

GNDR and Avina Resilience Hub

Ensuring the incorporation of culture and Indigenous and local knowledge at every level of decision-making

Implications for policy

Incorporating culture and Indigenous and local knowledge into climate decision-making is essential for achieving more inclusive, effective, and equitable climate and resilience policies. However, whilst this is widely recognised, policies and climate action often fail to properly take this into consideration. This policy brief first explores how culture and Indigenous and local knowledge support climate action, drawing on two case studies. It then provides key policy recommendations for how to incorporate culture and Indigenous and local knowledge into climate action and examines the policy implications for COP29 and COP30. This brief provides a call to action for the incorporation of culture and Indigenous and local knowledge in policies and practices at all levels.

CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IN CLIMATE ACTION

Communities and indigenous peoples are on the frontlines of climate change and are responding and adapting to its impacts on a daily basis. Across generations they have an intimate understanding of their environment and what solutions work in their communities and how to build resilience. Below are two short case studies that highlight local knowledge and leadership in action.

Harnessing local knowledge for DRR and climate adaptation: Frank, a resident of Gisasa in Rwanda, has lived through the devastation of heavy rains that washed away homes, arable land and livelihoods in his community. In response, Frank brought together displaced community members, local government officials, academia, NGOs, and the private sector to design innovative solutions

that were informed by local knowledge and tailored to the specific needs of Gisasa and Kangondo. This included the digging and terracing of hillsides, environmental conservation training and advocacy with local government to secure increased resourcing for adaptation measures and to support those displaced by the rains. Frank's story highlights how local ingenuity and knowledge can shape effective disaster response and climate adaptation. To find out more see [here](#).

Building resilience with local leadership: In Mozambique, Madagascar, and Malawi, six GNDR workshops and a training of trainers model led to the creation of 58 community-developed contingency plans. These plans, covering topics such as community action plans and micro-grant management, ensure that local communities have the tools they need to lead disaster response and climate change adaptation measures. To find out more see [here](#) on page 36.

These case studies demonstrate the importance of including local knowledge and leadership in climate policy and programmes and ensuring that local communities have the resources they need to adapt and build resilience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR POLICYMAKERS

1. Respect for Traditional Knowledge Systems:

Indigenous peoples and local communities have long-standing knowledge of sustainable land and resource management, which can complement scientific approaches. Valuing and incorporating these perspectives into decision-making will improve the accuracy and relevance of climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Policymakers should create frameworks that ensure traditional knowledge is respected and integrated without being appropriated or misrepresented. This needs to be institutionalised at the global level and implemented at the national and local levels.

2. Promote Co-Design of Climate Solutions:

Policymakers should involve Indigenous and local communities in the design, planning, and execution of climate policies and projects. Collaborative approaches ensure that climate actions are more relevant to local realities, increasing their effectiveness. This should include participatory planning processes where local voices help shape national and regional climate agendas. There is an urgent need for increased spaces for scientists and indigenous actors to work together to help foster the co-design of climate solutions.

3. Empowering Communities through Direct Access to Finance:

Providing Indigenous communities and local populations direct access to climate finance ensures that they can implement culturally appropriate and locally driven climate solutions. Traditional financial systems often sideline these groups due to bureaucratic barriers, so simplifying processes for access within funds, such as the Green Climate Fund and the Loss and Damage Fund, is vital. Decentralised and localised finance models and partnerships with Indigenous-led organisations can facilitate this.

4. Capacity Building and Technology Transfer:

Policymakers should prioritise the sharing of capacity and knowledge between Indigenous and local communities and the science community. This involves not only providing funding but also training and technical support to enable discussion and knowledge transfer.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COP29?

One of the central negotiations at COP29 is on setting the framework and financial targets for the NCQG, which aims to establish post-2025 climate finance goals.

1. Direct Access to Climate Finance

Learning from the past and knowing the difficulties developing countries have experienced, the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) negotiations must support direct access for communities at the frontline of climate impacts, such as Indigenous groups. Simplified financial processes and the creation of decentralised funding channels are needed to make international finance more accessible to local communities.

2. Equitable Allocation and Distribution

The NCQG negotiations focus on how much climate finance will be available post-2025 and who will have access to it. A significant portion of this funding must reach those on the frontlines including Indigenous peoples and local communities.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COP30?

1. Enhancing Climate Adaptation and Resilience:

Indigenous and local communities possess deep knowledge of natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land-use practices that have been honed over

generations. Incorporating this knowledge into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) is key to effective and locally relevant climate adaptation strategies.

2. Co-Designing Climate Solutions:

Ambitious NDCs and NAPs must be inclusive, ensuring that climate solutions are not just top-down but co-designed with the communities most affected by climate change. This improves local ownership and ensures that proposed measures align with the social and cultural values of Indigenous peoples and local communities, enhancing the feasibility and sustainability of climate actions.

3. Addressing Loss and Damage:

Local and Indigenous knowledge is vital in addressing loss and damage caused by climate impacts. These communities have a wealth of experience in coping with environmental changes. Incorporating this into NDCs will lead to more innovative solutions for managing and recovering from the impacts of climate change.

For more information on these policy messages or on GNDR's work, please contact our head of policy Rebecca Murphy: [rebecca.murphy\[at\]gndr.org](mailto:rebecca.murphy@gndr.org) or our climate lead Adessou Kossivi: [adessou.kossivi\[at\]gndr.org](mailto:adessou.kossivi@gndr.org)