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Policy Brief

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Integrating Climate and Health in Africa: A Call for Governance and Financing Reforms

Key Messages

- Africa faces a disproportionate burden of the global health challenges from climate change, exacerbated by the continent's's fragile health systems and vulnerable populations.
- Only a third of countries have climate change policies that prioritise health.
- Another major barrier to climate-health interagtion in Africa limited funding from national governments, minimal private sector investment and global funding shortfalls.
- African countries need to build robust governance structures, technical capacity and pursue innovative strategies for financing and resource allocation.



Context

Greenhouse gas emissions are a key driver of climate change, and despite Africa's little contribution, it is disproportionately affected. Climate change is exacerbating weather-related disasters such as heat waves, air pollution and flooding, which have devastating consequences on public health. The effects of climate change on health in Africa is exacerbated by the fragility of health systems, which are often underfunded and neglected.

The health impacts of climate change are disproportionately high among vulnerable populations such as children, women, urban and rural poor, amplifying existing health crises and undermining overall development. Available projections from UN Women shows that extreme climatic events will increase the number of food insecure women in sub-Saharan Africa by an additional 105 million women by 2050.

Although innovative research, data and capacity building are key for promoting the integration of climate change and health in Africa, climate-health governance frameworks and financing mechanisms are probably the foundational pillars of transformative policy shifts and resources mobilisation for such an integration.

Objective

The objective of this policy brief is to examine the climate change—health governance frameworks and financing mechanisms in Africa, and to propose actionable interventions for strengthening these two critical areas in order to fully mainstream health into climate actions.

Methodology

A desk review and synthesis of published and grey literature was conducted to understand climate-health policy frameworks and financing mechanisms. 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 PACJA, AMREF, and the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), to provide new perspectives on climate-health governance and financing in Africa.

Key Findings

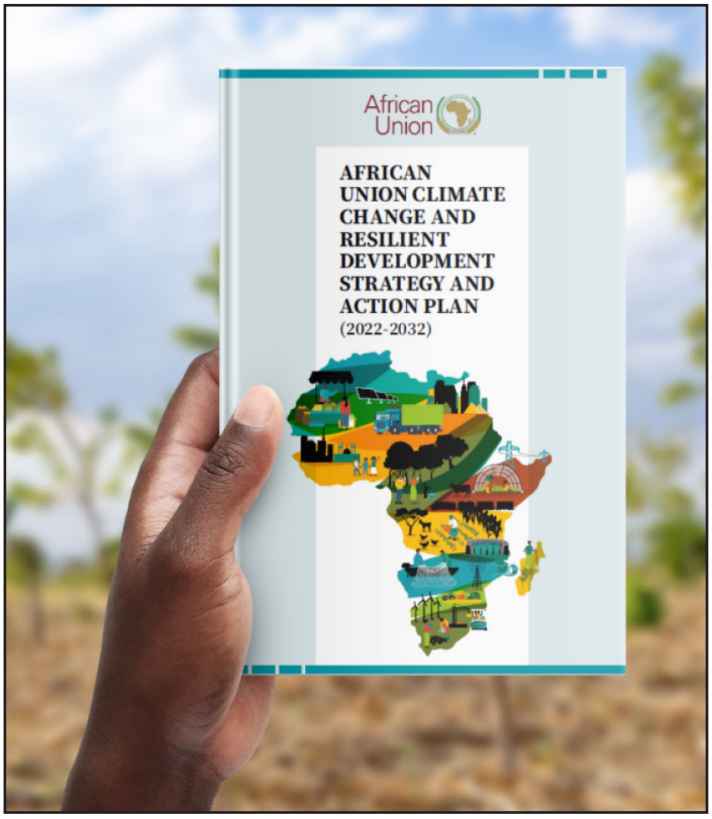
Climate-health policy and governance frameworks in Africa

The findings show a lack of climate-health policy and governance frameworks at the national level. It was found that only 35% of African countries had climate change policies that included health as a priority area. Nevertheless, there are continental and regional frameworks that aim to guide countries in the integration of climate change and health. Below is a summary of key regional policy frameworks that prioritise climate-health integration, highlighting gaps and opportunities:

- **Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa (2008-2018):** this is the first continental framework to explicitly recognise an integrated approach as the best approach for addressing climate-health interlinkages. Given that this declaration preceded the Paris Agreement, the framing of health-environment integration was quite broad, and focused mostly on environmental health and sanitation policies. A review of the implementation of the declaration found that only 30% of countries had developed strategies for integrating the health into the impacts of climate change as required. This declaration provides a basis for advocacy for signatories to prioritise climate-health integration in their policies and governance frameworks.

- **Africa Health Strategy (2016-2030):** the framework aims to strengthen health systems, increase investments and address social determinants of health to reduce the burden of priority diseases. The framework emphasises multi-sectoral partnerships and recommends the integration of health in all policies. Nevertheless, 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.

- **AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032):** the strategy 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 extends beyond human health to include planetary health. The strategy outlines specific actions for strengthening climate change policy and governance; (a) mainstream climate change considerations and update Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) policy actions



across sectors including health (b) strengthen coordination mechanisms and collaboration between sectoral line ministries, and (c) 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):** this strategic framework aims to guide countries in enhancing their climate resilience and mitigating the health vulnerabilities of climate change. It proposes the adoption of One Health as an approach for collaboration and cross-sectoral action to tackle climate-sensitive health risks. The framework identifies lack of policy frameworks and legal structures as major impediments to the effective integration of climate considerations into health systems. It therefore 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.

Financing mechanisms for integrating climate change and health in Africa

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). The Green Climate Fund and multinational organisations provide the majority of climate action finance in Africa. The private sector contributes very little and exclusively to profitable industries. The huge funding gaps for climate-health interventions in Africa is attributable to the limited capacity of African Governments and local partners to access global climate funds and inadequate prioritisation of health in climate financing. Furthermore, there is no consensus on climate-health financing priorities. Some stakeholders 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.



Conclusion

The findings highlight the importance of effective policy and governance frameworks, as well as creative climate-health finance mechanisms in integrating climate change and health issues. While regional frameworks exist, there few national-level frameworks and these are often ineffective and poorly implemented.

Recommendations for strengthening climate-health governance

The actions have been recommended for accelerating the integration of climate change and health in national polices and governance frameworks:

- African countries need to develop inter-ministerial coordinating mechanisms that are backed by appropriate laws to lead integration efforts, as exemplified by Kenya.
- 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.
- Strengthen advocacy and communication efforts to accelerate the integration of health across all climate policies and governance frameworks in Africa. 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.
- Explore regionally-led funding opportunities to support all African countries develop H-NAPs or national climate change and health strategies.

Recommendations for increasing climate-health financing in Africa

The following actions are recommended for generating financial resources for support climate-health initiatives in Africa:

- Support African Governments to develop innovative domestic financing schemes such as green bonds and carbon credits to raise financing for environmentally beneficial initiatives with health co-benefits.
- Strengthen the capacity of government entities responsible for climate-health integration should be strengthened to develop bankable climate-health projects.
- African countries need to develop blended financing mechanisms that combine public concessional funding and private capital to mobilise investments in critical areas such as renewable energy for health facilities.
- Developing debt-for-climate swap mechanisms targeted at African countries to lower national debts and leverage the extra financing by supporting climate-health initiatives.
- Increase domestic financing by raising national health budgets, and creating dedicated budget lines for climate-health initiatives.
- Advocate for the creation of new partnerships to pool financial resources for climate-health initiatives such the Climate X Health Catalytic Fund.

Acknowledgement

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@Afidep

African Institute for Development Policy

Malawi Office:
3rd Floor, Public Service Pension Fund Building
P.O. Box 31024, Lilongwe 3, Malawi
Phone: +265 995 495 143

Kenya Office:
6th Floor (Block A), Westcom Point Building
Mahiga Mairu Avenue, Off Waiyaki Way, Westlands
P.O. Box 14688-00800, Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: +254 20 203 9510 | +254 716 002 059

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