

Struggling to mainstream climate issues?

Lessons learnt from CDKN's knowledge brokering experience



Climate & Development
Knowledge Network

Challenge 3

Climate change is mainly seen as environmental ministries' responsibility, with little cross-sector collaboration



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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
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About the contributors

This document was written by Lucia Scodanibbio, CDKN Learning and Knowledge Brokering Lead. The experiences summarised in this series refer to the collective work of a much larger team of CDKN colleagues and partners, who generously shared their knowledge brokering lessons and approaches to mainstreaming climate change issues through interviews and joint learning sessions. Thanks to the following colleagues for their contributions and insights: Arsema Andargatchew and Robi Redda (Ethiopia); Chris Gordon, Prince Ansah and Amanda April (Ghana); Edna Odhiambo (Kenya); Margaret Angula and Cecil Togarepi (Namibia); Revocatus Twinomuhangi (Uganda); Claudia Martinez and Patricia Velasquez (Colombia); Gabriel Villamarín (Ecuador and Latin America); María José Pacha (Latin America); Sandra Isola and Jessica Huertas (Peru); Nivedita Mani (India); Kamal Devkota, Kaustuv Neupane and Geeta Sandal (Nepal); Bedoshruti Sadhukhan (South Asia); Lisa McNamara (Global).

Extensive review comments were provided by Lisa McNamara, CDKN Programme Lead, Georgina Cundill, IDRC Senior Programme Specialist and Shehnaaz Moosa, CDKN Director. Thanks also to Emma Baker, Rebecca Cullis, Zahrah Cassiem and Robin Heuermann for production assistance.

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Disclaimer: This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, as part of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) Programme. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, or of IDRC or its Board of Governors, or of the entities managing CDKN.

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Cover Image: National event, Kenya. *CDKN*

Design and layout: Ink Design Publishing Solutions, Cape Town, www.inkdesign.co.za



Farmer tending to new growth. SPDA

Introduction

Background



Since 2010, the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) has supported decision-makers in designing and delivering climate-resilient development in focal countries in Africa, Latin America and South Asia through a combination of knowledge, research and advisory support. Our approach has been to facilitate locally owned and led processes, working in partnership with governmental and non-governmental actors at multiple scales.

Through this work we have become aware of the important, often invisible, role that ‘intermediaries’ or ‘brokers’ play in linking knowledge producers with knowledge users, and in managing complex processes for effective decisions and actions on climate change. In 2018, we shifted our attention to focus on knowledge brokering to help accelerate and amplify climate action. We work closely with stakeholders to promote evidence-based decision-making by fostering learning, collaboration and leadership through capacity strengthening and integrating diverse types of knowledge.

Along the way, CDKN has sought to document our learning and that of our partners to better understand how knowledge and evidence of climate change can inform and translate into policy and action. This reflection process has investigated different tools and approaches for enhancing the use of knowledge in decision-making, the barriers encountered in facilitating change, and the lessons that may be useful for others who are navigating similar challenges.

The lessons showcased in this document initially emerged during a series of learning exchanges that brought together CDKN’s partners in Asia and Africa to discuss the ways in which they had sought to mainstream climate issues in decision-making processes. They identified core challenges that they had come across during these processes and brainstormed different solutions and approaches to overcome them. A series of detailed interviews with CDKN’s different focal country partners followed, to identify, document and share some of the strategies and approaches they had used.

As a result of this learning work, we identified seven **challenges** to mainstreaming climate issues across governance scales and sectors, including with national to local government decision-makers and community members on the ground. These seven challenges have been used to structure this series. Each challenge has a number of **pathways** and **case studies** that demonstrate the knowledge brokering approaches that were used, as well as **key takeaways** that exemplify the main lessons learned in each of the case studies. This series is not intended as a definitive guide about climate mainstreaming, but we hope that others may gain some tips about knowledge brokering approaches and tools that could help as they seek to integrate knowledge about climate issues into their own contexts.

SPECIFICALLY, IT IS HOPED THAT THE LESSONS PRESENTED HERE CAN:



Influence researchers and decision-makers about the importance of knowledge brokering



Enable learning exchanges with other knowledge brokers in the global South



Encourage donors to think differently about the design of future programmes, to ensure sufficient time for impact and openness to being adaptive as new demands emerge

What is knowledge brokering and who are knowledge brokers?

Knowledge brokering is the process of moving knowledge into action. Knowledge brokers link producers of knowledge and users of knowledge to facilitate the generation, dissemination and eventual use of that knowledge.¹ The range of activities they are involved in can be understood along a spectrum that goes from working with information flows to seeking to bring about systemic change (see figure below). Whilst knowledge brokers have often focused on making knowledge more relevant and accessible (the left-hand side of the spectrum), the scale and urgency of the climate crisis today calls for knowledge brokering practice to move towards innovation brokering (on the right side of the spectrum).²

INFORMATIONAL • RELATIONAL • SYSTEMS

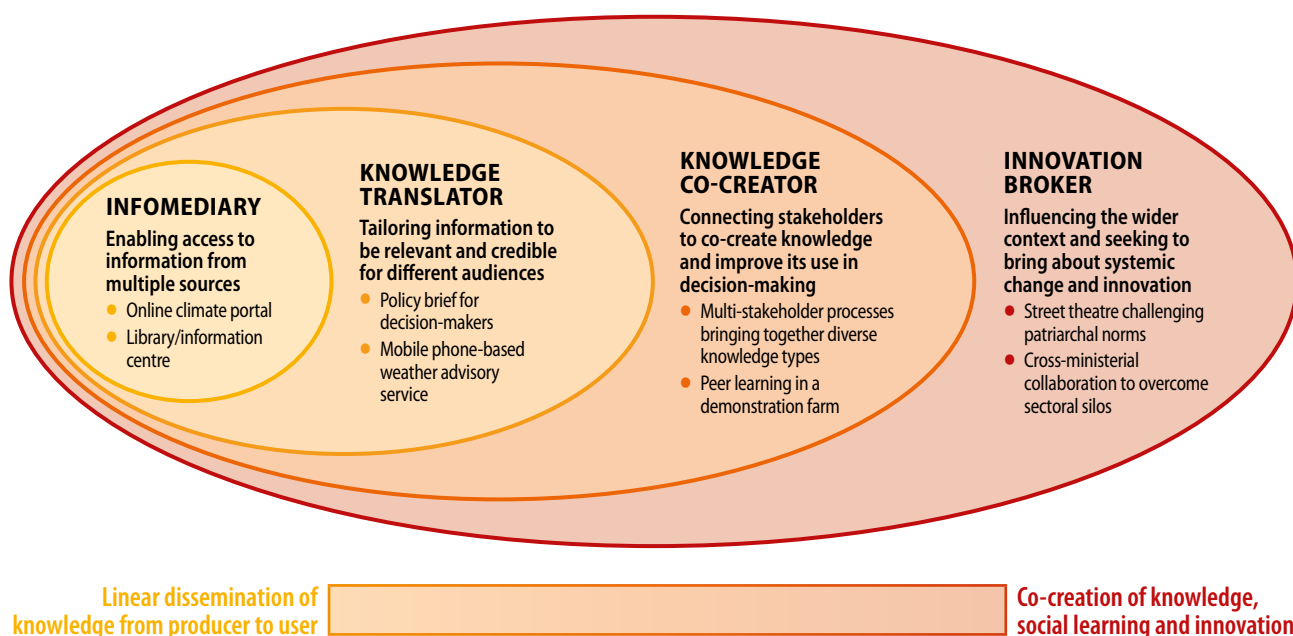


FIGURE 1 Spectrum of knowledge broker roles, adapted from Harvey et al. (2012)³ and Shaxson et al. (2012).⁴

This series is structured as follows:

CHALLENGE 1 Key stakeholders lack sufficient information about the significance and urgency of climate change.



To respond, knowledge brokers need to build a critical mass of tailored and accessible knowledge, highlighting the extent of climate change impacts on different sectors or groups. Knowledge, however, is not sufficient by itself, and needs to be combined with a range of engagement strategies, including to collaboratively develop responses to the challenges being faced.

CHALLENGE 2 Climate change is not sufficiently high on political agendas or part of institutional mandates.

To respond, knowledge brokers need to invest time and effort in understanding the governance landscape. They also need to be creative at finding different ways of aligning their messages with government policies, visions and mandates.

CHALLENGE 3 Climate change issues are mostly considered environmental ministries' responsibility and collaboration across sectors is rarely seen.



To respond, knowledge brokers can assist by creating or building on existing platforms for different stakeholders to discuss climate issues and strengthen relationships.

CHALLENGE 4 Subnational governments lack guidance and support to implement climate change related legislation and policy set at national levels.

To respond, knowledge brokers can provide support through existing vertical government and governance structures; they can mainstream climate issues into other related, better-decentralised sectors; or they can collaborate with strategic institutions to advance the climate mainstreaming process.

CHALLENGE 5 Limited capacities and resource allocation prevent the integration and implementation of climate change policy.

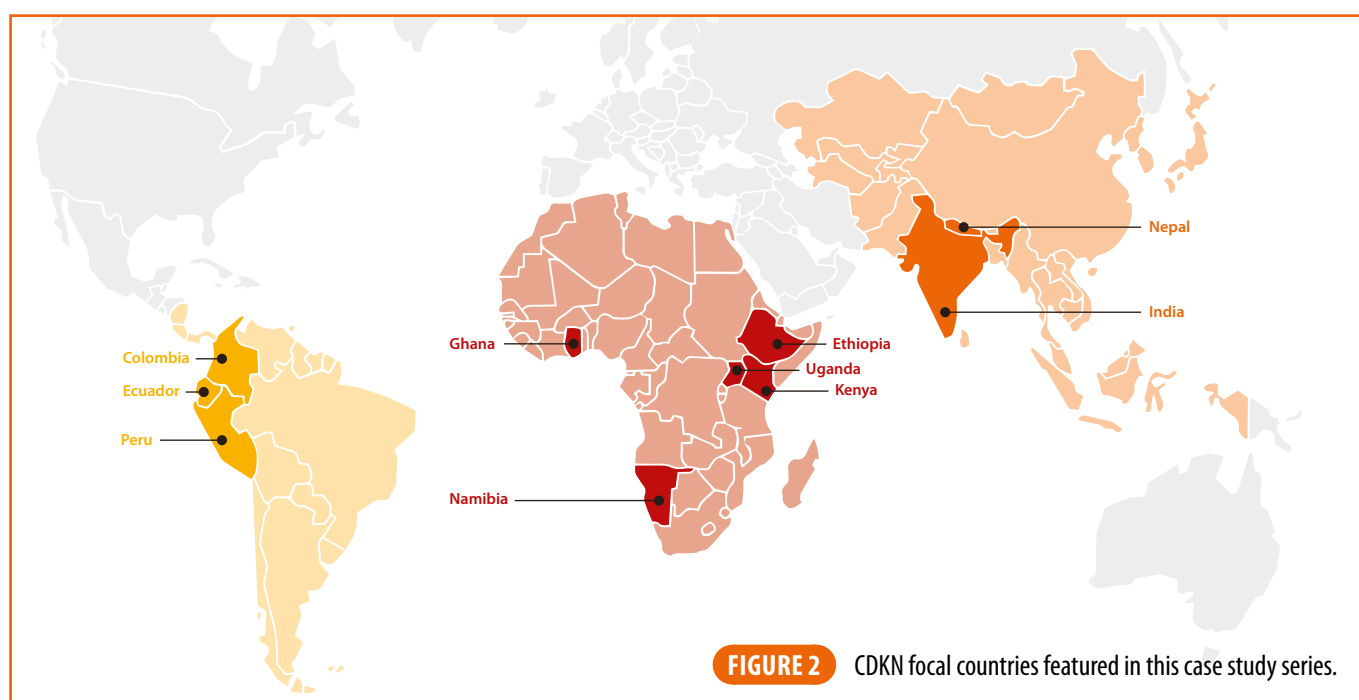
To respond, knowledge brokers need to think carefully about the medium of knowledge transfer beyond outputs. They can do this by co-organising training and engagement activities jointly with stakeholders and promoting learning and understanding about climate resilience from on-the-ground experience.

CHALLENGE 6 Gatekeeping and bureaucracy can act as bottlenecks and delay progress on projects.

To respond, knowledge brokers need to know their context well, using multiple tactics while maintaining flexibility. They also need to work both with government actors with continuity in the system and in partnership with other key actors to overcome challenges.

CHALLENGE 7 Local communities lack sufficient support to integrate climate issues into their actions.

To respond, knowledge brokers can assist by connecting local groups to different sources of knowledge and to intermediaries that can enhance access to specific resources.



Challenge 3:

Climate change is mainly seen as environmental ministries' responsibility, with little cross-sector collaboration

CASE STUDIES

PATHWAY A

Create a platform for different stakeholders to discuss climate issues and strengthen relationships



ETHIOPIA

Strengthening the climate-gender nexus in **Ethiopia** by choosing the right convenor



ECUADOR

Bringing together multi-sectoral partners to mainstream gender into **Ecuador's** national climate change policy



PERU

Strengthening sectoral implementation of gender and climate commitments in **Peru**



COLOMBIA

Promoting dialogue about integrated climate actions in the Carepa municipality of **Colombia**



Ecuador gender and cc training. Gender and climate change training in Ecuador. CDKN and FFLA



Young women crossing river in Peru. SPDA, Peru. SPDA

Climate change is mainly seen as environmental ministries' responsibility, with little cross-sector collaboration

Climate change impacts disrupt activities in many different areas, from agriculture and transport, to health, energy and water. Disruptions can affect and relate to the work of several departments and sectors, which by design tend to operate in isolation. Although efforts to enhance collaboration across sectors are increasing, there are limited convergence mechanisms for responding collaboratively and issues are addressed in a fragmented manner. Given the siloed nature of sectoral institutions, which have specific mandates that leave little room for working outside of those directives, significant transaction costs can limit how much cross-sectoral work is done. At present, most institutions have a limited understanding of climate issues and often perceive those issues to be the ministry of environment's responsibility. Furthermore, there is an absence of mechanisms that can foster dialogue and collaboration. Knowledge brokers can help to overcome these barriers by creating platforms or avenues that increase dialogue between different sectors so that they realise the value of finding synergies and practical ways to collaborate that result in win-win scenarios.

PATHWAY A

Create a platform for different stakeholders to discuss climate issues and strengthen relationships

CASE STUDIES



ETHIOPIA

Strengthening the climate-gender nexus in **Ethiopia** by choosing the right convenor

- 1 Carrying out a baseline study that assesses the integration of gender considerations in the climate change sector (including in planning, budgeting and project activities) can provide a useful starting point to strengthen the climate-gender nexus.
- 2 Validating the study's results with all the stakeholders involved in climate and gender activities in Ethiopia, highlighted the need for a formal platform to keep each other updated and strengthen capacities on how to continue integrating these two themes.
- 3 Strengthening the integration of gender and climate issues requires a government focal point that can lead a cross-sectoral platform. If they already have the mandate to convene and coordinate across different sectors, this is more likely to be successful.



ECUADOR

Bringing together multi-sectoral partners to mainstream gender into **Ecuador's** national climate change policy

- 1 Bringing together public, private and civil society actors can help to integrate a gender approach into the national climate change policy. In Ecuador the Technical Table on Gender and Climate Change was responsible for this, sharing data and good practices, implementing peer learning and co-developing a research agenda and funding strategy.
- 2 Providing strategic advice and coordinating the work of the group (such as organising and facilitating its meetings) in close coordination with the government is the responsibility of a rotating member of the Table.



PERU

Strengthening sectoral implementation of gender and climate commitments in **Peru**

- 1 Ensuring Peru's nationally determined contribution (NDC) was developed using a participatory approach strengthened the knowledge and capacities of different sectors on climate and gender topics.
- 2 Creating a cross-sectoral working group helped to build relationships and trust among actors that seldom collaborated and contributed to a smooth implementation of the NDC.



COLOMBIA

Promoting dialogue about integrated climate actions in the Carepa municipality of **Colombia**

- 1 Forming a climate change committee at municipal level helps to monitor progress on climate commitments across different stakeholders, and harnesses support for and alignment with municipal-level climate plans.

Create a platform for different stakeholders to discuss climate issues and strengthen relationships

To help break down sectoral silos, knowledge brokers can assist by creating a platform or opportunity for dialogue between different stakeholders (including ministries and departments working in isolation). These platforms offer spaces to explore how climate change impacts and can be integrated into their work, while also fostering stronger horizontal relationships. Scoping efforts are required to smooth the convening process, such as finding out the interests, roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders to identify areas of convergence. Different participatory techniques that bring actors together can also ease dialogue and help reach common outcomes. It is crucial for knowledge brokers to think about the sustainability of such platforms, to ensure that these become institutionalised in government structures and do not require the presence of projects or external funding to continue operating. Getting the buy-in and ownership of government actors is critical.

ETHIOPIA



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Carrying out a baseline study that assesses the integration of gender considerations in the climate change sector (including in planning, budgeting and project activities) can provide a useful starting point to strengthen the climate-gender nexus.
- 2 Validating the study's results with all the stakeholders involved in climate and gender activities in Ethiopia, highlighted the need for a formal platform to keep each other updated and strengthen capacities on how to continue integrating these two themes.
- 3 Strengthening the integration of gender and climate issues requires a government focal point that can lead a cross-sectoral platform. If they already have the mandate to convene and coordinate across different sectors, this is more likely to be successful.

[View another case study on Ethiopia in Challenge 6](#)

CASE STUDY

Strengthening the climate-gender nexus in Ethiopia by choosing the right convenor

In the past few years, the government of Ethiopia has taken important steps in setting up and strengthening the institutions and governance arrangements for climate change and gender. These included the establishment of Climate-Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) units and gender directorates in different sectoral ministries. However, despite their efforts to mainstream gender and climate change across all ministries' work, these units faced challenges. To assist the government in improving gender mainstreaming in climate change priority sectors, institutions and projects, CDKN tasked both a climate and a gender expert with assessing the integration of gender considerations into planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and project execution activities in the two institutions leading climate change coordination at the time in Ethiopia. Through numerous interviews and bilateral meetings with the Ministry of Finance (leading on climate finance issues) and the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission (the commission leading on technical climate issues, then restructured to the Environmental Protection Authority in 2021), the CDKN team got a clear sense of their long-term needs, difficulties and successes. The report found that the biggest challenges were the absence of a joint platform to discuss the gender and climate nexus, as well as the limited capacity to incorporate such issues in all aspects, from planning to M&E.

These findings were brought to a two-day workshop that invited multiple actors with a stake in climate and gender issues, to improve communication between parties and lay the foundation for enhanced coordination. The workshop demonstrated there was a need to establish a formalised gender coordination platform to provide a meeting point for all discussions on the gender-climate nexus, including for strengthening capacities. Within 12 months, an interim working group was formalised as a government-endorsed community of practice (CoP) on Gender and Climate Change, officially launched by the CRGE Facility in December 2020. The CRGE Facility managed this coordination platform as a secretariat, while the gender directorates of the Ministry of Finance and the Environmental Protection Authority co-chaired the platform until 2023.

With the mandate to coordinate climate change issues having shifted to the Ministry of Planning and Development (MoPD), the platform is co-chaired by MoPD and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. The MoPD's climate change unit serves as the secretariat and the CRGE Facility is a member of the CoP.

One of the critical elements of success was the choice of government partner to lead and coordinate this undertaking in its initial phase. While the then Ministry of Women, Children and Youth would have been a more obvious partner, they would have had no coordination mandate to ~~bring together~~ the main government actors working on climate change. Instead, at its establishment and up until 2023, the project's main counterpart was the national climate fund – the CRGE Facility – an institution that CDKN had had a working relationship with since 2014. Co-managed by the Ministry of Finance and the Environmental Protection Authority, and with the mandate to both coordinate different actors working on climate change and attract and mobilise climate finance, they were the right entry point. With gender also being a cross-sectoral issue, the CRGE Facility was a more natural home for this work due to its strong mandate to coordinate climate finance action in collaboration with different ministries and departments of government. Finally, the CRGE's gender focal point had been proactively engaging in best practices including gender-responsive budgeting for several years and therefore constituted ~~a perfect~~ partner for this work. As mentioned above, now the MoPD has taken over the technical coordination from the Environmental Protection Authority, setting up a climate change unit, leading climate change related initiatives and continuing this work.



▲ Participants engaged in discussions at the second meeting of the National Community of Practice for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Climate Change in August 2023. CDKN

ECUADOR



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Bringing together public, private and civil society actors can help to integrate a gender approach into the national climate change policy. In Ecuador the Technical Table on Gender and Climate Change was responsible for this, sharing data and good practices, implementing peer learning and co-developing a research agenda and funding strategy.
- 2 Providing strategic advice and coordinating the work of the group (such as organising and facilitating its meetings) in close coordination with the government is the responsibility of a rotating member of the Table.

View more case studies on Ecuador in Challenges 5 and 6

CASE STUDY

Bringing together multi-sectoral partners to mainstream gender into Ecuador's national climate change policy

Since 2018, Ecuador has sought to incorporate and mainstream gender into formulating and implementing its nationally determined contribution (NDC). To achieve this, the NDC mentions the need for a participatory approach, supported by the ongoing technical expertise of a range of relevant stakeholders.

Building on a strong working relationship developed over several years of collaboration on sustainable development issues, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition and Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA) launched a joint initiative in 2019. Evolving from a gender and climate change training course that highlighted the need to have a more structured space for regular dialogue on these issues, CDKN and the Ministry joined forces with the National Council for Gender Equality and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) NDC support programme to form the Technical Table on Gender and Climate Change (the Table). Responsible for managing information and suggesting proposals to advance the work of the Table at the national level, these four organisations initially constituted its core group, on a rotating basis. With an overarching aim of promoting gender equality and sustainable development in the country, the members of the Table seek to advance the integration of a gender



▲ Participants of climate change and gender training engaged in discussing how to promote gender equality and sustainable development. CDKN and FFLA

approach into the national climate change policy.

This cross-sectoral working group brings together public and private actors, along with civil society and researchers monthly, to exchange lessons and experiences about mainstreaming gender and climate themes, sharing data and identifying synergies and emerging issues. The Table commissioned an initial diagnostic study to document the initiatives on gender and climate change at subnational level, and is guided by annual plans, centred around three main components of work: political advocacy; capacity strengthening; and communication.

In the platform's early days, FFLA and CDKN provided guidelines on how to strengthen the governance of the Table, including through the incorporation of representatives of social movements and local organisations. An initial proposal was written on this topic, with the hope and expectation that it will help to challenge the issue of broader, more inclusive participation.



FFLA and CDKN played a crucial strategic advisory and coordination role (e.g. for facilitating and developing the agendas and minutes of the meetings). Other organisations have since assumed this role, on a rotational basis. Given the value accorded to this strong horizontal space for dialogue and cooperation, and the ownership felt by the different sectoral partners of the Table who are often the ones to summon the meetings, there is no strong interest in institutionalising the platform, lest it lose its informal and co-owned nature to a more top-down mode. Challenges tied to the Ministry of Environment's limited human and financial resources (to run this platform as a governmental entity) also make a co-owned space easier to manage.



▲ Participants of climate change and gender training. CDKN and FFLA

PERU



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Ensuring Peru's nationally determined contribution (NDC) was developed using a participatory approach strengthened the knowledge and capacities of different sectors on climate and gender topics.
- 2 Creating a cross-sectoral working group helped to build relationships and trust among actors that seldom collaborated and contributed to a smooth implementation of the NDC.

View more Peru case studies in Challenges ① ② ④ and ⑥

CASE STUDY

Strengthening sectoral implementation of gender and climate commitments in Peru

Peru's development of its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) convened a Multisectoral Working Group to undertake an 18-month participatory dialogue (2016–2018) to identify and co-produce the document outlining the country's commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerabilities, while mainstreaming gender. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Environment, technical teams from 13 different sectors and the National Strategic Planning Centre met regularly to generate technical information to guide the implementation of the NDC. They defined the scope of adaptation and mitigation actions and prepared a roadmap for their implementation. During this process, training was held both for the Working Group members and other state entities. Initially, general training was conducted for the sectors in charge of implementing gender approaches (production, health, water, agriculture, transportation, social inclusion). Later, the training was tailored according to each sector, their level of interest and required depth. During 2018, sectoral meetings were held to analyse implementation plans and to share tools for integrating gender into their respective adaptation and mitigation measures.

As a result of the collaborative way in which the NDC was developed, its commitments have been implemented smoothly, with increased attention paid to climate and gender issues, including by sectors that were previously more inactive. For example, thanks to this process, the Ministry of Energy and Mines realised that they could make some improvements to optimise the way they worked and reduce costs. Similarly, the **E-women programme** developed the capacities of women to promote, install and maintain renewable energy systems, such as domestic photovoltaic panels and energy-efficient cookers, as well as to start micro-businesses around these.



▲ Participants in "Let's talk about the NDC" participatory dialogue process. Ministry of Environment of Peru (MINAM)



▲ Members of the agriculture and forestry sector participate in the development of Peru's nationally determined contribution, strengthening their capacities and creating momentum for climate action. *Ministry of Environment of Peru (NDC)*

Owing to this participatory process, trust and strengthened relationships across this diverse group led to subsequent collaborations and joint activities on other topics, including by different sectors and interest groups. The Afro-Peruvian population, for example, participated in and provided input into the development of the National Agrarian Policy, while numerous groups (such as indigenous organisations, women, youth) contributed to the process of updating the National Climate Change Strategy.

This process also enabled integrating a social perspective in the adaptation measures outlined in the **National Adaptation Plan (NAP)**, approved in 2021. For example, the analysis revealed that Afro-Peruvian communities, children, adolescents, the elderly and women experience differentiated impacts from climate change, which vary by sector (such as water, agriculture and health). It also highlighted that individuals engaged in domestic and unpaid care work face unique vulnerabilities that remain largely unaddressed by public policies.

The contributions gathered through the participatory processes described above informed the development of a **Guide for mainstreaming gender, intercultural and intergenerational approaches in the design and implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures within the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**. Published in 2022, this guide was endorsed by the High-level Commission on Climate Change – a body composed of all 19 ministries and chaired by the Prime Minister – to promote coordinated climate action across sectors and levels of government, in alignment with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

COLOMBIA



KEY TAKEAWAY

- 1 Forming a climate change committee at municipal level helps to monitor progress on climate commitments across different stakeholders, and harnesses support for and alignment with municipal-level climate plans.

[View more case studies on Colombia in Challenges ④ and ⑤](#)

CASE STUDY

Promoting dialogue about integrated climate actions in the Carepa municipality of Colombia

The Carepa Integrated Plan for Climate Change Management (the Carepa Plan) was developed in response to a national policy on disaster risk management in Colombia. This policy gives municipalities responsibility for implementing risk management strategies, as part of their planning processes. Not only must such plans be accompanied by adequate M&E, but local risk management committees must take part in formulating local plans and strategies. These need to be aligned with Colombia's National Policy on Climate Change. Local authorities are mandated to consider these integrated climate plans in their development and land use plans. The Carepa Plan also responds to the implementation of the Peace and Climate Change Plan of Uraba, Nutibara and Urrao (*Plan Clima y Paz 2040*), developed with the guidance of Ecología, Economía y Ética (E3), Corpouraba and Cordupaz, as the first plan to respond to the peace and climate change challenges in this strategic region of Colombia.

The Carepa Plan was adopted in 2020. To support its operationalisation and strengthen institutional capacities, the CDKN team helped in the development of a methodology and instrument to monitor and evaluate its progress. In addition, in response to a request by the Mayor and the Secretariat for Agriculture and Environment, CDKN provided support for the establishment of a climate change committee, as a governance structure at municipal level that would help the Carepa Plan to be implemented. The committee was used as a platform to create awareness about the plan (including its vision and goals) among both public and private stakeholders and to seek their commitment to implementing it and ensuring their activities and projects align with the its climatic goals. The intention was that with the institutionalisation of this committee at municipal level, this would become permanent mechanism to monitor progress on climate commitments within the municipality.



Endnotes

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▲ Coffee harvesting in Colombia. SPDA

THIS SERIES IS STRUCTURED AS FOLLOWS:

- CHALLENGE 1** Key stakeholders lack sufficient information about the significance and urgency of climate change.
- CHALLENGE 2** Climate change is not sufficiently high on political agendas or part of institutional mandates.
- CHALLENGE 3** Climate change is mainly seen as environmental ministries' responsibility, with little cross-sector collaboration.
- CHALLENGE 4** Subnational governments lack guidance and support to implement climate change related legislation and policy set at national levels.
- CHALLENGE 5** Limited capacities and resource allocation prevent the integration and implementation of climate change policy.
- CHALLENGE 6** Gatekeeping and bureaucracy can act as bottlenecks and delay progress on projects.
- CHALLENGE 7** Local communities lack sufficient support to integrate climate issues into their actions.

ABOUT CDKN

The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) works to improve the well-being of the most climate-affected people in the global South, especially marginalised groups, through transformative climate action. CDKN is managed by SouthSouthNorth, in partnership with Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA) and ICLEI South Asia, and co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

We work in partnership with public, civil society and private sectors to mobilise knowledge, leadership and capacity in the global South in support of locally-owned and -led climate action.

Please visit: www.cdkn.org

This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, as part of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) Programme. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, or of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) or its Board of Governors, or of the entities managing CDKN.

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