The African Climate Foundation’s (ACF) Strategic Framework is the outcome of extensive research and engagement undertaken by our team over the course of a year. It has been informed and shaped by the knowledge and experience of a network of African scholars, practitioners, decision makers and activists of which the ACF is a part. The Framework has been designed as a living document. While it captures our current thinking and approach to climate change and development in Africa, it is expected to evolve over time. The Framework has also been designed as a directional document. It provides an overview of our theoretical framing, our body of work, our objectives and our approach to delivering impact. More detailed strategies for each of our sectoral focus areas have been developed which both inform and are informed by the Framework.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Supporting African solutions to the climate change challenges facing the continent
WE ARE THE FIRST AFRICAN-LED CLIMATE CHANGE RE-GRANTING ORGANISATION ON THE CONTINENT. BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF SISTER ORGANISATIONS LIKE CLIMATEWORKS FOUNDATION AND THE EUROPEAN CLIMATE FOUNDATION, WE WERE FOUNDED TO PROVIDE A MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH PHILANTHROPIES CAN CONtribute TO AFRICA’S EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE. AS AN AFRICAN-LED AND AFRICAN-BASED FOUNDATION, WE ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING AFRICAN SOLUTIONS TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES FACING THE CONTINENT.

GOVERNANCE

WE ARE GOVERNED BY A TWO-TIERED BOARD, COMPRISING A HIGH-LEVEL PAN-AFRICAN ADVISORY COUNCIL AND A MANAGEMENT BOARD. THE ADVISORY COUNCIL PROVIDES POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL OVERSIGHT AND STRATEGIC GUIDANCE, AND THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OVERSEES OUR OPERATIONAL, GOVERNANCE AND FIDUCIARY DUTIES.
OUR VISION

A vibrant and climate-resilient Africa in which inclusive socio-economic development delivers sustainable and equitable growth.

OUR MISSION

Supporting interventions at the nexus of climate change and development that can deliver long-term socio-economic transformation and inclusive development on the African continent.

Unlocking opportunities at the nexus of climate change and development
OUR THEORETICAL FRAMING

Climate change interventions have immense potential to unlock new development pathways on the African continent. To realise this potential, climate change needs to be brought to the forefront of development thinking and planning in Africa. Carving out new pathways – at the nexus of climate change and development – also creates a unique opportunity for African countries to redefine what we mean by development, what we prioritise in our developmental agendas, and how we measure progress towards it.

WHY THIS FRAMING MATTERS

Africa is a vast and diverse continent with over 1.2 billion people spread across 55 countries. Its climate is equally diverse, ranging from arid conditions in the north and south-western parts to tropical conditions around the equator and temperate conditions in some of the continent’s mountainous parts. Despite this diversity, African countries face some common climate challenges: temperatures and sea levels across the continent are rising, rainfall patterns are more variable, and extreme weather events more frequent. While these changes are not unique to Africa, the continent’s geographic positioning and limited adaptive capacity make it particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.
Building resilience against climate change impacts is imperative if Africa is to meet its developmental goals and fulfil the needs of its people. This is recognised by the African Union in its *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, which identifies building “[e]nvironmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities” as one of seven building blocks necessary for realising a “[p]rosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development”. African countries therefore need to develop strategies that can simultaneously achieve their development goals and build resilience against climate change impacts.

For African countries and indeed the rest of the developing world, following the traditional route to development, as per the early and late industrialisers, is no longer an option. Not only do they have to navigate more restrictive international barriers to production and trade but they also have to deal with the climate change reality. The conditions that exist for developing countries today are very different from those that existed for the early and late industrialisers.

African countries therefore need to carve out new routes to development that are alive to both their unique conditions and new global realities. A critical starting point in this regard is shifting our thinking about the relationship between climate change and development. The traditional framing tends to view climate change as tangential to development. Addressing climate change is often seen as imposing difficult tradeoffs between reducing emissions and pursuing economic growth. Shifting the paradigm and viewing climate change as an intrinsic part of the development agenda, enables us to move beyond the current focus on a narrow range of climate change risks and vulnerabilities in Africa and begin to explore the opportunities that climate change interventions have to transform sectors.

The most obvious example of this is the potential that Africa has to leapfrog fossil fuel technologies and to drive energy access and security through renewable energy sources. Africa’s current energy deficit means that, unlike other regions in the world, most African countries are not locked into increasingly risky investments in fossil fuel technologies and infrastructure. In essence, they have a blank slate. They can address the energy needs of their people using the newest, most cost-effective and cleanest technologies.
In carving out new routes to development, African countries have an opportunity to leverage four megatrends that are set to shape their future development – climate change, population growth, urbanisation, and the rapid digitisation and technological innovation currently underway (the Fourth Industrial Revolution). If strategically managed, these megatrends have immense potential to facilitate new opportunities for development. For example, investing in climate adaptation and resilience can unlock new industries, create new sources of revenue, generate new employment opportunities, support new skills, foster research and development, unlock economic diversification, and in the urban context help to mitigate urban sprawl and improve people’s standard of living. Similarly, while population growth will put pressure on Africa’s resources and services it will also expand its workforce and increase consumption, which will in turn stimulate production and contribute to fiscal revenues and GDP growth. The rapid technological innovation currently underway can facilitate many new opportunities. Mobile phones and the internet have already given millions of African people access to information and global networks – fostering innovation in and lowering the costs of production, improving services, providing real-time climate and other data, improving response times to shocks and connecting networks of actors mobilising for change.

Working at the nexus of climate change and development provides African countries with an opportunity to redefine what we mean by development and what we prioritise and measure. The dominant framing of development tends to focus on economic development – measured by GDP and income growth – as the means to achieving broader social development. More holistic definitions recognise the importance of realising second-generation or socio-economic and cultural rights (the right to housing, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to health and education, etc.) for ensuring people’s well-being. Revisiting what we mean by development and prioritising human development and well-being in our development agendas will be necessary if we are to achieve the long-term sustainable economic development envisaged by the African Union in Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

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1 Africa has the fastest-growing population in the world. By 2035, Africa’s population is expected to have grown by approximately 600 million people, from around 1.2 billion people in 2017 to more than 1.8 billion people (Bello-Scünemann, 2017).
2 Dalberg Advisors and ClimateWorks Foundation (2020) estimate that African cities are growing at an average rate of 4 per cent per year – more than two times the global average.
OUR OBJECTIVES

We facilitate and support climate change interventions that have the greatest potential to unlock new opportunities to deliver long-term socio-economic transformation and inclusive development on the African continent. We do this by:

1. Contributing to Africa’s body of knowledge and expertise on the climate change and development nexus through strategic research and the convening of networks.

2. Strengthening capacity on the continent, across sectors and disciplines, to engage with the climate change and development nexus at the international, regional, national and grassroots level.

3. Supporting greater integration of climate change issues into regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national economic plans and development strategies.

4. Supporting the agency of African decision makers to negotiate climate change and development priorities on Africa’s behalf.

5. Enabling Africa’s transformative potential by pooling philanthropic investments in catalytic initiatives and leveraging the ability of philanthropies to take longer-term investment decisions.
OUR SECTORAL FOCUS AREAS, BRIDGING INTERVENTIONS AND CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

We work in sectors that are key to unlocking long-term inclusive growth and development in Africa and that help to grow adaptive capacity, build climate resilience and mitigate emission. We also work on interventions that traverse these sectors such as finance, digitisation, infrastructure, industrialisation, geopolitics and climate diplomacy. These, we believe, are key to delivering scale and impact. Finally, we recognise that inequality in all of its forms undermines people’s personal and collective ability to guard against climate change impacts, and that building climate resilience in Africa requires us to be alive to the intersectionality of people’s lived experiences. As such, we have identified a number of cross-cutting issues that inform all our work.
Access to energy and to reliable and affordable electricity supply is a precondition for Africa’s development.

Renewing urban landscapes in sustainable ways is key to creating thriving and habitable cities.

An ecologically sustainable trajectory for Africa is fundamental to agricultural productivity, poverty eradication and human well-being.

Each sector and funding area has its own grantmaking priorities and objectives. These are regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure that our interventions are responsive to short-, medium- and long-term priorities.
LEVERAGING THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

Achieving energy security on the continent is not only critical for supporting economic growth, eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, but is also essential for realising other fundamental human rights such as access to clean water and sanitation, access to food, access to health care and quality education. Currently, it is estimated that around 600 million Africans lack access to electricity and some 900 million people on the continent do not have access to clean cooking sources (IEA, 2019). By 2030, Africa’s projected population growth will see around 530 million people living without access to electricity and 1 billion people living without access to clean cooking services, despite progress having been made in energy provision (IEA, 2019).

Paradoxically, the African continent is home to vast energy resources, both renewable resources like wind and solar as well as non-renewable resources like coal, oil and gas. The question for African countries is how to exploit these resources in a way that can address both the short-term and longer-term needs of their people, and indeed which of these resources to exploit. In the short term, countries need to decide which resources and accompanying technologies enable them to deploy cheap energy to as many people as possible as quickly as possible. In the longer term, they need to decide which of these resources and accompanying technologies allow them, the regions to which they belong and the continent more broadly to leverage industrialisation benefits, build climate resilience and position themselves geopolitically.

The current energy deficit in many African countries puts them in an opportune position to exploit the global energy transformation currently under way. Technological innovation and drastic cost reductions in renewable energy technologies present an opportunity for countries to leapfrog fossil fuel technologies and avoid large and risky investments in conventional energy sources and systems. The suitability of renewable energy technologies for small-scale and distributed applications allows African countries to meet their energy needs without having to make large investments in transmission and distribution infrastructure. There is also a democratic dividend: decentralised solutions empower ordinary people and give African states the opportunity to address multiple priorities.

It also puts African countries in an opportune position to develop industrial strategies (at the national, sub-regional and regional levels) to extract value across the supply chain – from the processing of mineral resources, to the manufacturing of parts, to the assembly of renewable energy technologies. For those African countries dependent on coal, gas and oil exports, domestic and regional renewable energy strategies present one avenue through which to begin to diversify their economies. This is not only important from an economic perspective but also has geopolitical implications. As IRENA (2019: 12) explains, “[j]ust as fossil fuels have shaped the geopolitical map over the last two centuries, the energy transformation will alter the global distribution of power, relations between states, the risk of conflict, and the social, economic and environmental drivers of geopolitical instability”.

Renewable energy technologies therefore enable African countries to expand universal access to modern and clean sources of energy and unlock new economic and geopolitical opportunities. Critically, they also enhance Africa’s resilience and do not undermine adaptive capacity through the destruction of water resources, land degradation and air pollution, for example.
OUR APPROACH

We believe that change cannot be brought about by one party acting alone. We therefore actively pursue and foster strong partnerships and platforms for collaboration. We also believe in learning by doing. As such, we work to ensure strong knowledge feedback loops in all areas of our work to enable us, our grantees and partners to build on successes and learn from mistakes.

Working together to bring about change
OUR TOOLBOX

01 EVIDENCE
We draw on and generate the most current, scientifically robust, and multi-disciplinary data and evidence to inform our work.

02 THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP
We work with leading experts from the continent and our Advisory Council to develop our thought-leadership and identify strategic interventions.

03 COLLABORATION
We foster partnerships with civil society, academia, government, business, labour and funding organisations both within Africa and across the globe.

04 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
We support capacity development on the continent across sectors and at the regional, national, sub-national and grassroots-level.

05 GRANT-MAKING
We support grants that have the greatest potential to deliver long-term socio-economic transformation and inclusive development.
UNPACKING OUR THINKING

LEVERAGING THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Agriculture remains the most important sector in Africa, not only because of its contribution to food security but also as the biggest source of employment (particularly for women) and as an important generator of export revenues. It is also the most vulnerable sector to climate change impacts. In 2019, it was estimated that, after conflict, extreme weather events were the second biggest driver of acute food insecurity, pushing around 27 million people into conditions of food crises or worse (FSIN, 2020). Improving the sustainability of Africa’s agricultural production is therefore critical. Regenerative agriculture practices provide African countries with one opportunity to replenish and rehabilitate ecosystems while simultaneously producing crops and raising livestock. They enable farmers to promote soil health by returning organic carbon, lost through conventional farming practices, to the soil. This also reduces water consumption and losses, minimises the need for fertilisers and contributes to carbon sequestration. Regenerative approaches therefore enable greater resilience and provide greater security for farmers and workers. If rolled out as part of a broader industrial strategy, regenerative agriculture can create new value chains, support greater regional economic integration and unlock new markets.
HOW WE DELIVER IMPACT

We work at two levels to deliver impact:

**FIRST**, we support the capacity of local agents.

**SECOND**, we endeavour to understand how systems work so as to identify entry points for strategic intervention.

To this end we work towards:

**1.** Building a coalition of actors that represent a diversity of voices, experiences and interests.

**2.** Leveraging our convening power and networks to create platforms for knowledge sharing, debate and thought-leadership and to foster greater co-operation between climate change and development practitioners.

**3.** Funding clusters of projects that are co-created and delivered by communities, practitioners and partners and that have the potential to deliver impact well beyond the grant cycle.

**4.** Co-developing innovative financing mechanisms and tailoring technical assistance and other forms of non-grant support to catalyse new initiatives and mobilise additional resources to deliver impact through scale.

**5.** Supporting leadership and institutional development needs on the continent and connecting African institutions and actors with institutions and actors in other parts of the world.
OUR GEOGRAPHIC FOOTPRINT

Given Africa’s size and diversity, our geographical focus is determined on an evolving basis by evidence-based assessments of the opportunities and challenges that exist at the continental, regional and country level. To ensure that we can achieve efficiency, coherence and strong representation, our operational presence is primarily determined by proximity to grantees and partners, important regional institutions and funders.
African cities are estimated to be growing at an average annual rate of 4 per cent – more than two times the global average (Dalberg and ClimateWorks Foundation, 2020). By 2050, Dalberg and ClimateWorks Foundation, (2020) predict the housing demand in cities will have grown by as much as 900 million residents. Lack of capacity, lack of access to finance and competing priorities are leading to urban sprawl in many of Africa’s cities, impacting not only the sustainability of these cities but, most importantly, the lives of their people. Population growth, increased urbanisation and climate change – without the requisite urban planning and infrastructure investment – will exacerbate these conditions. However, when climate change and development are viewed holistically, what becomes apparent is that African countries have the opportunity today to tap into climate-focused support to address some of these challenges. Climate finance can, for example, be used to spearhead green infrastructure deployment on scale. This would help to address immediate infrastructure constraints, improve the lives of people, future-proof African cities and economies from climate change impacts, and, if pursued strategically as part of a broader industrial strategy, develop new industries.
MEET OUR ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dr Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg

Wanjiru is the Director of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD). Wanjiru is also the Founder and past Executive Director of Akili Dada, an award-winning leadership incubator with a mission to contribute to nurturing transformative leadership in Africa’s girls and young women.

Dr Kamau-Rutenberg has received widespread recognition for her work investing in women, including being honoured as a White House Champion of Change, named one of the 100 Most Influential Africans by New African magazine, recognised as a Ford Foundation Champion of Democracy, awarded the United Nations Intercultural Innovation Award, and named one of Kenya’s Top 40 Women Under Age 40, among others.

Born in Kenya, Wanjiru holds a PhD and a Master’s degree in Political Science from the University of Minnesota, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics from Whitman College in Washington, USA. Dr Kamau-Rutenberg also served as an Assistant Professor of Politics at the University of San Francisco and a lecturer in International Relations at the Jesuit Hekima College, a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Her academic research and teaching interests centre on African politics, gender, international relations, ethnicity and democratisation, and the role of technology in social activism.
Carlos Lopes is a Professor at the Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town, and Visiting Professor at Sciences Po, Paris, and a Chatham House Associate Fellow. During 2017, he was a Visiting Fellow of the Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford. He sits on the boards of about a dozen institutions. Prof. Lopes has occupied several leadership positions across the United Nations system, including Policy Director for Secretary-General Kofi Annan; head of the UNDP’s policy bureau; head of UNITAR and the UN System Staff College; UN Resident Coordinator in Zimbabwe and Brazil; and the 8th Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (2012–2016).

Carlos is a member of the African Union Reform team and the AU High Representative for Partnerships with Europe. He has served in the Global Commission for Economy and Climate (serviced by WRI), the Global Commission for the Future of Work (serviced by ILO) and the Global Commission on the Geostrategy of Energy Transformation (serviced by IRENA). Prof. Lopes is an award-winning, widely published author, with over 20 edited or authored books and feature articles in main media vehicles such as Project Syndicate, CNN, Le Monde, Financial Times, China Daily, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, El Pais, Mail & Guardian, New African or Jeune Afrique. He has been selected 20 times for the “most influential Africans” lists of New African, Jeune Afrique, Africa Report, Financial Afrik and others.

Clarisse Iribagiza

Clarisse is the Chief Executive Officer of HeHe, a leading technology company she founded 10 years ago. HeHe’s vision is to enable Africans to live a life of abundance by optimising supply chains to match demand and supply. HeHe is now the largest e-commerce business in Rwanda, digitising over 200 businesses and serving 3 million consumers across Africa.

Since 2016, Clarisse has also served as a member of the African Development Bank’s Presidential Youth Advisory Group that provides an important platform for the Bank to hear directly from young changemakers on ways to harness the skills, talents and ideas of Africa’s youth. She advises on issues relating to the Future of Work, in line with the Bank’s vision to build inclusive and transformative African economies where young people across different countries, socio-economic strata, rural–urban divides, gender, and age groups have access to productive, sustainable opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

In 2019, Clarisse was appointed to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as an eTrade for Women Advocate, an initiative aimed at harnessing the positive impact of digital technology, combined with the transformative power of female entrepreneurship to help accelerate wealth creation and poverty reduction in developing countries.
Adnan Amin is a Senior Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center where he works on the Geopolitics of Energy Project. Following a distinguished career at the United Nations which included leading UN reform for system-wide coherence and as head of the UN System Chief Executives Board Secretariat in New York, he was elected as the first Director General of the International Renewable Energy Agency. IRENA is the first universal treaty-based multilateral organisation, headquartered in the Middle East in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and participates regularly in the work of institutions such as the G7, G20 and the United Nations.

As Director General of IRENA, Adnan led the building of a new institution to support the international community in the transition to a sustainable energy future, turning the agency into a leading player in the global energy transition based on its cutting-edge analytical, technical and advisory services to member countries. He will bring the insights gained over the last eight years at the forefront of international efforts to advance renewable energy and the analysis of the geopolitical implications of the global energy transition to promote the work of the centre in this field.
REFERENCES


