



Summary messages
of the
Faith Leaders and Actors Consultation on Adaptation in Africa
convened by ACT Alliance
on 4-5 September 2023

Introduction

Action by Churches Together (ACT Alliance) is a coalition of more than 140 churches and church-related organizations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, race or nationality in keeping with the highest international codes and standards. ACT Alliance is faith-motivated, rights-based, impact-focused, and committed to working ecumenically and inter-religiously, with the communities we seek to serve and accompany at the center of our work.

ACT Alliance convened a Faith Leaders and Actors Consultation on Adaptation in Africa to discuss and reflect on Africa's adaptation realities, potential solutions, and role of faith in driving the adaptation agenda in the continent.

Africa's climate change adaptation burden

Climate change is having numerous effects on the African continent. Despite contributing least to the climate crisis, and as confirmed by the IPCC, Africa is warming faster than any part of the world and hence stands as the most vulnerable world region due to multiple stressors and low adaptive capacity.

Impacts such as extreme weather events like floods and droughts rampant in the region are causing significant economic losses while disproportionately burdening vulnerable communities. The continent is experiencing an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, cyclones and heat waves which have devastating effects on agriculture, water resources, and human settlements leading to food insecurity and displacement.

A significant portion of Africa's population relies on rainfed agriculture for their livelihoods. The disruption in rainfall patterns is leading to crop failures, causes *increased incidence of drought and famine affecting food productivity and food security. Many regions in Africa already suffer

from water scarcity and climate change exacerbates this problem by altering precipitation patterns and increasing evaporation rates, making clean water access challenging.

Climate change-induced resource scarcity has been shown to exacerbate existing conflicts and create new ones, leading to political instability and displacements. As rural areas become less habitable due to climate-induced challenges, there is increased migration to urban areas putting stress on urban infrastructure and services. Additionally, those most vulnerable to the climate crisis - women, children, indigenous and far-flung communities - are increasingly facing the burden of climate change and its resultant effects. Therefore, the need to build their adaptive capacity and resilience is dire.

Climate change is halting the economic growth and well-being of African countries with reduced living standards and economies that increasingly struggle to foot the climate change bill. Climate adaptation urgency in Africa is a critical issue that requires immediate attention and action. The frequency and intensity of climate impacts overrun ecological, social and structural systems with sheer and unprecedented consequences on the African people

Disappointingly, the agency of African governments to response to climate impacts is normally crippled by inadequate capacity, increased debt distress and systemic inadequacies that compromises on the ability of African nations to comprehensively respond to the climate crisis. Additionally, the costs of addressing adaptation needs overwhelm Africa's financial and fiscal capabilities.

Tackling climate change adaption needs in Africa - The principle, moral and faith imperative

We unanimously share the conviction, as a matter of principle, that Africa must become fit to address the impacts of climate change by building adaptive capacities and implementing adaptation actions. As the climate crisis is a present and future impediment to fullness of life, joint and ramped-up effort on adaptation and resilience building is imperative.

While underscoring the complex reality of vulnerability and risks posed by the existential climate change threat that Africa finds itself in, **we call for** a revitalized effort by the community of nations to strengthen Africa's adaptive capacity to climate impacts, leveraging climate finance to drive real, and impactful adaptation solutions that center peoples' needs, and that further place gender and youth inclusion at the heart of climate policy and action.

Additionally, *acknowledging* that much remains to be done by faith leaders and the faith community of the region to advance climate action, particularly adaptation, we implore national faith leaders and actors to enhance their climate justice advocacy efforts targeting governments. A faith leaders and technical experts partnership should front innovative policy ideas and strategies, inform and influence public opinion and action on adaptation in Africa.

It is imperative that Africa's faith leadership props up the region's political leadership and engagement in climate adaptation in the run-up to COP 28 with the sole aim of onboarding

Africa's voices, realities, lessons and experiences in the global climate adaptation policy process to deliver adaptation gains and benefits for Africa.

We underscore that a moral impetus exists to: demand fulfillment of financial commitments to adaptation and delivery of new and additional finance for adaptation in Africa, bridge the public awareness gap, and tackle systemic and structural inadequacies that weaken our resolve to tackle climate change impacts at national and regional level, foster authentic dialogue between communities and leaders at all levels on enhancing adaptation, forge and leverage multi-stakeholder partnerships for scaled-up adaptation actions, respond to the needs and voices of climate change frontline communities, women and youth, and drive evidence-based impactful real and life-changing climate solutions.

We emphasize that faith engagement in climate adaptation has the potential to harness the moral, ethical, and community-focused faith traditions to tackle the most pressing global challenge of our time. Strengthening faith engagement offers unique possibilities to build a stronger and more inclusive movement for climate adaptation that is grounded in shared values and a commitment to a sustainable, resilient, and just future.

Recognizing the deep connection between faith traditions, environmental stewardship and climate justice, we:

1. Note that faith leaders and faith-based organizations have a widespread global, regional, and national presence and influence with networks, structures, congregations, and affiliates in communities around the world. They are deeply embedded in their communities.
2. Implore leaders and experts within various multi-actor spaces to tap the powerful source of motivation and unlimited connections rooted in ethical and spiritual values to the climate emergency.
3. Urge faith leaders and faith-based organizations in Africa to collaborate including with other institutions and engage with local populations to avail knowledge on adaptation including by exploring theological underpinnings and reflections, demonstrate and popularize working adaptation practices and solutions with benefits for poverty eradication and sustainable development.
4. Stress the need to bridge the gap between faith leaders and technical experts including in faith-based development institutions to enhance faith leaders' knowledge and active involvement as change agents and leaders on climate change, climate adaptation and finance, and locally led-adaptation actions and solutions.
5. Resolve to leverage the positioning of faith leaders to demand urgent and scaled-up action by governments across the world on adaptation and adaptation finance in light of differentiated responsibilities and capabilities. As a matter of principle, urgently required **adaptation finance should be provided by developed countries at scale and not**

increase the debt burden of already struggling vulnerable nations in Africa. Debt imperils economies and it is deeply unjust if finance meant to safeguard life and livelihoods drives greater debt burden in these nations.

6. ***Renew our resolve to*** work with communities to prioritize, and develop fit-for-purpose models that respond to adaptation needs in a manner that enhances local institutional and individual adaptive capacity with the inclusion of gender and human rights underpinning design and implementation of adaptation actions.
7. Note the huge adaptation burden, and emphasize the importance of designing modalities and arrangements for public and private partnerships that put people and communities first and equally share the adaptation burden and benefits.
8. *We commit to* building nuanced shared learning and experience exchange processes among African actors. This will enable the sharing of adaptation and resilience lessons in research, policy and practice

Further, we:

1. **Note** that some impacts of climate change go beyond adaptation and cause significant Loss and Damage in African societies. Loss and Damage associated with sudden and slow onset events degrade ecosystems, destroy infrastructure, cause death, destroy livelihoods, and significantly drive migration and displacement. Combined, they have extensive economic and non-economic repercussions
2. **Call** for the full operationalization and capitalization of the Loss and Damage fund at COP 28 as a matter of justice

We further ***devote ourselves to*** extensive national and regional level engagement on adaptation advocacy including in key sectors such as agriculture, climate finance and capacity development with the ambition to ensure that African nations have sound climate adaptation and finance policies - fit for present and future climate needs – and by all means are invested in building bankable adaptation project interventions and pipelines to access finance.

End.

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