

A publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development

Thursday, 21 October 2021 - Online at: [enb.iisd.org/Land-Food-Climate-Africa-Europe](http://enb.iisd.org/Land-Food-Climate-Africa-Europe)

## Tackling the Climate Implementation Gap: Are Rights the “Missing Middle”? 19 October 2021

The second in a two-part series on “Land-Food-Climate: An African-European Dialogue on Climate Resilience,” this event explored how international partnerships can help galvanize more inclusive climate governance at the national and sub-national levels in Africa. The event resulted in several key messages aimed at informing decision-making processes, including that:

- the gap in the implementation of climate policies is in part due to silos between the climate and agriculture fields;
- tackling this implementation gap requires addressing the “missing middle” between national commitments and programmes and local level capacities to scale up promising initiatives, particularly by creating enabling environments;
- vulnerability to the impacts of climate change is the result of overlapping inequalities and the progressive realization of human rights is, therefore, pivotal to achieve climate resilience;
- despite being vulnerable, people have agency that must be harnessed and supported to achieve climate resilience;
- civil society and community-based organizations are key actors to address the “missing middle” and should be involved as partners more systematically than is currently the case;
- acknowledging local and traditional knowledge in the design of locally-led solutions rather than imposing one-size-fits-all approaches is crucial;
- context-specific methods help foster meaningful stakeholder engagement, including by addressing diversity of language and forms of communication and exploring arts-based approaches;
- programmes by development partners tend to create new implementation structures instead of strengthening the capacities of the existing institutional landscape; and
- drastically reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the Global North is crucial, as the impacts of climate change will otherwise outpace adaptation efforts.

The event featured two panel discussions: the first focused on bridging the “missing middle” between national policy making and local-level action; and the second addressed the role of African-European partnerships in implementing rights-based approaches.

The 19 October event was conducted virtually and brought together close to 70 participants from the human rights, climate, development cooperation, and research sectors. It was jointly organized by TMG Research gGmbH and Robert Bosch Stiftung, in collaboration with partners.



Photo courtesy of Nana Kofi Acquah / Ashden

### Report of the Meeting

#### Opening Remarks

Welcoming participants, Gerrit Hansen, Robert Bosch Stiftung, underscored the need to engage affected communities in devising national transformation pathways and highlighted food systems transformation as key for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Wangu Mwangi, TMG Research, emphasized the need to break silos between the agriculture and climate change communities, calling for holistic responses developed in collaboration with civil society representatives.

Jes Weigelt, TMG Research, pointed to the gap in adaptation finance and recalled industrialized countries’ responsibility to drastically cut their GHG emissions to ensure vulnerable countries have the opportunity to adapt to already inevitable

#### In This Issue

Report of the Meeting . . . . .	1
Opening Remarks . . . . .	1
Panel 1: Understanding Ways to Bridge the “Missing Middle” . . . . .	2
Panel 2: Realizing Rights-based Approaches Through African-European Partnerships . . . . .	3
Joint Roundtable . . . . .	3
Closing Remarks . . . . .	4
Upcoming meetings . . . . .	4



Jes Weigelt and Wangu Mwangi, TMG Research

levels of warming. Explaining the notion of “the missing middle” on which the event focused, he highlighted that national governments often lack the capacity to implement activities at the local level, with the scaling-up of local-level activities, in turn, being curtailed by the lack of enabling environments.

### **Panel 1: Understanding Ways to Bridge the “Missing Middle”**

Cheikh Mbow, Director, Future Africa, University of Pretoria, called for transdisciplinary action focused on food loss and waste to address the yield gap in Africa without adding further pressure on land. He emphasized the need to holistically address leverage points for food systems transformation related to energy, water, carbon sequestration, local knowledge, and job opportunities.

Sanelisiwe Nyaba, Food Agency Cape Town, provided a youth and intergenerational rights perspective. He emphasized that everyone must have the ability to make sustainable and healthy consumption choices, which need to be accessible and affordable. She underscored the need to make information accessible to the general public.

Faith Alubbe, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Land Alliance, drew attention to challenges Indigenous women face, particularly related to lack of land tenure rights, illiteracy, and patriarchal decision-making structures. She noted these overlap with the gaps in policy enforcement and the multiplicity of laws affecting all rural people and smallholders. She urged capacity building to foster women’s engagement in policy development.

Corinna Enders, Managing Director, Zukunft-Umwelt-Gesellschaft gGmbH, provided insights into the activities of Germany’s [International Climate Initiative](#) funding programme, noting it aims to: involve the local level by pursuing a bottom-up approach and channeling 50% of funding through local actors;



Faith Alubbe, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Land Alliance



Sanelisiwe Nyaba, Food Agency Cape Town

mobilize private-sector funding; and enable disadvantaged groups, especially women, to gain land rights.

In a moderated discussion, panelists further reflected on avenues to overcome the gap that exists between international and national commitments and capacities at the local level. Noting food is culturally specific, Mbow emphasized food systems transformations should be contextualized. He stressed that incremental change is not sufficient and government agencies need to strive for transformation. Nyaba called for leveraging arts-based approaches to empower communities to engage in policy discussions and open up room for future-oriented thinking. She highlighted that collaboration between researchers, artists, and local communities can provide a fruitful platform for marginalized actors’ to make their voices heard and share their knowledge. Alubbe underscored the importance of adopting an intersectional lens to address climate vulnerability and food systems transformation, noting data is key to drive inclusive policy development. She cautioned against reliance on technology-centered approaches for community engagement, noting this can be a barrier to the participation of already marginalized people. Enders underscored the importance of multi-level partnerships, and, echoing Alubbe, stressed the need to overcome language barriers, which can be an impediment to community engagement.

Alexander Müller, Managing Director, TMG Research, reflected on the panel discussion, underscoring that food systems transformations are a complex undertaking. He said climate change adds to this difficulty, and the Global North, given its dominant contribution to GHG emissions, has a responsibility to support developing country farmers to prepare for an uncertain future. He highlighted civil society’s role in raising awareness and holding decision makers accountable. He noted international agreements, including those that recognize the right to food, act as safeguards for progress.



Cheikh Mbow, Director, Future Africa, University of Pretoria



**Corinna Enders**, Managing Director, Zukunft-Umwelt-Gesellschaft gGmbH



**Antoine Oger**, Institute for European Environmental Policy

### ***Panel 2: Realizing Rights-based Approaches Through African-European Partnerships***

Youba Sokona, South Centre, and Vice-Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), pointed to the IPCC's work on interlinkages between land, food, and climate. It is problematic, he noted, that these issues are addressed in fragmented silos of policy, knowledge, and practice, especially in the African context. He called for governance processes that overcome these silos, ensuring input from all levels.

Susan Chomba, World Resources Institute, said food systems require a total overhaul, calling for meaningful research to generate new models and for integrated policy frameworks at all levels to facilitate changes on the ground. She emphasized reducing gas emissions, increasing finance for adaptation, and promoting innovative financing mechanisms over bureaucratic procedures, pointing to mobile-phone-based financing solutions as an example.

Antoine Oger, Institute for European Environmental Policy, spoke on EU policies related to Africa. He noted existing agreements must be implemented and that regionalized policy agreements are well suited for targeted financial cooperation and leveraging private funds, which is key as public funding will not suffice. He called for ensuring local communities and farmers are involved in the initiation and design of new policies and programmes, rather than being cast as passive recipients.

In a moderated discussion, panelists further reflected on what needs to change in African-European partnerships to support the progressive realization of rights. Sokona called for enhanced focus

on the notion of solidarity, above that of partnership. He explained his expectation for "humble solidarity" from those holding power toward those whose voices have not been heard. He emphasized providing space for communities to chart out their own aspirations rather than imposing global solutions in a top-down manner. Chomba underscored the importance of stakeholder engagement, not only in terms of equity, but also effectiveness, pointing to community-led restoration efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa and their successful scaling-up. Oger said local communities should be in the drivers' seat, with donors providing capacity building to support them in implementing locally-led solutions.

### ***Joint Roundtable***

In a lightning talk, Kumi Naidoo, Founding Chair, Africans Rising for Justice, Peace, and Dignity, highlighted the need for political will and changing mindsets, not just among policymakers and business leaders but also calling for activists to move beyond their own business-as-usual approach. He emphasized that marginalized and exploited people have significant knowledge, capabilities, and power, which, he said, should be better harnessed to drive change. Among other things, he called for leveraging people's power as voters, volunteers, asset owners, consumers, and belief shapers.

During moderated discussions, Müller emphasized the need to invest in human capital. Chomba highlighted the power of social movements in driving change. Enders underscored good communication as key for driving change, noting the importance of "learning to listen" to ensure local needs are met. Nyaba said youth engagement is crucial to achieve sustained transformative change. She called for leveraging the communicative power of the arts, underscoring that music, among others, can be a powerful vehicle for reaching a broad stakeholder base.



**Susan Chomba**, World Resources Institute



**Kumi Naidoo**, Founding Chair, Africans Rising for Justice, Peace, and Dignity



**Youba Sokona**, South Centre and IPCC Vice-Chair

Sokona noted that while European countries need to transform their energy and agricultural systems, in Africa the question is less about transformation and more about “jump starting” their development in a sustainable manner. He called for reflecting on the definition of “sustainable urbanization” in an African context, noting Northern urbanization models are not fit-for-purpose on the continent. Naidoo pointed to the feminist movement’s role in bringing attention to the notion of intersectionality, underscoring the need to address different forms of vulnerability and to better assess how problems are interlinked.

Speakers converged on: calling for holistic approaches to tackle complex, interlocking challenges; fostering the capacity of government institutions to enable transformative rather than incremental change; and making sure financial support is aligned with local priorities.

### Closing Remarks

Müller summed up discussions emphasizing the importance of responsibility, solidarity, and partnerships. He underscored the Global North’s responsibility to dramatically and urgently reduce emissions. He called for reflecting on the need for new global public goods, such as access to information. He noted the unequal distribution of COVID-19 vaccines brought inequalities into sharp perspective. He emphasized that partnerships are not a one-way-street, saying European countries have much to learn from other countries’ experiences in dealing with weather extremes or implementing agroforestry or agro-ecology practices.

Hansen urged addressing poverty and inequality through rights-based approaches and said securing land rights is key, especially for women and Indigenous Peoples. She highlighted the role of philanthropic organizations’ in creating space for dialogue and supporting local-level actions.



**Alexander Müller**, Managing Director, TMG Research



**Gerrit Hansen**, Robert Bosch Stiftung

### Upcoming meetings

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the COP to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 26):** UNFCCC COP 26 was originally scheduled to take place in 2020, in Glasgow, UK, but was postponed for a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the conference is to advance work towards implementation of the Paris Agreement. **dates:** 1-12 November 2021 **location:** Glasgow, Scotland, UK **www:** [unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/glasgow-climate-change-conference](https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/glasgow-climate-change-conference)

**UN Economic and Social Council’s 2022 Partnership Forum:** The Partnership Forum will discuss ways to define and promote effective partnerships and how they can best advance the sustainable development agenda and the 17 SDGs. **date:** 2 February 2022 **location:** New York City, US **www:** [undocs.org/en/E/2021/L.34](https://undocs.org/en/E/2021/L.34)

**Resumed Fifth Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA):** The overall theme of UNEA-5 is “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.” It follows the first session of UNEA-5, which took place virtually in February 2021. UNEA-5.2 will be followed by a special session from 3-4 March 2022 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the UN Environment Programme. **dates:** 28 February-2 March 2022 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5](https://www.unep.org/environmentassembly/unea5)

**Ninth World Water Forum:** Organized by the World Water Council, the ninth World Water Forum is the first of its kind to be held in sub-Saharan Africa. The event will focus on the theme “Water Security for Peace and Development” and will consider, among others: water security and sanitation; cooperation; and rural development. **dates:** 22-27 March 2022 **location:** Dakar, Senegal **www:** [www.worldwatercouncil.org/en/dakar-2022](https://www.worldwatercouncil.org/en/dakar-2022)

**UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15) (Part 2):** The second part of CBD COP 15 will review the achievement and delivery of the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is also expected to take a final decision on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, as well as decisions on capacity building and resource mobilization, among others. **dates:** 25 April-8 May 2022 **location:** Kunming, Guizhou, China **www:** [www.cbd.int/article/new-dates-cop15-virtual-2021-facetoface-2022](https://www.cbd.int/article/new-dates-cop15-virtual-2021-facetoface-2022)

For additional meetings, see [sdg.iisd.org/](https://sdg.iisd.org/)