

- Enabling adaptation stakeholders at all levels to better understand and recognise the value of LLA, lived experiences and good practice in climate change adaptation
- Sharing evidence of what works to deliver LLA, based on research and direct experiences of people and institutions from the global South, informed or generated by people living in poverty and exclusion
- Ensuring that decision makers adopt policies and practices that reflect LLA, and the values and experiences of those living in poverty and exclusion, drawing on evidence of what works from design through to monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Building a community of practice (CoP) focused on local climate action with international legitimacy, which facilitates knowledge sharing, partnerships and finance flows across scales.

CBA and the LLA learning journey: from principles to action

The Principles of Locally Led Adaptation were born out of the recognition of the need for greater agency for, and resource flows to, local communities most impacted by climate change. The eight LLA Principles provide a framework for key enablers, and cover the governance, resources and programme design needed to deliver a fairer, more inclusive and equitable future that places communities at the centre of climate action. Currently, there are more than 150 endorsers of the LLA Principles, including government actors, researchers, development partners, grassroots organisations, and others from a range of backgrounds and geographies, whose common goal is to enable more effective climate change adaptation at the local level.

However, learning, both online and in person, is required to ensure that the LLA Principles move from endorsement to action. IIED and partners created the LLA 'learning journey' to ensure coordinated and effective learning for LLA. Saleemul Huq and Clare Shakya originally envisaged the learning journey as a ten-year process, anchored to a series of annual convenings to keep the LLA community engaged and committed to implementing LLA. They identified CBA conferences as an integral part of the LLA learning journey, providing an essential space for endorsers of the LLA Principles and the broader LLA community to collaborate, learn and share expertise.

The supporters, champions and endorsers of the LLA Principles form the LLA CoP, which meets online and in person at CBA conferences and other events to advance the LLA principles. The original LLA CoP, a partnership of peers championing LLA, including BRAC, Slum Dwellers International, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), World Resources Institute and IIED, was instrumental in formulating the LLA Principles. They were informed by extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, including donors, funders, delivery partners, global South governments, social movements and non-governmental organisations. Currently, the LLA CoP has more than 650 members and provides a space for continuous engagement among the wider community of CBA conference attendees, beyond the conferences.

Box 1. Key terms

Principles of Locally Led Adaptation (LLA): eight principles providing a framework for delivering fairer adaptation that places communities at the centre of climate action.

LLA Community of Practice (LLA CoP): the community of peers who have endorsed the LLA Principles or are champions of LLA.

CBA community: the CBA conference community (people and organisations that have participated in one or more CBA conferences).

LLA learning journey: a long-term process anchored to a series of annual gatherings that keeps the LLA community engaged and committed to implementing LLA.

The LLA CoP is fostered by opportunities to connect, share learnings and build relationships. Its learning agenda links to the LLA learning journey and is tied to a series of online and in-person events, where members of the LLA CoP share learning on LLA, track progress on LLA practice and hold themselves mutually accountable for implementing actions aligned with the Principles.

In addition to the CBA conferences, IIED and partners convene multiple other spaces that contribute directly to the LLA learning journey. These spaces include Development & Climate Days (D&C Days), an annual gathering that brings the climate change and development communities together to influence the uptake of community priorities and adaptation needs in the formal UNFCCC negotiations. Another, more recent, addition to the LLA learning journey is the London Climate Finance Resilience Summit, which brings together actors from resilience and finance ecosystems to seek financing solutions that can reach the local level.

The CBA conference approach

The CBA conference series is designed to offer safe spaces to challenge assumptions and ideas. Sessions at the conference encourage interactive, participatory, innovative and outside-the-box thinking to facilitate sharing of diverse perspectives and foster connections. Each year, CBA conference sessions are organised into themes, with additional cross-cutting issue themes, including gender, decolonisation and justice. Finance is also a cross-cutting theme with discussions each year on different elements of the quantity and quality of finance, including sessions on approaches for implementing trust-based grant-giving, sharing lessons on community-based funding mechanisms, and dialogues between funders and communities on easing funding access criteria.

Thematic sessions are complemented by additional sessions including the 'Shark Tank' and accountability workstreams. The Shark Tank is an incubator and showcase for LLA solutions. During the conference, participants pitch their ideas, receive mentorship from peers and experts, and refine their proposals. At the end of the conference, participants present their strengthened solutions and the winning pitches are selected for further mentorship. Accountability roundtables, introduced at CBA20, are designed to promote honest dialogues among diverse participants to improve LLA practices within their institutions. Other components include poster competitions, visual narratives, skill shares, lightning talks and marketplaces. CBA conferences also include field trips, which have been an integral part of the conferences since CBA19. These enable participants to witness the lived experience of communities and local adaptation in practice.

CBA conferences are interactive and innovative events. CBA participants have trialled a range of innovative approaches beyond traditional panel discussions, for example using games and role-play exercises to deliver sessions. During the conference, participants collectively synthesise key messages (which are collected

by rapporteurs during individual sessions) through panels, breakout groups and polls. This provides an opportunity to aggregate learning and create shared advocacy messages from the conference.

Outcomes of CBA

The CBA conference theory of change is centred around enabling communities to achieve equitable climate change adaptation outcomes. Over the years, the conferences have contributed to achieving outcomes such as enabling decision makers and practitioners to adopt policy and practice, and enabling local actors to engage with and influence other actors. The conferences act as fertile ground for new ideas, connections, and exchange of knowledge and practice, some of which are outlined below.

As noted in a recent evaluation, the CBA conference series has significantly shifted adaptation narratives to include the perspectives and priorities of frontline communities and Least Developed Country (LDC) governments. One of the most notable outcomes of the CBA conference series is the development of the Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) programme, an LDC-led initiative for implementing LLA at the national level. CBA conferences provided a platform for the participation of the governments of Uganda, Malawi and Ethiopia, who agreed to be the first three of the six countries to implement the LIFE-AR strategy after CBA conferences held in those countries (CBAs 11, 12 and 13). Other outcomes include influencing international climate finance processes, including the Green Climate Fund, to ensure that at least 50% of adaptation finance should support LDCs and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as first outlined in the Kathmandu Declaration on Financing Local Adaptation to Climate Change. Furthermore, CBA conferences have been instrumental in developing the LLA Principles, which aim to shift power and resources to frontline communities, by providing spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue, collaborative learning and knowledge synthesis.

CBA conferences have been part of broader climate change engagements, including D&C Days and the UNFCCC COPs, but what is unique about CBA conferences is their role as a platform for bringing together multiple local to global stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, donors and foundations, and media, as well as policymakers and government agencies (local and national). Funders and intermediaries such as the Climate Justice Resilience Fund, Civil Society in Development (CISU), the Adaptation Fund, the Wellcome Trust, the Global Resilience Partnership and the IDRC have connected with their grantees at CBA, and have examined their funding modalities, outcomes and lessons in line with the conference discussions.

Diversity in participation has always been central to the CBA conference series' ethos. The CBA sponsorship programme has been an important mechanism to increase participation, diversity and representation, and ensure that frontline community representatives can participate in the conference discussions. In recent years, we have been able to increase the number of fully supported participants. At CBA19, the programme supported 39 participants from Africa, Brazil, Latin America, Asia and other regions. At CBA20, sponsorship rose to 51 participants from the Philippines, Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands and other regions.

> *"Attending CBA18 in Arusha was a transformative experience. It offered unparalleled networking opportunities with practitioners and experts from around the world. I had the chance to learn and relearn vital skills for driving community-led climate action. The collaborative atmosphere and innovative solutions discussed have equipped me with new insights and strategies to implement in my community. I highly recommend this conference to anyone dedicated to making a tangible impact on climate adaptation."*
>
> - **Rashid Mwinyi, CBA18 participant**

CBA conferences over the past 20 years

CBA conferences have grown in attendance, from the first CBA conference in 2005 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which convened 80 participants, to the most recent event, CBA20 in Manila, the Philippines, which hosted 400 participants. CBA conferences have also incrementally transformed in focus, from defining a new field of practice to championing a vision of climate action rooted in local leadership, equity and justice. This trajectory reflects a profound shift: from asking whether communities should lead adaptation, to demanding a systemic shift of power and resources within climate and development finance systems. The narratives now examine the systemic drivers of inequality that restrict local actors' access to resources, power and agency in implementing climate action. This narrative shift laid the foundations of what eventually developed into the eight LLA Principles, which recognise the importance of empowering local communities to lead climate change adaptation and to have a voice in decisions that directly affect their lives.

> *"It's amazing to see how the CBA community has grown over the past 20 years, even with all the global challenges that have happened in between. And it really shows the spirit of members in this space to bring community thinking to the forefront and to international negotiations."*
>
> **- Saqib Huq, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at CBA20**

The CBA community has become more diverse over the years and the conferences have continuously become spaces for advocacy, promoting the uptake of locally led action among funders and grassroots practitioners alike. There has been a notable shift from the first couple of CBA conferences, which were primarily spaces for convening practitioners of community-based climate action, to a space attracting participants beyond practitioners, including a range of funders from multilateral development banks, vertical climate funds, bilateral funders and international organisations who flock to CBA conferences to hear what the adaptation needs and cutting-edge solutions are, first-hand from communities. There has also been a growth in the percentage of participants who are attending a CBA conference for the first time.

The CBA community has consistently included representatives of governments from the LDC Group, LDC government ministries, CSOs, grassroots federations and international organisations. These participants take key messages from the conference to share lessons learned and amplify the LLA message within their networks.

Evolution of the conferences and focus

Community empowerment, where communities are at the centre of adaptation actions, and local knowledge, prioritising lived experiences and capabilities, have always been central to CBA discussions. Climate finance discussions — including the importance of getting resources into the hands of communities — steadily increased and became the defining debate of CBA conferences, particularly from 2014 to 2018. Concepts of justice, power and decolonisation emerged after 2021, and gender, which was just a footnote at CBA1, is now considered central to climate justice.

This section summarises how the CBA conferences have evolved.

Conceptualisation stage: defining the concept and field of CBA

CBA1–CBA3 (2005–2009)

The first few conferences were in the conceptualisation phase that explored the identity of the conference and the purpose of the CBA community. The early CBA community brought together practitioners and researchers who sought to define 'community-based adaptation', driven by a desire to develop a term for CBA that places communities at the centre, with the core message being: 'local communities must lead adaptation, not just participate in it'. CBA1 (Dhaka, 2005) was the first to define CBA as a concept and distinct practice, establishing the baseline that communities must define adaptation, not governments or scientists. In this phase, the CBA community also laid the groundwork for participatory approaches to learning and sharing that have become the hallmark of the CBA community and conference series. At this time, the concept of Indigenous and local knowledge as 'the foundation for adaptation' and 'not a supplement to climate science' became a defining concept of the CBA discourse. Apart from defining CBA as a concept, some of the key messages from CBA1 included:

- We need a better understanding of adaptation issues
- Planning adaptation with the 'vulnerable community' is a must
- Mainstreaming climate change into project-level activities is important
- The definition of 'community' needs to consider scale in order to better understand the process and make mainstreaming of activity feasible.

Institutionalising and scaling up

CBA4–CBA7 (2010–2013)

During this period, the focus shifted from demonstrating CBA in practice to scaling up, communicating and mainstreaming adaptation within development and governance systems. The central message was that effective adaptation requires strong local institutions, community participation, and the integration of local and Indigenous knowledge with scientific knowledge and national planning processes. The CBA community expanded its networks beyond researchers and practitioners to include policymakers and donors interested in CBA. Technical and thematic discussions related to CBA also began to take shape, focusing on water, agriculture, urban, ecosystem-based adaptation, monitoring and evaluation, and finance. Examples of key messages from conferences during this era include:

- Strengthening institutions, governance and community governance is essential to ensure effective implementation and accountability to local communities
- Adaptation planning and delivery must operate across a range of scales, linking local-level planning with national-level delivery frameworks
- CBA should focus on the theme of scaling up beyond pilots, spreading CBA knowledge and practical lessons horizontally across communities, and vertically across levels of governance and action
- Effective adaptation communication requires honest and open communication, reflection, action and reflection again, and a two-way conversation between scientists and communities
- Community resilience cannot occur without addressing ecosystem resilience, and an integrated approach to community-based and ecosystem-based adaptation is required
- Local knowledge, traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge must be combined to inform adaptation planning, risk assessment and decision making.

Finance and ecosystems

CBA8–CBA11 (2014–2017)

In this phase, the CBA community focused on scaling up financing for adaptation, effective monitoring and evaluation based on flexible and participatory approaches, addressing urban vulnerability and integrating ecosystem-based approaches into adaptation practice. There was an emphasis on the idea that vulnerable communities already possess valuable knowledge and adaptive capacity but require greater access to resources, supportive policies and inclusive governance systems. The key messages on financing are most strongly reflected in the Kathmandu Declaration issued at CBA8 in 2014. The conference concluded with an outcome document calling on the Green Climate Fund to allocate half of its resources to adaptation, with a particular focus on vulnerable communities, and consideration of gender and social equity. Key messages from this period included:

- We need a radical shift in financial flows to ensure the most vulnerable communities can adapt to climate change, as articulated in the Kathmandu Declaration on Financing Local Adaptation, which called for at least 50% of adaptation finance to be directed to the poorest and most vulnerable communities, with funds reaching the local and community level
- Financing must be flexible, long-term and accessible, allowing communities to respond to uncertainty, extreme events and changing climate risks
- Private sector finance should not be viewed only as a source of funding, but also as a stakeholder with skills, expertise and influence to support adaptation
- Accountability and transparency in adaptation finance are shared responsibilities, requiring information flows, monitoring and evaluation, and responsiveness to communities' articulated needs
- Adaptive capacity, resilience and effectiveness are context-specific, requiring flexible, participatory and iterative approaches rather than fixed indicators alone
- Ecosystem-based adaptation and CBA are complementary, and adaptation should integrate social, ecological and livelihood dimensions.

Locally led adaptation

CBA12–CBA15 (2018–2021)

The period between 2018 and 2021 was characterised by the development of the LLA Principles, which reflect the CBA community's main approaches and aims. The role of intermediaries, or organisations responsible for channelling funding to LLA, became an important topic. The CBA community began to think about the role of intermediary organisations in enabling LLA and strengthening local capacity, rather than acting as gatekeepers to finance and decision making. While the COVID-19 pandemic forced three consecutive conferences online in 2020–2022, the virtual format expanded participation and brought a more diverse global audience into the conversation. There were also drawbacks of the entirely virtual format though, including limited interactivity, and reduced networking and partnership-building opportunities.

LLA was strongly linked to devolved climate finance, which relies on strong, accountable institutions and alignment with national policies/systems, as well as to equity, inclusion and agency, where adaptation solutions prioritise gender equality, youth participation, Indigenous leadership and agency of affected communities. Key messages across this period included:

- Institutional mechanisms for enabling devolved climate finance are key: government institutions must be strengthened so that there are mechanisms that enable devolved decision-making and finance transfer in a

transparent and accountable way. This could include, for instance, having institutional mechanisms in place that give subnational governments greater agency over climate actions and budgets.

- Donors must make it easy for people on the ground to access climate finance and they must not 'reinvent the wheel' in doing so.
- Donors should be prepared to take greater risks by providing more flexible funding to local organisations, so that the people most affected by climate change can respond to climate impacts based on their priorities and needs.
- Young people are not just volunteers. They need mechanisms that compensate them for their contribution to climate action, advocacy or policy consultation processes.
- Integrated approaches to adaptation, including nature-based solutions, address key interlinked societal challenges, including biodiversity loss, and build holistic resilience to future and unanticipated global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice and decolonisation

CBA16–CBA19 (2022–2025)

LLA was central to the discussions during these conferences, shifting attention from participation to the transfer of power, finance and decision making to local actors. The topic of decoloniality was introduced and discussed at CBA17 as a central element of climate justice. Conference participants recognised climate justice as vital to effective adaptation action. Climate justice requires systemic changes in governance, and a rebalancing of finance and power relations between funders and communities. Key messages in this period include:

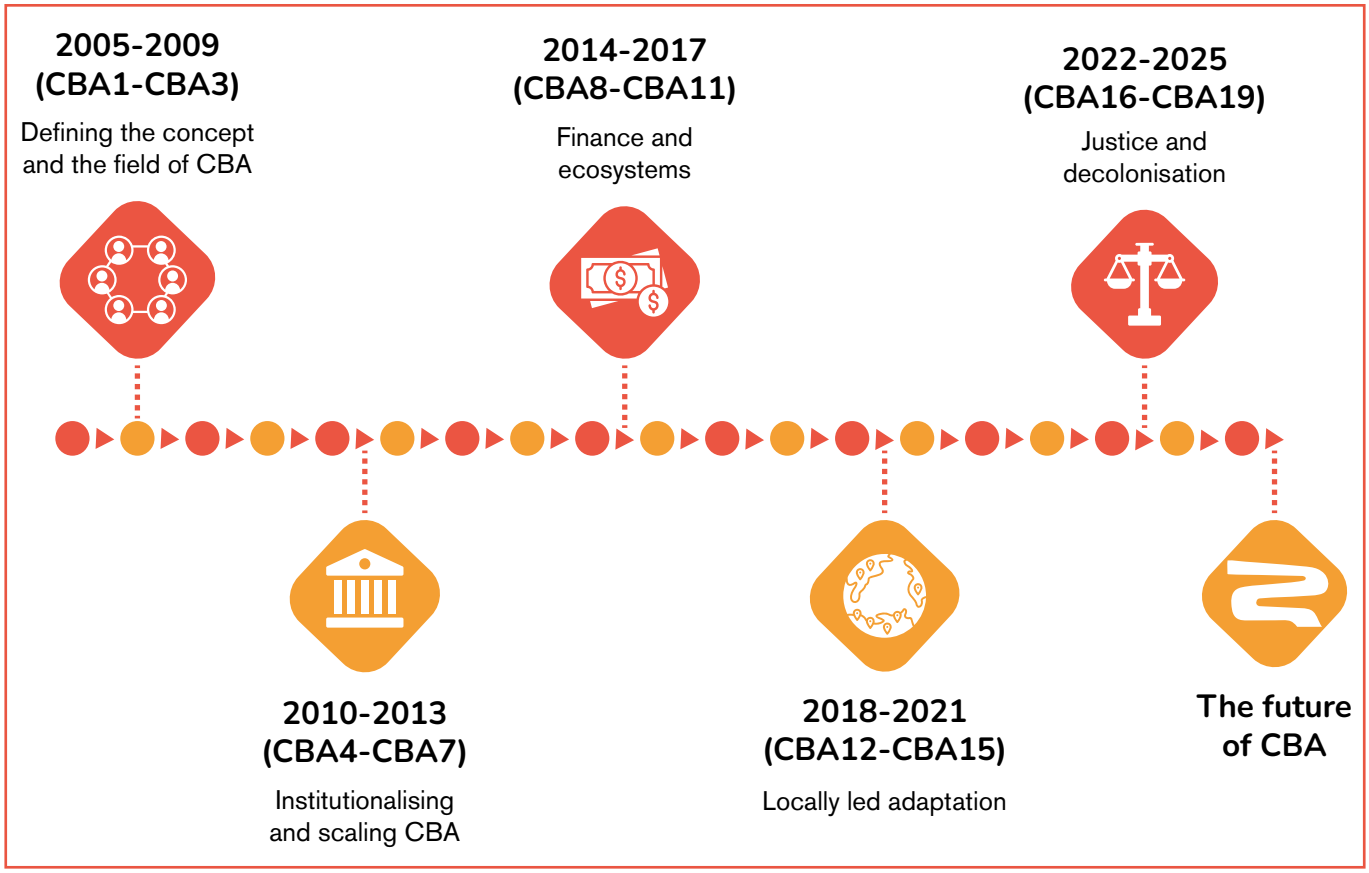
- Finance is still not flowing for locally led action at scale, nor do local actors participate enough in funding negotiations and decisions
- Climate justice cannot be attained without addressing inequality, inequity and poverty
- Addressing the colonial systems that underpin and dominate climate action requires creating more direct relationships and more frequent dialogue between donors and the local organisations their funding needs to reach
- Capacity building and decision making continue to be top-down and ineffective, despite this approach being repeatedly called out because of the power imbalances that underpin it
- Communities should define success and shape learning
- Nature-based solutions should be expanded to include 'local culture-based solutions' to acknowledge the vital link between nature, people and culture
- There is no climate justice without gender justice.

While the CBA community has focused on financing and resource allocation, in more recent years the CBA community has adopted the LLA Principles to confront the structural inequalities that shape climate action. Discussions at CBA conferences have increasingly centred on power, colonial legacies and the need to decolonise international development practices. At CBA17 in Bangkok, decolonising climate action became an explicit conference theme, signalling a shift towards critically examining who holds decision-making power and who benefits from climate finance and policy.

Additionally, key messages from CBA conferences have increasingly called for systemic shifts in the climate finance system. At CBA19 in Recife in 2025, the conference reiterated the call to achieve "business unusual", a key ask that underpins the LIFE-AR strategy, which had its roots at CBA conferences. "Business unusual"

calls for fundamental transformation in how adaptation is financed, governed and implemented. CBA19 concluded with the Recife statement, which reiterated the main messages from past years and expressed frustration regarding the scale and quality of adaptation finance. It explicitly connected local action to global climate ambitions, positioning community leadership as essential to delivering COP30 commitments.

Figure 1. How CBA conference themes have evolved



Cross-cutting priorities

Learning through partnerships

Since the first CBA conference, the CBA community has recognised the importance of peer learning and strengthening capabilities for implementing LLA. The conferences have often called for institutions, including governments, intermediary organisations and funders, to work together with communities to scale up good LLA practices. From as early as CBA2, the CBA community has recognised the importance of effective and trusted intermediaries who can enable better finance flows, absorb financial and operational risks, amplify key messages and facilitate learning through equitable partnerships with local community organisations. This was reiterated in the Recife statement at CBA19.

Accountability to the local level

Similarly, conversations on shifting power and accountability from top-down towards bottom-up and mutual forms of accountability have been gaining momentum. The CBA community has consistently called for a shift from top-down and opaque accountability, where funders and intermediary organisations set priorities

for community adaptation needs, to more transparent, bottom-up or mutual accountability. This type of accountability is where communities hold funders and intermediaries accountable for meeting local needs; where all actors, including funders, intermediaries and communities, are mutually responsible to one another for delivering on LLA. A practical example of this shift in accountability systems could be a change in reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems. Instead of communities reporting to funders on why a project/programme has been successful, funders would be responsible for reporting to communities on how funds have addressed their needs.

Related to these discussions are calls for bottom-up accountability mechanisms, such as community monitoring, to scale effective adaptation and track whether finance reaches local implementation. Since CBA4 in 2010, the CBA community has also called for strengthening governance systems to devolve decision making and improve accountability to communities. At CBA20, the national government constituency group reiterated this point, and called for governments to go further and protect the most vulnerable groups of human rights and environmental defenders from experiencing violence and harm.

Given the importance of the theme of accountability at CBA conferences, CBA20 introduced a new accountability roundtables workstream that brought different actors into dialogue on accountability, and offered a space to engage in constructive feedback between donors, intermediaries and local organisations, to work together towards improving accountability to LLA.

Quality and quantity of climate finance

Finance continues to be a priority for CBA conferences, as it has been since CBA8 in 2014. The CBA community has consistently called for more flexible and accessible funding mechanisms that reduce bureaucracy, decentralise decision making, allow longer implementation timeframes and ensure adequate resources reach grassroots organisations directly. The CBA community has also emphasised that local communities should be partners in designing funding mechanisms, rather than passive recipients.

Meaningful and inclusive participation

Meaningful participation is another unifying theme. Since the beginning, CBA conferences have called for the inclusion and recognition of communities, focusing on the needs of young people, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and women and children. These groups require dedicated platforms, access to finance and meaningful participation in climate policymaking and programming.

Messages differ for representatives of different groups: for youth, the CBA community has called for the recognition of young people as leaders and innovators in climate adaptation. Indigenous Peoples have called for the recognition and integration of traditional and ancestral knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, local and Afro-descendant communities with scientific, technical and popular knowledge to strengthen community resilience and just adaptation. Additionally, the importance of gender justice, to centre and recognise the experiences of women and girls in all their diversity of intersectional identities affected by age, ability, sexuality and race, has long been core to CBA discussions.

> *"This was my first CBA, and I felt engaged from the very start. The strong emphasis on participation and collaboration fostered a spirit of curiosity and openness, transforming the atmosphere from one of 'me and my work' to 'us and our path forward."*
>
> **- CBA19 participant**

CBA20 processes and outcomes from the constituency groups

As we move into the phase of CBA conferences focused on justice and the CBA community's call to move from advocacy to action, we sought to understand the visions and actions required to promote LLA from the perspective of different constituency groups. At CBA20, we looked at each constituency group's core aims to understand how each group envisaged key messages and actions for the future. The groups discussed the main points in breakout sessions and reported them back to the plenary session. The following groups met to develop key messages and actions for the future:

Constituency groups:

1. Indigenous Peoples
2. Community organisations
3. International organisations
4. National governments
5. Funders
6. National organisations

1. Indigenous Peoples

Key messages

Indigenous Peoples emphasised that LLA must be grounded in the equal recognition of Indigenous and scientific knowledge. This constituency group also called for better safeguarding of Indigenous Peoples and a scaling of Indigenous practices that respect Indigenous Peoples. Better disaggregated data was identified as essential to understanding where Indigenous Peoples remain excluded from adaptation efforts. There was also a call to better socialise LLA in Indigenous contexts.

Actions

Strengthening support for Indigenous Peoples participation in global climate processes and improving access to dedicated financing windows were seen as essential steps towards genuine LLA.

2. Community organisations

Key messages

Community organisations emphasised the need for communities to remain at the centre of planning, decision making and implementation of adaptation action. This constituency group emphasised the need to produce and own community-led data to show the climate impacts on the ground experienced by communities and hold power holders to account.

The constituency group also stressed the importance of considering intersectionality to reflect the diverse lived experiences of people from different social groups. There was also a call for long-term resilience-building, and strengthening resilience and capabilities beyond project cycles.

Actions

Priority actions included creating and engaging in spaces for dialogue and promoting collective action, strengthening local organisations' abilities to access and manage finance, integrating scientific and local knowledge through co-production, and building partnerships across sectors, including with the private sector.

3. National organisations

Key messages

National organisations emphasised the importance of working in tandem with government to strengthen accountability to local communities and integrate LLA. They called for improved accountability mechanisms, including independent oversight of policy implementation, stronger transparency in funding, regular policy reviews, and mechanisms that hold governments and the private sector accountable for delivering intended outcomes.

Actions

In terms of actions, this constituency group identified legal reforms as a focus: strengthening protections for climate defenders, reducing restrictive legislation that limits community access to finance and greater agency of Indigenous Peoples in legislatures. The group called for the integration of LLA within national and local planning — specifically for devolving decisions to lower levels and ringfencing resources for LLA in budgets. There was also a call for national climate commitments, including Nationally Determined Contributions, to integrate LLA.

4. International organisations

Key messages

International organisations recognised their role as enabling rather than directing LLA. To enable LLA, they identified their roles in translating climate science into accessible information, providing technical expertise, facilitating dialogue between communities, governments and donors, and supporting communities to navigate complex funding mechanisms. They also recognised their responsibility to strengthen accountability and help channel resources to vulnerable communities.

Actions

This constituency group wanted to play a role in advocacy and amplifying community voices. This includes encouraging governments to mainstream LLA into national policies, protecting climate and human rights defenders, promoting more flexible donor funding and ensuring stronger representation of community organisations in decision making. They also highlighted the need to support community mobilisation and advocacy while encouraging donors to establish minimum standards for direct community financing.

5. National governments

Key messages

This constituency group emphasised that national government commitment to LLA was key. They noted their role in protecting climate and human rights defenders. The government constituency group also acknowledged responsibility to ensure communities participate meaningfully throughout planning and implementation processes, make climate and adaptation data openly accessible, develop policies that are flexible enough to respond to local contexts and engage communities early in project design.

Actions

This constituency group highlighted the importance of simplifying procurement processes, strengthening collaboration with community organisations, creating dedicated funding windows for adaptation and providing technical support to community-based organisations seeking finance.

6. Funders

Key messages

The funder constituency group emphasised that funding mechanisms focused at the local level need to be flexible and context-specific, not standardised. They highlighted the importance of aligning donor requirements with community priorities, simplifying reporting and learning processes, and embedding scientific and technical capacity within long-term project budgets.

Actions

The funders also called for more collaborative approaches to finance. This included co-designing funding mechanisms with communities, strengthening shared accountability between donors and recipients, prioritising community organisations within grant-making processes, involving policymakers in funding design and ensuring communities have a meaningful voice in funding decisions. The group also highlighted the need for global learning platforms that allow funders and practitioners to exchange lessons on effective financing models.

A vision for the future of CBA conferences

Twenty years of CBA conferences have seen the CBA community mature in its advocacy and expand its networks. The development of the LLA Principles was a milestone for the CBA community, as advocacy messages crystallised under the banner of the Principles.

Alongside the development of the LLA Principles, several themes have consistently emerged as priorities. These include climate finance and the need for better mechanisms that can deliver quality climate finance that is sufficient, easily accessible, flexible and responsive to communities' needs. Another theme is the need for inclusive and meaningful spaces to learn and share experiences, such as CBA conferences, where funders and communities, including Indigenous Peoples, women and young people, can engage as equals rather than as donors and recipients. Additionally, accountability has become central to what it means to endorse the LLA Principles. Endorsement of the LLA Principles alone is not enough; it is understood as a commitment to specific actions that drive institutional change. Accountability roundtables at CBA conferences have emerged as a mechanism for facilitating dialogues towards change: a space where the community can have frank conversations about where accountability is falling short and how to strengthen it.

Additionally, the CBA community is driving a shift from advocacy to action. As one of the few global convening spaces where communities and funders meet as peers, there is a clear ask for the CBA community and the conferences to be a testbed for LLA. The ask is also that future conferences be used not only to discuss financing models, but to co-design, test and launch them as well.

Given this ask, now is the time for the LLA CoP to co-design a new vision for the CBA conference series, where funders, governments, international organisations, and local and Indigenous communities

come together to fund, design and implement an LLA grants facility that can channel funding directly to communities to implement cutting-edge climate solutions. Essentially, this vision is for the LLA CoP to collaboratively design an LLA grants facility whereby funding is channelled to grantees who convene annually at CBA conferences to share learning.

Our hope is that in co-designing and implementing this vision for the conference series, the LLA CoP could implement 'business unusual' by channelling funding through an LLA grants facility built on mutual trust and shared power, and effectively enable LLA that can have tangible impact on people's lives.

An LLA grants facility could benefit the CBA conference series and the LLA CoP in multiple ways. While the CBA conference series already provides a critical space for sharing learning, building capabilities and providing mutual feedback for accountability, it could take on more meaning as a living and breathing space for experimenting with new LLA approaches. We could trial new approaches to fostering learning at CBA conferences, such as providing long-term funding in three-year cycles that mirror the conferences' recurring regional rotation across Asia, Africa and Latin America. Over three years, CBA conference participants could witness a project's journey from inception to close, and what comes next.

Grantees could also strengthen mutual accountability by reporting back on how to improve the grants facility, including giving feedback on flexibility, access criteria, transparency and trust in the facility's operational aspects. At the same time, they would share lessons with the CBA community to improve LLA implementation.

Roadmap to achieving the vision

Achieving this vision requires strengthening and expanding the LLA CoP to mobilise actors who can further develop and implement the vision. Our aim now is to build alliances to further develop and implement this vision along with us.

We envisage that the roadmap for implementing the vision has three distinct phases: ally mapping, coalition building and implementation. These phases are not one-off events, but a continuous process to expand support for the vision.

In the ally-mapping phase, we will identify and map potential funders and allies central to advancing the vision of LLA. This mapping work would initially identify allies from the 600+ member LLA CoP, but additionally would seek to include the private sector and other climate funders not already part of the LLA CoP.

We will also extend our reach to other like-minded organisations leading LLA-aligned movements, such as those advocating for climate justice, just transitions and gender justice. By building alliances with the private sector and diversifying funders and allies, we will lay the groundwork for longer-term support for the LLA learning journey and CBA conferences.

The second phase will focus on coalition building. Once we have identified potential champions in phase one, we will begin to co-develop the vision for amplifying the scale and implementation of LLA. We see the CBA conference series as not only the hub for learning, building capabilities, funding, testing new approaches and promoting mutual accountability, but also as a key space for connecting with allies and other related events to share learning, build networks and scale effective LLA approaches.

The final stage is implementing this vision by working with champions from the LLA CoP and allies to pool funding into an LLA grants facility that can be disbursed at CBA conferences**.** The LLA CoP will serve as

a major vehicle for engaging with the existing and new champions, serving as a platform for sharing and iterating the vision, bringing in new ideas and amplifying the vision.

We are inviting our partners and allies who endorse the LLA principles to join us as we build the vision of putting an LLA grants facility behind the CBA conference series to transform its structure and status, moving it from an advocacy space to one that invests in LLA. Join us in the next phase of designing the CBA conference series so we can demonstrate together what it means to shift from principles to practice.

Register your interest in being involved via the CBA website (www.iied.org/community-based-adaptation-cba-conference-archive) or contact: cbaconference@iied.org



Participants at CBA20 gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by residents of Barangay Bagong Silangan, including flooding, proximity to the Valley Fault System, and occasional fire incidents in densely populated and low-lying areas. They observed how these risks shape daily life and recognised that vulnerability varies across households, with some residents having limited access to support. Credit: Marcelle Mardon/IIED