

# Outcomes Article

## Empowering southern practitioners through innovative small grants

### Background:

Dr. Rosalind West, co-chair of the Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) and Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, welcomed all to the session on Empowering Southern Practitioners through innovative grants. The session was organized by the [Adaptation Research Alliance](#), the [Climate and Development Network](#) (CDKN), the [Global Resilience Partnership](#) (GRP), and the [International Centre for Climate Change and Development](#) (ICCCAD). The session focused on Southern Leadership and how the design of the grants can be instrumental in shaping how successful the grants are at enabling more leadership and capacity at the local level.

Dr. West went on to present the [CLARE programme](#), an initiative between the UK and Canada for action-oriented research on adaptation and resilience. CLARE focuses on research for impact, gender and inclusion, strengthening capacity, and developing and promoting diverse and equitable partnerships that champion southern leadership of those research projects. This event highlighted that southern-led research and knowledge are much more likely to have an impact on adaptation policies and practice in Africa, Asia Pacific, and other regions of the world.

### The Grants:

The grants presented at the session were led by Southern-based organizations, and were all demand-driven projects that came from the needs of the communities or national level. Additionally, co-production was key for the grants and were actively promoted or built on prior co-production. The scale of the grants was small to medium – from USD 5000 to USD 200,000 and the time scales ranged from three months to three years.

The event highlighted the [CDKN project's Action Lab](#) where three selected projects sought to refine the impact pathways and brought together a wide range of people to ensure all stakeholders were clear on the intended impact and related actions needed to be taken. These projects were originally intended for 18 months but had to be extended due to COVID and the budget for this project was increased to almost USD 200,000.

Thereafter, the event presented the ARA's micro-grants which awarded 25 grantees GBP 10,000 each to projects focused on identifying issues in communities that research could help meet. The criteria determined that lead organizations had to be based in the global south, and preference was given to grassroots and practitioner-led collaborations.

Finally, the catalytic grants, run by ICCCAD, GRP and the [Climate Justice Resilience Fund](#) (CJRF), were introduced – a grant which facilitated short communication-centric interventions. The grants sought to help bridge knowledge into use by fostering learning and networking through the projects between events like [Gobeshona](#), [Community-based Adaptation](#) (CBA) and the [COP Resilience Hub](#). The projects were represented by small grants of USD 5,000, however, made sure that useful knowledge was given a chance to be packaged up and targeted for the right end users.



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**A panel of southern practitioners presented their experiences with grants. Their discussions were as follows:**

Dr. Renzo Guinto, St. Luke's Medical Center College of Medicine, drew on the example of the recent typhoon that hit the Philippines and how communities were left devastated. The project entitled "Putting health at the heart of local climate adaptation planning to maximize human wellbeing" was created with the purpose of addressing the public health issues created by climate change. The aim of the project was to spark and strengthen collaboration between health and climate leaders at the local and national levels and to build capacity for climate-health action and adaptation.

The project was conducted during the pandemic when lockdown was still in full effect - therefore, most of the activities were conducted online through virtual platforms which enhanced the participation of health professionals from different parts of the country. Other critical factors which added to the success of the project included the dedication and competence of the team, salience of health due to the pandemic, collaboration with "non-health" sectors, allowing a more contextualized approach (focused on the local challenges) and creative methods utilized during workshops. The funding provided for local-level adaptation work is critical.

Janet Ngombalu, Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC), shared highlights from the project "Mitigating the effect of climate change on grain quality and losses in Kenya and Uganda". The aim was to increase the use of climate information to increase grain production, reduce post-harvest losses and increase access to markets. In both Kenya and Uganda, grains are the staple foods with Kenya being a net buyer of grains and Uganda being a producer.

The project was instrumental to get people to rethink approaches around this issue and formed partnerships with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) Climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC) as well as the National Drought Management Authority and private sector partners. The budget for the project was \$197,510.

As EAGC moved on from engagement with stakeholders, they saw that there were additional areas to add to the projects and the CDKN team were very supportive of that. Within the project, an interactive digital ICT app was developed to translate information to the village/farmer level. Various forums were held with CDKN and partners who brought the necessary information as well as publications for these interventions. Over 400 farmers were supported directly.

Zakia Sultana, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, spoke about the project "Locally-led adaptation Strategies for Resilience building in Informal Urban Settlements in the face of Climate Change". The project received a small grant of USD 5,000. On the project, the two partners who joined were Slum Dwellers International Uganda and Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.

Rapid urban extension is being widely seen in Africa and Asia and this is associated with urban informal settlements and slums. These informal settlements accommodate about 1 billion people around the world. Communities have been living in these slums for a very long time and those under Slums Dwellers International have innovative locally-led adaptation strategies that focus on communities' economic strengths as well as environmental and social sustainability.



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These adaptation strategies could prove useful to other slums with similar issues. Core learning and replication of strategies is essential to build a resilient community, underlining the need for a knowledge management approach. This means that the knowledge we learn from the slum communities can be disseminated to other countries. This is also important for policy formulation.

The small grant initiative is different from other funding as it is a start-up grant which can initiate a larger longer-term project and is therefore catalytic. The project enabled more focus on southern organizations, allowed for a bottom-up approach, addressed local needs, and could lead to local and global impacts.

Participants were asked to respond to a Menti poll, with the results displayed below:



An open plenary discussion centred on what criteria grant-makers can use to achieve southern leadership and capacity development, as well as what pitfalls could be avoided, and which new approaches could be taken in the future design of these types of grants. Dr Guinto highlighted that in his experience it is important that there a based-line leadership inside the country already.

Participants raised the issue of competition in receiving grants, highlighting the opportunity for collaboration, while also underscoring the need to strengthen and develop governance structures through funding, and others pointed out that small grants don't measure indicators but rather ensure that the funds act as a catalyst to foster learning, while acknowledging the existing leadership of grant winners like Zakia. While the lack of indicators to track impacts or outcomes can be perceived as a limitation, these grants instead surface creativity, innovation and therefore catalyse change from the bottom-up.

The discussion also focused on demonstration projects and funding channelled down to local organizations to run these projects. Dr Guinto noted that it is important to make sure that there are demonstration projects which will give other stakeholders, and health professionals, a concrete demonstration of how to enact change. For example, when it comes to the health sector mitigation of climate change, there is this growing recognition that healthcare is also emitting its own carbon and it is necessary to lower healthcare's carbon footprint.

One of the biggest takeaways was to not underestimate the impact of small grants.



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