


**Insight Paper**

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**Governance and  
Financing Mechanisms  
for Strengthening the  
Integration of Climate  
Change and Health in  
Africa**

**AFIDEP**

African Institute for  
Development Policy





“African countries need to develop blended finance mechanisms that combine public concessional funding with private capital in order to mobilise investment in critical areas such as renewable energy for health facilities.”

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# List of Abbreviations

**AFDB – African Development Bank**

**AFIDEP – African Institute for Development Policy**

**AU – African Union**

**Africa CDC – Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention**

**CCDA – Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa**

**CSOs – Civil Society Organisations**

**GCF – Green Climate Fund**

**H-NAPs – Health National Adaptation Plans**

**IMCHE – Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment**

**MDPI – Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute**

**NAPs – National Adaptation Plans**

**NDCs – Nationally Determined Contributions**

**PACJA – Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance**

**PPCH – Pan-African Platform on Climate and Health**

**UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund**

**UN Women – United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

**WHO – World Health Organization**

# Executive Summary

Despite Africa's low contribution to global greenhouse gas emission less than 4% globally, the continent is disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. Climate change affects health directly through disease transmission pathways and indirectly through disruptions in food systems and other social determinants of health. In South Africa, air pollution accounted for 4% of all deaths in South Africa in 2015 while 900,000 children in Ethiopia in 2023 were at severe risks of severe wasting due to droughts and displacements. Research highlights the importance of capacity building and innovative research and innovative science in accelerating climate-health integration. Yet, the most critical pillars remain the establishment of clear policy and governance frameworks. Without these, Africa cannot sustainably integrate climate resilience into health systems or protect the most vulnerable populations

We therefore examined the existing climate change and health policy/governance frameworks as well financing mechanisms to identify gaps and opportunities for strengthening these two pillars. Our main approach involved the review of climate-health policy documents as well as grey and published literature. The results showed the existence of elaborate regional policy frameworks aimed at guiding the integration of climate change and health programmes in Africa, with the most recent being the 2025 Climate Change and Health Strategic Framework.

Despite various regional policy frameworks advocating for climate-health integration at the national level, only 29.5% of African countries have strategies focused on climate-health integration. Recent efforts at integration at the national level have focused on developing Health-National Adaptation Plans (H-NAPs). Our review revealed that Kenya is the only country in Africa to have developed a standalone climate change and health strategy. Across the continent climate- health initiatives face significant funding short-falls further complicated by weak domestic financing mechanisms. Thus, gap emphasizes the urgent need for innovative financing models and stronger governance frameworks to sustain climate- health integration.

To address the governance and financing gaps emerging from our review, we recommend actionable interventions including the following: There is the need for technical support and capacity strengthening programmes aimed at guiding countries in the development of integrated climate change and health policies and governance frameworks.

- a. African countries need to develop inter-ministerial coordinating mechanisms that are backed by appropriate laws to lead integration efforts.
- b. Non-state actors including CSOs need to strengthen advocacy and communication efforts aimed at accelerating the integration of health across all climate policies and governance frameworks in Africa.
- c. There is the need to support African governments to assess the economic cost of climate change impacts on health systems and disease burden as part of a broader resource mobilisation strategy to support climate-health initiatives.
- d. African Governments to develop innovative domestic financing schemes such as green bonds and increase health budgets to raise financing for environmentally beneficial initiatives with health co-benefits.
- e. There is the need for new partnerships to pool financial resources across sources and key funders for climate-health initiatives such the Climate X Health Catalytic Fund.

# Introduction

Climate change is unquestionably one of the most pressing global concerns of the twenty-first century. Greenhouse gas emissions are a key driver of climate change, and despite Africa's little contribution, it is disproportionately affected [1]. Climate change is creating catastrophic weather-related disasters such as heat waves, air pollution and flooding, which have devastating consequences on water (availability and quality), food systems, agriculture, infrastructure, public health, and, as a result, national or regional economy [2], [3]. Furthermore, climate change is clearly a key factor in the introduction and re-emergence of infectious and non-infectious diseases as it exacerbates transmission pathways [4], [5]. For example, 4% of all deaths in South Africa in 2015 were attributable to air pollution [4]. The effects of climate change on health in Africa is exacerbated by the fragility of health systems, which are often underfunded and neglected [6].

The health impact of climate change is also disproportionately high in already vulnerable populations such as children, women, urban and rural poor, thus amplifying existing health crises and undermining overall development [4]. For instance, estimates from UNICEF shows that 900,000 children in Ethiopia (as of July 2025) were at risk of severe wasting due to drought and displacement. According to projections from UN Women, extreme climatic events will increase the number of food insecure women in sub-Saharan Africa by an additional 105 million women by 2050. The heavy reliance on wood and charcoal as fuels for cooking and women's traditional role in preparing food disproportionately exposes them to respiratory diseases.

Despite the known effects of climate change in worsening health outcomes—increasing the spread of infectious diseases and extreme heat, exacerbating food and water insecurity and overburdening fragile health systems, health remains on the margins of climate change governance and financing globally and in Africa in particular. Yet, the integration of health into climate governance frameworks and financing mechanisms in Africa are critical and strategic for addressing the health impacts of climate change.

While we recognize the salience of other strategic factors such as innovative research and data as well as capacity building in promoting the integration of climate change and health, we argue that climate-health governance frameworks and financing mechanisms are the most important pillars required for transformative policy shifts and resources mobilisation for integrating health into climate actions in Africa. In this insight paper, we examine the climate change—health governance frameworks and financing mechanisms in Africa, and propose actionable interventions for strengthening these two critical areas in order to fully mainstream health into climate actions.

The paper was prepared by the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) in collaboration with AMREF Health and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance, through funding from the Rockefeller Foundation.

## Approach/ Methodology

To address our objectives, we conducted a desk review and synthesis of published and grey literature. We also reviewed key regional and national policy documents as well as conference proceedings and reports. We further relied on insights from the work of the Pan-African Platform on Climate and Health (PPCH), convened by AFIDEP, Amref Health Africa and PACJA, to provide new perspectives on climate-health governance and financing in Africa. Our approach was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the governance frameworks for integrating climate change and health in Africa?
2. What gaps exist in these frameworks, and how can they be addressed?
3. What are the opportunities for cascading regional frameworks into national action?
4. What are the main financing mechanisms for climate change and health integration in Africa?
5. What are the funding gaps, and how can these be addressed?
6. What are the opportunities for increasing financing and developing new funding streams to support climate change and health integration?

## Key Finding: Climate-Health Policy and Governance Frameworks in Africa

The absence of governance and policy frameworks has been identified as one of the most critical barriers to integrating climate change and health in Africa. A 2022 African Union (AU) Commission review found that only 35% of countries had climate change policies that explicitly prioritized health. While most national frameworks are weak or absent, continental and regional strategies to include AU climate change strategy and Africa CDC climate health initiatives offer guidance. A review of these regional frameworks reveals important gaps in implementation, financing and accountability. Closing these gaps requires countries to embed health into climate policies, strengthen governance, and mobilize innovative financing to ensure climate resilience in health systems.

The key continental and regional frameworks that prioritise climate-health integration include; the Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa (2008-2018), Africa Health Strategy (2016-2030), AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032) and the Climate Change and Health Strategic Framework (2025). A summary of the priority areas, opportunities and gaps in these regional policy frameworks is provided below.

### Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa (2008-2018)

The Libreville declaration was the outcome of the first Inter-ministerial Conference on Health and Environment (IMCHE) in Africa in 2018. The Declaration was signed by 52 African countries who committed to implementing priority actions aimed at establishing a strategic relationship between the health and environment sectors, as a basis for joint planning and interventions. The Libreville Declaration is probably the first continental framework to explicitly recognize the integrated policy approach as the best approach for addressing climate-health interlinkages. The declaration explicitly called on African countries to “integrate health and environment linkages in national legislative frameworks”. A review of the implementation of the Libreville Declaration, after 10 years, found that almost all the surveyed countries (40 out of 44 countries) had reviewed or updated legislations, developmental and sectoral policies to allow for the integration of health and environmental issues.

While the policy and legislative changes occasioned by the declaration provides a foundation for advancing the integration of climate and health policies, the implementation of these policies and legislations has been inadequate in nearly all countries. Given that the Libreville declaration preceded the Paris Agreement, the framing of health-environment integration was quite broad, and focused mostly on environmental health and sanitation policies. Even though discussions on the need to update climate change policies and frameworks to integrate health and vice-versa is gaining momentum, only 29.5% of countries had developed strategies for integrating the health into the impacts of

climate change. The main opportunity of the Libreville declaration is that it provides a basis for advocacy for the signatories to the declaration to prioritise the integration of climate change and health in their recent policy and governance frameworks.

## **Africa Health Strategy (2016-2030)**

The African Health Strategy (2016–2030) is the framework of AU that aims to strengthen health systems, increase investments and address the social determinants of health to reduce the burden of priority diseases. The situation analysis conducted as part of the development of the strategy recognised the effects of climate change in accelerating disease transmission and exacerbating health inequalities in Africa. In line with this recognition, one of the strategic approaches outlined in the strategy is the need for multi-sectoral partnerships to address the social and environmental determinants of health. In addition to emphasizing multi-sectoral partnerships, the strategy also explicitly recommends the integration of health in all policies.

The strategic focus on partnerships and integration of health in all policies is an opportunity for African countries to integrate health into climate change policies and governance frameworks. Nevertheless, the fact that partnerships and the integration of health into climate change policies is not explicitly prioritised in the strategy despite the recognition of climate change in exacerbating disease transmission represents a major gap in the strategy. Furthermore, the pathways through which climate change exacerbate disease transmission and health outcomes is not adequately addressed in the strategy. The health co-benefits of specific climate actions (mitigation, adaptation and resilience) in Africa is also omitted in the strategy.

## **AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)**

The AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032) is a continental framework that was developed to effectively respond to climate change and build climate resilient communities and economies. It seeks to promote collective action and increased cooperation among state and non-state actors in addressing climate change issues that improve livelihood and wellbeing. The nexus of climate change and health in this strategy and action plan extends beyond human health to include planetary health. A key guiding principle of the strategy is that conserving and restoring the health of biodiversity and ecosystems contributes to both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Although the strategy is not explicitly focused on the nexus of climate change and human health, it provides governance solutions that are critical for accelerating the integration of climate change and health in the region. The strategy identifies weak institutions, inadequate coordination and collaboration among sector ministries as key impediments to the effective implementation of climate change policies in Africa. To address this challenge, the first priority intervention of this strategy and action plan is strengthen climate policies and governance. The following specific actions have been outlined in the strategy as measures for strengthening climate change policy and governance in the region;

- (i) mainstream climate change considerations and update Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) policy actions across sectors including health
- (ii) strengthen coordination mechanisms and collaboration between sectoral line ministries, and
- (iii) mainstream climate-resilient development objectives and targets across all aspects of governance and into all development and sector plans.

## **Climate Change and Health Strategic Framework (2025)**

The Climate Change and Health Strategic Framework (2025) was developed by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to guide countries in enhancing their climate resilience and mitigating the health vulnerabilities of climate change. Unlike the frameworks discussed in the preceding sections, this framework explicitly focuses on strengthening health systems, improving disease surveillance, and fostering sustainable public health outcomes that are resilient to climate change. The development of this framework is critical for positioning health as a central pillar of Africa's climate change policy.

The framework identifies the main climate-sensitive health risks that pose the greatest health threat to the continent as follows;

vector-borne and zoonotic diseases, water-borne diseases, food and nutrition insecurity, air-borne diseases, mental and occupational health issues, damage to key infrastructure and antimicrobial resistance. It proposes the adoption of the One Health Approach for collaboration and cross-sectoral action to tackle these climate-sensitive health risks.

Consistent with the other continental frameworks, this strategic framework identifies the lack of policy frameworks and legal structures as major impediments to the effective integration of climate considerations into health systems. The framework therefore has governance and leadership as one of its pillars for mainstreaming climate change into health policies and systems. The framework also proposes key governance initiatives and actions that should be undertaken by governments and stakeholders interested in supporting the integration of climate change into health policies.

## Advocacy of Non-State Actors for Climate-Health Integration

In addition to the foregoing continental frameworks (mostly developed and led by AU agencies) that seek to promote the integration of climate change into health, non-state actors including regional non-governmental and civil society organisations have also championed the climate-health integration agenda in Africa. The Pan-African Platform on Climate and Health (PPCH) has been the foremost non-state actors' platform that has advocated for health to be at the centre of Africa's climate resilience and development strategy. PPCH is co-convened by AFIDEP, AMREH Health Africa and PACJA.

In August 2023, PPCH developed the Common African Position on Climate Change and Health through collation with the Government of Malawi and WHO. Recognising that climate change undermines gains in public health and human wellbeing, the common African position called on African Governments to mainstream health considerations into NDCs and to ensure full participation of health ministries in climate decision making processes. The Common African Position on Climate Change and Health informed discussions and engagement with policymakers, experts and CSO actors at the Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA) in Nairobi in September 2023.

Building on the growing global momentum for the integration health into climate actions and the visible omission of health in the first Africa Climate Summit, PPCH spearheaded the climate and health cluster at the second Africa Climate Summit in Addis Ababa in September 2025. The main outcome of the climate and health cluster was the declaration of the non-state actors. The declaration reinforced the call for African governments to institutionalize health integration in all climate and development policies. Even though the Declaration of the Africa Climate Summit in Addis Ababa did not explicitly include mainstreaming health into climate policy actions, health featured prominently in the programme.

## Integrating health into Climate Change Policies and Frameworks Nationally

As mentioned previously, the integration of health into climate change policies and governance structures at the national level in Africa is quite limited. In spite of this, the policies with probably the greatest health inclusion are NDCs in the various countries. It is estimated that between 70 and 90 percent of NDCs in Africa mention health or health related-issues. However, health is often vaguely mentioned in NDCs, without clearly defined integration targets.

Apart from the NDCs, many African countries have included health in their national adaptation plans (NAPs). Like the NDCs, the inclusion of health in the NAPs is almost always generic, without actionable integration targets. To provide a more detailed roadmap for the comprehensive integration of health into NAPs, a few African countries including Ethiopia, South Africa, Uganda, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia have developed separate Health National Adaptation Plans (H-NAPs). The development of the H-NAPs has been spearheaded by ministries of health, and they provided costed actionable plans for climate-resilient health systems strengthening.

So far, Kenya is the only country in Africa that has developed a separate climate change and health strategy (2024-2029). This is a medium-term strategy that provides a more robust plan for the health sector's response to the ongoing climate crisis. The ultimate goal of this strategy is to build a climate-resilient health system that is capable of withstanding extreme climatic shocks as well as effectively managing changes in disease patterns. The strategy also aims to reduce the health sector's carbon footprint through transitioning to low-carbon technologies for disposing health waste. A novel governance mechanism in this strategy is the institution of a climate and health technical working group that is mandated to coordinate, track progress and foster collaboration across key government ministries. The Kenya Climate Change and Health Strategy (2024-2025) presents an opportunity for leaning and policy transfer across other African countries..

# Recommendations for strengthening climate-health governance

The insights generated from the review of the key regional and national frameworks demonstrate that the development and enforcement of policies as well as establishment of governance for coordinating actions are critical for the effective integration of health into climate actions in Africa. Guided by the gaps and opportunities identified in the policy frameworks reviewed, we propose the following actions for strengthening the integration of health into climate policies and governance mechanism;

- a. African experts and organisations including think-tanks need to prioritise technical support and capacity strengthening programmes aimed at guiding countries in the integration of health considerations into climate change and vice-versa.
- b. Guided by the Kenya example, African countries need to develop inter-ministerial coordinating mechanisms that are backed by appropriate laws to lead integration efforts.
- c. Leverage on existing training models and curricula to train policymakers and related stakeholders on key policy and governance considerations in the integration of health into climate change.
- d. Strengthen advocacy and communication efforts to accelerate the integration of health across all climate policies and governance frameworks in Africa.
- e. Facilitate learning exchanges and knowledge sharing among African countries with the view to scaling policy and governance best practices in climate change and health integration.
- f. Explore regionally-led funding opportunities to support all African countries develop H-NAPs or national climate change and health strategies.

## Key Finding: Climate-Health Policy and Governance Frameworks in Africa

Limited external and domestic funding is probably the greatest impediment to effective integration of climate change and health in Africa. Globally, the main sources of funding for climate actions include dedicated climate funds (Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund and the Global Environment Facility), bilateral and multilateral funding, domestic public financing, private and philanthropic sources. Of all these sources, funding for climate-health integration in Africa is mainly from international public financing and channeled through bilateral and multilateral institutions such the African Development Bank and Specialised Overseas Development Assistance.

Available evidence shows huge gaps for climate-health interventions in Africa, mainly due to the limited capacity of African Governments and local partners to access global climate funds and inadequate prioritisation of health in climate financing. The African Development Bank (AfDB) forecasts that African countries will require an annual expenditure of between \$7 and 15 billion by 2030 to create climate-resilient health systems [21]. Yet, current funding levels fall well short of this requirement, resulting in insufficient infrastructure, research, and resources for successful interventions. The continent needs at least \$70 billion per year for climate adaptation, but only \$15 billion was allocated in 2023. This massive shortage is expected to grow due to accumulated deficiencies over time. Currently, most of the funding for climate adaptation comes from multilateral development institutions (43%), while African governments and the private sector provide 23% and 3%, respectively [22].

Notably, the private sector has shown willingness to finance high returns on investments such as renewable energy projects, but is reluctant to finance adaptation initiatives, which are deemed less profitable. Furthermore, there is no consensus on climate-health financing priorities. Some suggest that climate adaptation financing should include a defined amount earmarked expressly for the health sector, as opposed to the existing situation in which adaptation funds are provided in one lump sum. This, however, plainly demonstrates that, in addition to insufficient money, there is a structural issue, as existing adaptation funds do not reach some of the critical locations where they could make a difference. This calls for restructuring of the adaptation finance architecture.

In addition to the huge climate-health funding gaps, Africa's share of global climate finance allocation is also disproportionately low, despite being one of the most affected regions. In the 2021/2022 fiscal year, Africa received only 20% of global adaptation financing flows (USD 13 billion). On the other hand, East Asia and the Pacific area received almost 45% of worldwide adaptation funding flows. This meant that Africa is funding its own adaptation plans up to 80%. This is an unfair imbalance; from the assessment and evaluation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Africa needs around

USD 53 billion per year from 2020 to 2035[1]. Furthermore, 76% of funding allocated to Africa are concentrated in the top ten countries, with the rest sharing the remaining. In addition, debt accounts for a major amount of African climate funding. For a continent already grappling with massive debts, this does not provide a solution, but rather exacerbates the existing issue [22].

Recognising that limited funding is probably the greatest barrier to the integration climate change and health in Africa, the key regional climate change and health policy frameworks have prioritised resource mobilisation and innovative financing mechanisms. A key objective of the Africa Climate Change and Health Strategic Framework is to develop sustainable financing mechanisms to support climate-health initiatives. Achieving this objective requires concerted efforts by global, regional and national actors including advocacy by non-state actors such as PPCH.

## Recommendations for increasing climate-health financing in Africa

Plugging the significant climate-health funding shortfalls requires multiple approaches including developing innovative financing mechanism. We propose the following strategies for generating financial resources for support climate-health initiatives in the region;

- a. Quantify the economic burden: Regional actors including Africa CDC and research institutions need to support African governments to assess the economic cost of climate change impacts on health systems and disease burden. These assessments must be embedded into broader resource mobilisation strategy and global climate change finance negotiation.

Innovative domestic financing: Support African Governments to develop innovative domestic financing schemes such as green bonds and carbon credits and climate levies that raise funds for environmentally beneficial initiatives to direct health benefits (e.g. clean energy for hospitals and health facilities, pollution reduction)

- b. Build institutional capacity - Strengthen the capacity of government entities responsible for climate-health integration to develop bankable projects that donor and investor requirements. This includes training in project design, financial modelling and monitoring frameworks to unlock climate-health financing.

Mobilize blended financing - African countries should establish blended financing mechanisms that combine public concessional funding with private capital. Priority investments include renewable energy for health facilities and climate-resilient infrastructure.

- c. Explore debt-for-climate swaps - Debt-for-climate swap mechanisms should be tailored to African countries enabling them to reduce debt burdens while channeling freed up resources into climate- health initiatives to align fiscal sustainability with resilience building.
- d. Increase domestic budgets: Governments must commit to raising national health budgets with dedicated budget lines for climate-health initiatives.
- e. Catalyze partnerships: Advocacy should push new partnerships to pool financial platforms such as such the Climate X Health Catalytic Fund to aggregate resources from diverse sources for scalable climate health interventions.

## Conclusion

The findings of this insight paper demonstrate the salience of developing appropriate policy and governance frameworks as well as innovative financing mechanisms in advancing the integration of climate change and health in Africa. Even though there are ample regional policy and governance frameworks for guiding the integration of climate change and health, current frameworks at the national level are inadequate and poorly implemented in cases where they exist. The recent development of the Climate Change and Health Strategic Framework (2025) by Africa CDC and the Kenya Climate Change and Health Strategy (2024-2029) provide opportunities for national level domestication and cross-country learning in the integration of climate change and health. Beyond policy and governance, Africa must seize the opportunity to strengthen health financing as a central pillar of climate-health integration This includes embedding climate-health priorities into national health budgets and leveraging on innovative mechanisms such as national health budgets, creating dedicated budget lines, and leveraging innovative mechanisms such as green bonds, carbon credits, blended financing, and debt-for-climate swaps. This integration repositions health from being a passive casualty of environmental change to a fiscally protected pillar of national security ensuring that essential services for vulnerable populations remain resilient and financed amidst escalating climate volatility.

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