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## Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the NDC Revision Process: Insights from Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia

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African perspectives  
Global insights

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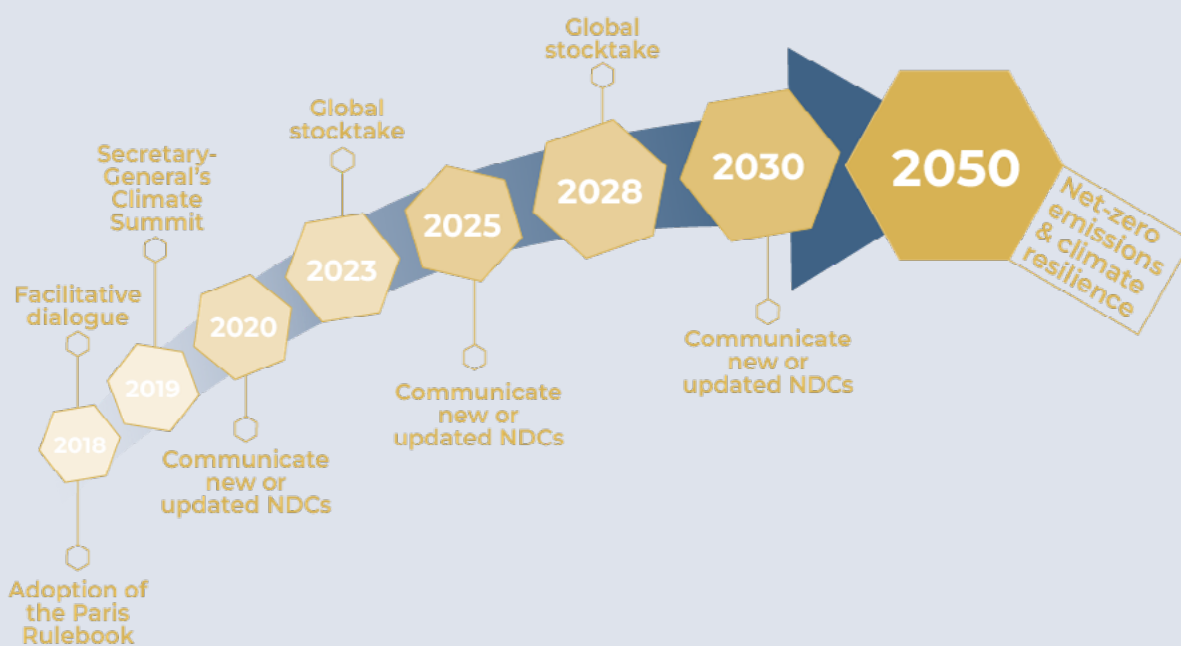
# Abstract

Civil society plays an important role in the development of robust and equitable Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by ensuring government is informed of the diverse challenges and risks faced by members of society. In this regard, civil society organisations advocate setting ambitious climate actions, creating awareness of the daily challenges faced by communities, supporting climate research and enhancing the resilience of vulnerable communities. Several challenges, however, inhibit the ability of civil society to participate effectively in NDC development and climate policy more broadly. This includes a lack of awareness of policy input opportunities and a lack of appropriate communication channels. Governments are also failing to include marginalised and rural communities in climate policy processes. Focusing on NDC development and civil society participation in Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia, this paper sets out recommendations to enhance collaboration between government and civil society to support more inclusive NDC development processes. In addition, it recommends safeguarding natural resource-based livelihoods through the development of inclusive, climate-resilient pathways that ensure the most marginalised communities are not left behind. Peer learning and knowledge exchanges between African countries on inclusive NDC development can help ensure good practices are replicated and scaled. This would accelerate the achievement not only of the Paris Agreement but also of broader policy goals, such as the AU's Agenda 2063 and the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

# Introduction

Climate change poses a significant threat to societies and economies, especially in developing countries. Responding to climate change requires a global response, which in turn must be operationalised through effective climate policy development and implementation at national level. At the global level, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the pre-eminent multilateral institution through which climate action is negotiated. The Paris Agreement, adopted under the UNFCCC in 2015, sets the goal of keeping the global temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and is pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement also calls for countries to improve their ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas (GHG) emission development.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1** Key timelines to enhance ambition under the Paris Agreement



Source: Adapted from Taryn Fransen et al., "Enhancing NDCs by 2020: Achieving the Goals of the Paris Agreement" (Working Paper, World Resources Institute, Washington DC, 2017)

In order to realise these goals, countries are required to develop NDCs, which are revised every five years and must show increasing ambition for climate action, building on the commitments made in previous submissions. NDCs are therefore the central mechanism

<sup>1</sup> UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement (Paris: UNFCCC, 2015).

connecting national action to the global climate response. However, the first Global Stocktake, completed at the UNFCCC's 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP28) in 2023, showed that national commitments to climate mitigation are falling short of what is required to limit warming to 1.5°C by 2030.<sup>2</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that, by 2030, emissions will need to have fallen by 43% from 2019 levels, yet current NDCs indicate only an 8% reduction in emissions.<sup>3</sup> It is thus crucial that countries develop robust, quantifiable and time-bound commitments in the upcoming 2025 NDC revision process.

While the content of the NDCs is important, the process of their development also needs careful consideration. The Paris Agreement commits all parties to effective engagement with all actors of society, with Article 12 requiring parties to enhance public participation and ensure access to relevant information. In this regard, countries should implement inclusive NDC development processes by ensuring that civil society is engaged and consulted during the revision process.

## Civil society plays a vital role in NDC development, monitoring NDC implementation and holding governments accountable to their international and national climate change commitments

The needs and concerns of these stakeholder groups are particularly important for Africa, where most of the rural population rely directly on natural resources for their livelihoods.<sup>4</sup> These communities face increasing risks owing to climate change, which exacerbates inequality and pushes people further into poverty. In addition, they are often excluded from policy development processes, owing to limited access to information, inadequate technical support and other barriers to participation. Civil society plays a vital role in NDC development, monitoring NDC implementation and holding governments accountable to their international and national climate change commitments. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are a vital link between the ground-level realities of climate change and the world of climate policy and practice. They can advocate ambitious actions, create awareness, support climate research and enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities.<sup>5</sup> The term 'civil society' is often used to refer to all non-government actors, including the private sector and academia. However, in the context of this paper, civil society is more narrowly defined

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2 UN, "Global Stocktake Reports Highlight Urgent Need for Accelerated Action to Reach Climate Goals", <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/global-stocktake-reports-highlight-urgent-need-for-accelerated-action-to-reach-climate-goals>.

3 Taryn Fransen et al., "9 Things to Know about National Climate Change Plans", World Resources Institute, December 7, 2023.

4 Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *African Biodiversity Loss Raises Risk to Human Security*, Report (Washington DC: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, December 24, 2022).

5 SLYCAN Trust and Southern Voices on Adaptation, "Civil Society Engagement in the NDC Review Process" (Policy Brief, CARE Climate Justice Center, Den Haag, November 2020).

as communities and those organisations formed to represent them, including CSOs, youth and gender groups, grass-roots movements, alliances and coalitions.

This paper presents the findings of the ‘Strengthening Civil Society Voices on Natural Resources and Climate’ project, which assessed civil society engagement in the 2020–2021 NDC review process, focusing on Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. Led by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and funded by the Southern Africa Trust, the project assessed CSOs’ capacity (voice, agency and participation) to engage in the NDC revision process and so help to protect natural resource-based livelihoods amid climate change. The project sought to strengthen civil society networks engaged in advancing social justice, supporting livelihoods and ensuring inclusive climate policy development and implementation. It emphasised participatory approaches and improved accountability for the risks and opportunities associated with climate action, aiming for an inclusive transformation agenda. Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic placed unique restrictions on the consultation processes of the most recent round of NDC revisions, the project nevertheless sought to examine experiences of these revisions in the participating countries. This was used to identify key lessons and good practices in support of more inclusive NDC development in future revision rounds. Ultimately, the project developed recommendations from CSOs’ involvement in the NDC revision process to build their capacity for the upcoming 2024–2025 NDC revisions while advocating increased collaboration between government and civil society.

## Country profiles: Climate risks and NDC reviews

### Mozambique

#### *Climate risk profile*

Mozambique is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change owing to its geographic location and socio-economic status. Its long coastline is prone to cyclones<sup>6</sup> and the climate varies from tropical at the coast to more arid in parts of the interior.<sup>7</sup> Despite some economic growth over recent years, Mozambique still ranks among the world’s poorest countries.<sup>8</sup> Climate change is expected to exacerbate existing challenges, with extreme events becoming more frequent and intense.<sup>9</sup> Anticipated impacts include loss of lives, population displacement, water scarcity, food insecurity and infrastructure damage. Biodiversity losses from extreme climate events and over-exploitation threaten food

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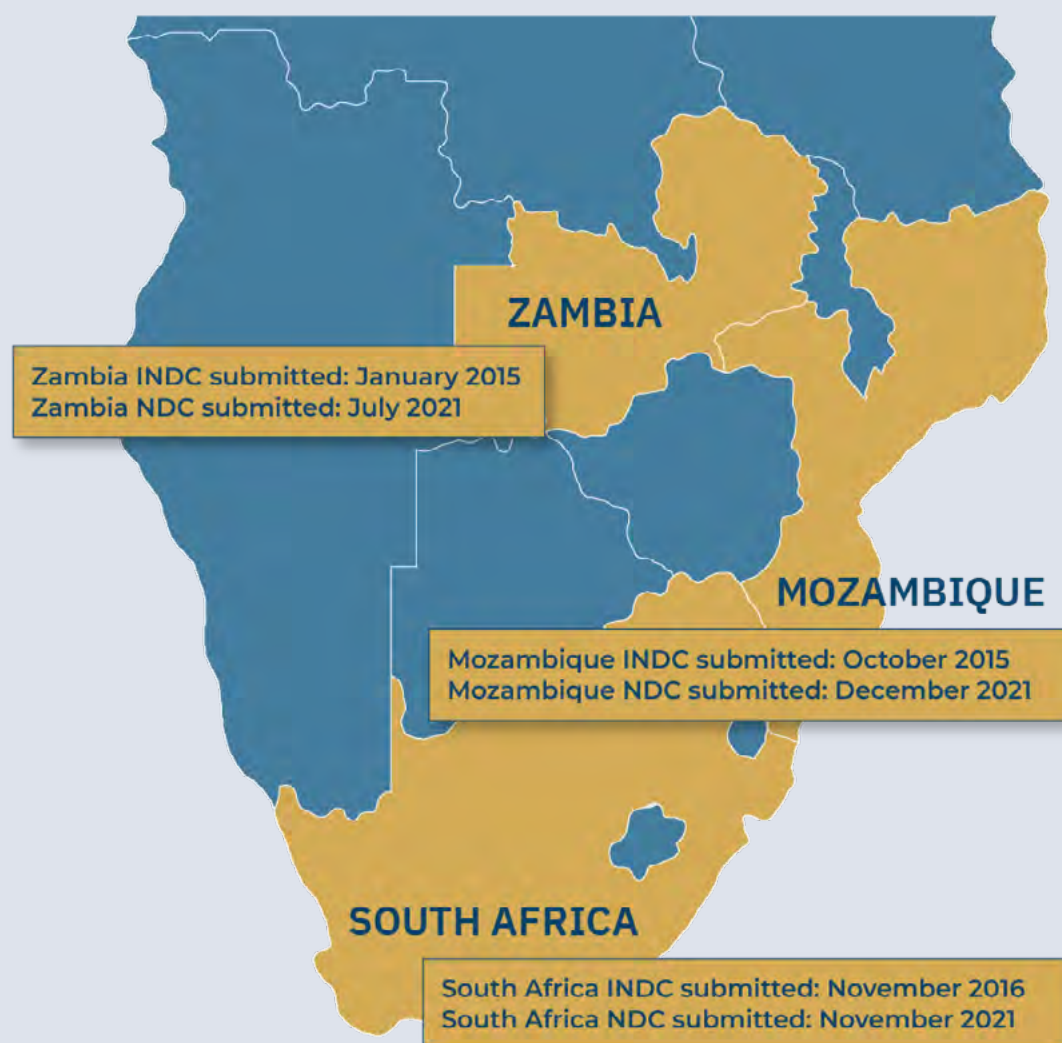
6 Alberto Mavume et al., “Climatology and Landfall of Tropical Cyclones in the South-West Indian Ocean”, *Western Indian Ocean Journal of Marine Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2009).

7 Lucas Chairuca et al., “Africa Groundwater Atlas: Hydrogeology of Mozambique”, British Geological Survey, 2018.

8 UN Development Programme, “Human Development Reports: Mozambique”, September 8, 2022; The World Bank, “The World Bank in Mozambique: Overview”, April 5, 2024.

9 MS Muthige et al., “Projected Changes in Tropical Cyclones over the South West Indian Ocean under Different Extents of Global Warming”, *Environmental Research Letters* 13, no. 6 (2018); Thomas Knutson et al., “Tropical Cyclones and Climate Change”, *Nature Geoscience* 3, no. 157-163 (2010).

Figure 2 Project countries



Source: Compiled by authors

security, health and livelihoods.<sup>10</sup> These challenges strain the country's fragile economy. The World Bank predicts climate change could push over 1.6 million people in Mozambique into poverty by 2050.<sup>11</sup>

The country's population of over 30 million people is largely rural, with economic activities focused in the agricultural, fishing and mining sectors.<sup>12</sup> Mozambique ranks as the seventh

10 Calvin Lee et al., "A New Framework to Assess Relative Ecosystem Vulnerability to Climate Change", *Conservation Letters* 11, no. 2 (2018); Tim McClanahan and Nyawra Muthiga, "Environmental Variability Indicates a Climate-Adaptive Center Under Threat in Northern Mozambique Coral Reefs", *Ecosphere* 8, no. 5 (2017).

11 World Bank Group, *Mozambique: Country Climate and Development Report* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2023).

12 Instituto Nacional de Estatística, *Anuario Estatístico 2021: Moçambique* [Statistical Yearbook 2021: Mozambique] (Maputo: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2022).

most economically vulnerable to climate change of the 160 countries studied in the Climate and Economic Vulnerability Index (CEVI).<sup>13</sup> The CEVI ranks countries according to the vulnerability of their economies to climate change – a major issue for African countries, which historically have struggled to invest in implementing their NDCs because of economic constraints.

Some of the most severe climate disasters recently include the El Niño drought of 2015/2016, which affected more than 2 million people, reducing food availability by 15% from 2015–2017.<sup>14</sup> Droughts and cyclones continue to devastate communities and infrastructure, impacting food production, energy generation and transportation. In 2019 Cyclone Idai flooded 715 378ha of cropland and destroyed bridges, roads, schools and hospitals. Just a few weeks later, at least 45 people were killed during Cyclone Kenneth, which made landfall in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado province. This has been the deadliest cyclone season for the southwest Indian Ocean region to date.<sup>15</sup>

Addressing these challenges requires significant investment in climate resilience, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, which supports the livelihoods of 81% of the population.<sup>16</sup> Although the country’s recent policies promote the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and encourage the adoption of nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation, climate change will have a negative impact on biodiversity. For instance, more severe cyclones will reduce the capacity of mangrove forests and seagrass beds to recover and will diminish the provision of environmental goods and important ecological services.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, while healthy ecosystems are key to reducing the country’s vulnerability and increasing climate resilience,<sup>18</sup> they may not be able to counteract some of the effects of climate change.<sup>19</sup>

## Mozambique’s NDC

Mozambique’s revised NDC is aimed at reducing emissions by 40 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>eq) between 2020 and 2025. Measures focus mainly on adaptation and resilience to respond climate change. They cover the following: energy, forestry, biodiversity, agriculture and fisheries, sustainable land use, waste management, industry, early warning

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- 13 Joseph Matola, “Measuring Economic Vulnerability and Resilience to Climate Change” (COVID-19 Macroeconomic Policy Responses in Africa Policy Insight 27, South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, February 16, 2024). The indicators used to develop this index capture the likelihood of climate-related shocks, country dependence on agriculture, resource stress and food security vulnerability.
  - 14 Southern Africa Drought Resilience Initiative, “Drought Resilience Profiles: Mozambique”, [https://www.ciwaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/SADRI\\_Drought\\_Resilience\\_Profile\\_Mozambique.pdf](https://www.ciwaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/SADRI_Drought_Resilience_Profile_Mozambique.pdf).
  - 15 UNDP, “Mozambique Cyclone Idai Post-Disaster Needs Assessment” (UNDP, New York, May 30, 2019).
  - 16 World Bank Group, Country Climate and Development Report: Mozambique (Washington DC: World Bank, 2023).
  - 17 Celia Macamo et al., “Mangrove’s Response to Cyclone Eline (2000): What Is Happening 14 Years Later”, *Aquatic Botany* 134 (2016): 10–17; Salomão Bandeira et al., “Impact of Cyclones and Floods on Seagrass Habitats”, in *Cyclones in Southern Africa Volume 3: Implications for the Sustainable Development Goals*, eds. Godwell Nhamo and David Chikodzi (Cham: Springer, 2021).
  - 18 Alberto Charrua et al., “Assessment of the Vulnerability of Coastal Mangrove Ecosystems in Mozambique”, *Ocean and Coastal Management* 189 (2020).
  - 19 Damboia Cossa, Eduardo Infantes and Sam Dupont, “Hidden Cost of pH Variability in Seagrass Beds on Marine Calcifiers under Ocean Acidification”, *Science of the Total Environment* 915 (2024).

systems, water resources and sanitation, health, social security, infrastructure, urban areas, settlements, tourism, coastal zones, communication and education. Strategic actions aim to strengthen early warning systems, enhance resilience in agriculture and fisheries and promote low-carbon agricultural practices. They also focus on improving water resource management, conserving biodiversity and developing climate-resilient urban areas and tourism zones. Five of these strategic actions directly affect the development of important community livelihoods (fisheries, agriculture and tourism), while the others will have indirect impacts (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION MEASURES IN MOZAMBIQUE'S NDC WITH DIRECT IMPACT ON COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS	
Measure	Impact on community livelihoods
Strengthening early warning systems	This includes actions to collect, assess and provide timely and accessible meteorological information to communities, including fishermen and farmers. This will enhance community preparedness for extreme weather events, reducing losses and facilitating recovery (eg, fishermen can protect boats and fish-processing infrastructure; farmers can protect backup seeds for the following agricultural season; communities in general can reinforce infrastructure).
Enhancing the resilience of agriculture, livestock and fisheries	This includes adopting climate-smart technology, reinforcing the necessary infrastructure and integrating good governance practices. It also refers to ecosystem conservation and rehabilitation, ensuring food security in both coastal and terrestrial communities. Resilient agriculture, livestock and fisheries will provide incomes and jobs for communities and have positive impacts on community health and nutrition.
Promoting low-carbon agricultural practices	Low-carbon and climate-smart agriculture is important to maintain food production without neglecting biodiversity conservation and the preservation of habitats that are key to climate change mitigation (eg, wetlands and mangrove forests). It will also provide job opportunities, livelihoods and better health and nutrition for communities.
Developing climate-resilient urban areas and tourism zones	This includes identifying the most appropriate areas for tourism development (avoiding the most vulnerable areas), promoting good environmental practices and adequate building codes among tourism operators and adopting climate insurance by tourism operators.

Source: Compiled by authors

The revision of Mozambique's NDC was led by the National Directorate of Climate Change under the Ministry of Land and Environment. Mozambique submitted its Intended NDC in 2015, which became its first NDC upon its ratifying the Paris Agreement in 2018. An updated version of the NDC was submitted in 2021. The revision aimed to increase ambition and align actions with the latest science, particularly by incorporating blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrass beds, which have significant carbon sequestration potential.<sup>20</sup>

20 Suhaib Bandh et al., "Importance of Blue Carbon in Mitigating Climate Change and Plastic/Microplastic Pollution and Promoting Circular Economy", *Sustainability* 15, no. 3 (2023); Lindsay Wylie, Ariana E Sutton-Grier and Amber Moore, "Keys to Successful Blue Carbon Projects: Lessons Learned from Global Case Studies", *Marine Policy* 65 (March 2016): 76-84.



The NDC Partnership provided support in budgeting the NDC actions and identifying commitments whose realisation was supported by international climate support.<sup>21</sup> The revised NDC also considered several strategies and development plans with relevant information on vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. These included the National Strategy for Climate Change (2013–2025), the Technology Action Plan for Coastal Adaptation, the Local Adaptation Plans of 123 districts, the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC and other strategic documents.<sup>22</sup>

### *Civil society engagement in the NDC revision process*

Civil society engagement in the NDC revision process was overseen by a climate change consultancy. Through a series of virtual engagements, the NDC revision team sought to include stakeholders from various groups, including academia (represented by the Eduardo Mondlane University), the private sector (represented by the Confederation of Trade Associations) and civil society groups such as the Grupo Inter-Institucional de Mudanças Climáticas (Inter-Institutional Group for Climate Change) and the Plataforma Nacional das Organizações da Sociedade Civil para Mudanças Climáticas (National Civil Society Organisations' Platform for Climate Change). The Platform for Climate Change is the main institution representing civil society on climate issues in Mozambique and has a current membership of 20 CSOs. Its objective is to bring together civil society actors to promote awareness and understanding of climate issues and support engagement in Mozambique's climate planning processes.

Despite efforts to include civil society stakeholders, some felt the process was insufficiently inclusive, with limited opportunities for meaningful participation, particularly in proposing changes to the draft NDC.<sup>23</sup> A lack of understanding of the technical details included in the NDC, as well as a general lack of understanding about climate change, impeded civil society contributions to the revision process. Other challenges included short notice periods for upcoming meetings and limited opportunities for stakeholder input. The onset of COVID-19 also had an impact on civil society participation in the NDC revision process. While steps were taken to create opportunities for online participation, many people were unable to access the internet to attend the virtual meetings. The pandemic also had a knock-on effect on government productivity and efficiency, affecting communication between government and civil society.

To strengthen the voices of civil society in the NDC process, it is necessary to enhance collaboration and communication between CSOs, specifically through the Climate Change Platform. CSOs often operate in silos and do not regularly share information

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21 NDC Partnership, "Mudança de paradigma: Moçambique lança o seu Plano de Parceria para catalisar a implementação das metas de longo prazo de suas NDC" [Paradigm shift : Mozambique Launches its Partnership Plan to Catalyse the Implementation of the Long-Term Goals of its NDC] (blog post), February 12, 2019.

22 Government of Mozambique, "Updated First National Determined Contribution of Mozambique, Climate Change Directorate - Ministry of Land and the Environment", UN Climate Change, Nationally Determined Contributions Registry, [https://unfccc.int/NDCREG?gad\\_source=1&gclid=EAlalQobChMIrp7Bz4H5hQMVRkxBAhO\\_zgxREAAAYASAAEgKt-PD\\_BwE](https://unfccc.int/NDCREG?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlalQobChMIrp7Bz4H5hQMVRkxBAhO_zgxREAAAYASAAEgKt-PD_BwE).

23 These are insights from interviews for this project.

with one another, inhibiting collaborative inputs into the NDC process. Greater inclusion of CSOs in the NDC process will ensure that the climate change interventions proposed in the NDC will not have unintended negative consequences for local communities. For example, it is important to ensure that the nature-based solutions proposed in the NDC consider communities' reliance on natural resources for their livelihoods, and that these communities are consulted and included in such interventions from inception.

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## South Africa

### *Climate risk profile*

South Africa is classified as an upper-middle-income country and has one of the most developed economies on the continent.<sup>24</sup> According to the CEVI rankings, South Africa is relatively less economically vulnerable to climate change than other African countries, ranking 103<sup>rd</sup> of the 160 countries studied. Despite its relative resilience, South Africa does face significant climate impacts, which threaten to exacerbate existing challenges related to poverty, inequality and unemployment. The economy showed a slight recovery in 2022 following the recession of the COVID-19 pandemic but is hindered by the ongoing electricity crisis, which is a significant obstacle to gross domestic product (GDP) growth. A projected 250 days of loadshedding in 2024 will translate to a \$12.7 billion loss for the country and slow down GDP growth to just 0.3%.<sup>25</sup>

South Africa's energy sector remains dominated by coal, making the country the 12<sup>th</sup> largest GHG emitter in the world and overall largest emitter on the continent. Coal mining, concentrated in the Mpumalanga province, supports 92 000 direct jobs and around 170 000 indirect jobs, contributes significantly to South Africa's energy sector and made up 10.13% of its foreign exchange earnings in 2020.<sup>26</sup> The country's climate change commitments focus on decarbonising its electricity sector, with development partners providing financial support to facilitate the transition. At COP26 in 2021, South Africa entered

24 International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Report: Countering the Cost-Of-Living Crisis*, Report (Washington DC: IMF, October 2022).

25 Dimaketso Leshoro, "South Africa Will Only See Growth of 0.3% This Year, Says SARB", *News24*, January 26, 2023.

26 Megan Cole, Mzila Mthenjane and Andrew van Zyl, "The Just Transition and the Coal Mining Sector in South Africa", *Journal of the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy* 122, no. 11 (November 2022); Government of South Africa, "Minister Gwede Mantashe: Coal Colloquium", February 1, 2022.

into a \$8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership with a group of developed partner countries to help accelerate the country's transition toward renewable energy generation.

Climate change will have an impact on all sectors of the economy, particularly natural resource-based livelihoods, which support millions of people in South Africa.<sup>27</sup> The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors are key components of the economy, contributing around 2.5% to the country's GDP and playing a crucial role in exports.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the tourism sector, which constitutes approximately 3.7% of GDP, is a major job creator, employing over 1.5 million people.<sup>29</sup>

TABLE 2 IMPACT OF KEY CLIMATE RISKS ON NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED LIVELIHOODS IN SOUTH AFRICA	
Climate risk	Impact on natural resource-based livelihood
Warming temperatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers are particularly threatened by rising temperatures, as South Africa struggles with water scarcity in the Western Cape, Northern Cape and Gauteng (three of the nine provinces and including two of the country's economic hubs).</li> <li>• Warmer waters impact fish population and distribution, while rising sea levels pose significant risks to South Africa's coastal towns and cities.</li> </ul>
Water scarcity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rainfall is set to decline over parts of the country, threatening already water-scarce areas and the country's agricultural sector.</li> </ul>
Unpredictable rainfall patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flash flooding remains a key concern, especially as South Africa struggles with insufficient wastewater management systems. Floods, such as were seen in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) in 2021, are projected to increase. The economic cost of the KZN flooding has been estimated at ZAR<sup>a</sup> 17 billion (over \$890 million).</li> </ul>
Biodiversity risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The heightened risk of extreme weather events and the onset of desertification and salination will have dire implications for South Africa's soil quality, agricultural land and biodiversity.</li> <li>• This has negative implications for livelihoods in sectors such as tourism, agriculture and fishing, which depend on ecosystem services.</li> </ul>

a Currency code for the South African rand

Source: Compiled by authors with insights from G20 Climate Risk Atlas, *South Africa Report*, 2021, <https://files.cmcc.it/g20climaterisks/SouthAfrica.pdf>

The impact of coal mining on natural resource-based communities is immense. The future of mining is highly contested – while the industry supports a large portion of the population, it also contributes negatively to the health and surrounding environment of local communities. CSOs have used the legal system to prevent the development of new coal-fired power stations.

27 Centre for Environmental Rights, "Comments on South Africa's Draft Updated Nationally Determined Contribution", April 30, 2021.

28 World Bank Data, "Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing, Value Added (% of GDP): South Africa", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ZA>

29 Government of South Africa, "Deputy Minister Lindiwe Sisulu: Tourism Dept Budget Vote 2022/23", May 19, 2022; "Tourism Contributed 1.5 Million Jobs and R425.8 bn in SA: Report", News24, April 1, 2019.

South Africa recently adopted the [Just Energy Transition Framework \(2022\)](#) and the [Just Transition Investment Plan \(JET-IP\) \(2023-2027\)](#). It has also passed the new [Climate Change Bill \(2022\)](#), which aims to synergise the country's climate change response and ensure a just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.<sup>30</sup> Through the JET-IP, South Africa plans to diversify its energy mix and increase its solar, wind and green hydrogen capacities in a transition away from coal.

The Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) was operationalised at the end of 2020 to bring together various stakeholders to inform South Africa's climate policy development

The Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) was operationalised at the end of 2020 to bring together various stakeholders to inform South Africa's climate policy development. The PCC was established to create a singular government body with the mandate to manage the energy transition and related climate change responses in a coordinated manner. Its composition supports the society- and economy-wide shifts required to respond to the threat of climate change. Through the commission, the president, 10 of his ministers and 26 business, youth, labour, academia, research and civil society groups are brought together in one forum. The PCC works towards meaningful inclusion in various hybrid and in-person dialogues and workshops that inform its work. Key findings from civil society engagement are also fed back to relevant government departments and policy processes. Cross-departmental collaboration and focus group interests have come together to produce technical but accessible documents that guide the just transition in this early phase.

### *South Africa's NDC*

South Africa submitted its revised [NDC](#) to the UNFCCC in September 2021, setting out measures to enhance the country's resilience through improved early warning systems and disaster risk-reduction measures. The revised NDC tightens the country's emissions targets to a more ambitious 28% and 33% below business-as-usual levels by 2025 and 2030, respectively. The NDC acknowledges the urgent need to transition away from coal and outlines sector-specific targets for energy, transport, heavy industry, agriculture and waste, as well as adaptation measures – in reference to the country's [National Climate Adaptation Strategy \(2019\)](#). The revised NDC makes specific reference to the just transition, highlighting that measures will be developed to plan for workforce reskilling, social protection and the

30 Parliament of South Africa, "Climate Change Bill", [https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Bills/2022/B9\\_2022\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Bill/B9\\_2022\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Bill.pdf](https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Bills/2022/B9_2022_Climate_Change_Bill/B9_2022_Climate_Change_Bill.pdf).

development of new green sectors for the economy, such as green hydrogen and electric vehicle manufacturing.

In direct response to some of South Africa's key climate concerns, the NDC recognises the country's water scarcity and outlines measures to improve water conservation and management. This includes increasing investment in water infrastructure and continuing to promote water-efficient use in water-heavy sectors such as agriculture and industry.<sup>31</sup> The revised NDC highlights the *Integrated Resource Plan (2019)*,<sup>32</sup> which sets out the country's investment needs for renewable energy. The NDC argues that a co-benefit of ramping up renewable energy capacity will be lower water usage (more water is needed in coal-power generation). In addition, increased renewable energy production will reduce pollution, thereby lowering the climate threats to biodiversity.<sup>33</sup>

### *Civil society engagement in the NDC revision process*

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) worked with the University of Cape Town and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research on qualitative and quantitative research on the mitigation and adaptation included in the revised NDC. Given the constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholder consultations were held virtually and in person. Over the course of three months, the DFFE held technical consultations with key stakeholders and engaged with the public across a range of platforms. This process also included a month-long period for written submissions by civil society and interested stakeholders, which were used to inform the final version of the NDC, endorsed by Cabinet in September 2021.

The department organised multi-stakeholder hybrid workshops that brought together representatives from civil society, academia, the private sector and various levels of government to discuss the main issues related to the NDC review. Cross-departmental consultations within government were facilitated through the Inter-governmental Committee on Climate Change, while the National Committee on Climate Change ran virtual consultations with broader partners. Targeted virtual consultations were held in April 2021 with interest groups that represented business (28 April 2021) and youth (29 April 2021). The department engaged provincial leadership through multi-stakeholder workshops across all nine provinces throughout May 2021. These were attended by provincial members of the executive councils as well as high-ranking government officials and the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, Barbara Creecy.<sup>34</sup>

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31 Government of South Africa, *South Africa: First Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement, Updated September 2021* (Paris: UNFCCC, November 2021).

32 The South African government has since adopted a revised *Integrated Resource Plan (2023)*: see Republic of South Africa, "Integrated Resource Plan, 2023", Government Gazette 703, no. 49974 (January 4, 2024).

33 Government of South Africa, *South Africa: First Nationally*, 5.

34 The South African NDC review process was presented in the South African virtual workshop by Mkhuthazi Steleki Director: Department of Fisheries Forestry and Environment (DFFE), Climate Change Development and International Mechanisms. The workshop took place virtually on 20 September 2023 and was hosted by SAIIA.

For the youth contingent, the Youth Policy Committee and the Youth@SAILA team engaged the department and organised a hybrid workshop for youth participants to draft a youth submission on the proposed revised NDC. This workshop featured presentations from climate experts on the proposed revised NDC and involved educating young people on the NDCs as they prepared to make their own presentation to the DFFE in the youth-focused virtual consultation that took place on 29 April 2021.

Despite the consultation process outlined above, CSOs have highlighted gaps in the revised NDC for natural resource-based livelihoods. As the Environmental Law Association and Animal Law Reform South Africa argues, the revised NDC is missing a specific section to cover mitigation challenges in the fishing and agricultural sectors.<sup>35</sup> Both sectors contribute to environmental degradation. Earthlife Africa and groundWork have also criticised the revised NDC, arguing that it does not reflect the deep transformation needed for a just transition.<sup>36</sup> Overall, the revised NDC would benefit from a clearer implementation plan for its new targets. It also requires more even levels of attention to natural resource-based livelihoods beyond the mining sector.

## Zambia

### *Climate risk profile*

Close to 40% of Zambia's wealth is tied to natural resources (including land, water and forests), making environmental sustainability a key national policy priority.<sup>37</sup> These resources support the country's development goals on job creation, poverty reduction, economic diversification and energy security. Zambia's *Vision 2030* aims to achieve middle-income status for the nation by 2030. This is in the face of macro-economic challenges such as high inflation and unsustainable debt levels, which have hindered economic growth and prompted the recent recession. Real GDP contracted by an estimated 4.9% in 2020, after growing by 4.0% in 2018 and 1.9% in 2019. The mining, tourism and manufacturing sectors helped facilitate Zambia's economic recovery in 2022, with real GDP growing by 3.0%.<sup>38</sup> Zambia ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> of 160 countries in the CEVI, being particularly economically vulnerable to climate change. It experiences frequent droughts, seasonal and flash floods, extreme temperatures and dry spells, all of which are expected to intensify as the climate crisis deepens.

Natural resource-based livelihoods in Zambia face significant climate change risks, including changes in precipitation patterns, increased frequency and intensity of extreme

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35 Animal Law Reform South Africa and Environmental Law Association, "[Provisional Comments on South Africa's Proposed Updated Nationally Determined Contribution in Terms of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement](#)", April 29, 2021.

36 groundWork and Earthlife Africa, "[groundWork and Earthlife Africa's Comments on South Africa's New Nationally Determined Contribution](#)", April 30, 2021.

37 World Bank, *Zambia's Natural Capital Accounts: Informing Key Policy Priorities* (Washington DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and World Bank, June 2020).

38 African Development Bank, "Zambia Economic Outlook", <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries-southern-africa-zambia/zambia-economic-outlook#:~:text=Real%20GDP%20recovered%20to%204.6,agriculture%2C%20and%20mining%20and%20quarrying>.

weather events and temperature changes. These risks pose challenges across various sectors.<sup>39</sup> Mining is a prime economic driver for Zambia, which is a major producer of copper, cobalt and coal. The mining sector is also a significant energy user and, while the country has developed a climate-sensitive hydroelectric power capacity (80.8% of electricity generation), this is outstripped by the growing demand for energy as Zambia's population grows.<sup>40</sup>

Agriculture faces numerous threats from climate change, with the majority of the population depending on the sector for their livelihoods. It is estimated that temperature and rainfall changes will reduce water availability by about 13% by 2100.<sup>41</sup> Droughts reduce the amount of water available to farmers, while floods cause waterlogging. Changes to the growing conditions of crops disrupt food systems, leading to food shortages and rising food prices. Fisheries are also at risk from rising temperatures. At the same time, the country's health sector is placed under considerable pressure during droughts and floods because of outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid.

Around 20% of rural household incomes is drawn from forest resources, which are facing the potential loss of 10 million ha over the next 30 years because of climate change.<sup>42</sup> Changing weather patterns with more frequent droughts and higher temperatures are leading to increased forest fires. This hampers proper regeneration in Zambia's miombo forest, for example, and reduces the harvest of non-wood forest products such as caterpillars, wild fruit and mushrooms.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, wildlife is under threat from illegal harvesting amid encroachment on protected areas – a trend expected to escalate as other livelihoods are disrupted. The economic impact of this encroachment on wildlife zones and destruction of forests is especially heightened for Zambia, where tourism is a priority sector. The sector is key to employment creation, foreign exchange generation and economic growth but is reliant on big game and natural landmarks such as waterfalls, which are increasingly threatened by climate change.

## Zambia's NDC

Overall, climate change poses significant risks to Zambia's natural resource-based livelihoods, affecting sectors crucial for the country's economy and development. Its NDC outlines the country's commitment to reducing GHG emissions and adapting to climate change impacts.

The revised NDC aims to reduce GHG emissions by 25% by 2030 compared to business-as-usual levels. Sustainable forest management and agricultural practices that can help it

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39 M Chundama, *Review and Synthesis of Existing Data and Knowledge on Climate Risks and Vulnerabilities of Marginalized Social Groups in Key Sectors and Geographical Areas Including Agro-Ecological Regions and Catchment Areas*, Internal Report (Lusaka: Ministry of Green Economy and Environment and Global Water Partnership Southern Africa, 2022).

40 Chundama, *Review and Synthesis*.

41 Chundama, *Review and Synthesis*.

42 Chundama, *Review and Synthesis*.

43 Temwani Mgunda, "Saving Africa's Miombo Woodlands", *Dialogue Earth*, April 3, 2023.

meet this goal include measures to reduce deforestation, promote the participation of local communities in forest management and explore the potential of carbon sequestration. Zambia also plans to roll out renewable and energy efficiency initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. The country aims to enhance the generation of low-carbon hydroelectricity, increase nationally installed solar energy capacity and explore biomass-based electricity sources.

Adaptation actions will cut across the agriculture, wildlife and water sectors, as well as address health and infrastructure systems. Efforts will be centred on protecting and improving the country's food security through the deployment of climate-smart agriculture practices in terms of crops, livestock and fisheries. The revised NDC makes specific reference to conserving water catchment areas by investing in water capture, storage and transfer systems in major watersheds for agricultural, industrial, domestic and energy-use purposes. Zambia mainstreams climate change in its [National Health Strategic Plan \(2022–2026\)](#) and [National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy \(2020\)](#) and aims to institutionalise integrated land use planning and sustainable resource management and infrastructure development across sectors to improve resilience. The revised NDC calls for decentralising climate information services for early warning and long-term climate projections in an effort to support infrastructure development and public health. The NDC highlights the significant capacity building and technology needs of Zambia, looking to enhance the country's research and technical capacities in climate-smart agriculture techniques and sustainable forest, fisheries and aquaculture management. It also hopes to increase its capacity in terms of change management and climate planning.

Overall, the revised NDC's mitigation and adaptation priorities are aligned with the main climate threats facing natural resource-based livelihoods and seek to protect these sectors against climate change.

### *Civil society engagement in the NDC revision process*

Zambia submitted its first NDC in 2016 and revised it in 2021, making a deliberate effort to include civil society and broader stakeholder voices. In terms of the NDC process, Zambia established the [National Policy on Climate Change](#) in 2016, which brings together various coordination structures from ministerial to technical committee levels. CSOs and broader stakeholders are included in these processes in order to incorporate ground-level vulnerabilities into decision-making, provide technical support, encourage ambitious action and build capacity. Capacity building and inclusivity were promoted through workshops facilitated by the Climate and Development Knowledge Network and the government, through which stakeholders developed an NDC Implementation Plan.<sup>44</sup>

Stakeholder engagement was aimed at ensuring that Zambia's NDC aligned with national development priorities and gained buy-in from all actors. Various platforms, both within

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<sup>44</sup> Climate and Development Knowledge Network, ["Zambia Works Toward Delivering Its National Climate Commitment"](#), May 16, 2017.



and outside the government, helped to facilitate public engagement, including cluster advisory groups, provincial and district development coordinating committees and sectoral technical working groups. These platforms allow for dialogue and feedback among communities, the government and civil society. The ZCCN coordinates actions by CSOs in Zambia and was involved in revising the NDC between 2020 and 2021. The ZCCN hosted two meetings to review the draft NDC and participated in the NDC implementation framework processes for Zambia.<sup>45</sup>

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Despite efforts to promote effective inclusion in the NDC revision, the process did face some challenges, particularly in terms of a lack of clarity on participation mechanisms and limited capacity-building support for stakeholders. At the local level, opportunities to engage the formal consultation mechanisms were limited, which eroded confidence in the revision process and the resulting NDC. Stakeholders observed that considerations of gender representation were not consistently applied across the participation and consultation mechanisms, thereby marginalising vulnerable and underrepresented voices. Addressing these challenges is essential for enhancing the inclusivity and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in Zambia's NDC processes.

## Lesson sharing and policy recommendations for inclusive NDC development

As part of the 'Strengthening Civil Society Voices on Natural Resources and Climate' project, hybrid or virtual workshops were held in each participating country, followed by a regional workshop in Cape Town. The national workshops brought government and civil society stakeholders together to discuss their national NDC revision processes and to share lessons on how inclusivity could be strengthened. These insights were incorporated into national assessments of the NDC revision processes. The regional workshop provided an opportunity for lesson and best-practice sharing between representatives of the project countries. It also facilitated relationship building both between national civil society and government

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<sup>45</sup> These are insights shared at the Zambian national workshop on inclusive NDCs, held on 17 August 2023 and hosted by the ZCCN as part of this project.

and between stakeholders from different countries. Several policy recommendations are made below, building on the insights from and recommendations discussed during the workshops.

## **NDCs must consider societal issues that go beyond climate change**

The majority of people in the project countries face daily struggles in terms of employment, equality and access to basic services such as water, electricity and transport. It is important that these are considered when NDCs are developed and that they integrate climate-resilient solutions that speak to overcoming the challenges faced by marginalised and poor communities. Such considerations are important to ensure that NDCs are not seen as top-down bureaucratic processes imposed by government. The buy-in of civil society in the NDC process is vital.

There is also a need to recognise the diverse backgrounds, needs and priorities of civil society stakeholders. Civil society is often seen as a single, cohesive stakeholder group and, as such, stakeholder engagement processes fail to account for conflicting views and opinions. In this regard, there is a need to recognise the complexity of the civil society engagement process.

## **Innovative communication channels can support broad-based participation**

Concerns about inadequate information on policy input opportunities, particularly for marginalised and poor communities, were noted in all three project countries. Government should employ multiple communication channels, some of which will be more effective for particular civil society stakeholder groups. For example, social media is the preferred communication channel for youth. Radio announcements and the distribution of hard-copy brochures in communities where internet access is limited will ensure these stakeholders are not excluded.

It is also important that environment ministries consult with government communications departments to tailor communication channels to specific stakeholder groups. Dedicated platforms should facilitate civil society engagement in NDC development. Where such platforms exist (eg, the Climate Change Platform in Mozambique and the ZCCN), it is important that the government supports their efforts to influence policy development.

A significant barrier facing the inclusion of marginalised communities in the previous NDC revision process was COVID-19 and the resultant inability to hold face-to-face consultations. Governments did implement virtual consultations, but unfortunately these excluded many marginalised and poor communities. The pandemic highlighted the need for countries to be adaptive and flexible in their efforts to promote inclusion, which is a key lesson going forward in the next NDC revision cycle.

A failure to include Indigenous knowledge (because of local communities' being excluded from the revision process) in the NDCs was a major concern raised by civil society. Given that these communities may struggle to access the internet or travel to consultation events hosted in national or provincial capitals, there is a need to create face-to-face opportunities through, for example, *imbizo*-type events (traditional gatherings that take place in the local community). Government representatives should travel to communities to facilitate such engagements and ensure that community needs and concerns are integrated into the NDC development process. When consultations are convened in national or provincial capitals, efforts should also be made to include groups that face barriers to participation.

Government representatives should travel to communities to facilitate such engagements and ensure that community needs and concerns are integrated into the NDC development process

## Engagement and coordination between national, provincial and local governments can ensure NDCs speak to different geographical and societal needs

To ensure NDCs address the needs of communities on the ground, efficient coordination mechanisms should be established between different spheres of government, as well as across different government ministries (eg, health, tourism, fisheries, etc.). While NDCs represent national plans in alignment with the goals of the Paris Agreement, NDC implementation relies on action at the local level, and affects multiple sectors. Inclusive, multi-stakeholder institutions and feedback mechanisms are therefore essential to ensure NDCs are implemented effectively and tracked. In South Africa, the PCC has been instrumental in this regard, particularly in promoting inclusion in the development of policies aimed at driving the country's just transition. For example, when the commission developed South Africa's Just Transition Framework and JET-IP, both went through a series of stakeholder engagements with civil society and communities. The PCC plays a pivotal role in providing government with important information regarding relevant community needs and priorities. In Zambia, the ZCCN has been instrumental in tracking NDC implementation at sub-national levels through an NDC tracking tool. The results of the tracking tool confirmed that most people, especially at the grassroots level, do not fully understand NDCs. In Mozambique, it was also noted that civil society has a poor understanding of the technical content of the NDCs. In parallel with the NDC tracking tool, the ZCCN plans to develop a scorecard to evaluate the country's capacity to implement its NDCs. This will help build an evidence base for increased capacity building where it is most needed, and so will help accelerate the achievement of the country's NDCs.

## Civil society engagement in policy processes should go beyond written submissions

Stakeholder engagement processes often include activities such as hosting stakeholder engagement workshops and allowing written public comments on draft policies. These processes, however, tend to exclude civil society stakeholders who cannot attend the workshops or do not have access to information about policy input processes. In addition, workshops are often held in English, which excludes people who cannot speak the language. The use of translators or facilitators in engagement workshops can help ensure the voices of non-English speakers are heard in policy engagement opportunities.

To ensure policy development processes account for the needs of people who do not have access to the internet or who are unable to read and understand the policy document for written submission, government representatives need to go into communities and collate verbal inputs. Gatherings such as *lekgotlas* or *imbizos* are currently being explored by the South African government.

Government should implement engagement processes that involve civil society early in the NDC development process

Careful consideration also needs to be given about when to involve civil society in the policy development process. Many CSOs have raised concerns that civil society is only invited to participate once the policy has already been drafted. This limits opportunities for civil society to contribute to the policy design or the background information that informs policy development. Government should implement engagement processes that involve civil society early in the NDC development process. For example, CSOs could have helped government identify the important information that was missing in the first NDC, before the revision process took place. It is also important that civil society is brought along during entire policy development processes and that it is given regular updates, so CSOs know whether their inputs are being given due consideration. More transparency and communication around NDC implementation are needed to instil confidence in civil society regarding government's commitment to addressing climate change.

## Civil society needs to be capacitated on the Paris Agreement and climate change more broadly, to ensure clear understanding of the importance of NDCs

Consultation with governments needs to go beyond involvement in the NDC development process. It should include discussions around the Paris Agreement and outcomes of previous global climate negotiations (COPs). It is important that civil society is informed and empowered to engage in broader global discussions on climate change. This can help ensure that civil society is equipped with the necessary knowledge and background to make robust inputs into the NDC development processes. As such, engagement between government and civil society should be a two-way process, ie, sharing information with civil society and receiving and integrating information from civil society. Several development partners are capacitating civil society to participate in the NDC process. For example, Care about Climate's NDC Equity Project has trained more than 200 young people on 'how to understand and analyse their country's NDC for intergenerational and gender justice'.<sup>46</sup> Such interventions can be scaled and customised to take account of unique national circumstances.

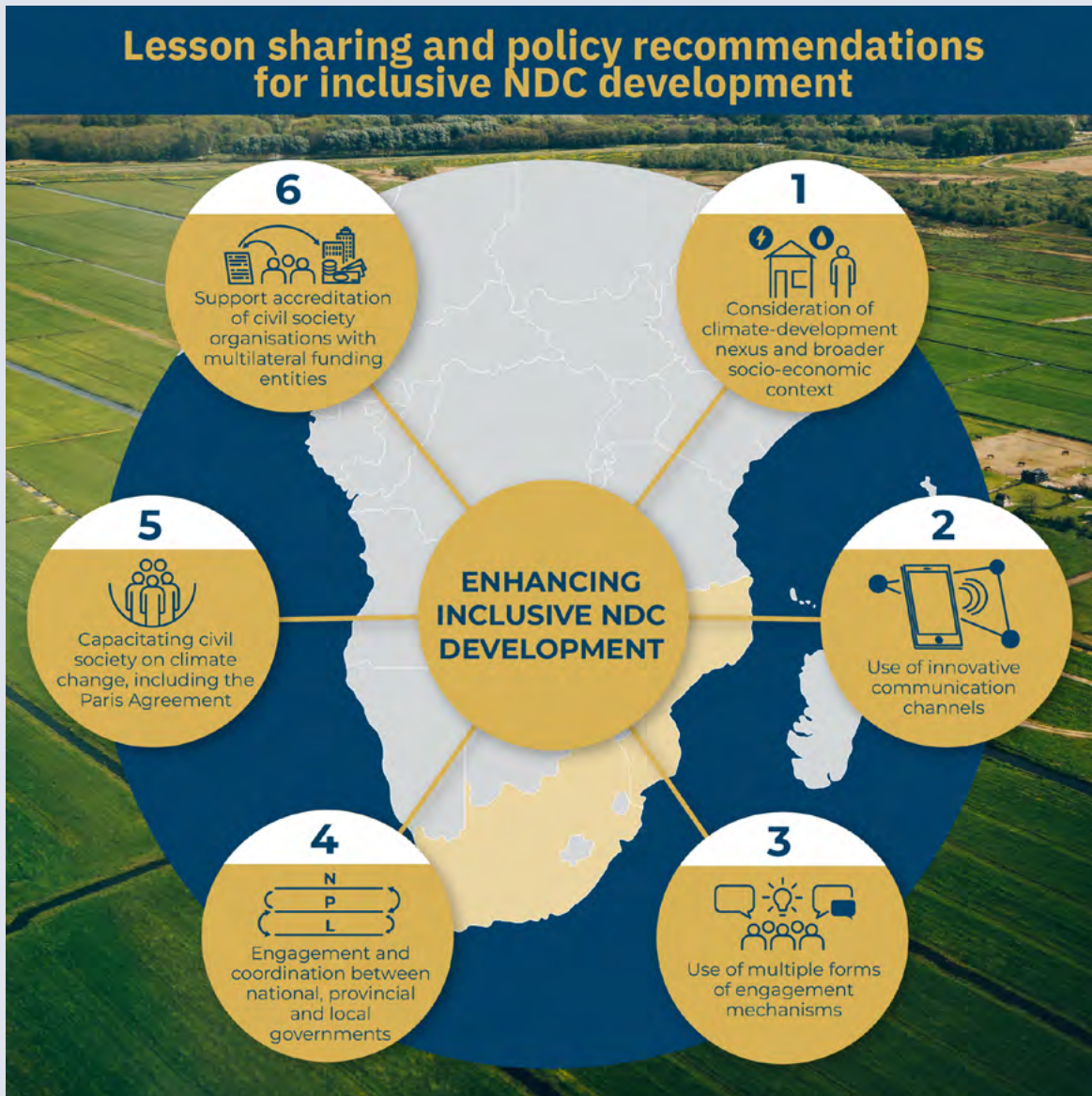
## CSOs need support in pursuit of accreditation with multilateral funding entities such as the Green Climate Fund

The two biggest challenges facing CSOs are a lack of funding and a lack of capacity to participate formally in policy development and implementation. To enhance a sense of ownership of climate policy and generate will for climate change implementation, government should support civil society in securing funding for work on NDCs and climate more broadly. Such support may include efforts to secure accreditation from large multilateral funds such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Fund. The accreditation process is complicated and often requires that organisations have a successful track record of securing funding and implementing large-scale projects. While many CSOs do not meet the funding or size requirements for formal accreditation, they are often best placed to implement projects at ground level, given their close relationships with communities. In this regard, governments should work with CSOs to help scale their business operations and capacitate them to apply for accreditation once they meet the funds' requirements. Larger grants secured by governments and other accredited agencies could also be structured to ensure that a portion of the funds can be allocated to CSOs and so support inclusive implementation.

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46 Vladislav Kaim, *On Equal Terms: A Checklist for Decision Makers & Practitioners on a Youth-Inclusive NDC Process* (New York: UNDP, October 2023).

Figure 3 Lesson sharing and policy recommendations for NDC development



Source: Compiled by authors

## Conclusion

With the next NDC revisions due in 2025, it is of paramount importance that countries increase their ambition by developing robust and inclusive NDCs that account for national climate mitigation and adaptation priorities. Given the extent of climate vulnerability in Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa, it is essential that the revised NDCs speak to the most pressing climate change concerns and are aligned with national and regional development policy agendas. While all three countries undertook stakeholder engagement

plans in the previous NDC revision process, it is clear that several barriers to inclusion impacted the extent to which civil society could contribute effectively. To overcome these and other challenges in the next NDC review process, government and civil society should work collaboratively by developing new, innovative and transparent engagement strategies that will prevent the most marginalised communities from being left behind in the development of climate-resilient pathways. This will ensure that natural resource-based livelihoods are safeguarded while supporting an economy-wide transition that includes all sectors and civil society groups in the transition toward climate-resilient development. Peer learning and knowledge exchanges between African countries on inclusive NDC development can help ensure good practices are replicated and scaled. This will accelerate not only the achievement of the Paris Agreement but also other relevant climate frameworks such as the [AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan \(2022-2032\)](#) and the [SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan \(2020-2030\)](#). Such efforts would also contribute to broader development frameworks, including the AU's Agenda 2063 and the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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SAIIA is an independent, non-government think tank whose key strategic objectives are to make effective input into public policy, and to encourage wider and more informed debate on international affairs, with particular emphasis on African issues and concerns.

SAIIA's occasional papers present topical, incisive analyses, offering a variety of perspectives on key policy issues in Africa and beyond.

## Cover image

Miombo woodland, Zambia (Joanne Hedger via Getty Images)

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