

# Integrating climate action into CSO programming

## A “HOW TO GUIDE”

June 2023



**Developed by UTS-ISF and ACFID Development Practice Committee, Climate Action Group.**

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**CITATION**

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**PHOTOS**

As indicated

**FRONT PAGE PHOTO:** Researchers from UTS-ISF explore what community resilience to climate change means to Wala Village members in Malekula, Vanuatu. Photo credit: Anna Gero.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction and Context



# INTRODUCTION

This document provides **guidance to civil society organisations (CSOs)** on how to take first steps to **integrate climate action** into their organisations and programs. The **audience is primarily CSOs who do not have a direct link to climate change** through their programs, thus may find it challenging to consider how climate change is relevant to them.

Funded by the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), this document is based on research undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney, Institute for Sustainable Futures between 2021 - 2023. Sector experts from across the Asia-Pacific, as well as representatives from ACFID members, contributed to the findings and lessons presented in this document.

**The question this document has sought to answer is:**

What can non-climate focused CSOs do to integrate climate action within their organisations, programs and policies?



Photo: Getty image

# CONTEXT

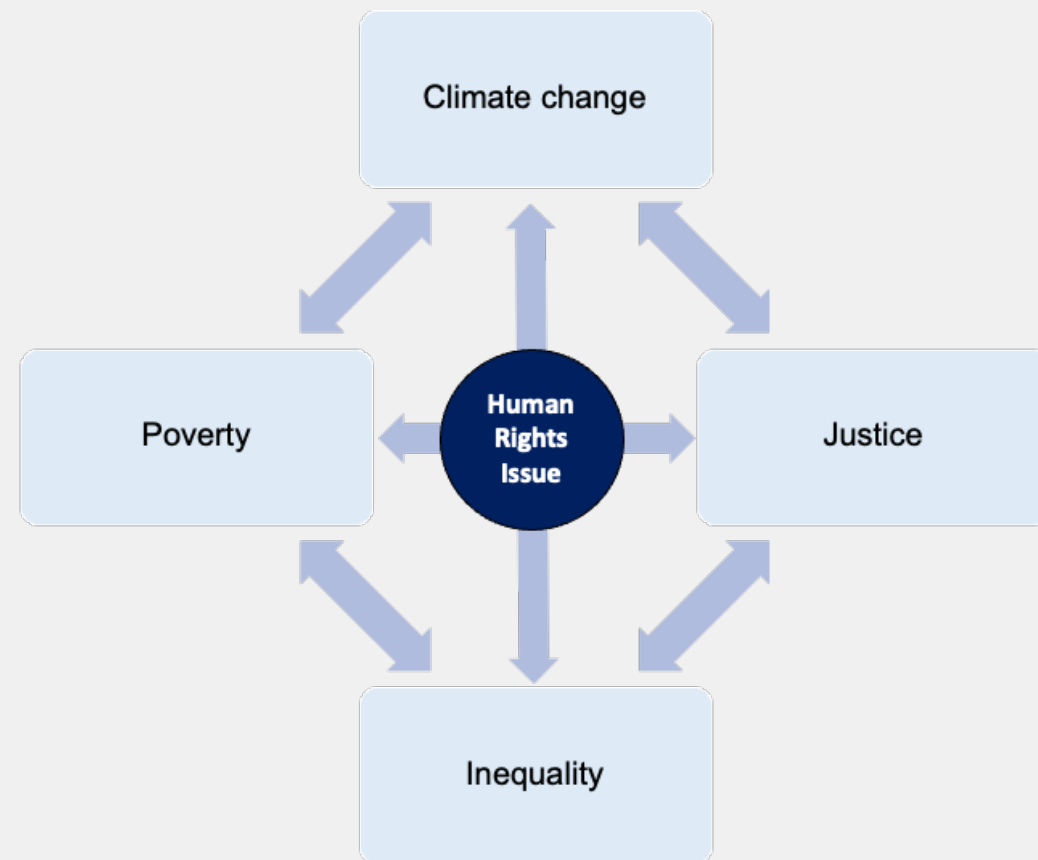
## Why is climate action important for CSOs?

Climate change is an urgent issue, requiring a response within all sectors and all scales across the globe.

Addressing climate change is a **human rights issue**, because of the interlinkages between climate change, poverty, justice and inequality.

Communities experiencing poverty and disadvantaged people are affected first and worst, due to pre-existing vulnerabilities.

Climate change also exacerbates fragility and conflict and amplifies food and water resource scarcity.



# CONTEXT

## Why is climate action important for CSOs?

The **system** in which development sector actors operate for integrating climate action in their organisations and programming needs to change.

**System transformation** of the development sector is needed to ensure climate change does not reverse development progress.

All CSOs have a role to play in this **system transformation**, which includes integration of climate action within organisations, aid and development programs.



This 'how to' guide provides ideas on first steps for CSOs to integrate climate action into their organisations and programs

# CHAPTER 2

## ACFID Climate Action Framework

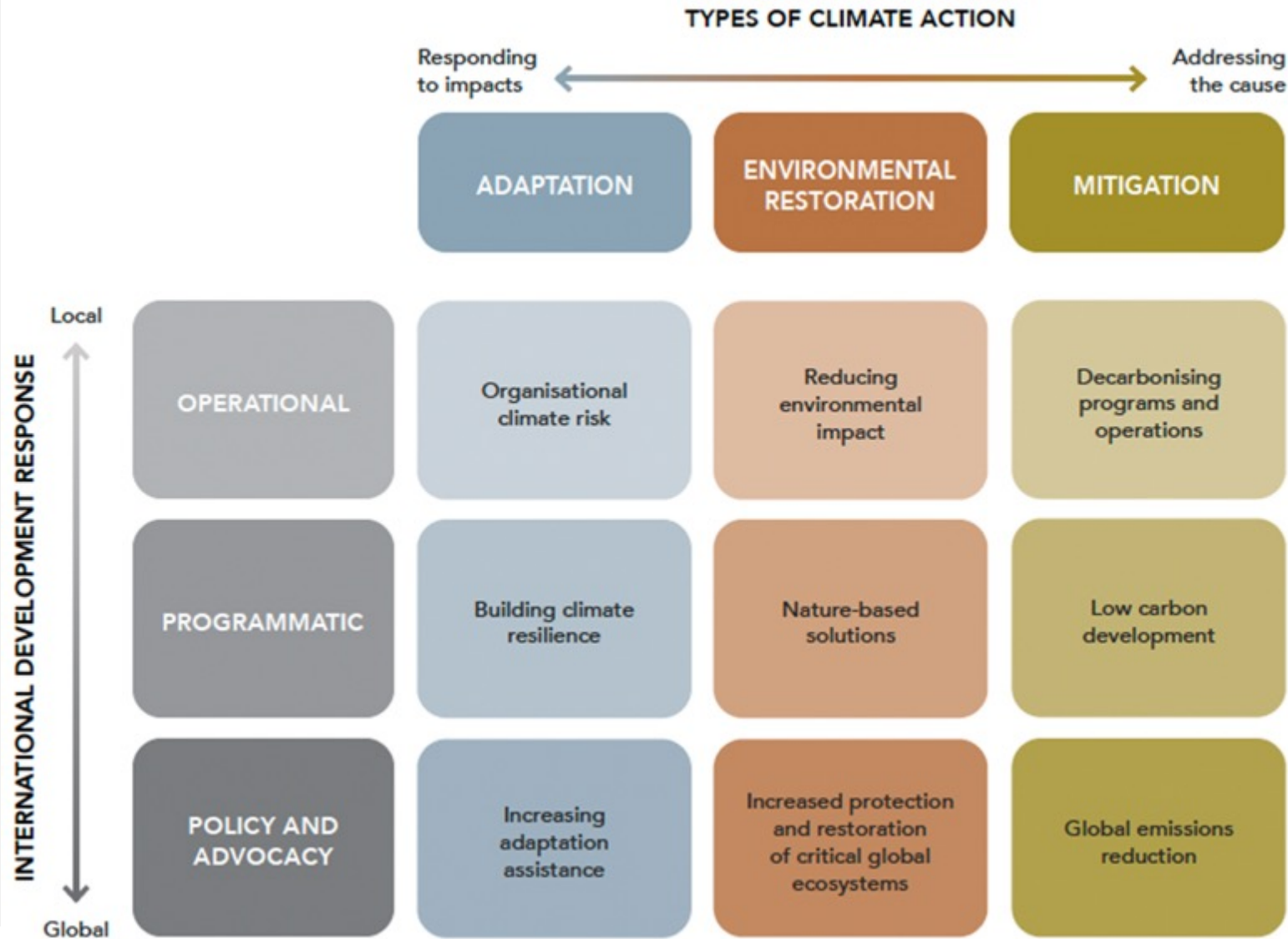
Australian  
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Climate Action  
Framework for  
the Australian  
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REPORT





# ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK

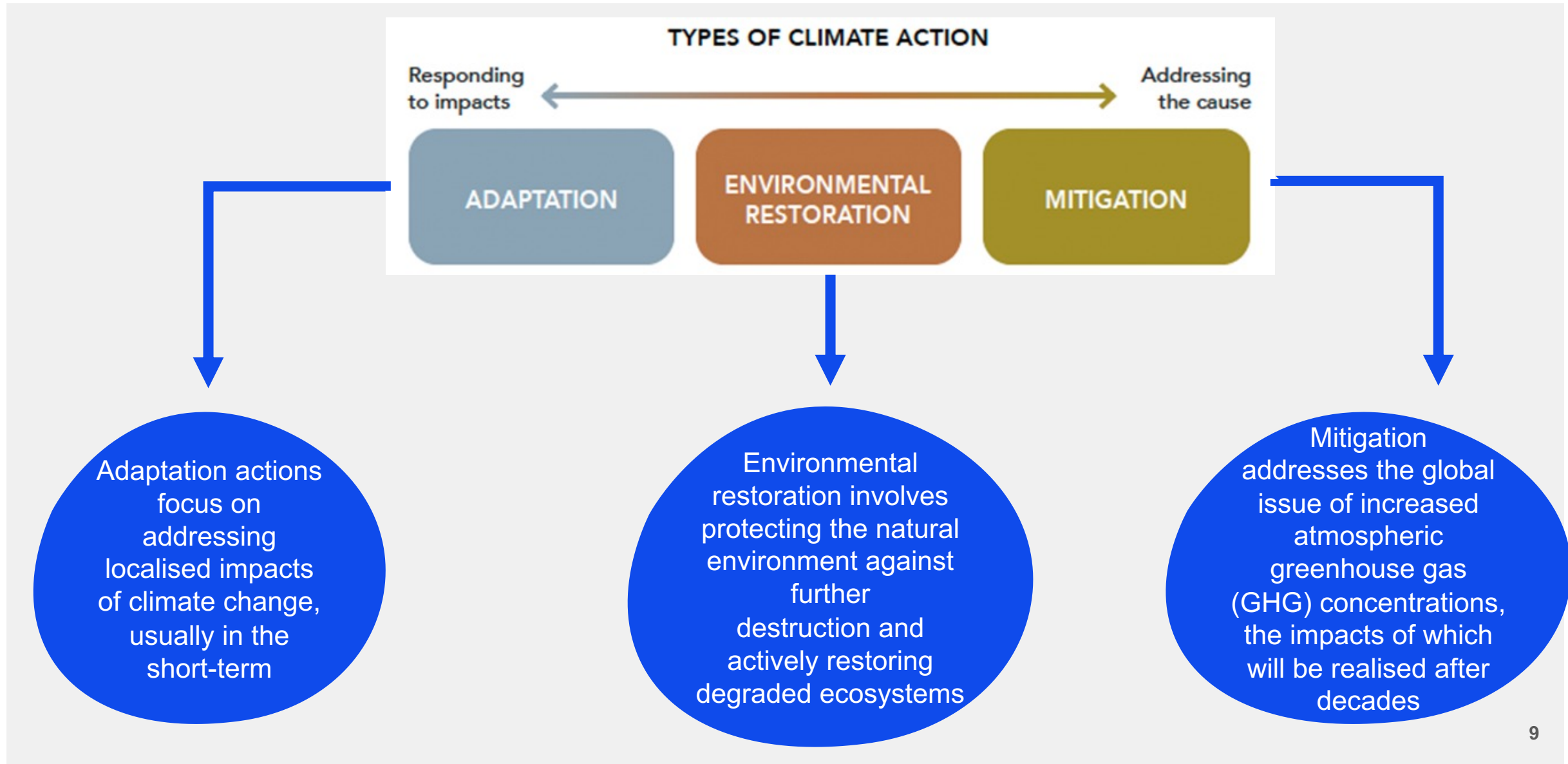


**Purpose of the framework is to:**

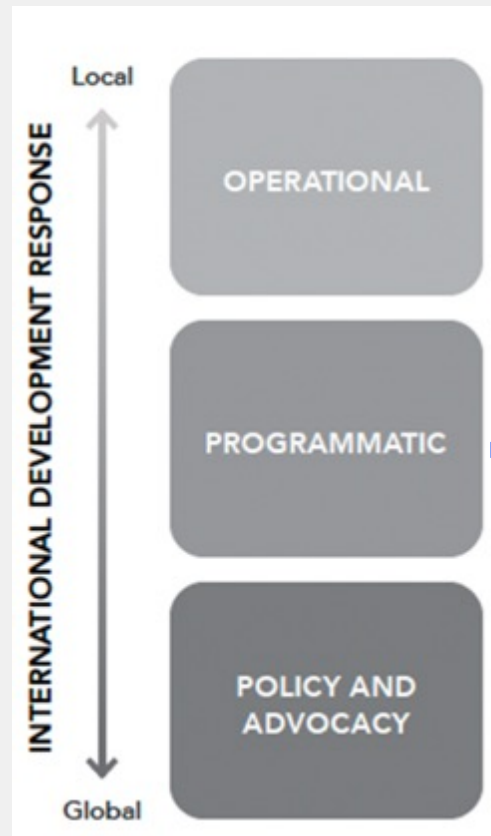
Increase the understanding of the types of climate action at different activity levels.

Provide clearer entry points for organisations to start or step up climate change in their work.

# ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK



# ACFID CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK



Reducing climate risks to an organisation's operations, programs, assets, and staff and reducing its own environmental impact.

Design and implementation of projects and programs that seek to deliver adaptation or mitigation outcomes.

Advocating for transformational change to the systems and power structures that disincentivise greater global action.

# CHAPTER 3

Key lessons from past  
research



# KEY LESSONS FROM PAST RESEARCH

## What does 'guidance' really mean for climate change integration?

### Guidance documents that are organisationally relevant

CSOs need practical guidance that supports their unique values, sector focus, ways of working and approach to engaging with local partners and communities.

### Improved awareness of climate change impacts & adaptation options

Awareness that meets organisational needs, that is contextualised to the specific location and recognises local and traditional knowledge supports CSOs to integrate climate change.

### Capacity building & training is needed

Training for staff and community facilitators, training of trainers, and building awareness to know what climate change means at the local level – and options to respond – are needed.

### Sharing information & knowledge; building partnerships through networking

CSOs build confidence to integrate climate change through peer learning, partnerships and sharing experiences through trusted relationships.

# KEY LESSONS FROM PAST RESEARCH

**Supporting progress towards climate integration is supported by:**

A strong appetite for integration activities within organisations

Supportive enabling environments within organisations for integration

Ongoing learning for improved integration practice

Knowledge exchange between CSOs

Prioritising local voices of lived experiences of climate change

# CHAPTER 4

Entry points for climate  
action



# ENTRY POINTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

**OPERATIONAL LEVEL:** What can organisations do to reduce climate risks to their operations, programs, assets and staff, and reduce its own environmental impact?

- ✓ **Strong leadership on climate action** from CEO level.
- ✓ **Inclusive governance** for climate action that includes senior leadership and staff champions, e.g. Sustainability Committee.
- ✓ **Organisational policy** that clearly states climate action as a priority for the organisation, and inclusion of climate action within job descriptions and KPIs.
- ✓ **Organisational plan** to implement the policy with agreed actions the organisation plans to take and ways to measure progress, outcomes and lessons.
- ✓ **Staff engagement** –providing options for all staff to engage in climate action dialogue and activities.
- ✓ **Explore equitable and responsible ways to offset carbon emissions** for flights.
- ✓ **Participate in climate action dialogue** with other organisations to learn and improve practice (e.g. ACFID's Climate Policy and Practice Committee - CPPC).
- ✓ **Procurement**– consideration of environmental sustainability in purchasing (e.g. carbon miles).
- ✓ **Waste minimisation** – taking steps to reduce / minimize office waste e.g. worm farms or composting organic office waste.
- ✓ **Low carbon transport**– reducing office car parking spaces; providing showers and lockers to encourage active transport.
- ✓ **Prioritising local voices** of lived experiences of climate change – e.g. developing mechanisms for local partner contributions to ANGO climate action policy and plans.



# ENTRY POINTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

## PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL: How can the design and implementation of projects and programs seek to deliver adaptation or mitigation outcomes?

- ✓ **Explore low-carbon programming approaches** that reduce carbon emissions e.g. enabling local partners to lead activities (with the added benefit of supporting the localisation agenda).
- ✓ **Invest time and resources into partnership building.** Long-term partnerships, ongoing engagement and knowledge exchange between diverse partners can promote new and innovative approaches to climate action.
- ✓ **Program design to incorporate a ‘systems thinking’ approach.** Climate change impacts communities in different ways. Building in no-regrets activities that work across scales (local-subnational-national) can lead to multiple co-benefits and address the drivers of risk and vulnerability.
- ✓ **Value and prioritise traditional and local knowledge and experiences of climate change** alongside Western science-based knowledge within program design and project activities.
- ✓ **Invest in women’s leadership** to support effective climate action. Social and structural barriers can limit women’s participation and leadership in climate action, therefore intentional activities are needed to create opportunities for diverse women’s participation.
- ✓ **Integrate lessons from past experiences.** Experience and knowledge from past severe weather events and local leaders are key to sustainable climate action.
- ✓ **Peer-to-peer learning** enables knowledge exchange and upskilling from those we can relate to, providing space for sharing of lessons learned in a safe environment.
- ✓ **Support local partners to play a knowledge brokering role.** Knowledge brokers blend and interpret local knowledge, context and strengths with external knowledge, and engage with diverse networks to progress climate action.

# ENTRY POINTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

## POLICY AND ADVOCACY LEVEL: How can NGOs advocate for transformational change to the systems and power structures that disincentivise greater global action on climate change?

- ✓ **Advocate to donors** to support multi-year and flexible funding options, allowing for exploration of effective climate action with local partners.
- ✓ **Join sector advocacy efforts through alliances** e.g. through ACFID's Climate Policy and Practice Committee (CPPC).
- ✓ **Building political support** to promote effective and just national and global climate action policies.
- ✓ **Engagement** with industry and private sector to encourage sustainable practices e.g. influencing to adopt environmentally responsible strategies.
- ✓ **Collaborate** with international networks to advocate for systemic changes and influence global climate negotiations and agreements.
- ✓ **Support local coalitions and partnerships** to amplify their collective voice in climate action at local and regional levels.
- ✓ **Participate** in international forums and conferences to advocate for stronger global climate action policies.
- ✓ **Public awareness campaigns** e.g. through educational programs, social media platforms and media outreach.

# CHAPTER 5

Additional resources



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Explore UTS-ISF research on integrating climate action into CSO programs:

- [Scoping Report](#) - Climate change action through civil society programs
- [Learning Report](#) - Climate change action through civil society programs
- Integrating climate change action across the Australian international development sector: [Setting the scene for ANGOs](#) and [Enablers of Best Practice](#)
- Institutional barriers to climate finance through a gendered lens in Fiji, Samoa, and Solomon Islands: [A synthesis across research objectives](#)
- Blog on [integrating climate action in the development sector](#)

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. [Join ACFID's Climate Policy and Practice Committee](#)
2. [Take ACFID's Introduction to Climate Change and Development Course](#)
3. [CSO Guidance Library](#)
4. [ACFID Climate Action Framework for the Australian International Development Sector](#)
5. [Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation: Policy Guidance](#)
6. [The NGO Climate Compact 2.0: Renewed commitments in the face of compounding crises](#)
7. [Mainstreaming climate change adaptation into development planning](#)



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