



LIFE-AR

LDC Initiative for Effective
Adaptation and Resilience



LDC Global and National Platforms: Transforming the climate finance landscape

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Least Developed Countries (LDC) Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) was launched in 2018 to promote a paradigm shift in how climate responses are prioritised, financed, coordinated and evaluated. The LDC-led, LDC-owned initiative invests in country institutions, systems and capabilities to enable long-term access to climate finance for locally-led adaptation (LLA).

LIFE-AR has been supporting participating countries to develop “national platforms” to channel climate finance to the local level. The initiative therefore provides rich learnings to contribute to the global conversation about “country platforms” – multilateral initiatives combining loans and grants from multilateral development banks (MDBs) and development partners behind national, programmatic priorities – which have emerged as vehicles for scaling up climate action. LDC national platforms have some of the same objectives as the country platforms – such as mobilising climate finance towards nationally owned, programmatic objectives. However, they are far more ambitious, aiming to transform institutions and governance for climate action in each country, and to transform the climate finance landscape more widely. They do this by taking a country-led, principles and partnership-based, “business unusual” approach that encourages long term investment and planning, flexible and adaptive management, and integration of stakeholders from all corners of society.

At global level, LIFE-AR national platforms are coordinated through the LIFE-AR Board and a Secretariat, hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

At country level, LIFE-AR national platforms are institutionalising principles for locally-led adaptation through delivery mechanisms designed with the contribution of local governments, civil society organisations and academia. Delivery mechanisms, which aim to channel 70% of funds to the local level, are establishing a track record of effective coordination, governance and finance delivery, laying the groundwork for future resource mobilisation. A key part of this is a focus on gender and social inclusion, tracking progress at every step of the journey.

The six “Front Runner Countries”, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Malawi and Uganda, demonstrate a variety of approaches to building a national platform. Some have built LIFE-AR directly into existing coordination committees for greater efficiency. Others, where existing institutions have not been able to take a “business unusual” approach, have created new structures to take the lead and generate learning. For financial management, some countries work directly through national intermediaries to handle funds, while some are accessing funds through Government accredited entities. Others have established special purpose units, with a mandate to build government capabilities to channel climate finance to the local level.

What can we draw from this experience?

1. When countries take the lead, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach.
2. Establishing platforms with a transformative agenda takes time: to convince others of the value of the approach, to consult widely, and to be flexible to change course when circumstances require.
3. This slower approach builds capabilities that serve platforms more effectively over the long term. LIFE-AR has avoided international consultants, prioritising in country staff and experience to create more durable and sustainable platforms with wider ownership and local buy in. This will pay dividends as learning is transferred to other programmes initiated by government.

It is still early to assess the future of the LDC national platforms but lessons from Front Runner Countries demonstrate valuable insights, especially on the design of the platforms, composition, and contextualisation within a wider LDC initiative, emphasising the importance of LDC-led governance based on country context.

ABOUT LIFE-AR

LIFE-AR, the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience, aims to enhance climate resilience by promoting a paradigm shift in how climate responses are prioritised, financed, coordinated and evaluated. Launched in 2018, the LDC-led, LDC-owned initiative invests in country institutions, systems and capabilities to enable long-term access to climate finance for locally led adaptation (LLA). LIFE-AR aims to support LDCs in building and strengthening their institutional capacity to attract, manage and deliver global climate finance flows to the local level.

The LIFE-AR Partnership Compact, signed by 11 development partners and 10 LDC Group countries (as of May 2025), invited the international community to collaborate with LDCs in a principle-based, partnership approach (LIFE-AR, 2023). Countries and partners commit to the LDC 2050 Vision towards a climate-resilient future (LIFE-AR, 2019), which sets out five ‘Offers’ of LDC governments, ‘Asks’ of the international community, and ‘Joint Principles’.

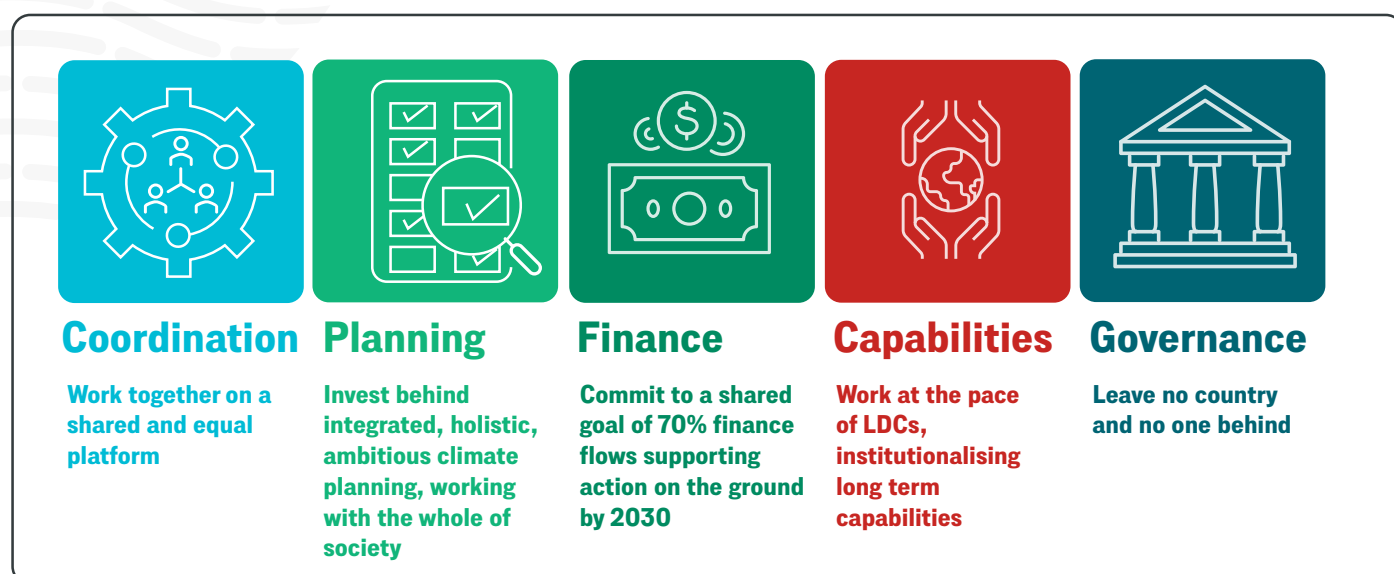


Figure 1 - LIFE-AR Joint Principles

LIFE-AR takes a radical “Business Unusual” approach to mobilising and delivering climate finance using **locally-led adaptation (LLA)** principles at scale (LIFE-AR, 2025a). This includes a focus on long-term, flexible funding, building in-country capabilities and strengthening existing institutions and systems. It is inclusive and community-led, taking a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to ensure a wider range of voices are heard and can contribute to climate decision making. This includes women, youth, people with disabilities and a range of government ministries and departments who may not typically interact.

THE LIFE-AR GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

LIFE-AR serves as one of the primary vehicles for delivering the LDC 2050 Vision for a climate resilient future. The LIFE-AR Board comprises signatories to the LIFE-AR Compact, all participating as equals—not as donors and recipients—and is headed by the chair of the Least Developed Countries Group on Climate Change.

The LIFE-AR Board is supported by a technical working group consisting of both LDC technical representatives and development partner representatives. The Board has also constituted working groups focusing on issues of finance, audit and risk to manage quality assurance.

The LIFE-AR Secretariat provides technical, strategic and logistical support to the initiative, guided by the

Board, the LDC Chair, the LDC technical lead and LDC strategic advisers. The team has worked with participating countries to set up inclusive governance structures in country.

The LIFE-AR Secretariat is temporarily hosted by International Institute for Environment and Development, an independent research and advocacy non-profit organisation based in the United Kingdom. The LIFE-AR Board has approved the establishment of an independent, LDC-led Facility to provide an opportunity for the LDC group to have greater influence over climate finance flows and their governance from international to local level. The Facility will champion the needs of LDCs locally

and globally using evidence from implementation of the initiative. It will also facilitate a thriving community of practice of LDC experts with hands-on experience

of creating the conditions needed for inclusive and effective adaptation.

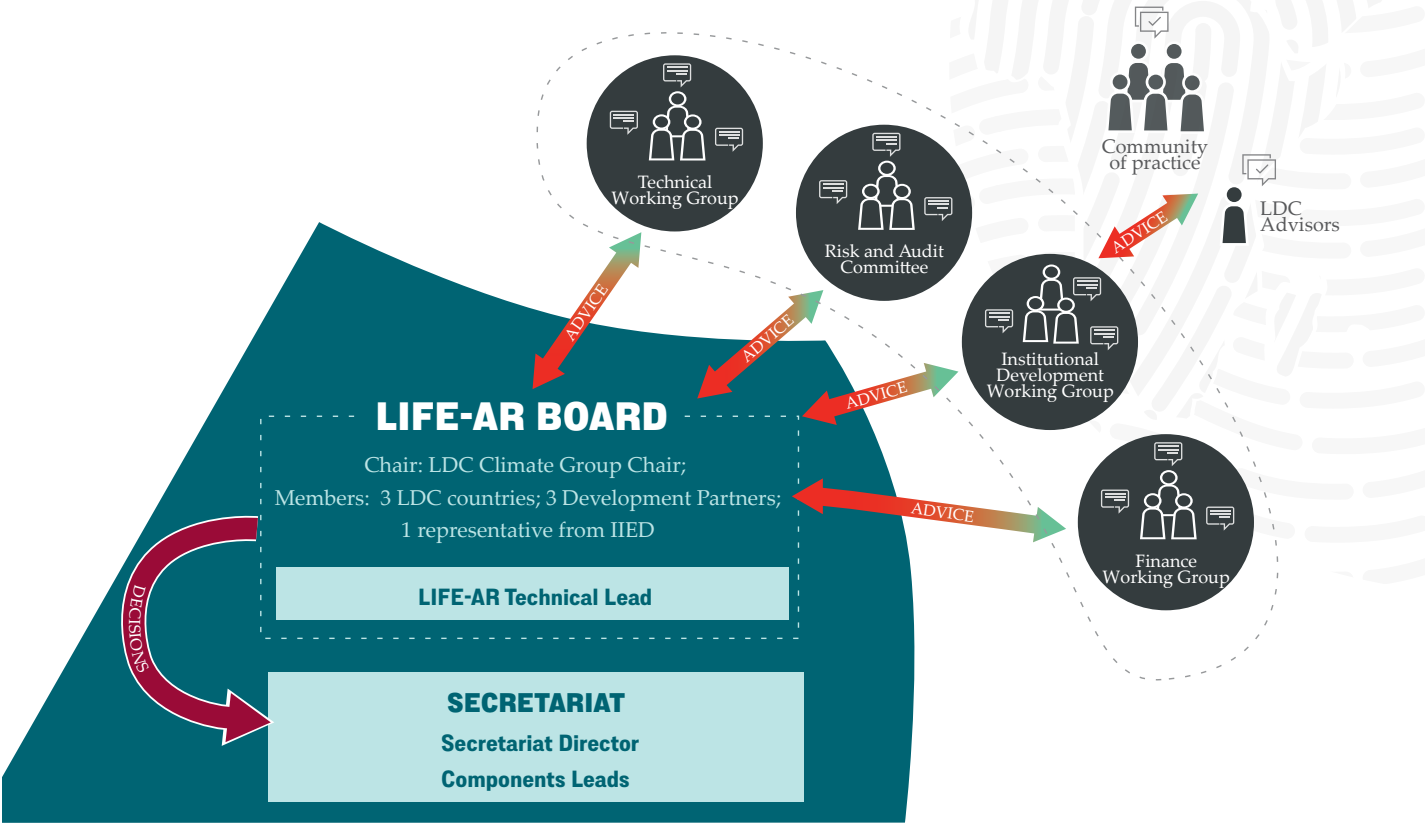


Figure 2 - LIFE-AR LIFE-AR global governance platform

In countries, governance structures – called LIFE-AR national platforms – have enabled inclusion of groups typically underrepresented in decision making spaces, established structures and forums for multi-stakeholder discussion, and provided on demand technical advisory support to develop “delivery mechanisms”, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Frameworks, strategies and research. Delivery mechanisms are the governance, planning and financial channels and systems that enable 70% of LIFE-AR funds to flow to the local level for community prioritised climate action.

The governance of LIFE-AR is three pronged, focusing on a three-way relationship between the target communities, the national platforms, and the LIFE-AR Board.



Figure 3 - LIFE-AR Flow of accountability

LIFE-AR commits to “radical” transparency, sharing information with communities in accessible and

digestible formats, enhanced where possible with technology. Communities are in turn more able to hold their national governments accountable for their actions, through inclusion in dialogues with members of national platforms. Bottom-up accountability processes such as social audits and reporting to community groups — as planned in countries like Uganda — can also encourage information sharing and greater influence by communities over the processes taking place through LIFE-AR.

The entire initiative is building systems to ensure that LDCs are genuinely leading these processes. An evolutionary approach has been taken, where participating countries go through three phases.

1. The Establishment phase designs the delivery mechanism and sets up the LIFE-AR national platform,

building supportive coalitions with ownership over a reformed approach to adaptation finance.

2. The Test and Evolve phase aims to establish proof of concept of delivery mechanisms and build a track record of fund management and delivery. It makes adjustments and adapts based on active MEL systems, with a focus on learning from the experience and improving year-on-year. Communities of Practice ensure the learning is shared more widely, within and between LDCs and at the international level.
3. The Scale Up phase will scale out the refined delivery mechanism to new locations, exploring innovations needed in specific contexts.



Women selling vegetables and potatoes, Liwonde, Malawi. Credit: Mick Harper

THE RELEVANCE OF COUNTRY PLATFORMS TO LIFE-AR NATIONAL PLATFORMS

BOX 1: EXAMPLES OF COUNTRY PLATFORMS

Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs):

A multilateral climate finance initiative to expedite the phase out of coal, promote renewable energy (RE) and incentivize a just transition. JETP's are in place in four countries. The first was established between the International Partners Group and South Africa at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, and more recently in Vietnam, Indonesia and Senegal. Studies show that in these types of partnerships, climate finance flows primarily to the most bankable, lowest risk, highest return, and often the largest scale projects, reinforcing social, economic and territorial inequities (Krammer, 2022; Karg et al, 2025)

The Bangladesh Climate and Development Partnership:

A combination of loans from MDBs and grants from development partners, this partnership is hailed as an example of a country-led climate platform established to scale up implementation of climate actions.

The international community recognises it as an important modality by the global community to deliver climate actions at scale (Asian Development Bank, 2024).

Country Climate and Development Platforms:

Supported by various ongoing international initiatives, they build on past efforts to coordinate donors more effectively behind programmatic approaches. These efforts have in the past been called "Poverty Reduction Strategies", "Sector Wide Approaches" (SWAPs), and guided by agreements such as the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the ACCRA Agenda for Action for putting them into practice (Robinson & Olver, 2025)

The lack of climate and development finance flowing where it is most needed is an ongoing challenge in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement. While a failure of developed countries to make funds available is a key contributor, it is also due to a lack of established approaches for mobilising funding sources towards policy priorities such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) (GCF, 2025). There is also a need for coordinated technical and financial support between donors and country level counterparts (Sabogal Reyes & Ahlgren, 2024).

Recent initiatives have seen a shift towards more coordinated and country-led approaches to climate finance delivery. "Country platforms" have gained momentum with international development partners, multilateral development institutions and national governments, as an approach for greater coordination. The current discussions on country platforms build on Brazil's G20 and COP30 presidency agenda, focused on improving the delivery of international climate finance. Country platforms are also part of the conversation in Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) reforms aimed at a fairer financing system that works through collaboration to achieve effectiveness and impact (E3G, 2024; Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2024; MDBs, 2024; Sabogal Reyes & Ahlgren, 2024; Gilmour et al, 2024).

While the momentum of country platforms is growing, challenges persist that need to be addressed (OECD, 2024). First, there is no commonly agreed definition of country platforms which can create inconsistencies in implementation and problems evaluating their success (Gul et al, 2025; Gilmour et al, 2024). Second, countries typically already have coordinating mechanisms with capacities and finances to ensure their effectiveness, suggesting duplication and the risk of making these existing institutions obsolete (Lyer et al, 2017; GCF, 2025). In addition, aligning multiple donor governance structures is a bureaucratic challenge that can be a hindrance to the success of the country platforms (Abesha, 2024; Disch, 2000). Lastly, changes in either donor or recipient government leadership may precipitate deprioritisation of some sectors that had previously been central to a country platforms purpose, leaving it less effective (Shinkle et al, 2021).

The LIFE-AR principles, Asks and Offers address these issues by calling upon donors to work together with LDCs to reduce transaction costs and ensure mutual accountability. LIFE-AR is designed to build in-country systems that will allow LDCs to strengthen and demonstrate their institutional capabilities, to better inform, influence and access global climate finance flows. The initiative emphasises the establishment of national platforms that build on structures that already exists rather than adding new ones. As a result, national platforms have a different structure in each LIFE-AR country.

| CHARACTERISTIC | COUNTRY PLATFORMS | LIFE-AR NATIONAL PLATFORMS | DESCRIPTION |
|---|-------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Country led governance and ownership | | ☒ | LIFE-AR national platforms are designed by the countries themselves, using bespoke institutional arrangements suitable to country context and aligned with the LIFE-AR principles |
| Coordination of multiple funding mechanisms and funding sources | ☒ | ☒ | Platforms seek coordination of delivery mechanisms and are open to multiple types of capital, blending or leveraging as is appropriate |
| Alignment with national climate priorities, taking a programmatic approach | ☒ | ☒ | Situation analysis maps alignment with country priorities set out in NAPs NDCs, SDGs, national development plans and climate strategies. Investment is across sectors of Government informed by climate risk assessment than being prescriptive |
| Multi stakeholder participation/ Whole-of-society approach | ☒ | ☒ | Inclusion of public, private, civil society and academic stakeholders to shape the approach to delivering finance. |
| Transforming governance, systems and institutions | | ☒ | LIFE-AR strengthens LDC institutions, systems and coordination mechanisms in the long term, to build a track record to access climate finance from diverse sources. |
| Clearly defined funding targets | | ☒ | LIFE-AR national platforms aim to deliver at least 70% behind community prioritised investments |
| Integration of the Locall-Led Adaptation principles | | ☒ | Locally led adaptation principles embedded within the LIFE-AR foundation principles of the initiative, with countries designing their own delivery mechanisms |
| Global level advocacy for an improved climate finance system drawing on experience with platforms | | ☒ | LIFE-AR national platforms are anchored in the LDC group as part of the UNFCCC block and with a collective voice on addressing climate change challenges for LDCs |
| MEL is a key component of the platform activities | | ☒ | LIFE-AR national platforms establish MEL Frameworks to track progress, while integrating into existing frameworks to reduce the reporting burden |
| Gender and Social Inclusion considerations fundamental to platform institutions | | ☒ | LIFE-AR national platforms have a particular focus on Gender and Social Inclusion, appointing focal points and champions to ensure GESI is prioritised, addressing elite capture and ensuring those likely to be left behind are included in climate decision making. |

Table 1 - Characteristics of general country platforms and LIFE-AR national platforms

LIFE-AR NATIONAL PLATFORMS

BOX 2: WHAT ARE LIFE-AR NATIONAL PLATFORMS?

National platforms provide strategic leadership and a coordinated, country-led approach to delivering LIFE-AR and the LDC Offers. National platforms are used to facilitate a coordinated whole-of-society, whole-of-government, and country-led approach to climate decision making.

LIFE-AR aims to establish a track record of LDCs accessing and delivering climate finance to the local level by developing delivery mechanisms that can channel 70% of climate finance to the local level for locally-led adaptation investment. Delivery mechanisms can utilise public or private delivery channels, with countries free to design them in ways that suit existing legislation, regulation and political realities. LIFE-AR national platforms work to support the design and institutionalisation of systems that build the resilience of people, economies and ecosystems. These systems generate integrated, multi-sectoral interventions that allow local adaptation priorities to be financed and integrated at scale.

All the platforms include representatives from local government and other relevant local institutions, ensuring local contexts are integrated into the whole-of-society approach. The delivery of adaptation finance to the local level generates learning and experience to directly inform the strategic decisions taken by the national platforms. LIFE-AR's long-term timeframe facilitates a country-led 'learning by doing' approach. The establishment of 'Communities of Practice' consolidate and share the learning, building expertise and experience in the process.

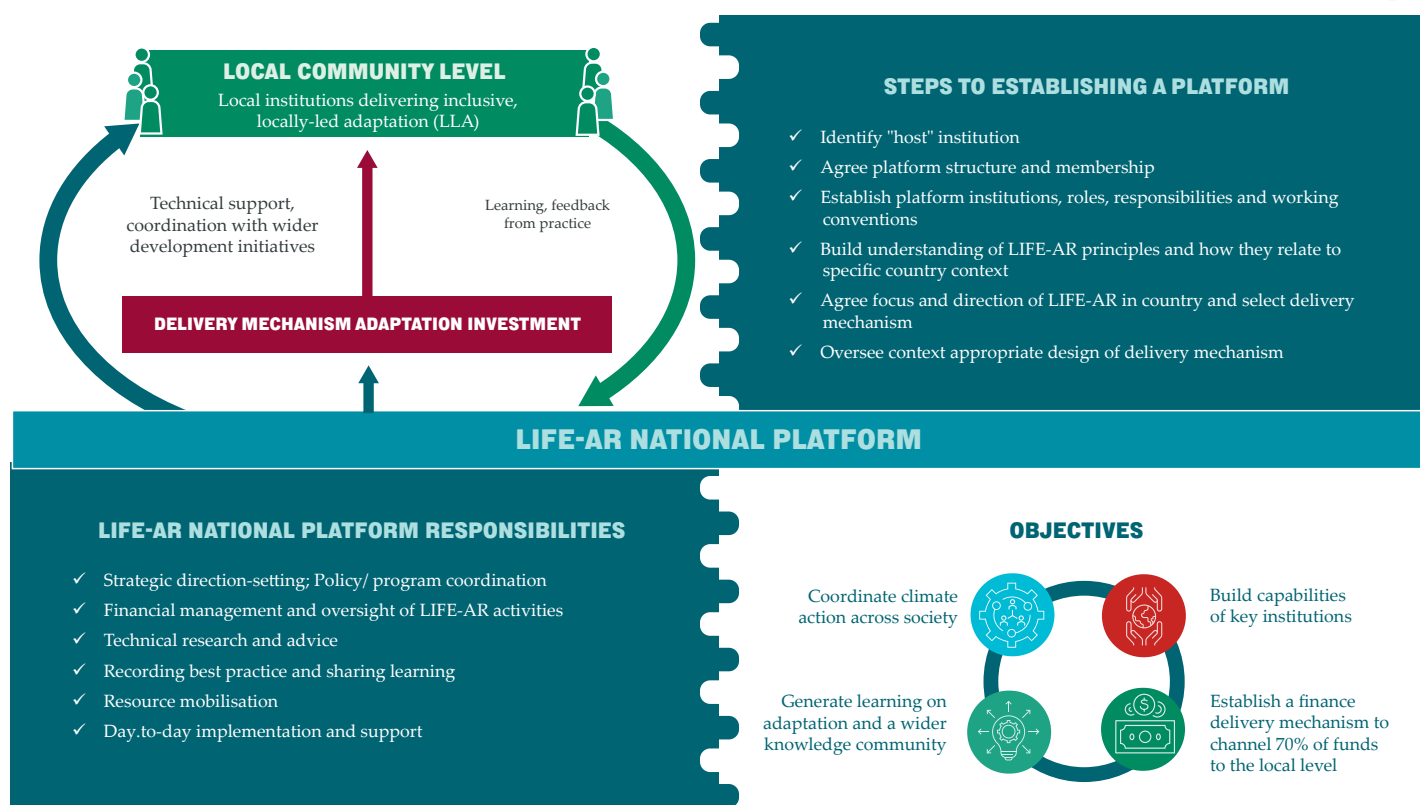


Figure 4 – LIFE-AR national platforms establish delivery mechanisms and institutional structures that aim to transform how climate finance is mobilised and delivered

Since joining LIFE-AR, Front Runner Countries (Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, the Gambia and Uganda) have set up national platforms that suits their specific needs, institutional priorities, regulations and politics.

In some cases, countries refer to one specific committee as their LIFE-AR national platform. Others view the

platform as a series of interlinked institutions and working groups supporting delivery of LIFE-AR. Some have integrated into existing coordinating committees and processes, while others have created bespoke committees for LIFE-AR that continue to evolve.

| ROLE | STRUCTURES IN PLACE TO DELIVER EACH ROLE | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Strategic Leadership, Coordination | LIFE-AR Roles taken up by National Platforms | Sets the strategic direction of the LIFE-AR approach; coordinates with pre-existing statutory committees and institutions |
| | Statutory national climate response coordinating body | Integrates LIFE-AR into existing mandates for coordination; ensures coordination with ongoing initiatives, provides strategic and political oversight |
| Technical Leadership | Task Force or Task Team | Advocates for the approach across sectors; coordinates technical inputs from whole-of-society and whole of government actors; carries out quality assurance on all aspects of delivery at national and local level; reports to the strategic leadership structure. |
| | | Takes responsibility for delivery and implementation of key activities, carrying out research or hiring service provision |
| Delivery mechanism design | Task Force or Task Team and | Examines delivery mechanism options, building on previous efforts and learning from similar contexts |
| | Working group | Appointed team responsible for research, development and design of the delivery mechanism |
| Coordination, planning and reporting | Secretariat | Works on instruction of a task team or task force to carry out activities |
| Resource mobilisation | Task Force or Task Team | Coordinates with country national designated authorities to identify and access financial resources |
| Gender and Social Inclusion | Working Group | Appointed group including Government, civil society, academia, that explores how GESI considerations are integrated across all aspects of the platforms and in delivery of the initiative. |
| | | Specialised NGOs included as part of the working group to bring their expertise and networks |
| Monitoring Evaluation and Learning | Working Group | Individual focal points are appointed as GESI champions per country to form the working group. |
| | | Appointed group exploring how MEL considerations are integrated across all aspects of the platforms |
| Capacity Building | Universities/ training institutions | Individual focal points are appointed per country as MEL champions |
| Financial Management | Financial Management Agent | Included in the platform to learn approaches and build capabilities of other stakeholders |
| | Project Implementation Unit | Organisation hired externally to handle funds on instruction of technical leadership |
| | | Special purpose unit created to establish financial management within the ministry while using external staff |

Table 2 - The structure of LIFE-AR's national platforms: roles, and responsibilities

Platform participants reflect and operationalise the whole-of-society, whole-of government approach. They vary depending on countries and can include representatives from:

- Government ministries, such as Ministries of Environment and Climate Change, Gender, Finance, Planning;
- Government departments and agencies such as meteorology agencies;
- Sub-national governments;

- Development partners;
- Academia;
- Civil society; and
- The private sector.

This ensures local and national experience is combined with a wide range of technical expertise to solve specific challenges, such as designing the delivery mechanism, coordination of MEL, or integrating GESI (LIFE-AR, 2025).

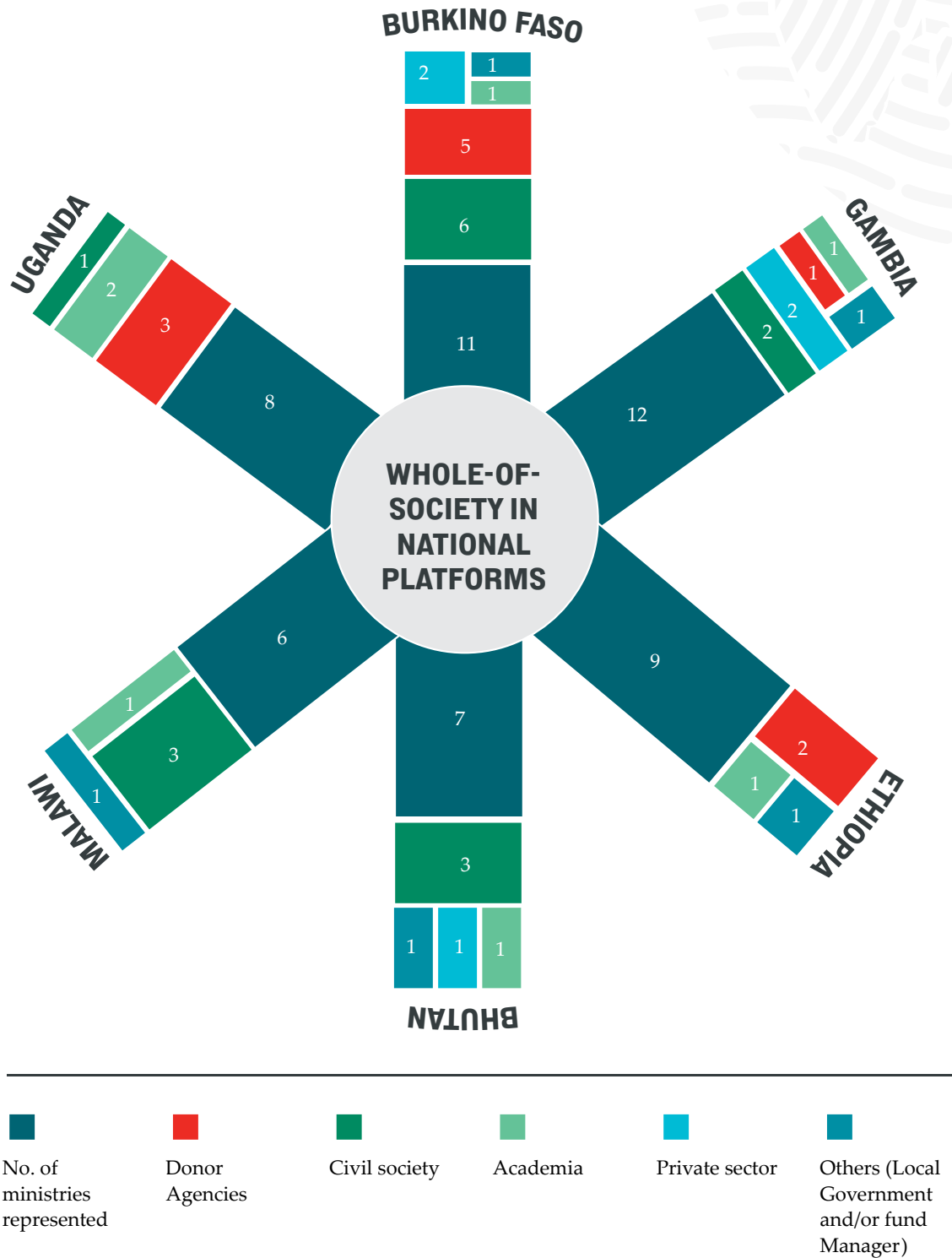


Figure 5 - Whole-of-society membership of LIFE-AR strategic level committees



Meeting of the LIFE-AR Task Force and the Secretariat, July 2025

BHUTAN - WORKING THROUGH EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

Bhutan’s platform uses existing institutions established by climate change legislation to coordinate LIFE-AR’s Offers and Principles with existing initiatives. The National Climate Change Committee is a policy and regulatory body coordinating decisions relating to climate change. Chaired by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, it includes representatives from other key ministries including Finance, Health, Industry, Home Affairs, Infrastructure and Transport, Commerce and Employment, and Education, Skills and Development.

In addition, the Climate Change Coordination Committee (C4) is a technical body providing a discussion forum on climate change, making recommendations to the NCCC. C4 includes high-level executive representation, including counterparts such as the Ministry of Finance and the National Commission for Women and Children,

as well infrastructure, agriculture and livestock. The C4 is chaired by the Head of the Ministry’s Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC). An NGO with gender expertise, Renew, provides targeted technical advice, helping to ensure that gender considerations are integrated in all decisions. DECC’s Climate Change Division supports the operations of the C4. These bodies were already in operation before Bhutan joined LIFE-AR, and they integrated the governance of the initiative into their operations.

Bhutan has established a LIFE-AR Task Force to support delivery, comprising government agencies and CSOs. Bhutan is one of the few countries that integrates LIFE-AR funding directly into country owned financial management systems, using the Central Bank of Bhutan to do so.

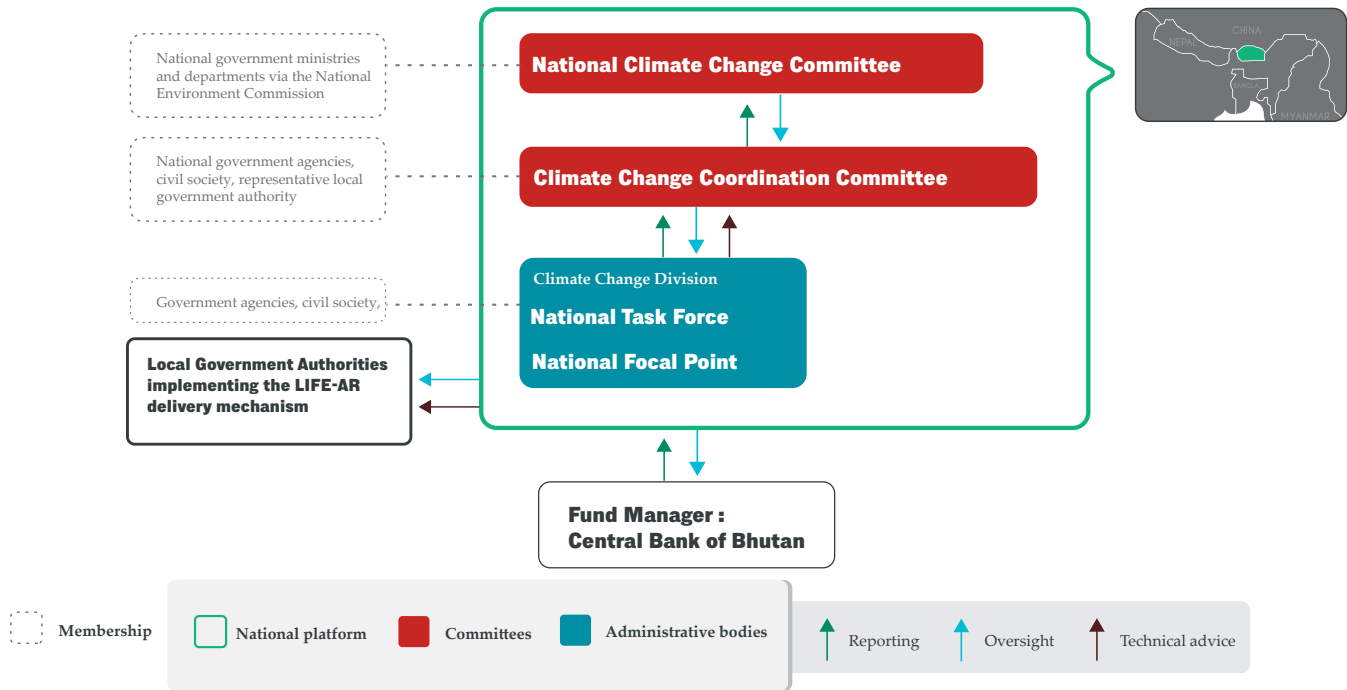


Figure 6 - Bhutan’s national platform

MALAWI - STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Malawi's political and technical advisory committees, the National Steering Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Technical Committee on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, were already established under the 2016 National Climate Change Policy. These committees provide strategic and political leadership, facilitating coordination of LIFE-AR with other ongoing initiatives, and technical advice drawing on a wide range of experiences and expertise.

The National Steering Committee includes representatives from across multiple government ministries, civil society, academia, development partners including the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Multilateral Development Banks, and the media. The larger Joint Technical Committee includes the same sectors, as well as organisations working with women, young people, people with disabilities and other groups previously under-represented in decision making spaces.

The task team is chaired by an NGO – Leadership for Environment and Development, Southern and Eastern Africa – and was established to guide LIFE-AR activities, coordinate and advocate for the LIFE-AR principles. The Task Team includes government agencies responsible for economic planning and development, water resource management, forestry, energy and environmental affairs, donors and academia. Two working groups report to the task team; one set up to design the delivery mechanism and the other to develop and oversee a MEL framework.

The LIFE-AR Malawi Focal Point, Secretariat and the **Implementation Unit (IU)** is hosted by the Environmental Affairs Department in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change – the National Focal Point to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

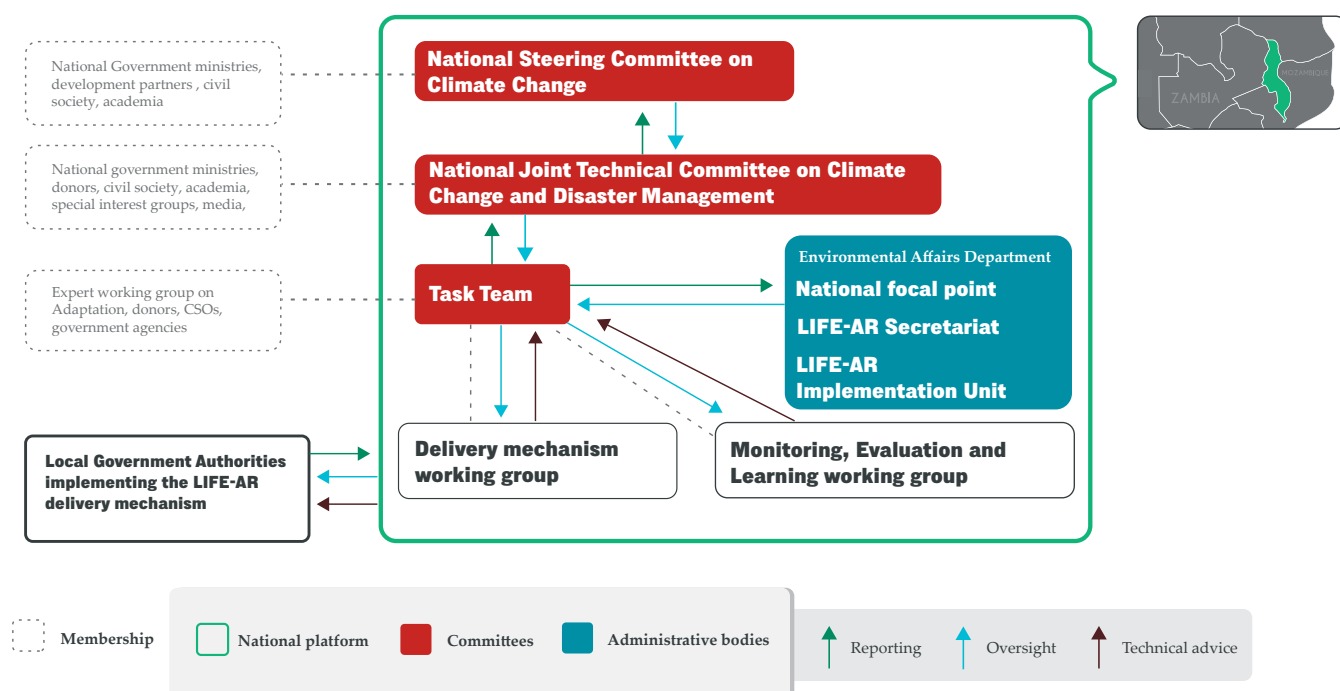


Figure 7 - Malawi's national platform

BOX 3: MALAWI'S PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNIT

Malawi has established a Special Purpose Vehicle, called an Implementing Unit, intended to be a long-term mechanism that builds government capacities (transparency and accountability). The IU is embedded into national frameworks and systems, and oversees delivery of LIFE-AR, including programme and financial management, drawing on climate technical expertise from the Task Team. The IU is not a government unit but is subject to government and donor oversight. The IU plays the role of Financial Management Agent (FMA), housed in the ministry to align with government and FMA systems and processes. Over the long term, the unit is expected to develop and oversee other programmes, later managing funds as a government entity.

UGANDA - INNOVATING FOR BUSINESS UNUSUAL

Recognising that its existing coordinating infrastructure was not set up to take on a “business unusual” approach, Uganda established three institutions specific to LIFE-AR, hosted by the Ministry of Water and Environment:

- A LIFE-AR steering committee, consisting of senior level government ministries and development partners, provides strategic oversight. The steering committee can connect and coordinate with more recently established institutions such as the National Climate Change Advisory committee. Participating ministries include the Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Local Government, Gender, Land and Social Development, as well two development partners and an NGO, Environment Alert.
- A Task Team of civil society, academia and government ministries offers technical oversight, including local government representatives able to share critical perspectives on the challenging realities of local governance and delivery. Like Malawi, Uganda has established two working groups to design the delivery mechanism and ensure MEL and GESI integration. A secretariat enables day-to-day implementation support, liaising between committees.
- An interim financial management agent, IUCN, was appointed both to handle funds from donors to support delivery and establishment of the delivery mechanism, but also to build capabilities of government institutions to take on this role in future, supporting resource mobilisation.

LIFE-AR is going beyond us. Eventually, we will see many programs adopting the same methodology.

Scovia Akot, Climate Change Unit, Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda Focal



Inspection of borehole site in Kaabong, Uganda

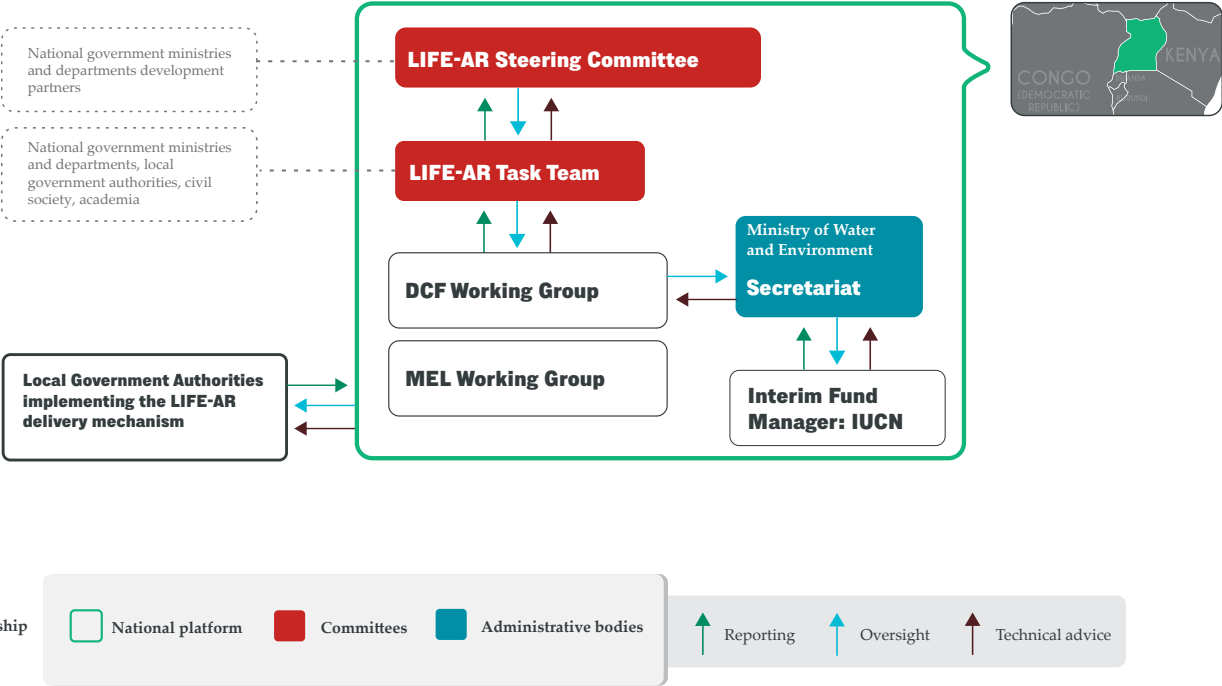


Figure 8 - Uganda's national platform



The Burkina Faso technical team for the launch of LIFE-AR workshop in 2022

BURKINA FASO - REINVIGORATING EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

Burkina Faso has used LIFE-AR as an opportunity to revitalise and strengthen capabilities of existing institutions, particularly the National Climate Change Committee (CNACC), responsible for fulfilling UNFCCC commitments. The committee was formed several years ago, and the implementation of LIFE-AR has triggered a formal *décret* to formalise and operationalise it. The CNACC is the focus of Burkina's national platform, providing a framework for consultation between the LIFE-AR stakeholders, enabling exchange of ideas and recommendations for improved implementation of the initiative. The committee now includes LIFE-AR in its agenda items, alongside other nationally relevant

climate action efforts. This approach aims to build on and support existing infrastructures that can enable a business unusual approach.

A LIFE-AR focussed steering committee provides supervision and oversight of strategy for delivery, ensuring it is aligned with other national frameworks and with a particular emphasis on dialogue between stakeholders. Meeting twice a year, it has over one hundred members, including CSO umbrella organisations for groups who have typically had less access to decision making spaces, as well as key government ministries and private sector representatives. To include more expertise

from local governments in the process, government agencies for regional policies and municipality umbrella organisations were invited to participate.

To address specific challenges, a technical working group carries out research, develops critical documents – such as the design of the delivery mechanism or the approach to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. The working group can act on request to other LIFE-AR structures to provide more detailed information. Delivery is overseen by a technical secretariat, which facilitates establishment

of the delivery mechanism and coordination of the LIFE-AR structures.

During the development of LIFE-AR, the platform has evolved to reflect a more sophisticated understanding of the coordination requirements of locally led adaptation efforts. In line with a business unusual approach, government officers have led this work without calling in external services, building their own capabilities and experiences.

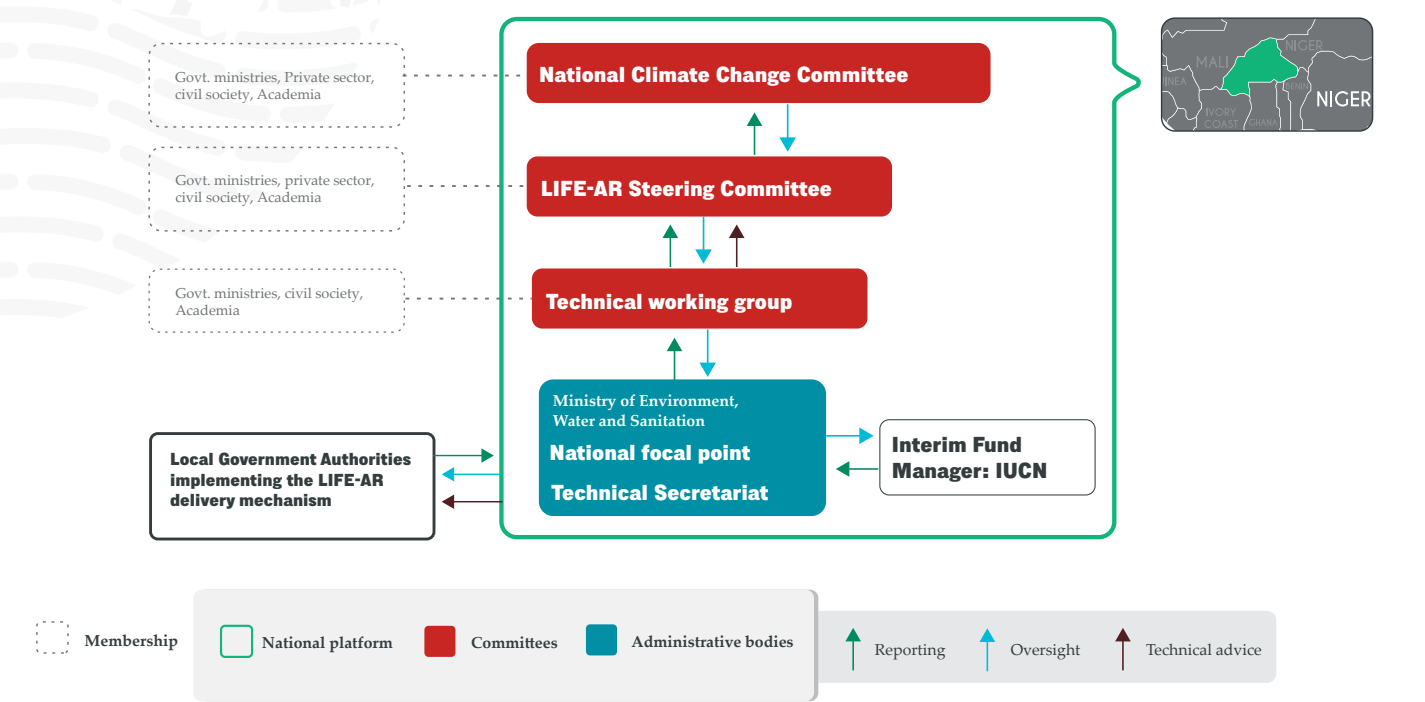


Figure 9 - Burkina Faso’s national platform

“What usually happens in [Burkina Faso] is that most of this kind of work is done by issuing calls for tender and hiring consultants....but we realised that the consultants were not translating the reality of what the stakeholders were saying... In setting up [the technical working group], we did all the work, leading to a significant reduction in expenditure. All members have participated from start to finish, leading to a real strengthening of the capacities of national actors to lead the process.”

Didier Bako, LIFE-AR Burkina Faso alternate focal point



Technical team visiting LIFE-AR investments made in Galvare, Burkina Faso

THE GAMBIA - CREATING GREATER INCLUSIVITY IN DECISION MAKING

Like Uganda, The Gambia has established bespoke committees for LIFE-AR, recognising that these would be more effective at adopting a business unusual approach. At the same time, it has also built on The Gambia's experience with finance mechanisms that channel funds to local governments for climate adaptation investment, through its Department for Community Development.

The LIFE-AR steering committee is the highest decision-making body, providing strategic guidance, oversight of resources and quality assurance of delivery. It includes high level representatives and heads of departments from several ministries, as well as CSO and representatives from academia.

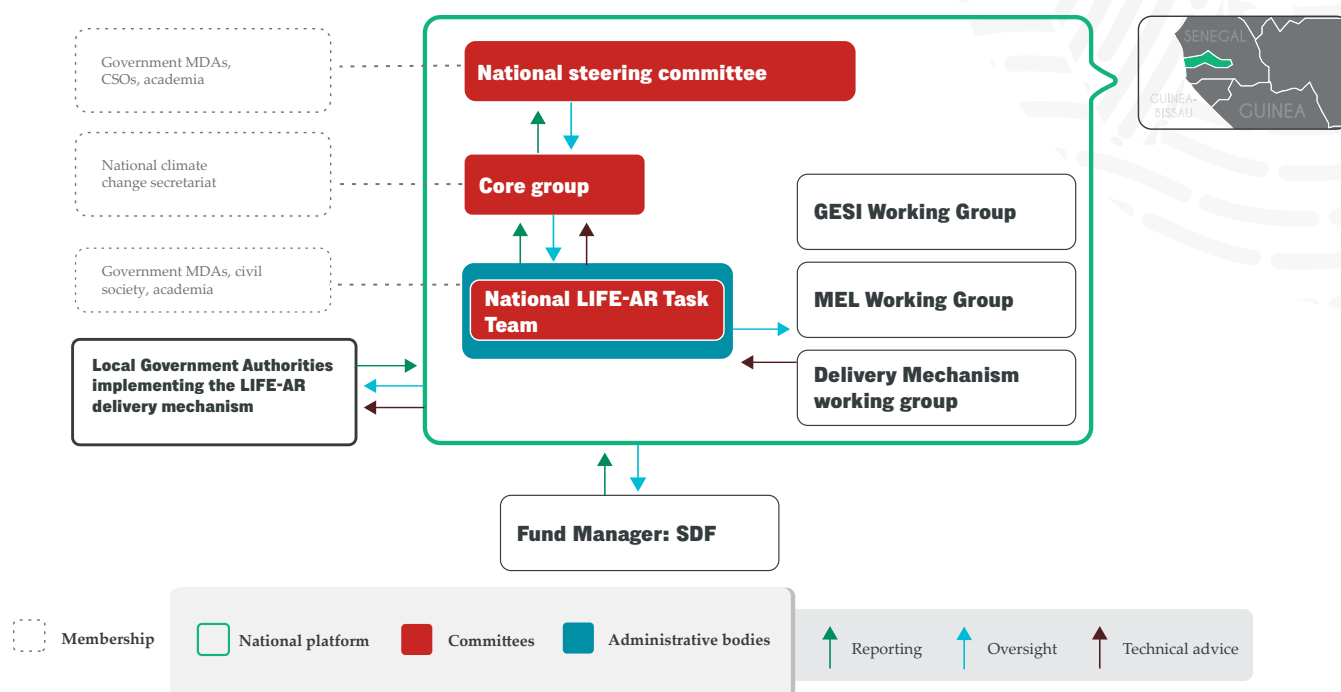


Figure 10 - The Gambia's national platform

Much of the research and delivery work is carried out by a task team, which also oversees working groups for specific technical functions. The Gambia has sought to facilitate inclusive decision making, including representatives of relevant environmental, finance and planning ministries, departments and agencies, as well as the Ministries of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, and Youth, academia and CSOs such as the Association of Non-Governmental Organisations. The core group acts as a secretariat, liaising between the strategic leadership and the Task Team. The fund manager, the Social Development Fund (SDF), is an autonomous public body with prior experience handling funds on behalf of the Government of The Gambia.

Technical Working Groups have been established to focus on large and more complex issues. One focuses on the design of the delivery mechanism, in this case the Local Climate Adaptive Facility (LoCAL), to ensure the LIFE-AR principles are embedded while improving on Gambia's previous experience channelling climate finance to local governments. The other focuses on MEL, seeking to ensure LIFE-AR MEL is integrated into existing country reporting processes.

"When [you] look at the institutional arrangement of LIFE-AR in terms of the national platform, you'll find out that every aspect of the society has a representation in the LIFE-AR governance system."

"We've made sure that everyone was represented in our meetings; we made sure that everyone participated and then it was not difficult to get ideas from different people on specific teams or issues."

Modou Cham, climate change specialist, UNFCCC and LIFE-AR national focal point, climate change secretariat, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources (MECCNAR), The Gambia



A community member in front of her house newly equipped with solar panels, Kembebit, Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA - A STREAMLINED APPROACH FOR FASTER PROGRESS

Ethiopia has taken a leaner approach to its national platform, with a cross-government task force supported by academia to implement LIFE-AR. This is overseen by a senior level, cross-government steering committee. The financial management processes in Ethiopia are already well established, with the Climate Resilient Green Economy Facility under the Ministry of Finance accredited

to the Green Climate Fund. LIFE-AR funds are channelled through the CRGE which has a track record of channelling funds to local governments. The Task Force liaises with local government ‘woredas’ to ensure local perspectives are integrated into the design and implementation of the finance delivery mechanism. The woreda level task force includes a gender focal point.

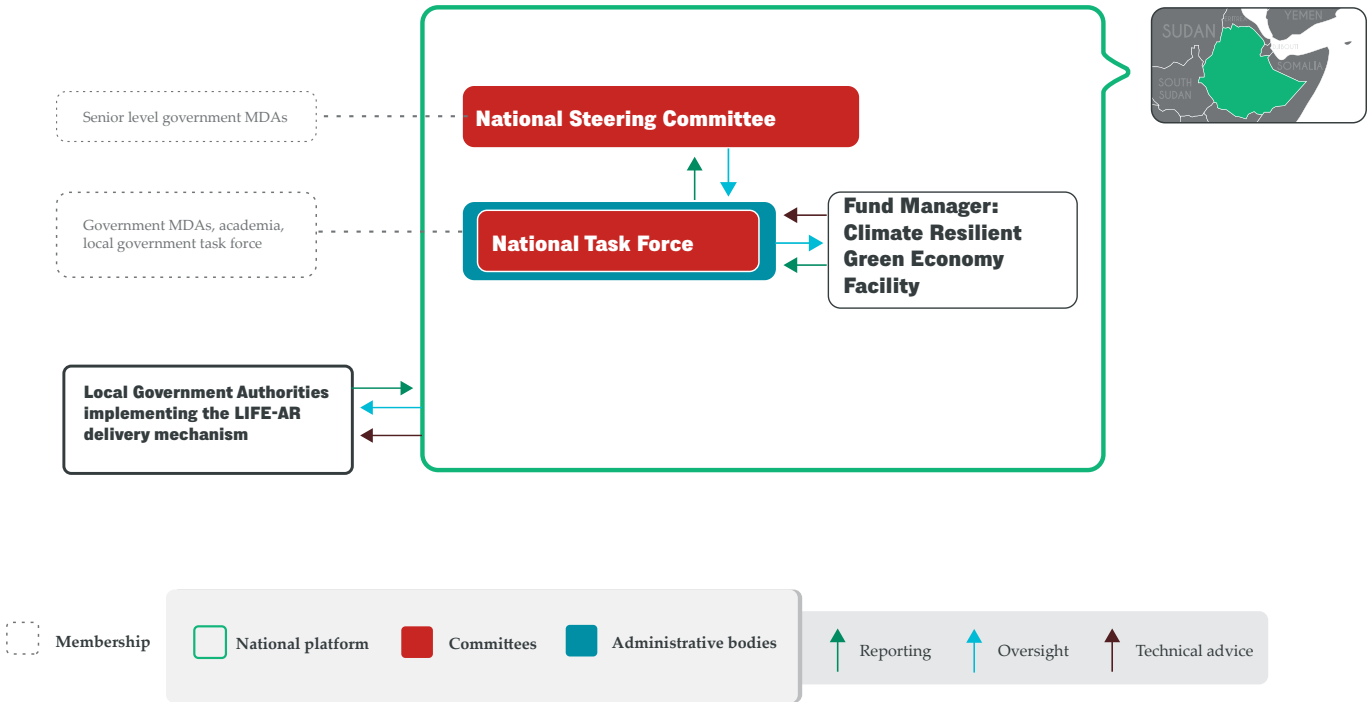


Figure 11 - Ethiopia's national platform

As LIFE-AR develops, the national platforms are likely to evolve to ensure the maintenance of the LIFE-AR principles in line with each phase of the initiative, and to adjust to changing political conditions. Drawing on their community of practice and evidence-based learning, the platforms have the freedom to self-modify in response to emerging challenges.



Small sized fish ponds set to be rehabilitated and merged into one larger dam in Salima, Malawi

LESSONS ON SETTING UP AND OPERATIONALISING NATIONAL PLATFORMS

The process of establishing national platforms in six different contexts can inform the development of similar initiatives elsewhere.

No “one-size-fits-all” model

The variety of approaches taken by the LIFE-AR Front Runner Countries demonstrates there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ model for a national platform. Instead, countries have selected context-tailored options that are strategically and politically appropriate, and that ensure they can deliver the LDC Offers in alignment with the LIFE-AR principles.

Bhutan has added LIFE-AR to the agendas of its existing climate change coordination committees, and Burkina Faso has taken the opportunity to reinvigorate them. On the other hand, Uganda and The Gambia found establishing new committees more reliable for taking a business unusual approach. These decisions have been led by government officials with a keen understanding of what is realistic and possible given existing internal relationships and dynamics.

Taking time is of the essence

Establishing platforms aligned with business unusual principles – a radical and impact-oriented approach – takes time. Ministries, such as Uganda’s Ministry of Water and Environment, have needed time to convince others of the value of a different manner of operating. Doing this effectively needs a clear theory of change that articulates a powerful vision which justifies systemic changes. It also requires adaptive management, adjusting and tweaking where necessary, further slowing the process. Aside from the governance elements of the platform, designing

delivery mechanisms in a way that uses local expertise, evidence and is genuinely country-owned is a lengthy process. LIFE-AR has provided countries with the time, funds and freedom to experiment and find innovative and context-appropriate solutions to channel climate finance to the local level, while providing evidence of its impact and what’s achievable at scale.

Building capabilities for the long term

Having government officers oversee or carry out key pieces of research or design of processes is slower but builds capabilities that serve the platform more effectively over the long term. LIFE-AR prioritise local consultants and national institutions or government staff and over international consultants, supporting in-country experiences and expertise. The ownership and experience to oversee the systems established is much stronger. Often, country consultants are former government employees considered trusted assets, able to use their networks to support research and to make challenging recommendations. An additional benefit is that more officials across other MDAs are involved in the work, able to learn from the approach and can apply it in other government interventions.

Learning from each other

The set up of the platforms has also benefitted from peer learning across LIFE-AR countries sharing experience of what is working and what is not. The countries have learned from each other and continue to benefit from a community of practice, as they are all working towards a common vision.



Election of the Parish Climate Change Committee in Pader, Uganda

AN LDC FOCUSED APPROACH: TRANSFORMING THE CLIMATE FINANCE LANDSCAPE

Country platforms have re-emerged as vehicles for mobilisation and delivery of climate finance. Yet most of the recent successful examples have been in middle income countries, driven in large part by MDBs agendas on reform. LIFE-AR, through the LDC national platforms, aims to reshape the climate finance landscape which currently does not deliver for climate vulnerable communities effectively or at scale.

Central to this transformation is a principles-based approach. Currently, most country platforms use a traditional “donor-recipient” model, with its attendant rules, reporting structures and barriers to country ownership. By contrast, the LIFE-AR Compact establishes a partnership based on a shared recognition of the inadequacies of the climate finance system and guided by the LDC Principles, Offers and Asks. These principles establish LDC ownership and leadership over decisions made at global and national level through the LDC Board and the national platforms. They are geared towards improving how climate finance can be mobilised, governed and delivered in business unusual ways that empower LDCs and their communities.

The Locally-Led Adaptation Principles, widely recognised as good practice in the shaping and delivery of finance for adaptation, are foundational. These are put into practice through delivery mechanisms developed by Front Runner Countries. They rely on strong engagement of local governments and communities in the planning, design and management of adaptation investments. They prioritise gender and social inclusion, creating or adjusting decision making spaces so that representatives of historically excluded groups are at the centre of decision making. LIFE-AR is also exploring “radical” transparency and bottom-up accountability systems that place information and power in the hands of communities directly. The decentralised financing mechanisms ensure that at least 70% of funds is invested behind community prioritised investments.

Another key contribution of LIFE-AR is the focus on long-term strengthening of institutions, building government capacities to coordinate complex, programmatic approaches. The whole-of-society principle facilitates coordination across government and the inclusion of a wide range of different perspectives.

Through establishing platforms and delivery mechanisms, LDC national platforms are building transferrable experiences and skills applicable to other programmes. This also supports resource mobilisation, as countries can more effectively coordinate efforts to access climate funds that can scale up delivery mechanisms.

Finally, the independent LDC Facility to be established in 2026 will provide an opportunity for LDCs to work together as a unified voice for a principles-based approach to climate finance. The Facility will enable countries to share experiences through a wider community of practice, highlighting working examples of scaled up systems for financing local adaptation, and promoting an improved climate finance system at global level.



A father and daughter looking at wind turbines credit: tetesong / Shutterstock

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The Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) is a long-term LDC-led, LDC-owned initiative which aims to enhance climate resilience.

LIFE-AR is hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and supported by the UK International Development from the UK Government, Irish Aid, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada and Quadrature Climate Foundation.

