



**COMMUNITY
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PROGRAM
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Scaling Up Local Adaptation Measures through Climate-Responsive Decentralization Processes

Climate shocks and stresses such as heat waves, sea level rise, changes in rainfall patterns, and increases in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events are already affecting the livelihoods, health, water security, and food security of millions of people in Asia and the Pacific region. Climate change is projected to further impact the frequency, intensity, extent, duration, and timing of extreme weather events, including unprecedented extremes, and to alter trends and induce shifts in the long-term average climate.

The adverse impacts of climate shocks and stresses are largely manifested at the local level. This is because the underlying drivers of vulnerability, including socioeconomic conditions, institutional and governance structures, and environmental and ecological conditions are context specific. Unsurprisingly, poor and vulnerable people are disproportionately impacted by these climate shocks and stresses due to the high levels of exposure and vulnerability arising from their livelihood activities, low incomes, occupation of marginal lands, and low levels of adaptive capacity. Poor and vulnerable populations typically have limited access to resources, including climate information, assets, land, and skills; have limited financial capacity to invest in resilience; are highly dependent on degrading natural resources; and are often left out from formal decision-making processes. Thus, adaptation measures

need to be planned and implemented at the local level, where information and data on historic and observed changes in weather patterns and their impacts on people, assets, and livelihoods can be captured at the granular level that is required, and can be combined with a more detailed and context-specific understanding of how such impacts interact with existing social norms, power relationships, and use of resources.

It is in this context that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has developed the Community Resilience Partnership Program (CRPP), which aims to scale up climate adaptation measures at the local level that address the root causes of vulnerability in order to facilitate transformational changes to the lives, livelihoods, and well-being of poor and vulnerable populations in Asia and the Pacific.

In order to combat the challenges that climate change presents, local level authorities will need to step up actions that ensure the delivery of services are not hindered by

Photo: A new 26 cubic meter water reservoir, implemented and managed through a community development committee in Bajhang District, Nepal. Improving water management and storage practices for use in the home and agriculture will be critical to adapting to changes in rainfall patterns that are likely to result from climate change.

the impacts of changing climate risk and, where relevant, to take advantage of opportunities arising from emerging climate policies to steer local development in a resilient direction. However, given the scale of the challenge related to climate change, stepping up such actions would require local bodies to move beyond business-as-usual delivery of services. National governments would also need to ensure that the appropriate frameworks for decentralized governance and administration are in place to facilitate such change. This shift would require adopting new forms of coordination with national and subnational governments, new types of collaboration with adjoining local bodies, new partnerships between local bodies and community groups, new ways for mobilizing resources, and inclusive decision-making processes in order to ensure the benefits reach all citizens in a just and equitable manner.

Integrating climate change adaptation considerations in decentralized governance processes, including planning, allocation of resources, and monitoring, has been identified as a key entry point for scaling up local level adaptation and an opportunity to increase meaningful participation of poor and vulnerable women and men in decision-making, ensuring that financing for adaptation meet their needs. In doing so, the CRPP will help make decentralized governance work better, improving its effectiveness in

delivering public goods and services needed for resilience building, and give poor and vulnerable people a voice in identifying and implementing adaptation measures, thus promoting procedural and distributive justice so that the people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change can engage in a fair process and receive a fair share of the benefits of adaptation efforts.

Featuring climate-responsive decentralization processes as part of the CRPP priority areas of intervention closely aligns the program with recent developments in climate policy in many countries of Asia and the Pacific, where responsibilities for adaptation planning and implementation are increasingly being devolved to subnational administrations (SNAs).¹ Many countries in the region have been progressively moving toward greater decentralization of fiscal systems and investment planning and some countries require major changes to the ways that some public services are delivered. The CRPP can capitalize on these evolving trends and support developing member countries (DMCs) to ensure that addressing climate change impacts through adaptation is an integral part of SNA service delivery, subnational planning, and budgeting processes, thereby ensuring that SNAs have the mandate and capacity to scale up climate adaptation actions.

¹ This note uses the decentralization term “subnational administrations” (SNAs), allowing consideration of different decentralized tiers, including (i) provinces/states, (ii) cities, (iii) peri-urban and rural districts, and (iv) local communes/villages.

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Why Decentralization Presents an Opportunity for Transformational Adaptation under the Community Resilience Partnership Program

Empirical evidence indicates that countries further along in the decentralization process are more likely to be associated with high and inclusive growth and poverty reduction, in part due to improved performance with local public service delivery.² Formalized decentralization arrangements exist in most DMCs, even small island states, though the extent and nature of decentralization vary widely. The ratio of subnational expenditures to general government expenditures in many DMCs is in the 40%–60% range. Big moves to decentralization in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam have been consistent with impressive economic growth and poverty reduction over many years. Studies using data from a large panel of countries also show that fiscal decentralization leads to a smaller number of deaths and that relatively more decentralized countries fare better in the effects on the population when disaster strikes (Martinez-Vazquez 2021).

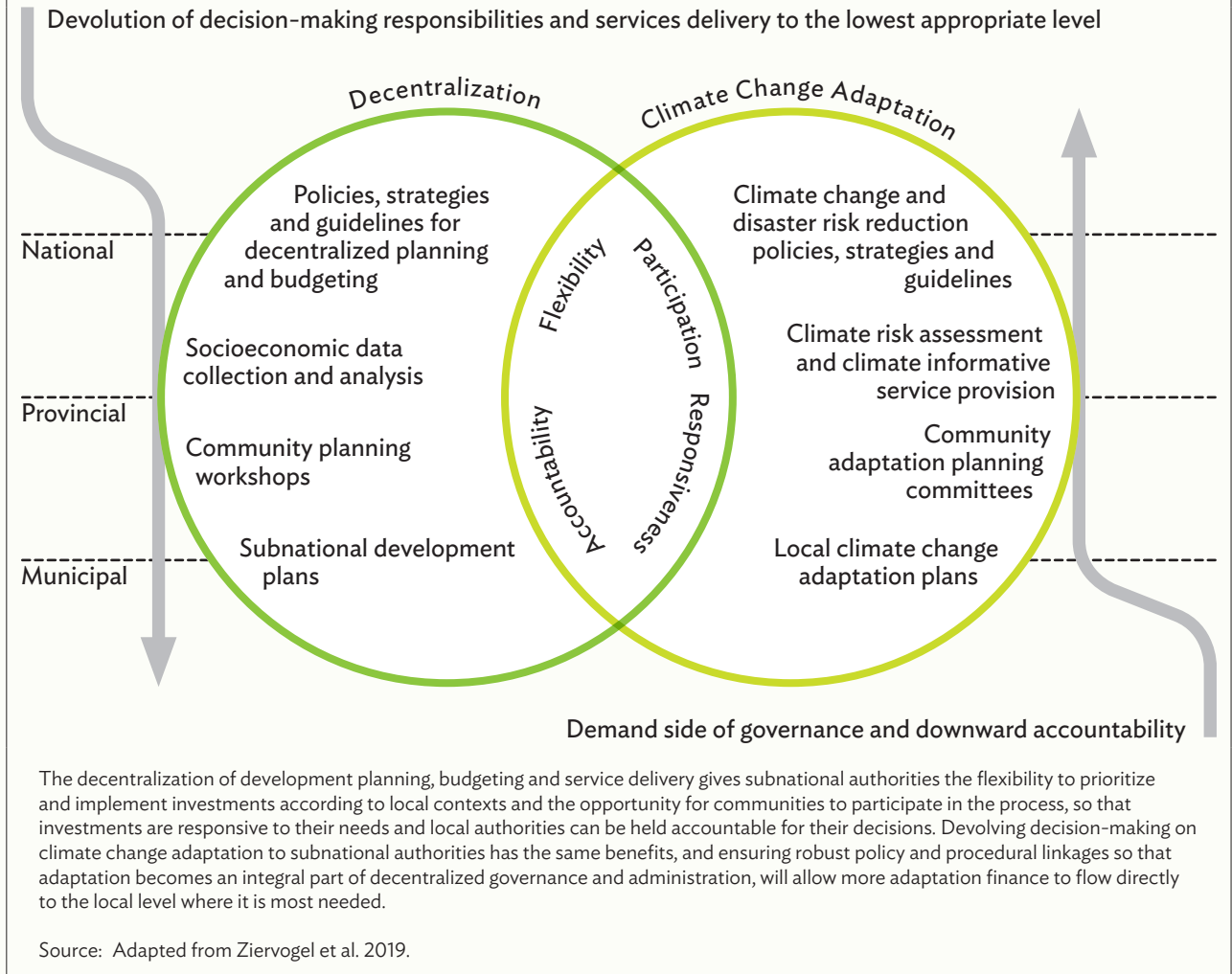
Close synergies exist between the general case favoring decentralization and the shifting focus toward climate change adaptation actions that are led locally and can support resilience building. Given that climate risk is largely manifest at the local level, and there is increasing evidence that effective adaptation actions are being realized at the local level close to people's needs and priorities

(Quevedo et al. 2019), the assignment of responsibilities for adaptation would appear to logically fall with the potentially affected subnational jurisdictions. This closely aligns with two of the guiding principles of general decentralization theory: (i) **Subsidiarity**—the responsibility for services that can be provided at different levels should be assigned at the most local government level compatible with the size of the benefit area associated with those services; and (ii) **Correspondence**—the geographical dimension of the level of government responsible for the provision of a service should match the area where the benefits from the service are received (Martinez-Vazquez 2021). The relevance of the application of these principles in resilience building is evidenced by the extent of functions associated with climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction that already are decentralized in many countries. Furthermore, the sectors and types of interventions needed for resilience interventions (e.g., climate risk-informed land use planning or improved telecommunications networks for early warning systems) are likely to be attractive to SNAs, as they can simultaneously address development and resilience and so help steer development in a resilient direction. Figure 1 provides a summary of the synergies and overlapping benefits between decentralization and locally led climate change adaptation planning.

A defining feature of the CRPP is its focus on transformational change for adaptation. Transformation, as framed in the program, has three main characteristics: systemic change, scale, and sustainability (see Box 1). Exploring each characteristic in the context of

² See examples in Blochliger (2013), Blochliger and Egert (2013), Smoke (2001), and World Bank (2015).

Figure 1: Synergies and overlapping benefits of decentralization and locally led climate change adaptation



decentralization shows that investing in climate-responsive decentralization processes has true transformative potential.

Contribution to systemic change, as understood in the CRPP framing of transformation, will require supporting interventions and activities that provoke shifts in existing roles and relationships among key actors and redistribute power and resources for adaptation. One fundamental reason for devolving climate change adaptation responsibilities from central government to SNAs is that decentralized governments are expected to be more knowledgeable, responsive, and accountable to the needs and preferences of citizens (Martinez-Vazquez 2021). Responsiveness and accountability—and the fact that lower-tier SNAs (communes, subdistricts, villages) are at the government and administration level best positioned

to directly engage with communities and individuals—can make climate-responsive decentralization a key entry point for altering fundamentally the system for adaptation decision-making. If decentralized systems incorporate mechanisms that help poor and vulnerable people engage in a fair process of decision-making that allows them to receive a fair share of the benefits of adaptation efforts, there is real potential to redistribute power to those most affected by climate change impacts.

The decentralization of responsibilities for planning and financing of adaptation measures to SNAs means that local level adaptation can be implemented at scale beyond targeted interventions that are dictated by central authorities and likely dependent on the national political economy. This scaling can make financing available to SNAs nationwide—and proportionate to their climate risk.

Box 1: Characteristics of Transformational Change under the Community Resilience Partnership Program

Systemic change: fundamental shifts in socioecological, financial, behavioral, market, policy, and/or decision-making systems that enable poor and vulnerable populations to prosper despite increasing climate risks.

Scale: adaptation benefits reach many poor and vulnerable populations across large geographies, and activities influence policy and practice from the local to national level.

Sustainability: positive adaptation outcomes that continue to strengthen the resilience of poor and vulnerable populations despite changes in wider socioeconomic and political contexts.

Source: Asian Development Bank, 2022.

Furthermore, integrating climate change considerations into decentralization policy frameworks and processes can ensure that a substantial proportion of public funds for adaptation investments are channeled through lower-tier SNAs to meet the needs and priorities of communities. Creating the legal framework for financing local adaptation measures through fiscal decentralization will therefore create a sustainable source of financing with impacts well beyond the life cycle of any development assistance program.

By bringing about changes in behavior and culture through increased participation and inclusive planning, and influencing how adaptation is planned and funded in communities, decentralization interventions can produce systemic change, secure sustainable funding for adaptation measures that meet the specific needs of communities, and influence community-level adaptation decision-making and financing throughout a country. With systemic change, scale, and sustainability as inherent characteristics, investing in climate-responsive decentralization has truly transformative potential.

Potential Program Support to Ensure That Decentralization Processes Build Resilience at the Local level

This section identifies some key areas where the CRPP can support to build resilience to climate change at the local level through integrating climate change adaptation concerns into decentralized governance and administrative frameworks. It is structured according to the key pillars of decentralization, with examples given of specific interventions the CRPP can support for each. These examples are indicative of the types of interventions that can be supported, and are not considered a comprehensive presentation of all potential activities. Opportunities to implement other types of activities may arise based on experience and new knowledge and practice in this area gained throughout the implementation period of the CRPP.



Support Institutional Strengthening of Subnational Administrations

For climate change adaptation to become an integral part of decentralized governance and administration, a suitable institutional framework needs to be in place, along with practical planning and budgeting tools and systems and adequate capacity within SNAs to use them. The CRPP will therefore support the establishment or improvement of the institutional framework for decentralization in selected CRPP participating countries to ensure that it integrates climate change adaptation considerations. These will include policies, plans, and strategies to ensure provisions necessary for decentralized adaptation planning and financing of adaptation projects are available at the subnational level. Development of tools and systems to enable local action is also needed, along with capacity-building so that SNAs have the knowledge, motivation, and skills to deliver climate-resilient services and plan and implement adaptation projects as part of local development and investment activities. The following are examples of possible interventions through four key activity areas.

1. Preparation of new or improved policies, strategies, and guidelines to strengthen linkages between climate change adaptation and SNA planning and budgeting.

Establishing policy and procedural coherence between climate adaptation and devolved planning and budgeting will be critical to paving the way for financing local adaptation interventions from public funds. This will require supporting governments to formally and explicitly assign adaptation responsibilities in laws and planning guidelines to local administrations so that decentralized functions include tasks related to climate change adaptation, including the provision of goods and services for climate change adaptation, that are to be undertaken by SNAs. Functional expenditure responsibilities for climate change adaptation will need to be reassessed through legal reforms that will provide the foundation for channeling finance for adaptation to the local level. This is already happening in some DMCs, such as Indonesia, where local governments must first draft a Regional Plan for Climate Change Adaptation and integrate climate change targets into the local planning and budget document.

This document then needs to be adopted into provincial, district, or municipal bylaws.

There are two main contexts in which the CRPP may help DMCs assign various functions for decentralized expenditure:

- a. **Countries with low decentralization and unclear and/or inconsistent assignment of functions between administrative tiers.** The CRPP, as part of ongoing ADB support to strengthen the extent and nature of decentralization, can support governments to develop precise and comprehensive assignments of SNA functions and responsibilities for climate adaptation and create the national policy instruments and practical guidance necessary for SNAs to effectively and efficiently carry out these functions.
- b. **Countries that are relatively decentralized and have long-standing comprehensive laws and regulations that assign functions by level of administration.** These systems might have been framed many years ago in a world where societal transformation to tackle climate



change was not a significant consideration. In this context, given that many basic functions are already assigned, CRPP support can be targeted at updating and refining frameworks to become better suited to climate change adaptation at the local level and developing practical guidance on how these functions will be fulfilled.

2. Support the development of systems, procedures, and tools for integrating climate change adaptation into local planning processes.

In order to identify and design appropriate local climate change adaptation investments that benefit the poor and ensure that services are resilient to climate change impacts, SNA actions will need to be informed by a robust understanding of climate risk in their jurisdiction. In many cases, decision-makers lack climate data and SNAs do not have systems in place to generate and use them. In other cases, data are often outdated or inaccurate, and data management systems antiquated and not user-friendly. The CRPP will thus need to help SNAs identify data needs and develop and institutionalize tailor-made, country-based methodologies and data management systems for the collection and analysis of climate data at the local level (downscaled climate models) and undertake climate risk and vulnerability assessments that incorporate the local dimension (local indicators of climate and non-climate drivers of risks and vulnerabilities). This will help local governments embed climate change adaptation in their development plans and budgets by making use of climate and vulnerability data to identify adaptation investments and justify investment decisions and costs.

3. Provide support to build subnational administration capacities

SNAs may lack the knowledge and skills to implement reforms to government processes supported by the CRPP. In many cases, SNAs face serious capacity constraints in executing day-to-day functions—in cases where smaller SNAs have only one dedicated planning official, addressing planning issues through the lens of climate change may be beyond their capability. Furthermore, many SNAs cannot afford to hire climate adaptation experts and can rely on private contractors only when funds are available. In this sense, capacity can be a binding constraint on devolving responsibilities for climate change activities (Martinez-Vazquez 2021). The CRPP will therefore need to develop SNA capacity to become administratively and technically capable of delivering the adaptation related

service functions assigned through policy and procedural reforms. Capacity-building interventions will need to be context specific and targeted according to the gaps identified by detailed assessments. Ultimately, any trainings and skills development programs on climate change adaptation that are developed with support from the CRPP must be integrated into existing capacity-building programs for local planners and decision-makers.

4. Development of communication and coordination plans and mechanisms.

Improved local responses to climate change challenges will require effective coordination both horizontally—across key departments, agencies, and sectors (including non-state actors)—and vertically—from local government and grassroots community groups, through to national ministries. Even in cases where detailed expenditure assignments are present and roles and responsibilities are clear, cooperation and collaboration between different entities at the local level may be an outstanding barrier for effective action. The CRPP will thus support the development of formal horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms, bringing together local planning departments with other key groups such as local disaster management agencies, through joint planning meetings with specific focus on climate change issues and setting up platforms for information and data sharing. Having designated climate change focal points within various sector departments would facilitate communication and coordination. Such mechanisms can also be designed to support learning between departments or institutions in local and regional governments, with their governance lessons feeding into national policy and learning across local authorities in different jurisdictions.



Invest in Climate Risk-Informed Fiscal Decentralization

With functional responsibilities for climate change adaptation at the local level well defined by law, they then need to be appropriately funded through fiscal decentralization systems that allow for structured and predictable financing for adaptation at the local level. Multiple funding sources are usually available to SNAs, with each providing potential opportunity for securing financing to implement adaptation measures.

1. Intergovernmental transfers

The CRPP will provide policy and technical advisory support for fiscal commissions to review and revise intergovernmental fiscal transfer mechanisms such as revenue sharing, equalization transfers, block and specific grants (including capital grants) to incorporate climate change adaptation considerations. The formulas many countries use to adjust basic per capita funding by including different variables (poverty, geographic features, and so on) could be revised to provide greater weighting to SNAs or regions that have experienced or are at higher risk of experiencing adverse climate or disaster events, to ensure funds are available for implementing adaptation measures prioritized by SNAs.

Informing decision-making in this regard will require robust, science-based, national climate information services that can equip decision-makers with necessary data, tools, guidance, and information. Currently, very few countries in Asia and the Pacific have climate information systems that can provide the information on climate risk needed to support such interventions. In many cases, connections between climate information users and providers remain weak or absent and, where climate information is available,

providers often do not understand the contexts in which decisions are being made (Vaughan and Dessai 2014). The CRPP will thus support investments in innovation and development of these services to become fully effective and fully integrated into decision-making processes at all levels. (See Box 2 for more information on the CRPP approach to investments in improved climate risk information services.)

2. Own-source revenue

A significant proportion of financial resources available to local authorities should come from local taxes, fees, and charges to cover at least part of the costs of climate adaptation services they need to provide. Assignment of substantive own-source revenue powers to SNAs are seen as important for achieving local involvement and accountability, with local politicians forced to demonstrate that revenues raised locally are used effectively. Environmental (green) taxes, fines, and other levies such as urban land value capture can be important for changing behavior and incentivizing resilience actions, as well as raising revenue in many SNAs. Therefore, potential exists for the CRPP to support revenue-raising capacities for SNAs to fund local resilience actions.

Box 2: The CRPP Approach to Investments in Improved Climate Risk Information Services

Climate risk information service frameworks developed under the Community Resilience Partnership Program (CRPP) will be designed to meet specific sector needs and support decentralized decision-making on adaptation and investments in climate resilience. They will be user-oriented and help local authorities and communities better understand and reduce risks, which is essential for them to take ownership of the adaptation process. Although investment in science and technological solutions will be important, the CRPP will support the shift from a traditional top-down approach (driven by climate models), and the one-way exchange of information from the scientific community to decision-makers. Instead, iterative risk management processes will emphasize the coproduction of information with communities and local authorities, using tools such as gender-differentiated vulnerability analysis.

Local data and information will complement the data from national government agencies. Local communities will be engaged in local disaster and hazard mapping, and community characteristics that drive vulnerability will need to be assessed, alongside hazards and climate risk projections. It will be imperative that data are presented in effective and accessible formats that can be used by different stakeholders, including nongovernment actors, and that information management systems are set up to facilitate data sharing. As such, working partnerships will be vital, including among key actors who can collaborate in the field, such as local information and communication technology organizations and academic institutions.

This bottom-up, inclusive approach is in line with guidance provided for the World Meteorological Organization (Martínez et. al, 2012), and will involve close interaction between all stakeholders, ensuring two-way communication channels, where information providers and users can interact equally.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

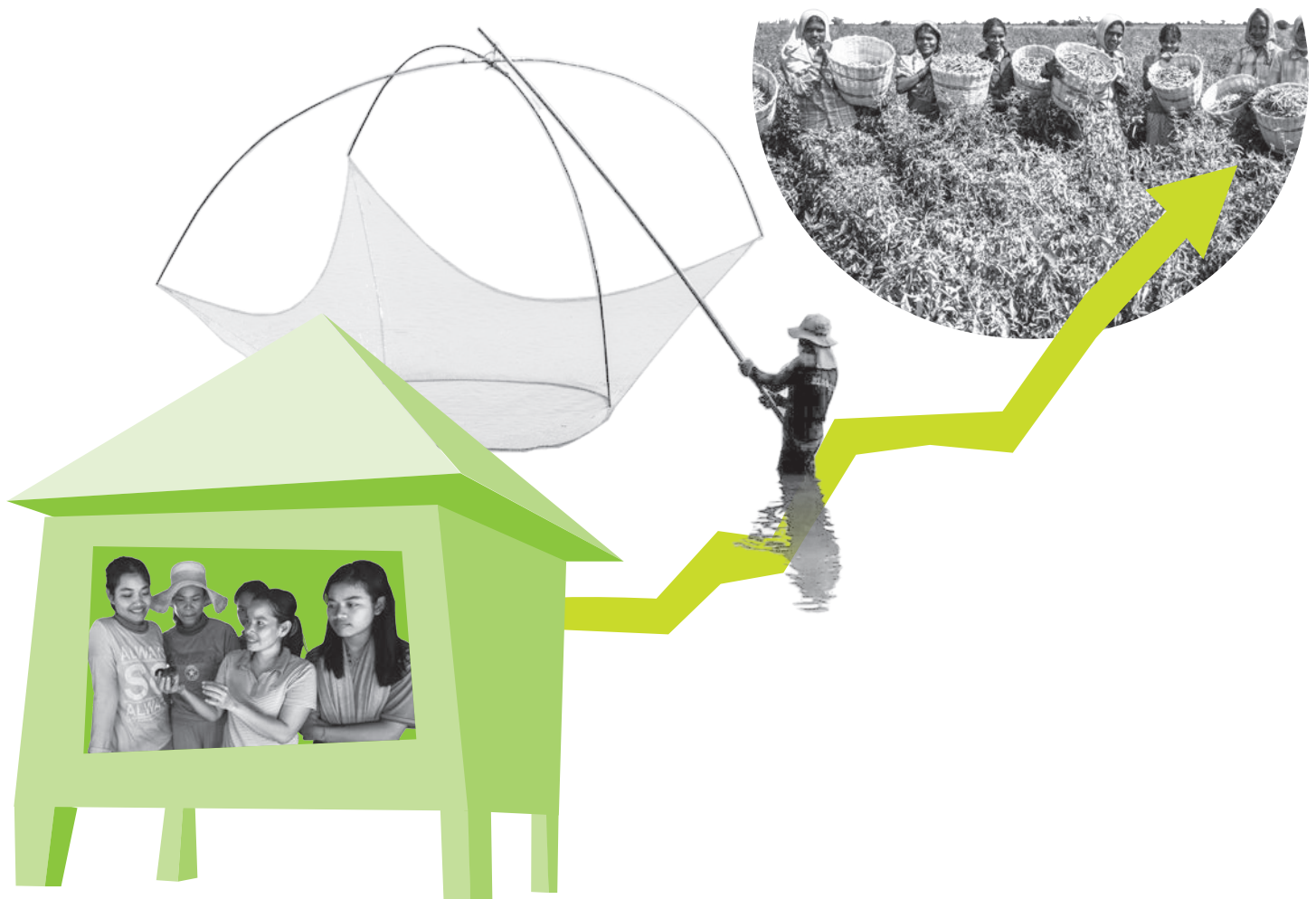
3. Subnational credit and borrowing

Decentralized systems require financing for the capital infrastructure expenditure needs of subnational governments beyond the use of their savings and capital transfers received from the central government. However, in most cases, SNAs have significantly restricted mandates to borrow in their own right, with the possible exception of some of the larger cities and provinces of the region (usually subject to the approval of central government finance ministries). A strong case exists for specially structuring subnational access to national and international climate finance. Among several specialized climate change and subnational financing institutions are the Subnational Investment Fund in Cambodia, the PT Sarana Multi Infrastruktur (Persero) Fund in Indonesia, and a number of community development small grant and loan schemes throughout the region (including microcredit and fintech institutions). The CRPP could work with participating countries to leverage additional international and domestic funding for resilience building and create

alternative financing instruments such as green and social bonds issued by national and/or local governments to address climate change. This would require developing the frameworks and capacity to allow subnational government flexibility in borrowing.

4. Performance-based grants

Performance-based grants provide a means for central authorities to reward local government practices without directly interfering with the devolved responsibilities of SNAs to define development priorities and projects. Such rewards could be extended to performance related to climate adaptation and risk reduction. The CRPP could help central government and SNAs expand existing programs by defining performance indicators. In this way, local authorities remain responsible for decision-making but are further incentivized to invest in climate adaptation, qualifying for total or partial payments depending on improvements against performance benchmarks.





Support for Community Empowerment and a Stronger Demand Side of Good Governance

Helping people most vulnerable to climate change to engage in a fair process and receive a fair share of the benefits of adaptation efforts is critical to building local resilience. The CRPP will support approaches that allow for adaptation interventions that are based on demand, respond to the needs of poor and vulnerable people, and ensure downward accountability. This will require support that empowers communities and strengthens the demand side of governance and accountability, including the following:

1. Establishing community adaptation planning committees and forums

One of the central principles guiding CRPP investment support is establishing and strengthening mechanisms that give poor and vulnerable people greater opportunity to be heard and contribute to decision-making for strengthening

climate resilience in their communities. As such, the CRPP can support the establishment of local mechanisms that enable citizens, communities, and civil society organizations to participate in local-level development planning and service delivery. This would include accountability mechanisms such as public hearings and social audits that provide a dedicated space for reviewing adaptation investments, where local governments interact with citizens, and where communities can participate in the screening and validation of climate adaptation projects identified in local development plans. Emphasis will be placed on creating systems that promote inclusion and allow vulnerable groups, especially women, to take part.

2. Strengthen awareness and capacity

Improving participation will require strengthening the capacity of communities to identify climate change solutions and to manage finances, as well as to negotiate with local governments for funding their priorities. The CRPP will therefore support activities that aim to strengthen civil society organizations, particularly grassroots women's organizations, so that they can represent the needs of the poor and help to connect

Box 3: Local Climate Adaptive Living (LoCAL) Facility and Performance-based CRPP Grants

The Community Resilience Partnership Program (CRPP) could contribute to a small fund earmarked for adaptation measures to top up national expenditures to incentivize the prioritization and implementation of climate change adaptation measures through local planning and budgeting processes. It could be accessed through performance-based grants using existing or improved fiscal transfer mechanisms. This approach would closely follow the tried-and-true model of the Local Climate Adaptive Living (LoCAL) Facility of the United Nations Capital Development Fund.

LoCAL is a mechanism that serves to integrate climate change adaptation into local governments' planning and budgeting systems and increase the amount of finance available to local governments for climate change adaptation. LoCAL climate resilience grants are performance-based and provide a financial top-up to cover additional costs of making investments climate-resilient. They are channeled through existing government fiscal transfer systems (rather than parallel or ad hoc structures), which takes international climate finance through national treasuries, down to the local level.^a

Adaptation measures eligible for possible investments under such a scheme will need to be included in the subnational administration development plan and be limited to the CRPP focus—typically ranging from construction of climate adaptation infrastructure (e.g., small dikes) to incentivizing new climate-smart production practices. These activities will also seek to strengthen local procurement practices, either by ensuring that the existing procedures are implemented to a high standard or, where necessary, by supporting the introduction of improved procedures, including integration of climate-relevant measures in tender procedures and contract monitoring. Grassroots women's organizations will be prioritized as local service providers.

^a Further information on the UNCDF LoCAL initiative can be found at <https://www.uncdf.org/local/homepage>
Sources: Asian Development Bank; UNCDF 2022.

informal and community-based processes with formal governance structures and the private sector, shaping local economic activities toward increased climate resilience.



Knowledge Solutions and Strengthening Partnerships

For activities related to integrating climate risk considerations into decentralization processes to be achievable in the short term, and sustainable and scalable over the longer term, they must be carried out within a political environment and culture conducive to bringing about change. The CRPP will therefore support activities to increase knowledge and understanding of climate change risk and the benefits of local action, and build a culture of leadership among local administrations for investing in climate change adaptation.

1. Create an evidence base and a range of knowledge products

Political and civil service commitment to prioritizing climate change adaptation initiatives is likely to be stronger when the impacts of climate change are fully understood, especially given uncertainty regarding climate risk and the

return on investment for adaptation measures. The CRPP has dedicated resources for knowledge generation and awareness-raising activities that develop a strong evidence base to help overcome aversion to risk among SNAs and communities, including through providing a solid, evidence-based business case for investment. The CRPP can therefore support research that can help build an evidenced-based case for local adaptation while demonstrating the broader development benefits of interventions.

2. Multistakeholder dialogues and knowledge sharing platforms

As part of its investment support, the CRPP can establish national and regional forums for multistakeholder dialogue, providing a space for actors in local level planning and climate change adaptation to share lessons and experiences. This will help to build a culture of climate risk awareness within countries and across the region so that adaptation in local planning processes becomes a priority for key ministries and local governments. This is considered key for change to be sustainable in the longer term. In the process, it is anticipated that important actors will become leaders and champions for local adaptation embedded in subnational governance and administrative processes. Knowledge and information sharing platforms on innovative and best practices can also be set up.

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