



Eye on the **SOUTH**

Issue #1

February 2024



African Synergy: Cooperative Initiatives Igniting Climate Resilience Across Africa



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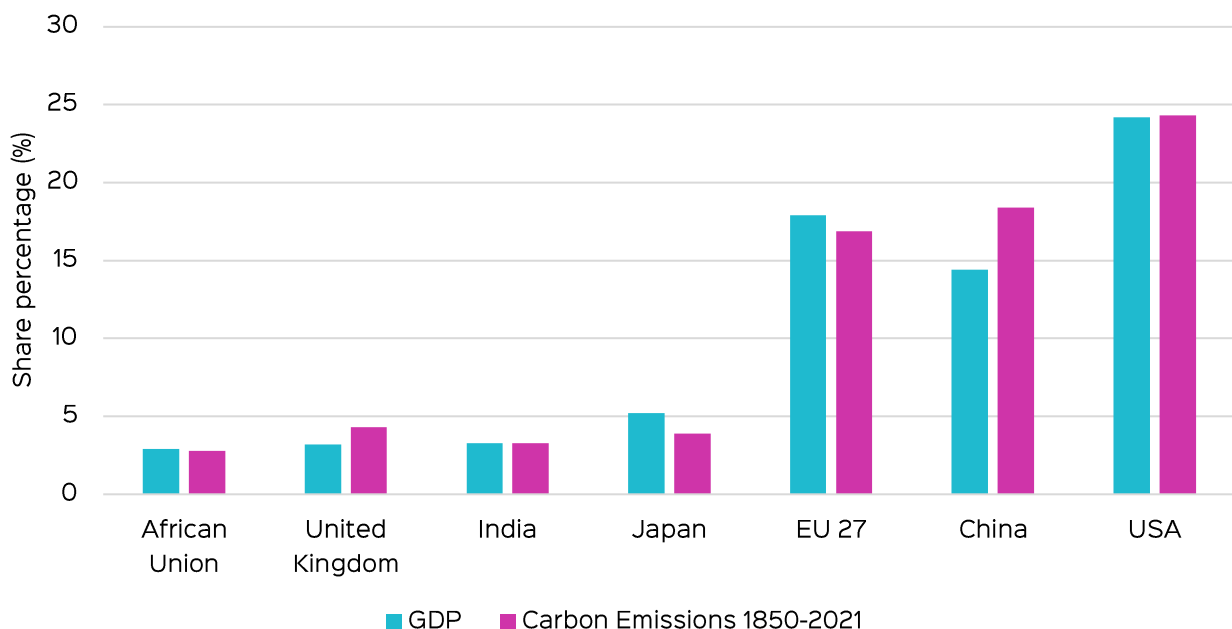


Introduction

Partnership initiatives among nations are a significant avenue of South-South collaboration as they bolster collective efforts to promote sustainable development across the Global South. This first issue of “Eye on the South” focuses on Africa in regard to combating climate change. It starts with a brief positioning of Africa and the extent to which it suffers from the deterioration in climate. It is followed by specific initiatives to address the climate issue at the continental and regional level, with an assessment of their advantages and disadvantages.

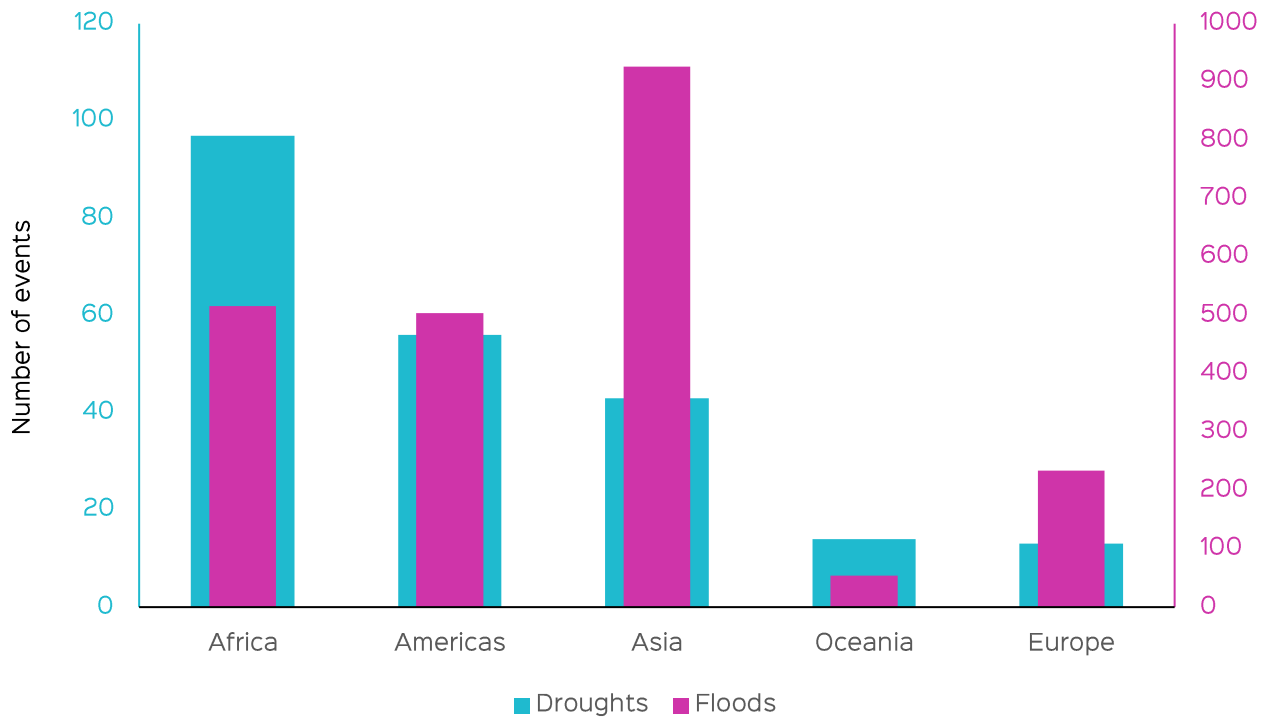
The African continent suffers from a paradoxical issue when it comes to climate change; being the least economically developed also makes it the least responsible for climate change, as Figure 1 below shows, Africa constituting only 2.9% of global GDP is consistent with that its carbon emissions do not exceed 2.8% globally. In spite of that very low contribution to the problem it suffers for a number of negative effects as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Selected regions and countries with historic share of CO₂ emissions against share of global GDP



Source: Global Carbon Project via Mo Ibrahim foundation Africa on the road to COP28: reconciling climate & development – November 2023

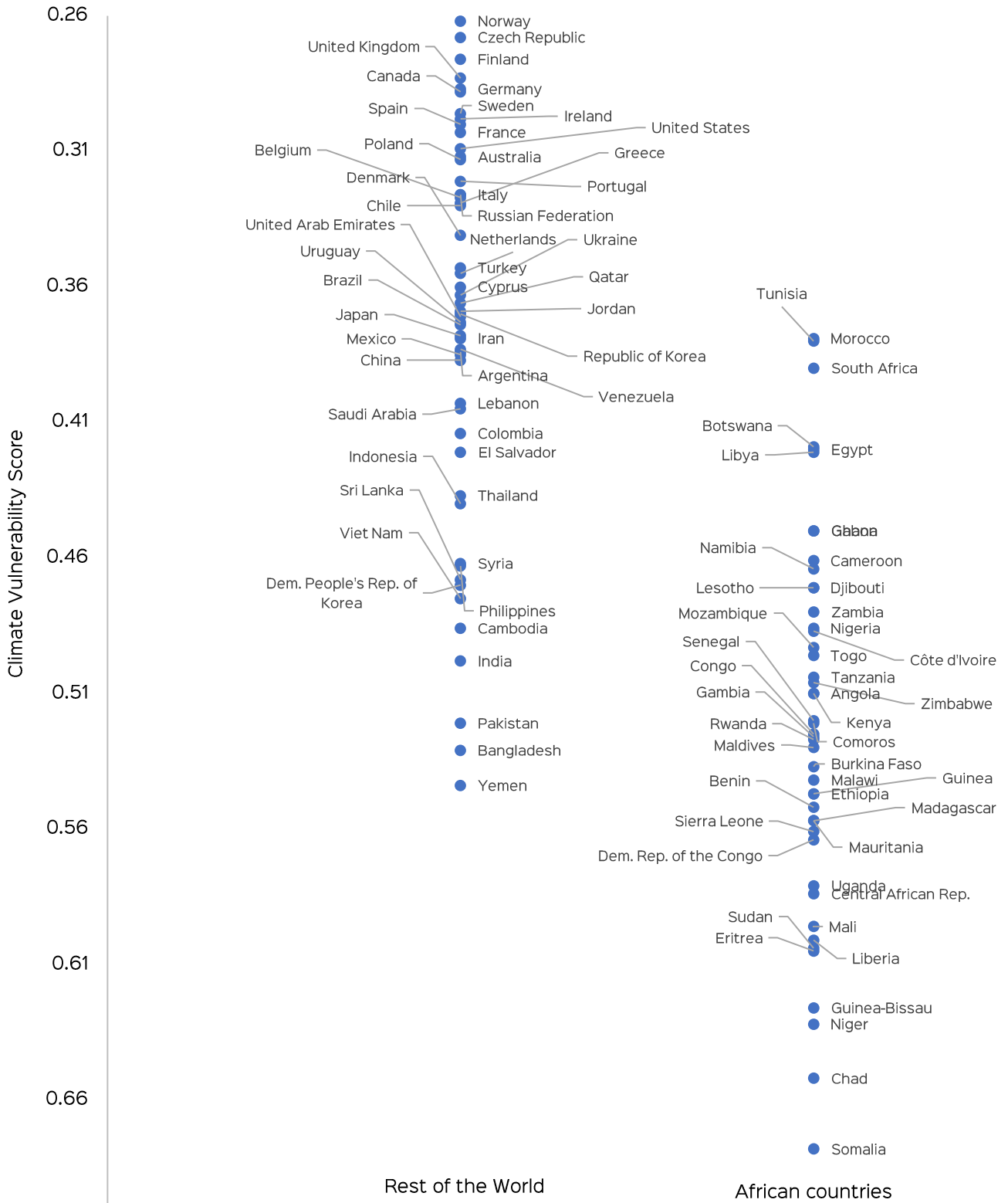
Figure 2: Number of drought and flood events by continent between 2010 and 2023.



Source: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters via Mo Ibrahim foundation Africa on the road to COP28: reconciling climate & development – November 2023

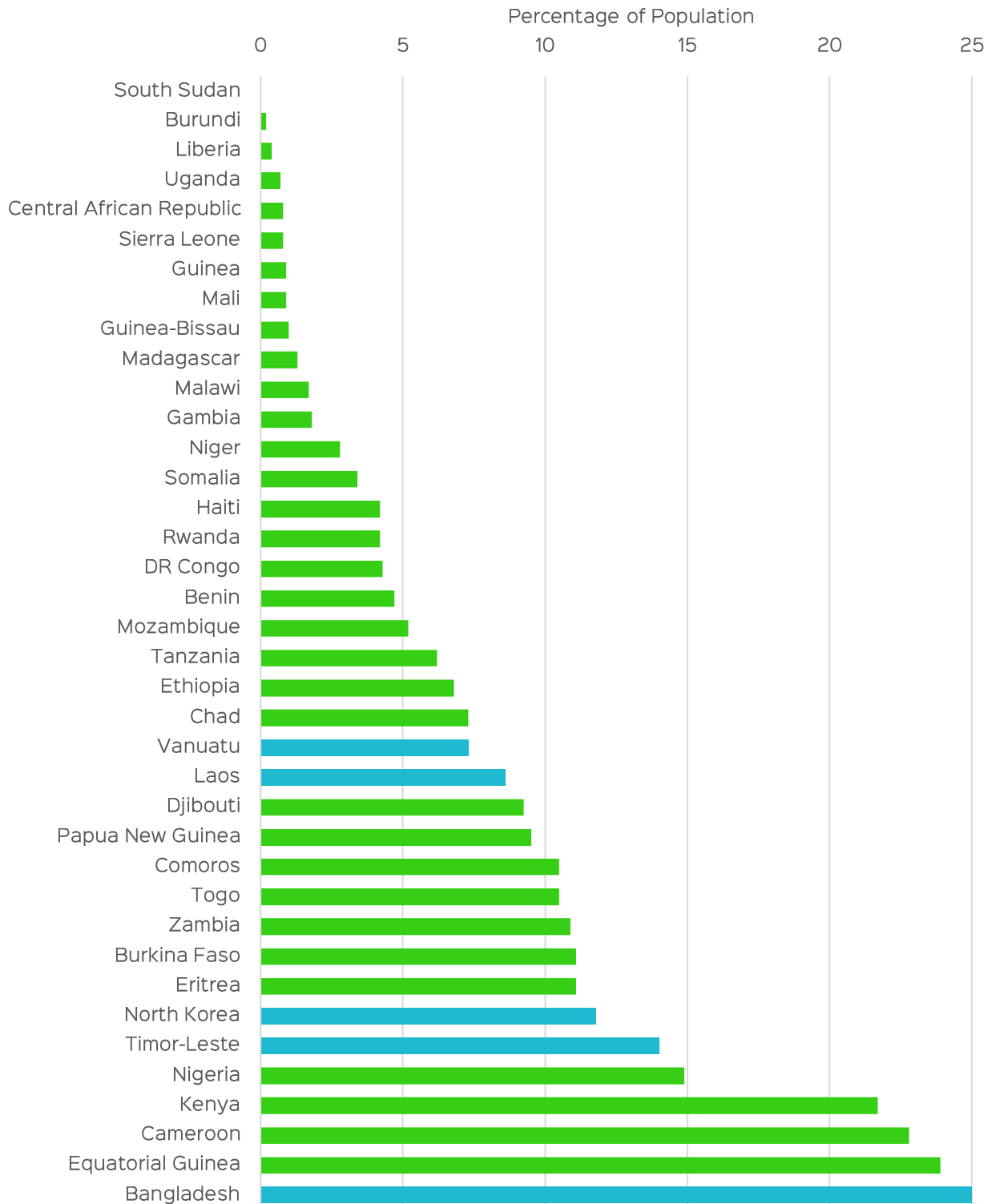
In addition, African countries are more vulnerable to the climate crisis and are the ones most at risk. At the same time, African countries face the challenge of meeting their development means with most of the population having difficulty accessing energy sources for cooking. Figure 3 and 4 highlights this climate vulnerability which has a negative effect on the human development of the population.

Figure 3: Climate Vulnerability Score of African countries (right) vs the rest of the world (left).



Source: Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative via the Mo Ibrahim foundation.

Figure 4: List of countries with the lowest access to clean cooking fuels. African countries are in green and non-African countries are in blue.



Source: World Health Organization vis Mo Ibrahim Foundation

1. Initiatives in Africa

Numerous organizations and initiatives exist within the African continent on the continental and regional levels to facilitate this goal by building climate initiatives in Africa. The initiatives on the continental level, mainly led by the African Development Bank, the UNDP, and the African Union, combined the efforts of the whole African continent, and supported by international institutions. The ones on the regional level are led by economic blocs such as ECOWAS, COMESA, and SADC, among bordering member states. The table below is a list of the most prominent initiatives taking place within the past ten years.

Table 1: List of the most prominent initiatives taking place within the past ten years

Initiative		Description
Continental Initiatives	Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP) 2021	This program was launched in partnership with the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA), aiming to mobilize \$25 billion for adaptation projects. The program comprises four pillars: i) Climate-Smart Digital Technologies for Agriculture and Food Security. ii) African Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator, which funds infrastructure projects in water, transport, energy, and waste management. iii) Empowering Youth for Entrepreneurship and Job Creation in Climate Adaptation and Resilience, iv) Innovative Financial Initiatives for Africa, which taps into new green markets to generate sustainable finance for adaptation projects.
	Adaptation Benefits Mechanism (ABM) 2017	This is a results-based payments mechanism for mobilizing finance for climate projects in vulnerable communities and ecosystems. The ABM states its aim is to contribute Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to meet the adaptation and mitigation needs of various African countries.
	Africa Climate Change Fund (ACCF) 2014	This fund supports over 26 African countries to make African economies more resilient to climate change and help meet their NDCs.

	Africa NDC Hub 2017	This is a platform led by a technical committee from the African Development Bank. It helps partner institutions and African governments build their capacity to address climate change and help reach their NDCs.
	African Financial Alliance on Climate Change (AFAC) 2018	This is a partnership between various public and private financial institutions in Africa to increase capacity and raise awareness to finance climate projects.
	Africa Climate Mobility Initiative (ACMI) 2021	This initiative encourages cooperation between partners including the UN, regional NGOs, and development finance institutions. It aims to reach political agreement for cooperative approaches to addressing climate change.
Regional initiatives	ECOWAS regional climate strategy 2021	A regional strategy that releases a joint adaptation program among the members of ECOWAS.
	COMESA five-year program for climate adaptation 2021	A five-year program with the aim of harmonizing the national adaptation plans of member states by setting up a regional unit to monitor their progress.
	SADC five-year program for climate adaptation 2021	A five-year program with the aim of harmonizing the national adaptation plans of member states by setting up a regional unit to monitor their progress.
	Congo Basin Forest Fund - 2008	A fund financed by regional and international donors aiming to reduce deforestation and land degradation of the forest area in the Congo basin. The fund is headed by a governing council that represents countries in the basin.
	EAC Climate Change Policy Framework	A policy framework designed to guide East African states to prescribe adaptation and mitigation measures to reduce climate vulnerability.
	CEN-SAD council for sustainable development - 1998	The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) has a permanent council for the coordination and implementation of sustainable development projects.

2. Comparison and contrast between continental and regional initiatives

The main difference between the continental and regional initiatives is the scale and nature of the cooperation. The continental initiatives focus on making the entire continent more climate resilient through large programs, while the regional initiatives focus on cooperation between bordering member states within economic blocs that share the same environment. Each one of these initiatives has its advantages and disadvantages. Continental initiatives promote cooperation within Africa with one voice. They are also generally better financed and supported than regional initiatives from international institutions due to their higher profile. Conversely this sometimes leads to African countries foregoing the ability to independently chart the course of their program development. Regional initiatives capitalize on the fact that member states share the same environment and geography, making knowledge sharing more relevant compared to continental cooperation between distant countries with varying environments. They also overcome the major downside of continental initiatives in which they have more independence to craft their policies.

3. Initiatives of focus with rationale

In what follows, a few specific examples of initiatives are analyzed below along with the reasons for their choice.

From the above list the two most noteworthy initiatives from the continental list are the African Climate Change Fund (ACCF) and the Adaptation Benefits Mechanism (ABM). The ACCF and the ABM are chosen because they are exceptional to the aforementioned downsides since they are relatively independent and allow African policymakers to craft their own policies. In addition, their progress has been better documented by the African Development Bank making learning from their success and failures easier. The three most noteworthy from the regional list are climate partnerships from economic blocs of ECOWAS, SADC, and COMESA. The rationale being that they are African-led and are better resourced compared to other economic blocs.

Below are more details on these initiatives, assessment of their advantages and disadvantages, and the status of each to date.

3.1. Continental Initiatives

Continental Initiatives such as the African Climate Change Fund and Adaptation Benefits Mechanism were introduced within the past decade. What they both have in common is that they try to find innovative mechanisms to overcome the lack of financial resources within Africa, while trying to keep policy making within Africa instead of under the control of African governments.

- **African Climate Change Fund (ACCF)**

The Africa Climate Change Fund (ACCF), established by the African Development Bank in 2014 is an African led initiative, with the goal of financing climate projects to ensure that African economies are more climate resilient. Although this fund was initiated with an external grant from countries in the Global North by the governments of Germany, Canada, Ireland and Belgium, the funding is distributed by the board of the African Development Bank. Projects are approved by members of the AfDB, and funds are given to African governments to help increase the climate resilience of their economies. There are currently 28 planned projects established by the ACCF with 7 out of the 8 initial projects completed within the allocated time period.

The ACCF stands out from most initiatives as its area of focus is investing in government capacity to reform the macro-economy of beneficiary countries. The aim is to create greener and more climate resilient economies, rather than building individual climate projects. For example, one of the projects focused on advancing Kenya's Green Growth agenda by supporting the Kenyan National Environment Trust Fund (NETFUND) which helps develop project proposals and improve its capacity to raise finance and conduct research in the agriculture and forestry sector. According to the ACCF annual report in 2021, NETFUND published nine concept notes in agriculture and forestry management worth \$150 million, and nearly all have had their financing approved, reaching the stage of first disbursement. Another project in the Ivory Coast, the ACCF provided technical assistance worth \$0.5 million to apply for funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The projects were in the fields of bioenergy production and building an early warning system, helped unlock financing worth \$27.6 million and \$45 million respectively.

The low cost of these ACCF grants which are usually less than \$1 million, while helping unlock financing projects that are worth multiple times the grant makes it noteworthy and provides great value. This is especially important in a climate where a fraction of the \$100 GCF fund is given to African countries due to the complicated legal process. The

benefits of the ACCF grant also extend to the long term as it raises the capacity of government institutions to finance projects in the future. In addition, it helps reduce the reliance on multi-lateral institutions for financing projects that usually substitute government institutions, and it highlights the potential success of investing a small amount in human capital in Africa to unlock larger returns with economic benefits in the long run. This makes the ACCF unique, since other initiatives that directly fund projects are relatively costly and the benefits are typically limited to those projects. This helps reform the macro-economy in the long-run, by creating greener policies and adapting to climate change.

While these greener policies are beneficial it leads to one major drawback for the ACCF. The impact is intended to be felt in improved government capacity and policy, which is difficult to quantify and measure. This drawback explains why donors opt to directly finance mitigation projects which have clearly defined goals that are measured as a financial return or carbon output. Another drawback is that funding is focused on West African and East African countries, while other regions were neglected due to their poor institutional capacity. In response to this, a demand driven window was proposed in 2020 and approved in 2022 for smaller individual projects for low-income countries, but the results have yet to be seen. Despite these drawbacks the ACCF is a unique initiative that helps build a climate resilient economy

- **Adaptation Benefit Mechanism (ABM)**

The Adaptation Benefit Mechanism (ABM) is another continental initiative put forward by the African Development Bank after the Paris agreement (COP 21) to catalyze and de-risk investments in adaptation projects. This initiative is results-based, meaning that the initial grant is expected to provide an initial return, with the intent of giving investors the confidence to invest in later stages of these projects. The mechanism combines grant and donor-based approaches in the first stage with market-based approaches from investors in the later stages. This two-staged approach is preferred rather than a pure market-based approach since investors are risk-averse when investing in unproven African climate projects, and the greatest concern usually pertains to the first stage.

Currently the African Development Bank is running two pilot projects under this umbrella, one for climate resilient Cocoa farming in Ivory Coast, and another to build an integrated water system by constructing a series of dams in Nigeria. In the Ivory Coast, the AfDB raised \$50 million during both stages to support 800,000 cocoa farmers with two international private sector partners.

According to the preliminary results, the grant encouraged sustainable cocoa production by providing higher yields on smaller plots of land. This was done by encouraging various sustainable practices such as planting shade trees, and maintaining a proper seeding nursery. Higher agricultural yields remove the incentive for forest encroachment by farmers, preventing deforestation and protecting biodiversity¹. The AfDB stated the success of the pilot program will be replicated in other parts of Ivory Coast and West Africa, with financing from international investors instead of grants. The full results of these programs have not been released, but the AfDB expects to mobilize an additional \$25 billion for similar projects in the next five years.

It is noteworthy to mention that the only visible drawback of this initiative is the long time-frame due to the logistics required in the first stage of grant applications. The initiative was announced in 2017, the pilot program was launched in 2019, and the full results are expected to be announced after four years.

3.2. Regional Initiatives

Regional economic community blocs like the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are originally economic blocs focusing on trade integration. However, the fact that peoples' income is derived from natural resources such as forestry, pastures, and fisheries, means that there is a strong relationship between climate change and economic development². This has imparted these regional blocs to propose initiatives to formulate a joint adaptation strategy to manage their natural resources, and ultimately tackle the issue of climate change. Since neighboring member states share similar geography, ecosystems, and natural resources, this makes it logical to issue a joint regional climate adaptation strategy, with the intent of addressing problems that are too large in scale to be tackled by one country.

- **ECOWAS Regional Climate Strategy**

ECOWAS released a Regional Climate Strategy plan from 2022 to 2030 which shares knowledge and experience to address the impact of climate change. The plan addresses common challenges faced by the member states such as soil degradation, deforestation, and drought. The bloc shares a coastline that faces environmental

¹ <https://www.afrik21.africa/en/ivory-coast-afdb-abm-for-climate-resilience-of-cocoa-farmers/>

² http://www.ecowrex.org/system/files/repository/2008_ecowas_environmental_policy_-_ecowas.pdf

threats such as overfishing, costal erosion and maritime pollution, which affect all involved states. In response ECOWAS developed a coastal protection program to help conserve this shared coastline, and has established several agreements on utilizing common natural resources between the member states. Although nearly all member states of ECOWAS are endowed with water resources above the international standard of 1,700 m³, the majority of these resources are shared across borders³. The agreement on utilizing natural resources was used to overcome disputes among member states that share the same rivers by creating a unified consolidation framework to coordinate their action regarding the resources of the member states.

Despite political instability, disputes between member states and changes in government, there remains an agreement on usage of the river basins as well as water allocation. The high-cost of water conflicts and the advancements in measuring water usage makes water agreements the best outcome for member states in sharing their resources, even when there is conflict and unresolved disputes in other areas.

- **COMESA and SADC five-year programs for climate adaptation**

COMESA and SADC launched very similar but separate five-year programs, each worth \$5.7 million supported by the Global Environment Facility. These programs aim to help harmonize their adaptation and mitigation programs, used as a base to develop their national adaptation strategies. It helped overcome the issue of different levels of capacity and skill among member states and avoid duplication of efforts by issuing a unified plan. The five-year regional plan was used as a blueprint for member states to develop and harmonize their national adaptation plans in a more efficient way. Within five years these regional blocs set up a Program Management Unit in the H of each of these regional institutions to monitor the national adaptation plans of each state.

In particular SADC established the first Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) among the regional institutions to conduct an assessment on future food security with regards to climate in Zambia, which was applicable to the southern Africa region, given their shared ecosystem. This was the only assessment conducted by SADC due to the difficulty in attracting finance for further projects.⁴

Since these regional blocs rely on pre-existing regional economic integration, it means that cooperation is facilitated without any impediments. It is also more effective to manage common natural resources on the regional level, since managing them on the

³ Atlas on Regional Integration in West Africa

⁴ <https://www.comesa.int/regional-climate-change-resilience-framework-developed/>

state level is not effective. Finally, they allow African states to determine their needs through their own national adaptation plans and vulnerability assessments.

All these regional blocs, however, lack many of the resources dedicated to continental and international institutions. The blocs lack the experience that larger or more specialized institutions have. They are also more financially constrained, which limits their efforts to issuing strategies rather than implementing them. Because of this, they coordinate with other state and continental institutions to develop their policies. These regional blocs also suffer from limited data in regards to issuing strategies. However, the benefits of developing viable national adaptation plans help these countries attract finance for climate projects by other institutions.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the partnership initiatives in the context of South-South collaboration, within Africa, play a vital role in advancing sustainable development and addressing climate change. The African Climate Change Fund (ACCF), the Adaptation Benefit Mechanism, and the efforts of regional economic blocs like ECOWAS, COMESA, and SADC are all African led initiatives that have had some degree of success as mentioned previously. While they have made significant progress in fostering green growth and climate resilience across several African countries, there are challenges in measuring their immediate impact, concerns about geographical disparities, and inadequate resources, especially on the regional economic blocs. Nevertheless, these initiatives represent a significant step towards empowering African countries to independently build climate resilience. The Adaptation Benefit Mechanism, in particular, showcases an innovative approach by combining grants and market-based approaches to attract investment in adaptation projects. Regional economic blocs also contribute by harmonizing climate strategies, despite capacity limitations. These are all promising steps towards a more sustainable and climate-resilient future in Africa. They demonstrate the potential for collective efforts to drive meaningful impact in the face of global challenges like climate change.



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