

# Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB)

## Call for submissions from Parties and non-Party stakeholders:

### **Experience, good practices and lessons learned related to enhancing the ownership of developing countries of building and maintaining capacity**

#### Background

The PCCB aims to address gaps and needs, both current and emerging, in implementing capacity-building in developing country Parties and further enhance capacity-building efforts.

Current priority areas are:

- a) Enhancing coherence and coordination of capacity-building under the Convention;
- b) Identifying capacity gaps and needs, both current and emerging, and recommending ways to address them;
- c) Promoting awareness-raising, knowledge- and information-sharing and stakeholder engagement.

To learn more about the work of the PCCB, you can access its annual reports and other documents [here](#).

#### Topic for submissions

As part of its continuing efforts to respond to these priorities, the PCCB determined in its 2021-2024 workplan, to make a call for submissions from Parties and non-Party stakeholders on:

*Experience, good practices and lessons learned related to enhancing the ownership of developing countries of building and maintaining capacity.*

#### Submissions form

We thank you in advance for filling out this template with concise, evidence-based information and for referencing all relevant sources. There are 2 sections in this template:

- *Details about your organization*
- *Guiding questions about implementing NDCs and national development plans in developing countries*

#### How will the inputs be used?

The inputs will feed into upcoming deliverables under Activity B.3 of the 2021-2024 PCCB workplan, including a technical paper in 2022, a technical session at the 5th Capacity-building Hub in 2023, and recommendations to the COP and CMA.

#### Further information:

You are welcome to provide any other information that your organization thinks would highlight suggestions made in response to this call for submissions.

Address for submission: [pccb@unfccc.int](mailto:pccb@unfccc.int)

Deadline for submissions: 30 November 2021

Please only fill out sections that are relevant to the work of your organization. Please note that no section is mandatory.

### Organization or entity name:

PlanAdapt

### Type of organization:

Please choose as appropriate:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intergovernmental organization                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Development bank / financial institution                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> UN and affiliated organization                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-governmental organization                               |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International network, coalition, or initiative | <input type="checkbox"/> Research organization  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional network, coalition, or initiative                 | <input type="checkbox"/> University/education/training organization                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public sector entity                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Private sector entity  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Development agency   | <input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropic organization   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) <small>Click or tap here to enter text.</small> |

### Organization Location

City: Berlin

Country: Germany

### Scale of operation:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Global | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local             | <input type="checkbox"/> Subregional   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> National          | <input type="checkbox"/> Transboundary |

### City(ies)/Country(ies) of operation (if appropriate):

Click or tap here to enter text.

## Experience, good practices and lessons learned related to enhancing the ownership of developing countries of building and maintaining capacity.

Enhancing country ownership of capacity-building, is a topic that the PCCB has explored from the start as part of its mandate. Article 11.2 of the Paris Agreement notes that capacity-building “should be country-driven, based on and responsive to national needs, and foster country ownership of Parties, in particular, for developing country Parties, including at the national, subnational and local levels.” Parties and other stakeholders in the UNFCCC process have variously noted that a lack of country ownership and local leadership is a key cause behind existing capacity gaps and constraints in developing countries.

Under its new workplan for 2021–2024, the PCCB will collate, review and share information on experience, good practices and lessons learned related to enhancing the ownership of developing countries of building and maintaining capacity, and providing recommendations in this regard.

### **What are good examples of lessons learned and best practices in enhancing country ownership of capacity-building efforts?**

Capacity building is commonly defined as “the process by which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time.” Article 11.2 of the Paris Agreement notes that capacity-building “should be country-driven, based on and responsive to national needs, and foster country ownership of Parties, in particular, for developing country Parties, including at the national, subnational and local levels.” Yet, as the call for submissions points out, achieving country ownership within capacity building efforts has been difficult for stakeholders in low-income countries.

Given that the importance of country-ownership and local leadership for effective capacity building efforts is a long established “lesson-learned”, why is it so difficult to put this “best-practice” into effect?

The PlanAdapt submission argues that the lack of country ownership and local leadership in capacity building efforts is largely a consequence of the way climate capacity building is financed. We further argue that that a failure to focus on the way in which capacity building is financed amounts to procedural injustice.

In question 3 we explore the concept of procedural (in)justice as a key challenge to effectively enhancing county ownership of capacity-building efforts. In section 2 we highlight solutions to the perennial challenges identified in our recent paper and in what follows we share examples of capacity building efforts that demonstrate climate procedural justice.

Our submission draws on our recent paper “[Unleashing the Potential of Capacity Development for Climate Action](#)” (Rokitzki & Hofemeier, 2021; developed with GIZ and the International Climate Initiative), the conclusions of which were based on an extensive literature review, key stakeholder interviews, and the vast collective experience of the PlanAdapt network members in capacity building projects around the world.

Before addressing the question directly, we call for a closer evaluation of what is meant by country ownership, and a careful consideration of whether simply enhancing country ownership is a sufficient step to improving capacity-building efforts. We suggest an important

first step is defining the specific elements of country ownership. Our response is thus aimed at identifying conditions of country ownership that make it a remedy to shortcomings in capacity-building.

- **A) Funding examples**

[DFID and IDRC's Climate and Resilience Framework \(CLARE\):](#)

This framework has informed DFID (now FCDO) and IDRC's approach to climate and resilience projects and the capacity strengthening processes within their programmes. Among the range of guiding principles, CLARE draws attention to how funding modalities shape capacity development outcomes. CLARE advocates for flexible, non-directive funding calls that allow for proposals to address a range of climate impacts; and a phased and iterative approach which enables space for projects to navigate the shifting terrain of climate risk. Adaptive management aims to create relationships built on trust by allowing for uncertainty and co-evolution of activities.

[Decentralising Climate Funds \(DCF\), Mali & Senegal:](#)

The establishment of six devolved Climate Adaptation Funds (CAFs) within local municipalities enables communities to decide how funding is allocated. Through inclusive planning processes embedded in local government structures, the community can prioritise how CAFs are allocated to fund investments in public goods. This ensures that decision making and access to funding is in the hands of those most directly affected, and most able to identify strategies for building local resilience. Climate adaptation finance is not just concentrated at the national level but becomes locally responsive through this process.

- **B) Demand and needs examples**

[Chinantla Forest Monitoring, Oaxaca, Mexico:](#)

This project focuses on community empowerment by supporting forest restoration and community led protection of land and monitoring activities. Local partners work exclusively with communities who have asked for support, ensuring that activities are demand-driven and shaped by community priorities. Responding directly to the needs of the community facilitates community ownership, increasing the likelihood that activities are taken forward independently after the project cycle has ended.

[Mahila Housing SEWA Trust, Ahmedabad, India:](#)

This organisation has been embedded within Ahmedabad's informal settlements for many years, focusing on developing the capacities of slum communities to cope with climate impacts. They have focused particularly on supporting women to conduct their own vulnerability assessments, considering them to be experts of their own situation, and empowering them to develop resilience action plans and gender-sensitive climate solutions. As problem identification is based on the women's self-defined needs, solutions are demand-driven, and experiential, tacit and indigenous knowledges are valued and incorporated.

When capacity development is informed and shaped by the experiences of local people, it can enhance project ownership.

- **C) Processes**

[Future Resilience for African Cities and Lands \(FRACTAL\):](#)

This project sought to understand climate processes driving the regional climate variability and response to climate change within southern Africa. Working through the University of Cape Town, the project aimed to build strong relationships between researchers, city government officials and decision makers within six cities in southern Africa to integrate scientific knowledge into climate decisions at the city-regional scale. The project developed a [Learning Lab approach to co-production](#) that generated contextualised solutions and demonstrated a collaborative approach to decision-making, strengthening functional capacity to address climate challenges. Relationships between FRACTAL research consortium members and city partners have endured beyond the project end date in 2020, ensuring that capacity development is long-term and retained.

[Rosario Urban Agriculture Programme, Argentina:](#)

By focusing on enabling sustainable urban food production to improve climate resilience and food security, this project was able to secure commitment from the city to make its resources available beyond the project end date. The city became a legacy partner to ensure the long-term viability of the project, by committing to make publicly vacant land available for food production. This enabled local families to use their knowledge on agroecological production to cultivate this land independently and provided the conditions needed for longer-term capacity development and community ownership.

- **D) Evaluation of CD outcomes**

[Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia \(CARIAA\):](#)

This long-term project sought to build the resilience of vulnerable populations in climate change hotspots by supporting collaborative adaptation research through four consortia. Project monitoring systems tend to focus on measurable outcomes and outputs, like papers and policy briefs, meaning that capturing capacity development outcomes, which are often intangible is challenging. CARIAA used enhanced monitoring and evaluation processes to better understand the impact of their activities, including developing 'stories of change', supported by evidence, as an experimental way to understand capacity development outcomes. Evaluating capacity development outcomes requires a monitoring and evaluation approach that is creative and presents an overview of all relevant outcomes, not only those that can fit neatly into a template.

[Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters \(BRACED\)](#)

The BRACED project combined investment in ongoing learning by and between implementing partners generating case studies and stories, with a realist evaluation approach. It sought to explore "What works and why in implementing and achieving outcomes in adaptation and

resilience-building projects?” [Reflections by the evaluators](#) (Leavy et al, 2017) suggest that there is value in applying a ‘realist’ way of thinking throughout the programme, not just for evaluation, and that, as part of a broader theory of change approach, applying a realist lens forces you to ask important questions of how and why project arrived at their outcomes. The evaluators stress the need to be flexible and iterative, acknowledging that the growing understanding of what matters for building resilience means that some important elements may not be captured in project logframes.

In your experience, how can country ownership of capacity-building efforts best be ensured and enhanced?

In our response, we are drawing upon the extensive experience of members within the PlanAdapt network as well as interactions with relevant stakeholders. The solutions we’ve identified are grouped according to the 4 areas relating to procedural justice for country ownership in capacity building which we outlined in question 1.

- **A) Funding**
  - Successful capacity building depends on who controls the use of project funds. Project planning and appraisal should make room for flexible and adaptive management, including an inception phase that allows for uncertainty and co-evolution of activities instead of a straight-jacket approach. Outcomes and results which are too narrow and pre-defined should be avoided (see also Solution Area 8 in table 1 of [Rokitzki & Hofemeier, 2021](#)).
- **B) Demand and needs**
  - The role of external experts/outside is important to include but should be more carefully framed and planned. Non-local consultants or experts should not replace internal national and sub-national experts, but rather act in a role of support, facilitating the process as directed by local actors (see also Solution Area 3 in table 1 of [Rokitzki & Hofemeier, 2021](#)).
  - There is also a need to adjust the overall attitude regarding experts and non-experts within the broader development and climate-aid paradigm. In view of adaptation action especially, it is necessary to pay more attention to and attach greater importance to the experience of locals/practitioners (see also Solution Area 12 in table 1 of [Rokitzki & Hofemeier, 2021](#)).
- **C) Processes**
  - Capacity building should prioritize long-term approaches, enhanced recognition of the time after the project, and identification of legacy partners, ideally not public administration partners but rather knowledge partners such as universities. This also relates to selection of learners, which should be based on self-motivation and interest in professional growth. This is also in view of overcoming supply-driven approaches (see also Solution Area 10 in table 1 of [Rokitzki & Hofemeier, 2021](#)).

- D) Evaluation of CD outcomes

- Evaluation strategies should enhance the use of existing monitoring, evaluation and results measurement for capacity building results, e.g., with (a) an increased focus on capacity building as an outcome; (b) better target-setting and understanding/measuring of baselines; (c) inclusion of new OECD DAC evaluation criteria 'coherence'; (d) reflection of intangible outcomes (see also Solution Area 1 in table 1 of [Rokitzki & Hofemeier, 2021](#)).

What are key challenges (incl. e.g. knowledge and institutional barriers and capacity gaps) with regard to effectively enhancing country ownership of capacity-building efforts?

PlanAdapt argues that the lack of country ownership and local leadership of capacity building is largely a consequence of the way in which financing for climate-related capacity building is administered and operationalised, i.e. the rules, regulations and norms that govern these processes. We argue that this frequently amounts to hidden procedural injustice as a result, and that any efforts to enhance country ownership in capacity building must emerge from this perspective.

Procedural justice is one pillar of climate justice; it is about processes for making decisions about impacts of climate change and responses to climate change that are fair, accountable, and transparent. Just procedures are important to regulate the distribution of goods and climate finance and having the transparent and accountable decision-making processes in place. This can include access to information, access to and meaningful participation in decision-making, lack of bias on the part of decision makers, and access to legal procedures. Procedural justice generally focuses on identifying those who plan and make rules, laws, policies, and decisions, and those who are included and can have a say in such processes. Adapted from (Guide on Climate Justice in Gender and Youth Engagement, Oxfam/PlanAdapt, unpublished, [IDRC 2020](#))

Using a climate justice lens to consider the persistent and well-documented shortcomings of current approaches to capacity building can highlight the ways in which procedures and administrative processes around capacity building, and activities to support it, serve to reinforce power differentials and act as a barrier to country ownership. A climate justice lens allows for specific identification of administrative procedures and management or planning approaches within the capacity-building process itself which might hinder or even undermine positive capacity-building and learning outcomes.

Below, we lay out the key challenges and identify ways to overcome various types of procedural injustice in order to emphasize why we call for a new business and funding model, i.e. funding modalities, in efforts to enhance country ownership in relation to capacity building.

- A) Who decides about **funding**? (who decides about resource allocation? who pays, approves plans/ budgets and assures quality?)

Funding for climate-related capacity-building is often governed by norms and practices that can be a barrier to supporting country ownership. This relates, for example, to the tendency to adopt project-based approaches to capacity building. Projects often rely on 'plannable' outputs, such as discrete outputs like workshops, trainings etc. for which inputs can be monetized and budgeted. Projects tend to have hierarchical systems of decision-making and are governed by results frameworks and countable outputs. In addition, accountability and reporting arrangements that limit flexibility in terms of expenditures, changing of plans and adapting to the emergence of capacity-building processes.

Many practitioners argue that systems thinking and the concept of complex adaptive systems can help to better understand how capacity develops within organisations and large systems, and thus what external partners need to do differently to improve their support for endogenous capacity development processes. However, these approaches do not fit easily within the project paradigms often used for funding capacity building efforts. In the majority of funding schemes, applicants are forced to feign the plannability of capacity-building outcomes.

- B) Who decides about **needs**? (who is considered an 'expert'? what kind of knowledge is considered relevant? exclusive experts/ lack of "local experts")

Key challenges in this area are pervasive and rooted in underlying beliefs that capacity building is about addressing capacity gaps and needs (often identified in terms of knowledge and skills needed to achieve short term objectives), and a mindset that gaps can be identified and filled by expert providers. People have been trained to expect supply and expert driven approaches, which creates a barrier to genuine exploration of the range of resources and capabilities needed for individuals, communities, organisations and societies to realise their own goals and ambitions over time. Furthermore, there is an overreliance on skills and knowledge, and a negligence of connectivity, respect, trust and relationships as underlying conditions and enablers of capacity building. The application of standardized capacity needs assessments (often defined as skill or knowledge gaps and deficiencies) further perpetuates this.

- C) Who decides about **processes**? (who controls and designs the process of planning and implementation? do participatory processes exist?)

Agendas and goals of capacity-building processes, including the selection of participants and institutions, are often determined by outsiders (e.g. experts or representatives of funders). Processes are often shaped by plans created in the process of securing funding, they rely on set pieces such as training and workshops often on pre-determined areas. Genuinely participatory processes are likely to be slower and may generate unpredictable outcomes. Consideration of what is enabling or constraining the capacities of individuals or communities to achieve desired outcomes may generate demand for activities or input that do not fit within a typical "capacity building" paradigm.



- D) Who defines **outcomes**? (how to integrate “knowledge, skills, capacities” into life of beneficiaries? definition of success comes from outside?)

When measuring success, a key-challenge to country-ownership lies in the hands of the – mostly exogenous – measurer. The monitoring and evaluation of projects and the sharing of lessons learned and good practices are based on unjust procedural biases. Already in the design of indicators, the lessons learned are based on projects that are originally designed, funded and implemented by international cooperation actors with an urge for quantitative, thus measurable outputs. Overall, there is a clear trend of overcoming rather narrow monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators of capacity development support activities (number of workshops, number of participants, towards considering capacity development from a perspective of outcomes. Effective measures focus on better ways of understanding positive effects of networks, connections and relationships or on changed attitudes and behavior. However, such approaches do not only require enhanced attention and more long-time commitment by exogenous funders and implementers, but also a recognition that more funds in project budgets need to be set aside to implement them. Examples of robust, but harder to measure qualitative ways of M&E include approaches such as [outcome harvesting](#), [most significant change](#), [summative evaluation](#) and [realist evaluation](#) (see Leavy et al, 2017).

#### Useful sources:

*Please give examples of useful sources relevant to this topic  
(e.g. webpages and portals, publications, fora, organizations working on this issue)*

#### Tools and Initiatives

- Zurich Flood Resilience Alliance: [Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities](#)
- ECLAC: [Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)
- [International Land Coalition](#)
- IIED: [Getting Money where it Matters](#)
- OECD. (2019). [Better Criteria for Better Evaluation— Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use.](#)

#### Further literature

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#### Open comment:

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