

InfoNote

Capacitating the West African civil society organisations on climate finance mobilization

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Key messages

- West African countries are highly vulnerable to climate change yet receive limited climate financing from the existing global mechanisms.
- Although the Paris Agreement emphasizes inclusive and participatory approaches, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in West Africa face significant barriers in accessing major climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- AICCRA supported a regional workshop to build the resource mobilization capacity of the members of the West Africa Regional Hub of the Independent Global Stocktake (iGST WA Hub), a network of over 500 climate-focused CSOs.
- The capacity building workshop specifically targeted the GCF, providing CSOs from 8 West African countries, including AICCRA countries, hands-on training to design bankable GCF concept notes.
- The workshop strategically included 4 experts from the National Designated Authorities (NDAs) and ministries of agriculture and environment from Benin and Burkina Faso, the targeted countries for the concept note development.
- Next steps include the finalization and submission of the multi-country GCF concept note, thereby creating a tangible pipeline for climate finance mobilization within the iGST WA Hub.

- Through this capacity building, AICCRA equipped the members of iGST WA Hub with skills enabling them to leverage existing climate finance for locally relevant adaptation and mitigation actions.

Background

The Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches in climate action, encouraging the engagement of non-state actors (i.e., civil society) in both national and international climate processes (UNFCCC, 2015). Civil society plays a vital role in translating global climate commitments into local action by mobilizing communities, promoting accountability, and ensuring that climate responses address local needs and vulnerabilities. Despite this mandate, civil society organizations in West Africa often face limited access to climate finance, restricting their ability to implement locally relevant projects and scale innovative solutions. Strengthening the capacity of regional civil society networks and platforms to mobilize resources is therefore critical to bridging this gap, enhancing inclusive participation, and ensuring that civil society can contribute effectively to national and regional climate agendas.

The West Africa Regional Hub of the Independent Global Stocktake (iGST WA Hub) is a regional platform that brings together climate-focused civil society actors, including youth organizations,



women's groups, and researchers. The Hub strengthens climate action in West Africa by empowering its members to engage in research, advocacy, implementation, and knowledge sharing, thereby ensuring inclusive participation. To fully realize its potential, it is crucial to build the Hub's capacity in fund mobilization, enabling its members to access resources, implement climate projects, and scale locally relevant initiatives.

As part of its objectives to strengthen climate advisory platforms and promote gender and social inclusion, AICCRA provided technical and financial support for a weeklong regional workshop to build the capacity of Hub members from eight West African countries, including Ghana, Mali, and Senegal, in climate fund mobilization, with a particular focus on the Green Climate Fund. This info note highlights the key outcomes and insights from the workshop.

Opportunities and challenges for the iGST West Africa Hub in climate finance

The global climate finance landscape has evolved into a complex ecosystem comprising multilateral, bilateral, regional, and national institutions. The Financial Mechanism of the UNFCCC, primarily managed through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), form the core institutional arrangement for channelling resources to developing countries. Additional entities, such as the Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund, and the Special Climate Change Fund, target specific priorities and vulnerable groups, ensuring that funding reaches areas of greatest need.

While these funds primarily target national governments, civil society organizations (CSOs) can benefit indirectly and directly. CSOs can participate as implementing partners, accredited entities, or through partnerships with national institutions to access grants for locally driven adaptation and mitigation projects (GCF, 2023). Enhanced direct access mechanisms under the GCF allow eligible national and subnational organizations, including CSOs, to directly apply for and manage resources, increasing opportunities for community-based initiatives (GCF, 2023).

Beyond UNFCCC financial mechanisms, CSOs have access to a diverse range of alternative funding sources to support climate action. Philanthropic foundations and private donors that provide grants for advocacy, community-based adaptation, innovation, and pilot projects.

Multilateral and bilateral development partners also offer small grants, challenge funds, and technical assistance specifically targeting non-state actors, enabling them to pilot and scale locally driven solutions. By leveraging these opportunities, civil society can play a more active role in translating global climate commitments into tangible local action and contribute to inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development outcomes.

Despite the growing array of climate finance opportunities, members of the Hub like other CSOs in West Africa, face challenges in accessing them. They lack the technical expertise, institutional capacity, and financial literacy required to develop bankable project proposals that meet the stringent criteria of major funds such as the GCF, GEF, and Adaptation Fund. The complex application procedures, lengthy accreditation processes, and rigorous reporting requirements often create barriers that prevent the Hub members from participating effectively. Political and bureaucratic constraints in their countries of operation further limit their engagement. Additionally, insufficient knowledge of available financing mechanisms reduces the ability of the members to mobilize resources efficiently.

These challenges highlight the urgent need for capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance, and stronger partnerships between the Hub, governments, development partners, and initiatives such as the Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) to enable the members to fully leverage climate finance for locally relevant adaptation and mitigation projects.

Regional capacity building in climate fund mobilization

The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT through AICCRA provided a five-day regional capacity building workshop (Figure 1) from 6th to 10th October 2025 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, to strengthen the resource mobilization capacities of the members of the iGST WA Hub, contributing to its sustainable operationalization and climate action efforts in the region. With the overall objective of training Hub members to design high-quality, scientifically robust, and bankable GCF project concept notes, the workshop aimed to: (i) familiarize participants with the GCF's investment framework, strategic priorities, and requirements; (ii) provide practical, hands-on training in designing and developing GCF concept notes, resulting in a draft multi-country project concept

note for Benin and Burkina Faso; and (iii) strengthen collaboration between the governments of Benin and Burkina Faso and the Hub.



Figure 1: Group photo of workshop participants

The five-day workshop provided participants with practical knowledge and hands-on experience in accessing and managing GCF resources. Day 1 focused on understanding the GCF’s mission, governance, investment framework, and accreditation process, followed by group organization. Day 2 centred on developing logical frameworks for a multi-country project concept for Benin and Burkina Faso, alongside discussions on financing plans, and risk analysis. Day 3 emphasized strategic alignment with GCF investment criteria, featuring case studies. Day 4 explored project implementation modalities, stakeholder engagement, and the regulatory and market context. Day 5 concluded with the finalization of the logical framework, presentation of roadmaps, and evaluation of the training.

The workshop benefited a total of 28 participants, comprising 8 women and 9 youth, drawn from the Hub’s member organizations across eight West African countries (Table 1), including 4 experts from the national designated authorities and the ministries of agriculture in Benin and Burkina Faso.

Table 1: Summary of participants of the capacity-building workshop

| Country | Participants | Females | Youth (<35) |
|---------------|--------------|---------|-------------|
| Benin | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| Burkina Faso | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| Cote d’Ivoire | 5 | 2 | |
| Ghana | 3 | | |
| Mali | 1 | | 1 |
| Nigeria | 1 | | |
| Senegal | 1 | | |
| Togo | 2 | | 2 |
| Total | 28 | 8 | 9 |

Technical plenary presentations and discussions focused on two youth-led preliminary studies examining climate profiles and policy frameworks in the agriculture and energy sectors of Benin and

Burkina Faso, providing key inputs for defining the climate rationale of the concept note. The capacity-building sessions covered essential aspects of the GCF framework, including its mission, governance, investment priorities, accreditation process, financing plans, risk analysis, project implementation modalities, stakeholder engagement, and the regulatory and market context. The main outcomes of the plenary session was an agreement on the topic of the project concept note.



Figure 2: Indoor photos during the workshop

Participants were divided into two practical session groups and tasked with developing the logical framework of a multi-country project concept note covering Benin and Burkina Faso. The practical group work led to two main outcomes: (i) completion of the project’s logical framework and (ii) consensus to further develop the ideas into a GCF concept note.

Next steps

The climate fund mobilization workshop leads naturally to two main actions. First, the Hub intends to act on the consensus reached during the workshop, using the agreed project topic and logical framework to develop a multi-country GCF concept note in the agriculture sector covering Benin and Burkina Faso. A practical step in this process is to engage with countries experts and GCF’s NDAs, as well as the two young fellows who conducted the preliminary studies on the climate profiles and policy frameworks of the two countries. Second, participants from the eight national networks of the Hub will transmit the knowledge gained to other members of their respective networks. Together, these actions are expected to strengthen the Hub’s capacity in climate fund mobilization and enhance the ability of civil society to contribute effectively to regional climate action.

Further reading

- GCF (Green Climate Fund), 2023. Independent Synthesis of Direct Access in the Green Climate Fund. Evaluation report No. 15 (February 2023). Songdo, South Korea. Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund.
- UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), 2015. Adoption of the Paris Agreement. Accessible from URL

This infonote highlights AICCRA's support to strengthen West African civil society capacity in climate finance mobilization. Through a regional workshop, CSOs from eight countries received hands-on training to design bankable Green Climate Fund concept notes, fostering stronger engagement with national authorities and creating a pipeline for locally relevant adaptation and mitigation financing.

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ABOUT AICCRA



Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) is a project that helps deliver a climate-smart African future driven by science and innovation in agriculture. It is led by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and supported by a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank. Explore our work at aiccra.cgiar.org