



PALM-TREES

**A Pan African and Transdisciplinary Lens on the Margins:
Tackling the Risks of Extreme Events (PALM-TREES)**

FROM POLICY COMMITMENT TO LAST-MILE ACTION: STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE CLIMATE GOVERNANCE IN LAGOS

POLICY BRIEF

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lagos has made significant policy commitments to climate adaptation, resilience and gender inclusion. However, evidence from the PALM-TREES project suggests that important gaps remain between formal policy frameworks and the everyday experiences and adaptive capacities of vulnerable communities. The PALM-TREES project was specifically designed to examine how vulnerability to extreme events is shaped by different social identities and to identify intersectional links between governance structures, policy frameworks, gender, inclusion and sustainability. The study reveals substantial gaps in institutional support. 70.3% of respondents identified inadequate government response as a challenge affecting social networks, while only 1.2% identified their LGA as a source of climate information and support after extreme events. NiMet accounted for only 0.1%, NGOs

1.5%, and neighbours/community 3.4%, while family accounted for 4.5%. At the same time, communities are not without adaptive capacity. They support one another, develop local coping mechanisms and participate in adaptation activities. The PALM-TREES intervention demonstrated that co-design can work, with male and female groups benefiting from interventions, ownership of assets, training in their use and maintenance, and the use of WhatsApp groups for information sharing. The policy challenge is therefore not to replace community systems with government programmes. Rather, Lagos needs to connect community capacities to formal institutions, strengthen last-mile climate information, institutionalise meaningful participation, and ensure that gender and inclusion commitments are translated into implementation and budgeting.

Key Recommendations

1. LASRO should develop a Last-Mile Climate Information and Community Engagement Framework linking NiMet, LASEMA, LGAs and community structures.
2. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget should require gender- and inclusion-responsive climate indicators in adaptation programmes and budgets.
3. Local Government Councils should establish community climate focal points in high-risk communities, with representation of women, persons with disabilities, youth and relevant livelihood groups.
4. The Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation should integrate climate vulnerability into women's economic empowerment and livelihood programmes.
5. LASRO and relevant MDAs should establish a formal mechanism for incorporating community knowledge and experience into climate adaptation planning.
6. Lagos State should develop a monitoring and accountability mechanism for tracking implementation of its existing gender and inclusion commitments in climate policy.

1. METHODOLOGY

The brief draws primarily on the PALM-TREES Lagos study, *A Pan-African and Transdisciplinary Lens on the Margins: Tackling the Risks of Extreme Events—Dimensions of Risks and Vulnerability Associated with Flooding and Heat Stress among the Margins in Lagos, Nigeria*. The project combined physical and social science approaches, including GIS-based flood vulnerability analysis, the Weather Research and Forecasting (WRF) model, iButton installations, weather diaries, quantitative surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, stakeholder

engagement and community needs assessments. The quantitative survey covered 918 communities and 377 wards across Lagos's 20 LGAs, while the wider engagement included stakeholder consultations, FGDs and community needs assessments. The policy brief focuses on the project's evidence concerning institutional support; climate information; social networks; gender and inclusion; community participation; adaptation capacity; and the relationship between formal governance and community-level responses.

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2. POLICY CONTEXT

Climate adaptation in Lagos does not begin from a policy vacuum. The Lagos Climate Action Plan committed the State to mainstreaming gender in climate action through gender-disaggregated data, gender impact assessments, capacity building and increased representation of women in climate decision-making. More recently, the Lagos State Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (LCARP) states that adaptation projects should be inclusive and equitable, considering gender, age and income and paying particular attention to vulnerable groups. It also emphasises mainstreaming adaptation projects across government institutions, processes and policies. The policy issue is therefore increasingly one of implementation and institutional reach. This is consistent with recent research on Lagos coastal communities, which found that women and persons with disabilities can face disproportionate vulnerability and that gaps remain in early-warning dissemination and community participation in formal adaptation processes. The PALM-TREES findings add important empirical evidence from a broader set of Lagos communities. They indicate that while communities have coping mechanisms and social networks, formal institutional support does not appear to reach many respondents effectively.

3. WHAT THE PALM-TREES EVIDENCE SHOWS

3.1 Government response is perceived as inadequate

The most significant social-network challenge identified by respondents was inadequate government response, reported by 70.3%. Inadequate NGO response was identified by 24.2%, while geographical isolation accounted for 16.8%. This is a critical governance finding. It suggests that climate resilience cannot depend solely on communities helping themselves. Institutional responsiveness needs to be strengthened.

3.2 Formal climate-information channels have limited reach

The reported sources of climate information and support after extreme events were:

Source	Reported percentage
NiMet	0.1%
Red Cross	0.2%
Religious centres	1.1%
LGA	1.2%
NGO	1.5%
Family	4.5%
Neighbour/community	3.4%

The figures should be interpreted cautiously because they reflect the study's reported responses rather than a comprehensive assessment of the performance of each institution. Nevertheless, they indicate a last-mile communication problem. This is especially important given that 89.5% of respondents reported access to a

hand phone and 58.5% access to a smartphone. There is therefore a substantial opportunity to improve climate communication through mobile and community-based channels.

4. COMMUNITIES ALREADY HAVE ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

The PALM-TREES findings do not portray communities simply as passive victims. During flooding, households used strategies such as relocating to relatives in safer areas; building embankments; renovating drainage; moving valuables; closing local schools; and undertaking community erosion control. During heat stress, households reported: using fans (71.8%); increasing water intake (70.5%); wearing lightweight clothing (64.2%); and staying indoors during peak heat periods (40.6%). These responses demonstrate local agency. However, they also reveal the limits of autonomous adaptation, particularly where households lack adequate infrastructure, services and institutional support.

5. GENDER AND INCLUSION MUST MOVE FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE

The PALM-TREES study included a gender and spatial lens in its research design. Women constituted 53.5% of respondents, men 46.5%, and 8.23% reported a disability. The project also identified social and cultural



Farmers at Agbado-OkeOdo using the provided equipment for irrigation

barriers to GESI, demonstrating that inclusion cannot be assumed simply because both women and men are invited to participate. This is particularly relevant because the project's adaptation solutions included specific support for women in fishing communities and training for vulnerable men and women on alternative livelihoods and improved nutrition. The implication is that climate adaptation should address not only who participates, but also: who has access to adaptation assets; who controls those assets; who receives training; who participates in decisions; and who benefits from adaptation investments.

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Farmers at Agbado-OkeOdo using the provided equipment for irrigation

6. THE PALM-TREES PROJECT OFFERS A PRACTICAL GOVERNANCE LESSON

The adaptation-solutions component provides an important lesson for Lagos's climate governance. The project used a co-design approach involving researchers, government and non-government policy actors and communities. It included surveys, 22 key informant interviews, FGDs, a policy consultation involving more than 20 MDAs, community needs assessments and formal handover of solutions to community groups. The resulting interventions included shaded gazebos; solar-powered boreholes; fishing nets and smoking kilns; solar-powered cold storage; cassava processing equipment; seeds and farming equipment; and irrigation facilities. The project reports that: male and female groups benefited; beneficiaries owned the assets; beneficiaries received training on use and maintenance; stronger networks and accountability could support scaling; and WhatsApp groups were used for information sharing. The project nevertheless encountered initial distrust, social and cultural barriers to GESI, and problems relating to land access and security of tenure. This is an important lesson: participation must be designed as an institutional process, not treated as a one-off consultation exercise.

7. POLICY GAP: CONNECTING FORMAL AND COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

The PALM-TREES findings point to a disconnect between:

Formal systems

- ❖ state MDAs;
- ❖ LGAs;
- ❖ NiMet;
- ❖ emergency-management structures;
- ❖ NGOs; and
- ❖ formal climate policies

and

Community systems

- ❖ families;
- ❖ neighbours;
- ❖ livelihood groups;
- ❖ community leaders;
- ❖ informal information networks; and

- ❖ local coping strategies.

The policy priority should be to connect these systems. For example, a flood warning has limited value if it does not reach communities in an understandable form or if households do not know what action to take. Likewise, community knowledge has limited policy value if there is no institutional mechanism through which it can influence planning.

8. PRIORITY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Establish a Last-Mile Climate Information and Community Engagement Framework

Lead institutions:

Lagos State Resilience Office (LASRO) and LASEMA

Supporting institutions: NiMet, Ministry of Information and Strategy, Local Government Councils, community organisations and relevant NGOs.

Actions

- ❖ Link official climate forecasts to LGA and community dissemination structures.
- ❖ Develop simple heat and flood messages with clear recommended actions.
- ❖ Use SMS, WhatsApp, radio and community networks.
- ❖ Identify community focal persons for receiving and disseminating alerts.
- ❖ Ensure information is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Recommendation 2: Establish Community Climate Resilience Platforms in High-Risk LGAs

Lead institutions:

Local Government Councils, coordinated by LASRO

Supporting institutions: Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, community organisations, women's groups, disability organisations and relevant MDAs.

Actions

- ❖ Establish platforms in priority climate-vulnerable communities.
- ❖ Include women, persons with disabilities, youth and livelihood groups.
- ❖ Use platforms for community risk assessment, preparedness and monitoring.
- ❖ Link them formally to LGA disaster and climate-planning processes.

Recommendation 3: Make gender and inclusion requirements measurable in climate programmes

Lead institutions:

Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget and LASRO

Supporting institution: Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation; LASODA; implementing MDAs.

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Actions

Every major climate adaptation programme should specify:

- ❖ gender-disaggregated beneficiaries;
- ❖ participation of women in decision-making;
- ❖ accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- ❖ gender- and inclusion-sensitive indicators;
- ❖ dedicated resources where required; and
- ❖ mechanisms for collecting beneficiary feedback.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen women's participation in climate-sensitive livelihoods Lead institution:

Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation

Supporting institutions: Ministry of Agriculture and Food Systems, Ministry of Wealth Creation and Employment, LASRO and Local Government Councils.

Actions

- ❖ Integrate climate-risk management into women's livelihood programmes.
- ❖ Support women in fishing, agriculture, processing and trading.
- ❖ Provide climate information and relevant skills.
- ❖ Facilitate access to productive assets and finance.
- ❖ Include women in decisions concerning community adaptation investments

Recommendation 5: Create a formal mechanism for integrating community knowledge into climate planning Lead institution:

LASRO

Supporting institutions: Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, Local Government Councils, NiMet, universities and research institutions.

Actions

- ❖ Document community observations of heat, flooding and other climate events.
- ❖ Include community knowledge in vulnerability assessments.
- ❖ Use community feedback to refine adaptation interventions.
- ❖ Establish annual community-policy dialogues in priority LGAs.
- ❖ Maintain a state-level repository of community adaptation practices.

Recommendation 6: Introduce an annual Climate Inclusion and Responsiveness Scorecard Lead institution:

Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget

Supporting institutions: LASRO, relevant MDAs, Local Government Councils and NISER/other research institutions.

Actions

- ❖ Develop a Climate Inclusion Responsiveness tools
- ❖ Design a Climate Inclusion Responsiveness scorecard for projects and programmes
- ❖ Provide incentives for project/programmes/communities that are scoring well

9. CONCLUSION

The PALM-TREES evidence points to a fundamental governance challenge in Lagos: communities are adapting, but formal institutional support is not consistently reaching them. The evidence is particularly striking because 70.3% of respondents identified inadequate government response as a challenge to social networks, while formal institutions were reported relatively infrequently as sources of climate information and support. Yet, communities demonstrate considerable agency through local coping strategies and social networks. The PALM-TREES intervention further demonstrates that co-design, community ownership, gender inclusion and capacity strengthening can produce practical adaptation benefits. The implication is not that government should withdraw and allow communities to cope on their own. It is the opposite. Lagos needs stronger connections between formal institutions and community systems. The State already has policy commitments to gender mainstreaming and inclusive climate adaptation. The priority now is to translate those commitments into last-mile information systems, meaningful participation, measurable inclusion, responsive institutions and accountable implementation.



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