

Joining forces: how to make local climate partnerships a success

Key findings

1. **Choose partners strategically.** Local governments have to find partners who can contribute the planning and practical expertise needed to address the often long-term and locally-specific challenges facing communities in a changing climate. Going beyond the environmental arena or public sphere to find partners often enriches the process of identifying appropriate solutions to climate-related challenges.
2. **Make marginalised groups your partners and opposing parties your supporters.** It is essential to involve the citizens that are the most exposed to the effects of climate change yet have the least resources to deal with them. Involving actors that are disinclined or even hostile to climate compatible development, without losing sight of long-term objectives will also pay off.
3. **Look for partners on the doorstep while considering their sphere of influence and accountability.** Local governments are advised to establish partnerships with knowledgeable local actors that are successfully running initiatives in the community. Mapping the spheres of influence and accountability of potential partners helps us to understand what they can bring to the table and what drives their behaviour.
4. **Ensure all partners have something to gain from the success of the programme or project.** To make a partnership more attractive, local governments should co-design the project in such a way that all partners benefit from its success.
5. **Identify a facilitator to bring all relevant actors into the process and keep them regularly briefed.** Having a trusted knowledge broker involved is key.

Climate compatible development requires long-lasting partnerships among local governments and other public and private local, regional and national actors. While some partners may be obvious – such as meteorological centres or community-based organisations – others need to be actively explored in order to identify and benefit from complementary expertise and different perspectives on challenges, opportunities and solutions. The CDKN-ICLEI learning programme on subnational climate compatible development asked: What strategies for partnership have borne fruit, and why? Learning partners from organisations in South and Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean synthesised their experience into these top five lessons.

Partnerships can involve very different actors from diverse disciplines and sectors at all levels – local, regional, national and international. Yet, partnerships rarely succeed if they are ad hoc. **Choosing partners strategically** – and not merely amongst the usual suspects in the environmental arena – has proven effective. In Sialkot, Pakistan, Ecofys and PITCO found a strong partner in the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), through which they gained access to the industry associations that are members of the Chamber. This partnership allowed them to communicate the potential of renewable energy sources to representatives of most small and medium companies in the area. The SCCI agreed to proceed with developing photovoltaic solar collectors, which will be a cost-efficient, reliable and very low carbon option for ensuring regular power supply, compared to diesel alternatives. In West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, neighbouring communities collaborated among each other to create economies of scale to implement renewable energy projects. The University of Mataram, the Energy Research Centre of the Netherlands and the Provincial Government of West Nusa Tenggara – with CDKN's support – worked together to scope this initiative: they proposed that neighbouring villages could set aside a percentage of their yearly budgets to invest in and maintain renewable energy generating plants together.



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Local governments should not restrict their partnerships to groups that completely agree with their own climate-compatible objectives and activities. Coalitions should **include representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups** from the very beginning so that they can assess whether the proposed solutions really meet their needs and suit their realities. In Nepal, the learning partner LI-BIRD engaged with key local institutions, such as farmer's groups and cooperatives, local forestry groups, women's groups and *Dalit* (lower caste) groups, to promote climate smart agriculture approaches. They used these partnerships to communicate how climate smart agriculture can involve less labour-intensive farming techniques and deliver more reliable crops than conventional approaches. Women and *Dalits* are now adopting these measures and improving their economic status..

Local governments should **engage partners with different or even opposing opinions and interests**. In Mexico City, the introduction of a rapid-transit bus system – the Metrobus – was opposed by the operators of minibus companies as they lost some of their bus routes to the Metrobus. Government leaders forged ahead with the policy by emphasising the well recognised need to reduce traffic congestion and alleviate local air pollution – issues that were already on the local political agenda, according to analysts at Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (FARN). Involving opposing actors requires local governments to negotiate and make compromises, without losing sight of their own long-term objectives for climate compatible development. If they succeed, they will receive wider buy-in and support for their plans.

Local governments need partners who truly understand the community, from its physical landscape to its political, social and economic fabric. Local actors who have experience in running successful projects linking climate action to development needs are therefore often the first, and in many cases the most suitable, choice as partners. Partnering with ongoing initiatives and working to scale them up promotes a city's agenda for climate compatible development as well as bringing benefits to the community. However, local government staff should **understand the actual sphere of influence and accountability of potential partners**. While actors may appear 'local', they might be driven to participate by national or international interests to which they are connected. This can either give local efforts a boost by making available additional knowledge and financing from the 'outside' or it can slow down the local process if the partners' interests, which are controlled from beyond community, are incompatible with local interests. A positive outcome emerged in Belize where WWF-Belize is part of the global WWF network. WWF-Belize undertook action research on climate compatible coastal management, and used its international links to obtain scientific support from American universities.

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Further reading: The case studies on Bogor and West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia; Belize; Bolivia, Jamaica, Madurai, India, and Mexico City, which contributed to this 'CDKN Essential' may all be found on www.cdkn.org/cdkn_series/inside-story

By fully understanding the motives, priorities and needs of potential partners, local governments can ensure that all will benefit from working together. In Belize, up to 70% of the tourism sector is climate vulnerable and fisheries are highly likely to be affected by climate change in the near term. Government departments and WWF-Belize partnered with tourism and fisheries industry bodies to assess their needs and interests in solutions. This input helped the government to design a coherent Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan that is backed by robust economic arguments and solid stakeholder buy-in.

The jargon used by partners often differs, particularly in the case of cross-sectoral cooperation. This is why working together in partnership requires well-planned, extensive and targeted communications. Local governments have a role to play both in convening partners and in being the **facilitators and interpreters** of the process ('climate knowledge brokers'). If local circumstances do not allow for this, a trusted, nonpartisan body can take this role. In Jamaica, local parish councils acted as community conveners and offered training courses on the use of geospatial data under guidance of the University of The West Indies.

Regular communication about the climate compatible development process is vital to keep all partners' support; sporadic updates are insufficient. In Bogor, Indonesia, the mayor was updated regularly by the municipal working group and the supporting agency ICLEI on the progress of developing urban low emission options for the city; he later supported a large-scale financial investment in clean transport.

The majority of the learning partners asked local non-governmental organisations with strong community links to act as knowledge brokers. In Madurai, India, the DHAN Foundation held weekly community 'river walks' in the local language, which proved effective in mobilising support for climate adaptation action. The DHAN Foundation also provided planning manuals and educational material to strengthen the capacity of partners and citizens to participate. In Bogor, capacity building was vital to reinforcing the bond among the partners, increasing their expertise in developing greenhouse gas inventories, and defining subsequent measures. In Nepal, LI-BIRD found that it is important to recognise the ability of individuals and organisations to contribute and to adjust their expected contribution as appropriate (e.g. full or partial financial support or in-kind contribution to the project). This negotiated contribution increased people's willingness to participate and kept them on board.

While local governments know that developing their communities in a climate compatible manner rarely works without collaborators, they should also keep in mind partners' potential to be advocates, knowledge brokers, sponsors and agents of change who can make a big difference in progressing collective efforts.