

The Global Goal on Adaptation: Its relevance and implications for Africa

Key Messages

- ❖ *Africa is already experiencing negative impacts from climate change, and risks will increase in the near-term, making adaptation an urgent and important development priority for Africa.*
- ❖ *2023 is a crucial year for putting the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) into action under the Paris Agreement.*
- ❖ *Establishing GGA targets that are ambitious and focused on reducing negative climate change impacts, and related loss and damage, now and in the future are an essential part of putting the GGA into operation.*
- ❖ *Increased finance, capacity building, and technology transfer are key to facilitating effective GGA implementation across critical sectors including food systems, water, cities, health, and economies in Africa.*

Overview

Climate change is a significant threat to human well-being and planetary health, and many people in Africa are highly vulnerable to climate change. The risks of loss and damage to African food production, of African biodiversity loss, and of loss of African lives will escalate with every increment of global warming. Deep, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are essential for limiting the increase in future global warming, and therefore limiting future risks, but climate change impacts are already occurring and will increase in the near-term, so emissions reductions alone are insufficient to reduce climate change impacts in Africa.^{1,2}

Therefore—alongside rapid reductions in emissions—**accelerated implementation of adaptation action during this decade is a crucial factor for reducing climate change loss and damage for humans and ecosystems in Africa.**

Recognizing the importance of adaptation for protecting people, livelihoods, and ecosystems, and the urgent adaptation needs of developing countries, the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) was established by 195 governments under the Paris Agreement in 2015. In the context of keeping global warming well below a 2°C increase and ensuring an adequate adaptation response, **the GGA goal is to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change³. Taken together, these actions should support reduction of climate change impacts, especially for vulnerable developing countries. However, the GGA has not yet been put into operation, which is a major body blow to African countries.**

A GGA work programme was established as part of intergovernmental climate change negotiations in 2021⁴. This is a major opportunity for African countries, but the work programme has not yet agreed on a framework to implement the GGA and is

¹ IPCC 2022 Africa Chapter <https://bit.ly/3DVB9pU>

² CDKN <https://cdkn.org/ipccs-sixth-assessment-report-whats-it-africa>

³ Paris Agreement Article 7 <https://bit.ly/3YYkBlh>

⁴ GlaSS Work Programme <https://bit.ly/46e9pK3>

currently scheduled to close at CoP28 in 2023. **More work is needed on this priority issue to reduce climate change impacts for African countries.**

This brief presents contextual reflections on the GGA, its relevance and implications, considering African perspectives. It aims to provide a deeper understanding of a GGA framework and what it actually means for Africa.

Highlights of the GGA Framework

It is proposed that the purpose of the framework is to achieve the Global Goal on Adaptation. It is further proposed that the framework should include an overarching target that elaborates the GGA goal, encourages action, and is also easy to communicate. **A strong overarching target could focus on reducing impacts from climate change which is the outcome of effective adaptation, and is easy to communicate and understand.**

Structure of the framework

To initiate development of a framework to guide achievement of the GGA, a structured approach was agreed by governments for a framework that may consider the following components⁵:

i. **Dimensions of the framework:** Iterative adaptation cycle, including:

- ❖ Impact, vulnerability and risk assessment
- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Implementation
- ❖ Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

It must be included in the GGA framework that support and means of implementation in terms of finance, capacity-building, and technology transfer is a key consideration in each stage of the adaptation cycle and that means of implementation is essential to putting a GGA framework into operation.

ii. **Themes for the framework:** these are sectors under which GGA targets can be implemented, including: water; food and agriculture; cities, settlements and key infrastructure; health; poverty and livelihoods; terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems; and oceans and coastal ecosystems; tangible cultural heritage; mountain regions; and biodiversity. The number of themes could be reduced by clustering similar themes, such as biodiversity and ecosystems, or expanded to include important missing themes, such as adaptation in the energy sector.

iii. **Cross-cutting considerations:** These are considerations that cut across the dimensions and themes of the framework, including country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approaches, human rights approaches, intergenerational equity and social justice, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities, and ecosystems.

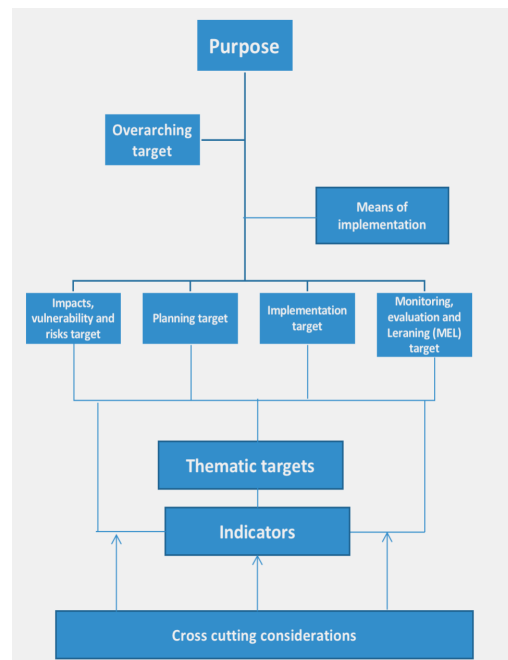


Figure 1: Proposed structure of the GGA

Source: Author

The GGA framework should also comprise elements informed by the best available science, including for targets, and indicators

⁵ <https://unfccc.int/documents/626569>

and metrics for tracking progress on achieving GGA targets. Other key considerations of the framework include traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples, and local knowledge systems.

OVERARCHING TARGET	IMPACTS, RISK & VULNERABILITY TARGET	PLANNING TARGET	IMPLEMENTATION TARGET	MONITORING & EVALUATION TARGET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce climate impacts and risk • Scale up adequate support for adaptation • Be an outcome of moving towards resilience, improving adaptive capacity and reducing vulnerability related to the long-term temperature goal. • Avoid maladaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess vulnerability and exposure to existing and future climate impacts and risks • Reduce vulnerability and exposure • Develop early warning and response systems • Use information on impacts, exposure, vulnerability and risk to develop feasible adaptation plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As at 2022, 84% of countries have at least one national-level adaptation planning instrument in place (AGR, 2022); • Ensure all countries have developed national adaptation plans, strategies and policy instruments • Increase inclusive planning and enhance implementation of plans • Access means of implementation to prepare and implement plans, including investments for integration across levels and sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase adaptation programmes/projects that align with identified priorities to effectively reduce climate impacts and vulnerability and avoid maladaptation. • What actions can achieve reductions in exposure or vulnerability to climate hazards? • What actions can reduce the widening adaptation gap? • What actions bring out the challenges of tracking implementation progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, set up, improve, and implement monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes and systems for adaptation, including integration of local and Indigenous knowledge, and knowledge of other vulnerable groups to enhance buy in and ownership; • Developing countries having equitable access to support for monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Figure. 2: Principles to consider in developing an overarching target, as well as targets for themes and dimensions of the GGA framework. Source: Authors

Putting the GGA into operation

To guide operationalization of the GGA globally, the following considerations could be key:

- Defined targets in the GGA framework** to guide action to achieve the goal, and to guide monitoring and evaluation of adaptation progress.
- Use of both quantitative and qualitative elements** at international and national levels with sector-specific technical guidelines and standards on which effectiveness and adequacy of adaptation can be assessed.
- Ensuring adequate means of implementation (see Box 1)** to ensure implementation of practical adaptation actions on the ground based on adaptation needs of developing countries.
- Comprehensive review mechanism for the GGA** as part of the global stocktake (scheduled to take place every five

years, commencing in 2023) - See Box 2.

- Reviewing the adequacy of support** provided for adaptation and the enhanced implementation of adaptation action.
- Technical and political elaborations and consensus** under each of the above is required to achieve the purpose of the GGA.

BOX 1 - MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Paris Agreement highlight finance, technology and capacity building as core means of implementation needed to enable the achievement of the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Means of implementation refers to the support required for developing countries to meet the challenges associated with transitioning to a “pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development”. The provision of these forms of support should take into account the needs and priorities of developing countries and represent a progression beyond previous efforts as well as provide clarity on types of finance—grants, loans, leveraged private finance— made available to developing countries. It would also entail prioritizing capacity building to ensure access to finance and should include technology transfer for both mitigation and adaptation.

**BOX 2 - TRACKING ADAPTATION
PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE**

GGA

The GGA offers an approach against which adaptation support can be assessed for adequacy during each Global Stocktake and a review to assess performance against achieving the GGA. This is particularly important to ensure that adaptation support is consistent with adaptation needs, considering the progress of mitigation efforts to meet temperature goals. Elements to track adaptation progress include:

- ❖ *Assess the adequacy of the means of implementation provided for and received by developing countries to meet their adaptation needs, as communicated in their a-NDCs (backward-looking element).*
- ❖ *Assess the effectiveness of adaptation actions in reducing climate change impacts.*
- ❖ *Overall assessment of progress towards achieving the GGA and the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and the adequacy of the GGA in light of countries' mitigation efforts and associated scenarios for temperature increase.*

What does GGA mean for Africa?

Africa is already experiencing widespread negative impacts from climate change and climate change risks will increase with every increment of global warming, hence the need to have targets for tracking adaptation progress defined in the GGA. Such targets will enable adaptation needs and progress to be adequately captured and subsequently measured in a context specific manner.

Global inaction on adaptation poses a severe threat to past development gains⁶. This further highlights the following considerations in underscoring the importance of the GGA for Africa:

- ❖ Africa's climate vulnerability.
- ❖ Barriers and gaps to climate adaptation and ability of a strong GGA framework to catalyze adaptation actions in Africa.
- ❖ The potential of the GGA to increase political will and follow-through in Africa and globally for allocating resources to climate change adaptation.
- ❖ The potential of the GGA to increase climate finance to match increasing adaptation needs and costs thereby closing the widening adaptation gap.
- ❖ A GGA that is robust to the possible feasibility and effectiveness challenges of adaptation responses if countries fail to meet the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.
- ❖ Avoiding maladaptation.

It is important to look both at contemporary climate change impacts and future climate change risks, including linkages between social and economic development in Africa and climate change, for operationalizing the GGA in Africa. To envision meaningful GGA outcomes for Africa, adaptation actions would mean:

- i. **Action to limit global temperature rise to 1.5° C**—by ensuring rapid and far-reaching greenhouse gas emissions reduction transitions for sectors such as land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities across Africa and globally.
- ii. **Accelerating action on adaptation during this decade, recognizing that even if the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement is achieved there will still be significant adaptation needs and costs for Africa.**
- iii. **Addressing barriers preventing deeper adaptation**, as well as equitable, inclusive cooperation with those vulnerable to climate change.

⁶https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf

- iv. **Acknowledging that African countries are already contributing to global adaptation efforts** from their national budgets and expenditures.
 - v. **Increasing finance for adaptation action in African countries and supporting assessment of the total finance requirements per adaptation need** to ensure adequacy in adaptation financial support and in doing so, close the adaptation gap.
 - vi. **Recognizing the urgent need for climate and other information** based on more science and knowledge as the evidence-base to inform planning for feasible and effective adaptation actions to current and future climate change impacts.
 - vii. **African countries further developing institutional frameworks**, support, and architecture for development of in-country capacity to collect and effectively use both disaggregated and aggregated data to identify vulnerable populations and their needs to act.
 - viii. **Provide African countries with the technical support** to access global climate funds to plan, implement and assess adaptation progress.
- ❖ **Establishing ambitious targets for adaptation in the GGA** framework is crucially important. Targets should be informed by science, including studies done in Africa. This will guide setting contextual targets that are robust and enable tracking of adaptation progress.
 - ❖ **An overarching target focused on reducing impacts from climate change** would help be actionable and help unpack and make it easier to communicate the three pillars of the GGA goal on reducing vulnerability, increasing resilience and increasing adaptive capacity.
 - ❖ **Provision of technical support** from bodies like the IPCC and specialized bodies established under the UNFCCC should be explored to guide development of indicators and metrics for tracking adaptation targets.
 - ❖ **Means of implementation is a critical component of the GGA framework** and it must be clear on how a commitment from developed countries to support African countries to enhance climate action on adaptation will be realised.
 - ❖ African countries need to improve mobilization of adaptation finances, communicate their adaptation needs, and access technologies to deliver commitments on the Paris Agreement and promote operationalization of the GGA.
 - ❖ African countries leverage the interfacing of the GGA with the Global Stocktake to direct the development of upcoming NDCs or adaptation communications.

Conclusions and the Way forward

2023 is an exciting year for achieving consensus on a framework to put the GGA into operation under the Glasgow–Sharm el-Sheikh Work Programme. Recognising Africa’s vulnerability and limited finances for climate change adaptation action, Africa can also do more on adaptation and take a leading role in operationalizing the GGA to obtain meaningful outcomes.

Recommendations as way forward for obtaining a meaningful GGA for Africa include:

Further reading

1. IPCC, 2023: *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. A Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland
2. IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, 3056 pp., doi:10.1017/9781009325844.
3. Ngwadla, X. and El-Bakri, S., 2016. *The global goal for adaptation under the Paris agreement: Putting ideas into action.* Trisos, C.H., I.O. Adelekan, E. Totin, A. Ayanlade, J. Efitre, A. Gemedo, K. Kalaba, C. Lennard, C. Masao, Y. Mgaya, G. Ngaruiya, D. Olago, N.P. Simpson, and S. Zakiideen, 2022: *Africa.* In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1285-1455, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.011.
4. Neufeldt, H., Christiansen, L. and Dale, T.W., 2021. *Adaptation Gap Report 2020.*



<https://acdi.uct.ac.za/>

Contact

Dr Portia Adade Williams. Email: adadeposh@gmail.com

Mr. Luckson Zvobgo. Email: Luckson.zvobgo@uct.ac.za

Disclaimer: This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the funders.