

Beyond Commitments

Negotiating Climate Justice for Vulnerable Communities

27 March 2025



1 Introduction

The **Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA)** is dedicated to accelerating climate adaptation investments and fostering resilience among vulnerable communities through its **274 global members**, including **NGOs, research institutions, think tanks, and government agencies**. As an active ARA member, the **African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS)** leads regional advocacy efforts, focusing on **climate finance, adaptation policy, and sustainability**. ACTS plays a pivotal role in shaping **COP 30 negotiations**, ensuring Africa's adaptation priorities are reflected in global climate policy. Key efforts include **multi-stakeholder engagements, regional policy workshops, and virtual discussions** to influence the **New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** on **climate finance** and the **Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)**. Central to this work is **climate justice**, encompassing **procedural, distributive, and retributive justice**, advocating for **transparent, needs-based adaptation finance** directed at frontline communities.

As global discussions advance, ACTS remains committed to pushing for **fair adaptation finance mechanisms** and ensuring vulnerable populations receive the resources they need to combat climate change. The ARA and ACTS are committed to ensuring that the voices, interests, and priorities of vulnerable communities are not only recognized but also meaningfully integrated into the decision-making processes at COP 30. Through strategic engagement and advocacy, both organizations aim to influence climate negotiations to drive equitable and sustainable outcomes.

The **webinar, “Beyond Commitments: Negotiating Climate Justice for Vulnerable Communities,”** held on **March 27, 2025**, provided a platform for discussing how developing nations can navigate global climate negotiations to secure just and equitable climate finance.

Despite commitments under the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG), many vulnerable communities remain underserved. This session explored how negotiations can be leveraged to ensure climate justice translates into actionable outcomes.

2 Objectives

The webinar aimed to:

1. **Examine how developing nations can negotiate for fairer climate deals** and stronger adaptation commitments.
2. **Identify strategies to prioritize adaptation finance** for frontline communities.
3. **Analyze the role of multilateral negotiations** in shaping climate justice outcomes.
4. **Explore how Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) can attract financing** and be integrated into global climate frameworks.

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Welcoming and Context

Salome opened the session by framing climate justice within the context of global negotiations. She highlighted the challenges that developing nations face, including the slow implementation of climate commitments, unequal power dynamics in decision-making, and insufficient adaptation finance. She emphasized that bridging the gap between commitments and action requires stronger **accountability mechanisms, region-specific adaptation plans, and direct financial support for vulnerable communities.**



To engage participants, an icebreaker was conducted with the question: “**What does climate justice mean to you?**”

Attendees shared their responses in the chat, reflecting diverse perspectives on justice, equity, and adaptation. This set the tone for an interactive discussion on the importance of ensuring negotiations translate into real benefits for communities most affected by climate change.

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Session I: Breaking the Barriers to Climate Finance Speaker: Philip Kilonzo

The first presentation underscored the broad conceptualization of climate change as a **poverty, equity, justice, humanitarian, and economic issue**. It emphasized that while developing nations and marginalized communities contribute the least to global emissions, they bear the greatest burden of climate-related disasters, economic losses, and displacement. Developed countries, having historically contributed the most to emissions, must take the lead in **climate action, financing, and reparations** to ensure a just and equitable transition.

Three key dimensions of climate justice were explored:

1. **Procedural Justice** – Ensuring that vulnerable communities actively participate in decision-making processes and negotiations.
2. **Distributive Justice** – Holding major polluters accountable for their emissions and ensuring that resources for adaptation and mitigation are directed to the most affected populations.
3. **Retributive Justice** – Advocating for developed nations to take responsibility for past emissions by financing reparations, loss, and damage for climate-affected regions.
4. **Generational justice** (protecting future generations). Funding should be seen as a responsibility of high-emission nations, not as charity.

The concept of **climate debt** was also highlighted, stressing that wealthier nations owe compensation to vulnerable communities due to the disproportionate impact of climate change. However, challenges such as **slow progress on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), restrictive funding mechanisms favouring private sector entities, and limited local ownership of climate solutions** continue to hinder climate justice efforts.

To advance climate justice, the following recommendations were made:

1. **Strengthening Local Participation:** Climate negotiations must actively involve representatives from vulnerable communities to ensure their voices shape decision-making.
2. **Reforming Global Financial Systems:** Equitable climate financing mechanisms should prioritize direct support to affected populations rather than being funneled through private sector entities in the Global North.
3. **Ensuring Financial Justice:** Climate response funding must be transparent, needs-based, and accessible to local initiatives rather than limited to state-level processes.
4. **Accelerating Just Transitions:** Developed countries must lead in decarbonization while supporting developing nations in transitioning to sustainable energy sources.
5. **Enhancing Accountability:** Developed nations should be held accountable for historical emissions through concrete commitments to loss and damage funds.
6. **Promoting Regional Collaboration:** Stronger alliances among African, Latin American, and Asia-Pacific nations can create a unified front in climate negotiations.
7. **Empowering Vulnerable Groups:** Structured efforts should amplify the voices of indigenous groups, fisherfolk, women, youth, and smallholder farmers in climate decision-making.
8. **Fostering Knowledge Exchange:** Sharing and integrating local and indigenous climate solutions into policy frameworks can drive more inclusive and sustainable adaptation strategies.

The presentation concluded by stressing that climate justice must move beyond **rhetoric to action**, ensuring **financial equity, inclusive decision-making, and concrete commitments** that prioritize the needs of vulnerable communities over corporate and state interest.

Activity 2: QnA Session on Breaking Barriers to Climate Finance

What does Trump's "Drill, Baby, Drill" statement mean for climate justice? It signals a push for aggressive fossil fuel extraction, primarily in the U.S. but potentially affecting global markets and geopolitics. This could undermine climate justice efforts by prioritizing profit over environmental sustainability and increasing emissions that disproportionately impact vulnerable communities.

Where will Trump's drilling efforts take place? Mainly in the U.S., including offshore and federal lands, but with potential geopolitical influence in resource-rich regions like Africa, particularly through economic and security agreements in countries with critical mineral deposits.

What does Ibrahim Traoré's stance on African self-sufficiency mean for climate justice? It challenges Africa's dependency on external aid and promotes resource sovereignty. However, for true climate justice, this must go hand in hand with sustainable development, preventing the continuation of exploitative extractive practices.

Are mechanisms in place to ensure vulnerable communities are considered in climate negotiations? There are frameworks, but gaps remain. African nations must advocate for adaptation financing and community-driven solutions instead of externally dictated approaches.

How do we move away from a victim mentality to a justice-driven approach? By shifting focus from dependency to strategic action:

1. Strengthening regional climate policies
2. Holding major polluters accountable
3. Investing in Africa's renewable energy
4. Ensuring African negotiators prioritize long-term interests.

Are African countries completely innocent in climate degradation? No. Some engage in environmentally harmful practices, but their emissions remain far lower than industrialized nations. The global north has historically overused atmospheric space, making it unjust to place equal burdens on African countries.

Why is climate finance essential for Africa? African nations are adapting to a crisis they did not cause. Climate finance is a necessity for equitable development and resilience. However, it should not be used to suppress Africa's right to industrialization and sustainable economic growth.

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Session II: How Developing Nations Can Shape Outcomes

Speaker: Stella

The second presentation focused on **strengthening youth and civil society participation in climate action**, emphasizing **strategic advocacy, institutional representation, and capacity building**. The speaker began by underscoring the importance of youth-led initiatives and the role of civil society organizations in holding governments accountable for climate commitments. By **leveraging digital campaigns, media storytelling, and citizen-led accountability mechanisms**, young people can amplify climate issues and keep them at the forefront of public discourse.

A key point in the presentation was the **need for institutionalizing youth representation in climate negotiations**. While Africa is a youthful continent, **many young people remain excluded from formal decision-making spaces**. The speaker cited a past initiative by the African Group of Negotiators, which **trained young women negotiators and integrated them into COP discussions, as an effective model**. **Institutionalizing similar programs within national delegations would ensure that young voices contribute meaningfully to climate policy**.

The presentation also highlighted **the role of legal frameworks in reinforcing climate justice**. She stressed the importance of adopting a human rights-based approach by embedding **climate justice within constitutional and legal systems**. This would provide stronger protections for vulnerable communities disproportionately affected by climate change. Furthermore, pushing for legally binding commitments within international climate agreements and regional treaties would strengthen compliance and enforcement, ensuring that climate policies translate into tangible action.

Another significant aspect of the discussion was the need to **rethink how African nations approach climate finance**. Rather than relying solely on Western funding, **countries should focus on developing their own bankable projects that attract investment from African financial institutions** such as the African Development Bank. The speaker pointed out that a lack of awareness and inadequate project structuring often hinder access to available funding. Capacity-building initiatives targeting governments, local authorities, and community organizations could bridge this gap by equipping stakeholders with the necessary knowledge to develop and manage climate adaptation projects effectively.

The session concluded with a call to action, **urging young people and civil society organizations to remain proactive, collaborate strategically, and push for stronger institutional reforms that integrate youth voices into climate governance**.

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Closing Remarks/Key Takeaways

Dr. Bessy gave the closing remarks by highlighting the takeaways from the session

1. **Who are we negotiating with?** Climate justice negotiations require inclusive engagement with diverse stakeholders, including youth, women, men, the elderly, and people living with disabilities. Strengthening alliances across these groups will enhance collective bargaining power and ensure that all voices are represented in decision-making.
2. **What are we negotiating about?** Climate justice extends beyond financial commitment. It is about securing stronger policies, accountability from historical polluters, and prioritizing long-term resilience over short-term gains. The focus must be on shifting power dynamics to prevent vulnerable communities from being marginalized.
3. **What are we negotiating for?** The fight for climate justice is intergenerational. Beyond immediate needs, we must secure commitments that ensure future generations inherit a stronger platform for advocacy rather than continuing the same struggles.

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Way Forward

1. Collaboration over Competition:

Africa's negotiating power is often weakened by internal divides. A unified, cooperative approach will strengthen efforts in securing climate finance, adaptation support, and global accountability.

2. Beyond Symbolism to Impact:

Negotiations should not be mere box-ticking exercises; they must drive real, measurable change and hold leaders accountable.

3. **A Unified Voice for Justice:** Africa must speak with one voice, demanding fairness, holding global actors accountable and driving meaningful change in climate policies and financing.



Negotiation is not just about securing a seat at the table. It is about reshaping the table itself. As we move forward, let's commit to more strategic engagement, long-term thinking, and ensuring that climate justice negotiations result in tangible benefits for those most affected.



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