

## **Preparing African civil society actors to engage with the Green Climate Fund**

Africa is one of the regions the most affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. The continent regularly experiences humanitarian crises from deadly water scarcity, floods and severe droughts, with this sometimes resulting in permanent conflicts between communities living near the only water sources available. Since the 1970s, the Lake Chad – one of the main water resources of the continent – leaves thousands of families without solution for their daily access to “clean” water, which is a basic human right. This is just one example among many others, and the key findings of the October 2018’s IPCC<sup>1</sup> Special Report on 1.5 degrees does not give any security to the continent’s population which needs more than ever before to become better resilient to the threat.

Aware of the urgency to act on climate change, African civil society actors cannot longer wait to be part of long-term solutions, but rather are taking concrete steps toward solving the problem at its own source, while also adding their own voices to this common goal. This leads many to seek a better understanding of existing opportunities for their governments and communities to access funding opportunities that are made available through climate funds established under the United Nations, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

With the ambition of becoming the most important multilateral instrument to finance climate action through local and regional projects and programmes, the GCF invests in transformative and innovative approaches to adaptation and climate resilience as well as low-carbon development strategies. Africa is one of its focus regions, and is therefore important one to demonstrate that financing for climate action could effectively contribute to a sustainable development pathway. It is, however, unlikely that the intended paradigm shift that the Fund seeks can be achieved without a broader engagement of state and non-state stakeholders in its financed activities, especially given that the latter can help scaling up existing capacities, bring on-the-ground expertise to the table and support GCF proceedings at the various levels of action.

Informed by this, the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) and CARE International in collaboration with Germanwatch and other partners, invited 70 representatives from over 20 African countries – such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa, Morocco, Benin, Malawi, Sudan, Uganda, Zimbabwe, among others – to a Pan-African Conference on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) readiness to the Green Climate Fund, held on 8-9 October 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya, in the margins of the 7th edition of the Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA7) conference. As part of the project “CSOs Readiness to the GCF – focus Africa” which is funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) under the German’s Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the conference provided a platform to participants to share their experiences with their initial engagement with the GCF in their respective countries, promote peer learning among CSOs on how to engage and harness opportunities with regards to the Fund, and to initiate future engagement and partnerships among CSOs working on climate change, with a special focus on finance.

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<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Participants familiarized themselves with the GCF and its current state of play and challenges, and shared extensive experience on GCF matters and CSO engagement with almost 20 country presentations. They identified common challenges, such as the complexity of the GCF, insufficient international and in-country information flows (from relevant institutions, but also within civil society), lack of capacity and resources to fully engage in GCF issues, and insufficient attention by institutions to knowledge and on-the-ground expert contributions that CSOs can bring to the table. They also learned that situations vary between countries and many good existing examples of active collaboration between CSOs and government institutions.

In interactive group work, participants developed concrete ideas for next steps of CSO engagement and the interaction with other relevant institutions involved in the Fund's activities, in mainly four target areas.

Firstly, advancing the understanding of GCF matters and national context is essential, given the complexity of the GCF's provisions and frameworks. Identified strategies include increasing engagement in peer-to-peer learning, conducting national stakeholder mappings and preparing for independent monitoring of GCF implementation in their countries additional new programmes currently being implemented.

Secondly, advancing CSO coordination and the outreach to, cooperation with and influencing of other institutions which play relevant roles in the domestic discussions, such as National Designated Authorities (NDAs), implementing entities, private sector etc. CSOs have an opportunity to become knowledge brokers based on a deeper understanding of the GCF's mechanisms, they are also in a better position to influence such conversations on equal footing.

Thirdly, CSOs can play a special role in communicating about the GCF, its projects and – hopefully – successes and CSO work in-country and within the region, as they often have access to various types of media. This includes publishing of articles on regional and international platforms, engaging in communication of the outcomes of the conference to a wide range of other organizations, educating media about the GCF, etc.

Fourthly, close collaborations to access and generate funding to secure and scale-up civil society's valuable contributions to tackle the climate crisis was identified as a very important area of work, for example by building mutual programme development capacity, forming (multi-country) consortia to develop concepts, and engage with NDAs and other institutions responsible for projects and programmes' design and implementation.

The close collaboration with the organisers of the CCDA7 conference resulted in the opportunity to present key results and outcomes from the CSO readiness conference to the closing plenaries of CCDA7 (*photo*). Furthermore, various participants were able to stay on for the CCDA7 and contributed to other climate finance related sessions during this big gathering of African experts, scientists and policymakers.

As the conference took place a week before the 21st Meeting of the Board of the GCF held in the Kingdom of Bahrain, this saw the GCF at a critical crossroads with a view to launching its first formal replenishment. Participants also exchanged views on some of the governance challenges and the reputational damage generated through the 20th Board meeting in particular, to the scarcity of resources and unclear prospect for the upcoming replenishment, and countries like USA and Australia announcing to reduce their contributions in times when, among others, the IPCC report on 1.5°C calls for much greater urgency and action. There was strong agreement that the GCF needs to be operated effectively and provide significant new resources to address climate action needs in

Africa. Many participants welcomed the progress that the GCF Board achieved a few days after the Pan-African conference was held, and wished for immediate enhanced action.

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*Crispus Mugambi (CARE Kenya) presenting main findings to the CCDA7 audience.*