

POLICY BRIEF

Locally Led Adaptation Metrics: Unlocking Finance with Community-Defined Indicators

A Policy Brief on the Locally Led Adaptation Metrics for Africa (LAMA) Project

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Executive Summary

The transition to Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) in Africa is fundamentally hampered by a persistent accountability gap. Despite broad political endorsement, adaptation finance and reporting continue to rely on top-down, standardised metrics that fail to capture local resilience priorities.

ARIN's Locally Led Adaptation Metrics for Africa (LAMA) Project reveals stark evidence of this failure: only 11.2% of African households participate in the design of adaptation interventions, yet 70.4% believe they should define what "success" means. Furthermore, the exclusion of marginalised groups remains widespread, with 58.1% of households reporting no female members in local climate leadership roles.

This brief argues that Community-Defined Indicators (CDIs) are the essential compass for achieving effective, equitable, and locally grounded LLA. We call upon COP30 parties, finance institutions, and African governments to institutionalise CDIs by adopting three strategic pillars:

1. Mandate Local Metrics: Embed CDIs within all national and global adaptation frameworks (NAPs, NDCs, GGA).
2. Reform Climate Finance: Shift fund disbursement from compliance-based reporting to performance-based payments tied to locally validated outcomes.
3. Empower Local Data Systems: Invest in the institutional capacity of grassroots organizations and establish participatory, digitally enabled monitoring systems.

I. The Challenge: Bridging the Accountability Deficit

Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) is globally recognised as the most effective pathway for building climate resilience for vulnerable communities, particularly Small-Scale Farmers (SSFs) in Africa. However, the majority of adaptation efforts remain disconnected from the lived experiences and priorities of people on the ground.

The LAMA Project, supported by the IDRC and implemented by the Africa Research and Impact Network (ARIN), addresses this fundamental disconnect by co-developing community-defined indicators rooted in the knowledge and lived experiences of smallholder farmers across diverse agroecological zones in Kenya's Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB). The core methodology utilised Citizen Science and the Participatory Visioning Approach (PVA) to ensure that the metrics for resilience are co-created by the communities themselves.

II. Key Findings and Evidence Gaps

Evidence from the LAMA household survey (n ≈ 550) and Focus Group Discussions exposes persistent gaps between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities:

A. Persistent Accountability and Inclusion Gaps

- **Low Design Participation:** Only 11.2% of surveyed households participate in the design of adaptation interventions in their community, confirming a top-down planning bias.
- **Exclusion of Women:** 58.1% of respondents report no female family members in local climate leadership roles, undermining inclusive resilience and equity.
- **Adaptation Barriers:** Lack of information (91%) and financial limitations (57.9%) are cited as major barriers to adaptation at the household level.

B. Emerging Insights on Resilience Measurement

The LAMA research revealed critical insights into how communities genuinely measure adaptation success, proving that uniform indicators are inadequate:

- **Context Specificity:** Aspirations for resilience vary drastically; high-rainfall communities prioritise indicators related to flood control and soil conservation, while arid communities emphasise metrics for water harvesting and pasture restoration. Resilience success is fundamentally context-specific.
- **Intersectionality in Vulnerability:** Gender, age, and livelihood roles shape adaptive capacity. Women tend to prioritise indicators related to stable crop yields and market access, while youth highlight metrics for technology uptake, training, and green jobs.
- **Process-Oriented Indicators:** Communities define success not just by quantifiable outcomes (e.g., yields, infrastructure) but also by processes, such as inclusion in decision-making, equitable benefit-sharing, training participation, and the frequency of local climate dialogues.
- **Local Institutions as Anchors:** Grassroots organisations, including farmer groups and women’s cooperatives, function as existing micro-adaptation hubs. Strengthening their capacity is key to effective local governance and accountability.

III. Policy Action Agenda

To translate the principles of LLA into measurable practice and unlock effective climate finance, African governments, development partners, and COP30 Parties must commit to the following three strategic pillars:

Pillar 1: Governance and Policy Mandate

Institutionalise Community-Defined Indicators (CDIs) as the legitimate standard for measuring adaptation progress across all governance levels.

Action	Description
Mandate CDI Integration	Require the inclusion of community-defined indicators in national adaptation planning documents (NAPs), global reporting (NDCs and Adaptation Communications), and monitoring for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA).
Embed Equity and Inclusion	Mainstream Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) across all adaptation actions. Mandate that women, youth, and persons with disabilities are integrated into decision-making and benefit-sharing structures.
Institutionalise Knowledge Co-production	Support the integration of intergenerational learning platforms (e.g., Barazas) to formally link indigenous knowledge and community-generated evidence with scientific and policy systems.

Pillar 2: Climate Finance Reform

Redesign climate finance modalities to shift accountability from mere compliance and input tracking toward verifiable, locally measured outcomes.

Action	Description
Shift to Impact-Driven Payments	Reform donor and national climate finance disbursement criteria, linking a portion of adaptation funds to performance-based payments achieved against community-defined metrics (e.g., increased water access, stable crop yield, inclusion metrics).
Utilize Sub-national Funds	Incorporate community indicators into the monitoring systems of sub-national Climate Change Funds to ensure that funding decisions and performance tracking directly reflect local priorities.
Strengthen Local Financial Capacity	Provide targeted technical and institutional assistance to emerging youth- and women-led organizations to facilitate their ability to directly access and manage adaptation finance.

Pillar 3: Local Empowerment and Data Systems

Invest in the institutional anchors and digital tools that empower communities to monitor, validate, and share their adaptation data in real time.

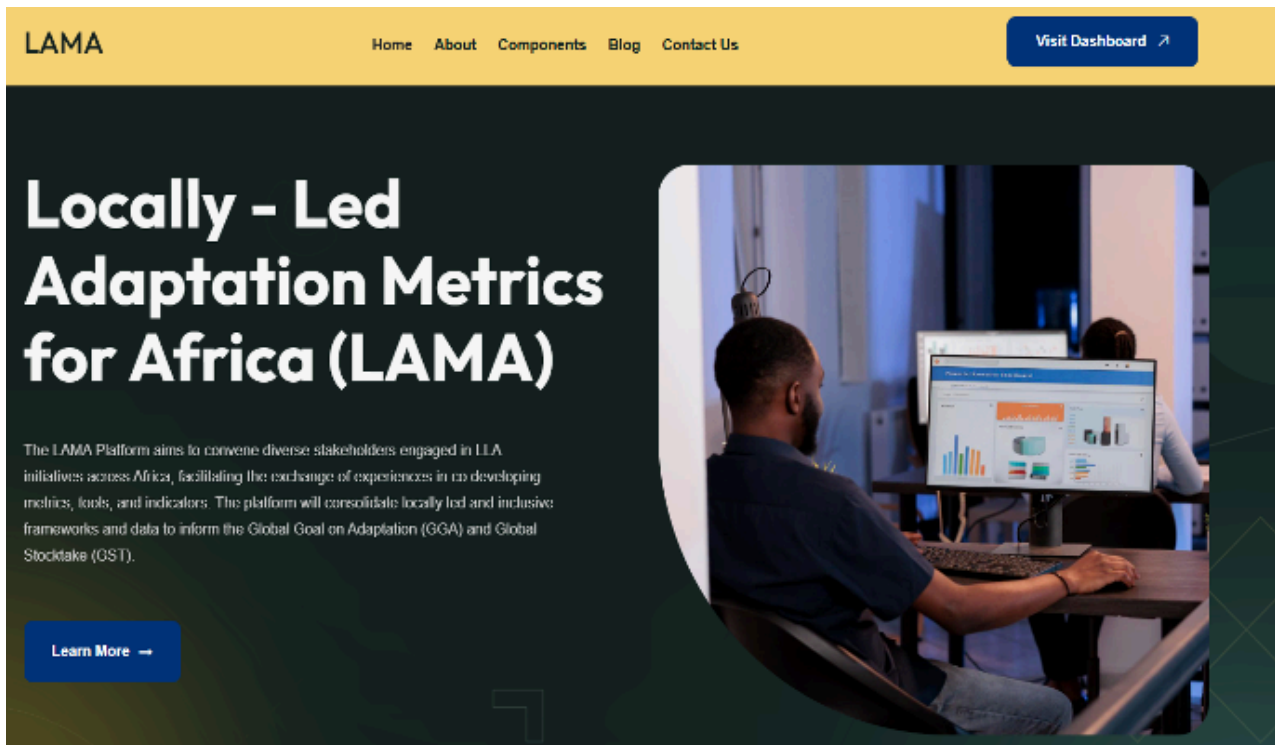
Action	Description
Empower Grassroots Institutions	Formally acknowledge and strengthen grassroots organisations (farmer groups, cooperatives, CBOs) as viable and accountable implementation partners for adaptation interventions.
Enhance Participatory Monitoring	Invest in digitally enabled, participatory M&E systems co-managed by communities, sub-national governments, and national institutions to gather real-time household data using citizen science and community climate champions.
Scale Data Interoperability Platforms	Support the expansion of open data-sharing platforms, such as the LAMA Platform, across Africa to link community-generated evidence seamlessly with sub-national, national, and global adaptation monitoring databases.

IV. Conclusion: A Commitment to Locally Led Resilience

The path to a climate-resilient future for Africa must be paved with the lived experiences and wisdom of those on the frontlines. Community-defined indicators are the essential compass required to ensure adaptation finance and action are effective, equitable, and truly locally led.

At COP30, we have an unprecedented opportunity to move beyond rhetorical principles and commit to the practical, locally validated metrics that will transform Locally Led Adaptation from a concept into a tangible reality for Africa's most vulnerable populations. The time to trust, fund, and empower local action is now.

Figure 1: LAMA Platform



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

