

GENDER AND BEYOND:

Creating Innovative Strategies for Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation Among Small-Scale Producers in Africa



CONVENING SUMMARY REPORT

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To learn more about the Advancing Climate Adaptation with Meso-Level Integration (ACAMI) project please visit [our webpage](#).

To subscribe to our ACAMI newsletter for project updates, project products and future convenings please contact the project coordinator: Nadine Methner (nadine.methner@uct.ac.za)

BACKGROUND

This report provides a summary of the 'Gender and Beyond: Creating Innovative Strategies for Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation among Small-Scale Producers in Africa' convening (link to recording). The convening was a key component of the [Advancing Climate Adaptation with Meso-Level Integration](#) (ACAMI) project. The aim of ACAMI is to examine the roles and functions of meso-level organizations (MLOs)¹ in implementing climate change adaptation interventions for the benefit of agricultural small-scale producers in Africa. The convening aimed to (1) present and discuss consolidated gender-related findings from the 2023 ACAMI in-country workshops, (2) facilitate dialogue among gender experts from MLOs, identified during prior interviews with MLO leaders in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and Malawi, on challenges and strategies related to gender, and (3) stimulate active participation within the broader MLO community on gender and equity issues to promote knowledge sharing, network building, and visibility.

The convening was held virtually for two hours on the 15th of February, 2024. It attracted a diverse audience, including representatives from various organizations that are actively engaged in Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) projects focusing on small-scale producers in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, and Malawi. The convening was chaired by ACAMI's gender expert, Dr. Ruth Magreta, and a total of 62 participants attended the meeting.




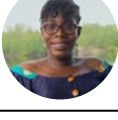
The ACAMI team selected five panelists based on their deep expertise in gender and equity, and their experience developing innovative solutions to address climate change adaptation and gender issues within their organizations. The panel featured two experts from Ghana and one representative from Kenya, South Africa, and Malawi (see Table 1 for more details). The convening began with a presentation by the ACAMI gender expert, who summarised key gender-related findings from the 2023 ACAMI in-country workshops held in the four countries.

This set the stage for an enriched conversation covering three key questions addressed by the five panelists:

1. What are the core concerns related to gender when aiming to improve the climate resilience of African small-scale producers?
2. What are other issues of inclusivity and equity that need attention in climate adaptation efforts?
3. How do organizations, on their own or in partnership with others, address these issues through their climate change adaptation interventions?

¹ ACAMI defines Meso-level organizations (MLOs) as public, private, and non-profit organizations involved in implementing climate change adaptation interventions intended to benefit agricultural small-scale producers in Africa. These organizations are critical intermediaries between small-scale producers and the policy, scientific, and finance communities.

Table 1: Detailed information on the ACAMI gender convening panelists

	Name	Designation	Organisation	Country	Discussant Question
	Stephanie Kanyinhi	Programs Officer	GROOTs Kenya	Kenya	1
	Bertha Chiroro	Programs Director	Gender CC-Southern Africa Women for Climate Justice	South Africa	1
	Dominic Amon Nyasulu	National Coordinator	National Youth Network on Climate Change (NYNCC)	Malawi	2
	Zinabu Abdulai	Resilience and Social Inclusion Director	ACDI/VOCA	Ghana	3
	Jacqueline Mbawine	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Manager	A Rocha Ghana	Ghana	3

BEYOND GENDER: A FUTURE-ORIENTED, INCLUSIVE APPROACH

During the last quarter of 2023, the ACAMI project team engaged with MLOs in the four countries (involved in CCA for small-scale producers) through country-level interviews and focus group discussions. ACAMI project team found that many of MLOs involved in CCA are either mainstreaming or striving to mainstream gender and other equity considerations into their activities and organizational cultures. The MLOs identified multiple challenges and opportunities related to gender and equity that they address on a regular basis in their work.

In reflecting on the richness of MLO insights and activities, and recognising the importance of CCA gender-related discussions for now and the future, ACAMI project team designed a convening focused on the need to advance the equity discussion for CCA efforts. The first goal was to move beyond traditional gender binaries, ensuring no group, especially the youth and the vulnerable, is excluded. This approach is rooted in MLOs' recognition of the unique challenges and vulnerabilities faced by these groups, advocating for strategies that are inclusive. By focusing on the specific needs of young and vulnerable populations, MLOs argued for future financing and support mechanisms that are sensitive and adaptable to these groups' evolving requirements. This shift indicates a necessary evolution from current gender mainstreaming efforts, underlining the critical need for targeted, effective interventions that secure the well-being and development of all community members, regardless of their gender. Second, the convening aimed to underscore the importance of future-oriented planning. Climate change is a dynamic and evolving challenge, necessitating strategies that are not only responsive to current realities but are also adaptive to future uncertainties. This forward-looking mindset is crucial in equipping small-scale producers with the skills and resources needed to navigate the complexities of tomorrow's climate challenges.

Third, the convening sought to emphasize the need to extend our geographical and cultural lenses beyond specific countries, incorporating a Pan-African perspective that values and integrates the diverse voices of Sub-Saharan Africa. This broader agenda calls for collaboration and learning across borders, enabling the sharing of innovative practices and lessons learned among countries facing similar climate challenges. It is imperative to pool collective intelligence that lies beyond gender, knowledges, administrative and geographies to chart a path towards a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for small-scale producers across Africa.

METHODOLOGY

The virtual convening was laid out into distinct phases: pre-convening, convening, and post-convening. The intention behind the design (see Figure 1 below) was to ensure an inclusive and engaging discussion that speaks to the interests and challenges of organizations working in the equity and CCA space, as well as adequate follow-up and learning from the event. The pre-convening phase focused on identifying key gender-related issues identified from the review of the in-country workshops. For this phase, Dr. Magreta held a series of online discussions with the ACAMI project team to both communicate gender findings from the in-country workshops and identify the core questions to frame the convening. The team also carefully selected Gender and Equity experts among the MLOs that had participated in the 2023 in-country workshops. Selection was based on expertise and diversity of perspectives and geography, in order to foster rich and varied discussions. Once selected, Dr. Magreta met on-line with the panelists twice to explain the intentions of the convening and to engage them in co-design.

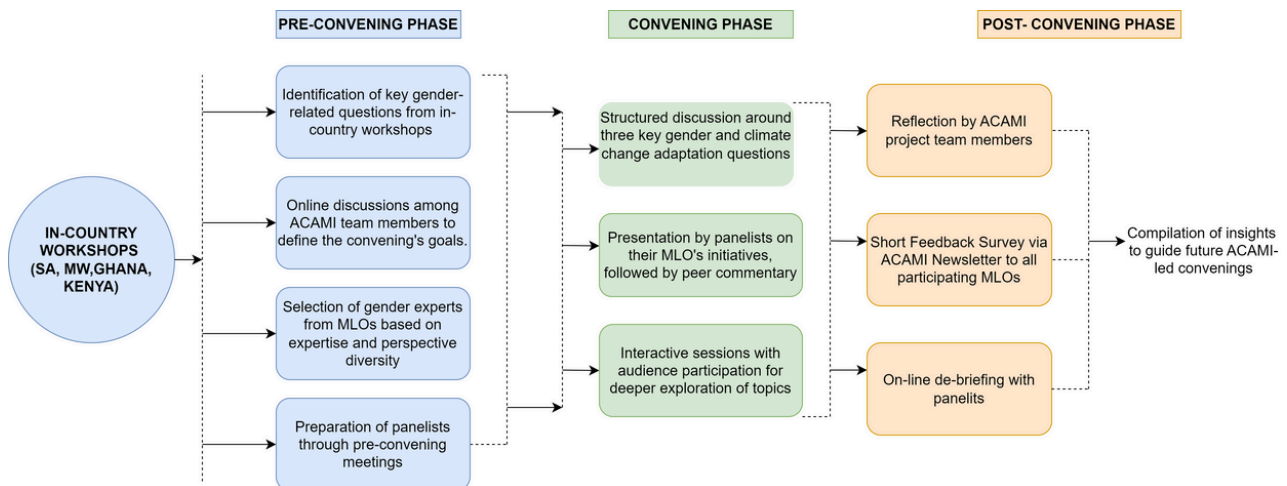


Figure 1: ACAMI Gender and Beyond Convening Process- Adapted from https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/home_page.pdf

The main focus of the convening was the panel discussion, framed sequentially around the three key questions. This segment was designed for maximum interaction, with one or two panelists allocated five minutes each to present their experiences and the initiatives their respective MLOs undertake. After each presentation, other panelists provided additional insights, each contributing two minutes of commentary on the issues highlighted by the main discussant. Audience members were then invited to add comments and raise questions, thus deepening the discussion around each question. This interactive approach was repeated for each of the three questions, ensuring a thorough exploration of the topics.

The post-convening phase involved gathering immediate feedback from participants to evaluate the process and impact of the convening. This structured approach resulted in a rich discussion on pivotal gender issues in CCA and identified actionable steps for future ACAMI-led convenings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ACAMI's Take on the Pulse of Gender in climate change adaptation

The ACAMI gender expert, Dr. Ruth Magreta, opened the event by communicating the purpose of the ACAMI project and the topical ACAMI convenings before delving into the critical findings from the in-country workshops related to gender integration in CCA activities. Dr. Magreta's presentation showcased how gender considerations have been embedded within different MLOs' climate adaptation efforts across the four countries, particularly focusing on small-scale producers. The workshop findings were organized into four pivotal areas: the incorporation of gender in adaptation activities, the evolution of gender integration over time, strategies and expertise for addressing gender issues, and the alignment between funders' expectations and on-the-ground realities.

Key Insights from In-Country Workshop

- a. Integration of Gender in Adaptation Activities: Across the four countries, MLOs undertake proactive efforts to integrate gender into climate adaptation projects by enhancing women's participation in decision-making and their involvement in community initiatives. This finding showcases the critical role of gender considerations for successful adaptation efforts.
- b. Evolution Over Time: MLOs expressed a noticeable shift toward recognizing and addressing gender disparities, marking progress in evolving traditional gender roles that impact adaptation initiatives, and showcasing strides toward gender equity. Importantly, the workshops highlighted that equity issues must go beyond gender, to address intersectional concerns and other vulnerable groups in climate adaptation.
- c. Strategies and Expertise: To address gender issues effectively, organizations utilize gender experts and gender-focused tools, embedding gender mainstreaming as a fundamental aspect of project planning and execution. Organizations tailor gender strategies to fit the unique cultural and societal contexts of each community, aiming to cultivate an understanding and acceptance of gender equality principles.
- d. Disconnect Between Funders' Expectations and Ground Realities: Conversations in the workshops revolved around the challenges of matching donor-prescribed gender methodologies with the realities faced by local communities. There were multiple instances where donor expectations did not align with practical needs on the ground, underlying the necessity for flexible and culturally sensitive gender-responsive approaches.

BEYOND GENDER: A FUTURE-ORIENTATED, INCLUSIVE APPROACH

This section of the report delves into the key insights that emerged from the Gender and Beyond convening. Following the three-question structure, the discussions explored the core concerns related to gender in enhancing climate resilience, addressed additional issues of inclusivity and equity, and examined how organizations address these challenges through their adaptation interventions. The discussants rounded off the discussions by unpacking key questions or challenges regarding gender and equity in the future.

These discussions were instrumental in shedding light on the integration of gender and inclusivity within the realm of CCA, specifically focusing on the resilience of African small-scale producers. As a result, the convening provided important insights into the challenges MLOs face but also the progress and potential pathways for integrating gender and inclusivity into climate adaptation efforts across the participating countries.

Q1: What are the core concerns related to gender when aiming to improve the climate resilience of African Small-scale producers?

Panelists highlighted several core concerns related to gender in improving climate resilience for African small-scale producers. These include the need for sensitivity to cultural and religious norms, the importance of access to resources like land and markets, the influence of poverty, the challenge of a lack of climate finance and extension services, and the need for farmer-friendly financing. Women, who are predominantly small-scale producers, face specific challenges such as limited decision-making power within their communities and the larger value chains, access to credit and financial services, unpaid care work, and gender-specific needs in adapting to climate change. Structural issues, such as obstacles to land ownership, can impede project-specific efforts in gender equity. Addressing these concerns requires promoting gender equality, combating discrimination, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, adopting family-friendly practices, increasing women's participation in decision-making, providing equal access to benefits, and centering women in development assistance. Additionally, decolonizing climate actions and financing is crucial to effectively address these challenges and promote inclusivity and equity in climate adaptation efforts.

Takeaway points from the discussion

1. Promotion of Solidarity Markets: The formation of solidarity markets² has improved market access for women. These solidarity markets have reduced the travel distance and cost of transportation for the women to be able to sell their farm produce.
2. Priority on Gender Inclusion: Inclusivity is important when dealing with gender issues. Providing equal access to benefits for women, men, and youth, and properly positioning these groups to receive the right resources that meet their needs is essential to reduce their vulnerabilities.

² "They have ended up creating these solidarity markets so that they don't have to travel across places and have to spend a lot of money in order to be able to pay for them to be able to sell some of their extra products that they are producing" (Bertha Chiroro, Gender CC- Southern Africa Women for Climate Justice)

3. No Universal Remedy: There is no one-size-fits-all solution for increasing farmers' resilience. It is important to recognize the unique challenges and vulnerabilities faced by different groups of farmers and develop tailored and inclusive strategies that can effectively address their specific needs. Gender concerns and interventions, therefore, have to be context-specific and consider local needs, resources, and cultural norms holistically.

4. Access to Resources: To empower women farmers, it is important to improve their access to finance, land, information technology, and knowledge, as well as promote the inclusion of women in decision-making platforms across agricultural value chains.

5. Understanding Social Structures and Power Dynamics: When considering gender within the context of climate finance, it is important to acknowledge the varied social structures and power differences that exist among men and women. This necessitates that interventions are designed effectively to address these inequities in culturally competent ways.

Q2: What are other issues of inclusivity and equity that need attention in climate adaptation efforts?

Participants underscored the importance of improving inclusivity for women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in climate adaptation efforts through wealth creation channels such as access to markets, production, and financial resources. This requires thinking beyond the individual farm by creating opportunities for the small-scale producers in the larger agricultural system. Youth and women are critical agents for problem-solving in the face of climate change. Youth can contribute important technical/scientific knowledge, and rural women are knowledge holders of indigenous knowledge. Both sources of knowledge, especially when combined, are important for developing future climate-resilient pathways. In addition, participants pointed out the challenges rural farmers face, especially women and young people, in accessing timely information necessary for decision-making in agricultural practices. The lack of information exacerbates existing issues in agricultural productivity. Furthermore, timely access to climate information is crucial for rural communities to respond to environmental challenges effectively. To address this need, sustainable methods of disseminating information to educate and empower rural farmers so that they can make informed decisions and effectively engage in climate resilience efforts are required.

Takeaway points from the discussion

1. Recognition of Women's Contributions: The discussion highlighted a lack of recognition of women's contributions to climate science, indicating a need for greater recognition, crediting, and inclusion of women's CCA contributions and problem-solving.

2. Incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge: The importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge in climate adaptation efforts was emphasized, underscoring the value of traditional knowledge systems in addressing climate challenges. Rural women are often important holders of indigenous knowledge, their expertise should be better integrated into CCA interventions.

They have valuable knowledge about indigenous seeds and food preservation methods. It's important to recognize and preserve this indigenous wisdom, particularly regarding indigenous crops. Strategies like storytelling can help share this knowledge effectively within communities.

3. Priority on Disability Inclusion: The discussion extends beyond gender to encompass equity concerns related to people with disabilities in CCA. It emphasizes the importance of disability inclusion in CCA projects to ensure accessibility of knowledge, resources, and benefits for all individuals. This includes addressing barriers faced by marginalized groups like people with disabilities and integrating their needs into adaptation efforts alongside considerations for women farmers' resilience strategies.

4. Role of MLOs in Addressing Issues: MLOs were recognized as key players in addressing these issues through organizing interventions for women, youth, and people with disabilities and designing projects that cater to the varied needs of the intended project beneficiaries.

Q3: How do organizations, on their own or in partnership with others, address these issues through their climate change adaptation interventions?

Women's financial empowerment, coupled with training and information access, were presented as important strategies for addressing gender inequity in CCA among the MLOs. These efforts often emerge through collaborations and partnerships among MLOs with distinct capacities and functions. In some instances, these partners provide connections and training across rural value chains, as well as introduce project beneficiaries to novel technology and material resources relevant to facilitating CCA. The discussants shared their experiences on how they empower small-scale producers, especially women, financially while addressing the obstacles faced by women in farming and adapting to climate change. The MLOs employed strategies such as organic shea production, waste management by converting waste from shea nuts into briquettes, restoration of degraded land through the establishment of shea seedling nurseries, and partnering with private sector companies and donors to provide market access and technology. The MLOs in Ghana also connect women to government-led climate change initiatives happening within their location and encourage them to leverage the establishment of Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA) for financial gains for the women.

Takeaway points from the discussion

1. Partnerships for Climate Resilience: Collaborating with private sector actors, donors, and government initiatives to support rural small-scale producers, particularly women, was emphasized as an important strategy for enhancing resilience to climate change.

2. Women Empowerment through Innovation: Implementing innovative solutions, such as the use of improved stoves in the value chain during shea butter processing, to enhance safety, health, and quality of production, benefits women who traditionally engage in processing activities.

3. Value Addition and Market Access: Prioritizing value addition and market access for small-scale producers, especially for women, including providing bonuses for organic production and setting up processing facilities to ensure farmers benefit from the end value of their products, was also highlighted as important for boosting climate resilience.

4. Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing: Focusing on capacity building and knowledge sharing are essential strategies for CCA, such as training women in organic production, certification, and providing access to climate-smart agronomic information through digital platforms.

What are the key questions or challenges regarding gender and equity in the future?

Inadequate access to resources and decision-making power for women, cultural norms that limit women's participation in climate adaptation efforts, and insufficient engagement of men in supporting women's initiatives were highlighted as key challenges that would potentially affect gender and equity in the future. Additionally, recognizing and supporting female-owned initiatives to prevent demoralization and loss of aspirations among women and youth, ultimately leading to missed opportunities for progress, were also identified as a challenge to achieving gender and equity in the future. The MLOs are implementing various strategies to facilitate the participation and empowerment of women, men, and youth in CCA. There is a growing recognition of the importance of tapping into indigenous knowledge, particularly from women and youth, in addressing climate change. Efforts are being made by MLOs to encourage indigenous experts to share their knowledge, engage men in supporting women's initiatives, and find innovative means to engage the youth to take action in CCA. Through empowerment, capacity-building, and collaboration, these initiatives seek to foster inclusive and sustainable responses to climate change at the grassroots level.

Takeaway points from the discussion

1. Champions Model for Male Engagement: Some MLOs are employing a "champions model" to engage grassroots community members, including men who advocate for women's rights and participation in decision-making processes. Through dialogue and capacity-building initiatives, men are encouraged to support women's initiatives.

2. Women Empowerment and Exchange Programs: Efforts are made to empower women through leadership, advocacy, and group dynamics training. Leveraging exchange programs allows women to share experiences, learn from one another, and develop a sense of belonging within a larger movement. Platforms like WhatsApp groups are also useful in facilitating information exchange and mutual support among women champions.

3. Youth Climate Change Champions: MLOs recognize the potential of young people as agents of change in CCA. Training programs are developed to equip youth with knowledge and skills in climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, and other initiatives. Peer-to-peer interactions and linkages with private entities help youth champion CCA initiatives and economic opportunities in their communities.

4. Documentation and Support for Youth Efforts: Despite the active involvement of young people in CCA initiatives, their efforts often lack proper documentation and support. Initiatives such as the development of manuals for youth leadership in climate adaptation aim to provide guidance and capacity-building opportunities for young leaders. The MLOs seek to ensure that youth contributions are recognized and supported in policy formulation and implementation processes.

5. Multidisciplinary Collaboration and Networking: Recognizing the importance of collaboration, MLOs encourage multidisciplinary approaches and partnerships among stakeholders. Women are encouraged to network and collaborate with other women's groups to amplify their initiatives and access resources. Similarly, youth leaders are supported through networks and capacity-building initiatives to enhance their contributions to CCA efforts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the report highlights the critical importance of gender integration, inclusivity, and equity in CCA efforts for small-scale producers in Africa. Through discussions and insights from the convening, key takeaways underscore the need for context-specific interventions that empower women farmers, recognize indigenous knowledge, improve access to resources for vulnerable groups, and leverage the complementary positions and capacities of youth, women, and men in climate adaptation. The emphasis on inclusive and future-oriented approaches to CCA in Africa reflects a growing recognition of the interconnected challenges faced by communities in the region. The discussions further emphasized the significance of disability inclusion, women's empowerment, and youth engagement in addressing the complex impacts of climate change.

MLOs are working in partnership to develop innovative strategies, promote value addition, and build capacity to tackle these challenges. In spite of these efforts by MLOs, small-scale producers in Africa are challenged by unequal access to resources, cultural norms that limit women's participation, and the need to support female-owned initiatives. In response to these challenges, MLOs are implementing a range of strategies to empower women, men, and youth in CCA efforts. These include the champions model for male engagement, multidisciplinary collaboration and networking, women empowerment programs, and youth climate change champions.

Looking ahead, MLOs need to play crucial roles in empowering women farmers and building resilience to climate change. However, significant challenges remain, including the need to create conducive conditions for women's empowerment and establish knowledge networks to advance equity in climate adaptation strategies. By addressing these challenges and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, there is a clear opportunity to drive positive change and build more inclusive and sustainable climate adaptation efforts in Africa.