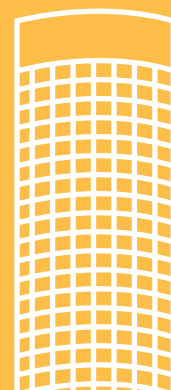
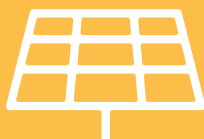


# THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLIMATE CHANGE SUPPORT PROGRAMME IN SOUTH AFRICA

REAL PRACTICE IN COLLABORATIVE CLIMATE ACTION



V-LED

STIMULATING  
URBAN CLIMATE ACTION



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[www.sustainable.org.za](http://www.sustainable.org.za)

**AUTHORS:**

Yachika Reddy, Simisha  
Pather-Elias, Lisa Keusen,  
Paola Adriázola, Peta Wolpe,  
Mikateko Sithole, Faith Nkohl,  
Mapula Tshangela, Canecia  
Thobela.

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## ACRONYMS

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>BMU</b>    | Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety |
| <b>CoGTA</b>  | Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs                 |
| <b>DEFF</b>   | Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries                            |
| <b>GHG</b>    | Greenhouse Gas   |
| <b>GIZ</b>    | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH                 |
| <b>IDP</b>    | Integrated Development Plan  |
| <b>LGCCSP</b> | Local Government Climate Change Support Programme                            |
| <b>SALGA</b>  | South African Local Government Association                                   |
| <b>SEA</b>    | Sustainable Energy Africa  |
| <b>V-LED</b>  | Vertical Integration and Learning for Low-Emission Development               |



# SUMMARY

South Africa's cities and towns are crucial to changing the country's emissions profile and building a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy. The national government has pioneered a support programme to enable them to become key actors in this transformation: the **Local Government Climate Change Support Programme (LGCCSP)** is a large-scale capacity-building programme that helps provinces and municipalities across the country better understand and respond to climate change. Its key objectives are to (1) mainstream climate change into subnational development planning and (2) support municipalities in project development and financing.

Led by the South African Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) and implemented by a multi-stakeholder coalition, the LGCCSP represents the first hands-on demonstration of multi-level coordination and collaboration on climate change and has co-produced knowledge that continues to shape South Africa's climate policy framework. This case study seeks to capture the practical experiences of the support programme and uncover some key lessons for future initiatives that aim to strengthen local climate action and multi-level climate policy reform, both in South Africa and globally.



## RELEVANCE

The Local Government Climate Change Support Programme will interest decision-makers and practitioners anywhere who work to support subnational authorities in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as actors tasked with designing and putting into practice capacity development programmes with local government staff.



## PROBLEM

When South Africa's national climate policy recognised a key role for local governments in climate change, local officials required support to better understand their new mandate and to integrate mitigation and adaptation concerns into local government planning and implementation. At the same time, national government representatives needed to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities of local climate actions.



## VISION

The LGCCSP vision is to catalyse climate action at the local level while building intergovernmental relationships. Its key objectives are to mainstream climate change into subnational development planning and to support municipalities in developing and financing climate projects. Working across all three spheres of government, the support programme ultimately aims to develop and implement strategies and plans that are vertically aligned to enable municipalities to respond to climate change at scale.



## PRACTICE

The support programme's core elements:

- A country-wide stocktake of subnational climate planning and action.
- Peer exchange and vertical dialogue between levels of government.
- Municipal capacity-building and technical support.

Two main tools support this work:

- The Let's Respond Toolkit: a guide to integrate climate change risks and opportunities into municipal planning.
- The Municipal Climate Finance Guide: supports municipalities in designing and financing climate-responsive projects.



### KEY ACTORS

- South Africa's Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF)<sup>1</sup>. Teams from the Chief Directorates of Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation were instrumental in establishing and implementing the support programme.
- The South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the main municipality network in the country, assists its members and represents local interests countrywide. In partnership with the DEFF and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), SALGA developed the first set of guiding tools (the Let's Respond Toolkit and Guide) for mainstreaming climate response into municipal planning. The association is also a key player in the national rollout of the support programme.
- Provincial and district governments. Their political will and leadership are essential for supporting climate actions of and transferring knowledge to lesser resourced local municipalities.
- The German Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMU) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH provided long-term funding and technical support to develop and implement the Let's Respond Toolkit and the Local Government Climate Change Support Programme.



### VALUE & OUTCOME

The LGCCSP has made progress in tackling climate change at many different levels. Ten years of dedicated engagement have created awareness of climate change risks and opportunities across all South African municipalities, driven climate strategy development and planning and firmly anchored the country's climate response policy at all levels of governance. All 44 district municipalities have developed climate change response plans and several provinces and some municipalities have institutionalised climate change responsibilities.

The programme also stands for the first country-wide initiative that mobilised knowledge and resources for multi-level learning and planning. Thus, it represents an important stepping stone towards the development of a coherent, vertically-integrated climate governance framework in South Africa.



### CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD

A decade into capturing practical learnings, the LGCCSP has found a set of strategic priorities that have shaped the programme's way forward:

- A strong cooperation with provinces and a focus of support activities on the district level to strengthen their role as enablers for local municipalities.
- Driving the integration of climate priorities into municipal integrated development and/or sector plans.
- Linking the development of plans and strategies to project design and finance.
- Garnering support of municipal departments beyond the environmental department.
- Leveraging buy-in of local political leadership.
- Finding a strong link with citizens and civil society.
- Integrating local climate change mitigation and adaptation.



### REPLICATION

In South Africa, the support programme was rolled out nationwide and continues to provide capacity-building support and technical assistance to municipalities. Some key recommendations to consider for setting up similar local government support programmes include: provide time and resources for multi-level co-creation and learning; provide practical tools and broker information to help bridge local capacity gaps; give provincial governments a key role in supporting local climate action; incentivise local climate mainstreaming and action through appropriate national enabling policies; and secure personal commitment, partnerships building and institutional leadership support.



### KEY RESOURCES

The LGCCSP website provides knowledge resources and planning guidelines for municipalities, among them the Let's Respond Toolkit and the Municipal Climate Finance Guide: [www.letsrespondtoolkit.org](http://www.letsrespondtoolkit.org)

<sup>1</sup> Known as Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) until 2018.

## ABOUT THE V-LED REAL PRACTICE SERIES ON COLLABORATIVE CLIMATE ACTION

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We believe that local governments are crucial to addressing climate change. As frontline responders to the effects of global warming, they create sustainable development pathways and opportunities for resilient communities. The climate actions of cities and regions are vital to pioneering transformative decarbonisation processes and achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement, but we must join forces across governing levels to ratchet up efforts and bring successful initiatives to scale.

The V-LED Real Practice series responds to the growing demand for real-life examples and practical knowledge about multi-level climate governance. The series answers the question: How have local and national governments addressed challenges in their collaborative climate actions? By delving into the details of practical initiatives, examining the challenges they face and highlighting key lessons for replication, the series extends knowledge to policy makers and implementers in order to improve collaborative action between local, national and global actors.

The Real Practices from Kenya, South Africa, the Philippines and Colombia are produced by the V-LED project.

Visit [www.localclimateaction.org](http://www.localclimateaction.org) to learn more.







# BACKGROUND

**Local governments are crucial to changing South Africa's emissions profile. In particular the country's larger cities and towns account for almost half of the country's energy demand and the eight metros alone for approximately 20% of national carbon emissions.<sup>2</sup> Yet, few municipalities are currently progressive in terms of climate action. Especially smaller municipalities face resource and capacity gaps and struggle to fulfil their environment and climate change related mandates next to all their other prioritised service delivery responsibilities. In this context, the national government has pioneered the Local Government Climate Change Support Programme (LGCCSP) to advance climate responsive planning at local level and enable municipal actors to create opportunities for low-emission, climate resilient communities on the ground.**

## SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE FRAMEWORK

**South Africa is the 14th largest greenhouse gas emitter in the world** with a per capita emission of 9.6 tons, above the G20 average of 8 tons/capita<sup>3</sup>. The majority of the country's emissions (83%) originate from its energy supply and use. South Africa has an energy-intensive economy, based on the extraction of vast coal resources. As such, South Africa has focused on responding to climate change through the formulation of policies and plans to reduce its emissions and transition to a low-carbon economy and society. The country's response is guided by the National Climate Change Response White Paper (2011) which sets out to reduce emissions by 34% by 2020 and 40% by 2025, relative to business as usual<sup>4</sup>. Since then, however, the country has adopted absolute values: South Africa's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) includes a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to between 398 and 614 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e over the period 2025–2030<sup>5</sup>. The Climate Action Tracker rates South Africa's NDC target as "highly insufficient".<sup>6</sup>

**At the heart of the transition to a low-emission society lies a complete transformation of the energy mix** to replace an ageing fleet of inefficient coal-fired power. In the context of this energy transformation, the country pursues a developmental agenda that focuses on the social and economic co-benefits of climate actions to tackle the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. These priorities are also reflected in the country's Cabinet-endorsed National Development Plan: Vision 2030; the NDC (2015); the draft National Climate Change Bill (2018) and the Low-Emission Development Strategy (2020).

In addition to national climate change mitigation efforts, the National Adaptation Strategy (2020) paves the way for an appropriate response for all vulnerable sectors and directs attention to the local level, where impacts are experienced first-hand.

**While national adaptation policy has lagged behind mitigation policy, the country fully recognises the threat of unavoidable climate impacts on the ground.** These are evident especially through prolonged droughts that have ravaged several parts of the country including the Eastern and the Western Cape Provinces. The City of Cape Town metropolitan municipality was the first city in the world to experience "day zero".

The water and agricultural sectors are highly vulnerable, putting many aspects of society and the national economy at risk. Other vulnerable sectors that significantly contribute to services, jobs and socio-economic stability of the country are human settlements; forestry and fisheries; biodiversity and ecosystems; health; mining; energy; transport and public infrastructure.<sup>7</sup> As climate change effects will disproportionately impact the poor (comprising 40% of the national population<sup>8</sup>), policies and measures need to pay special attention to buffering dire impacts on the most vulnerable.

<sup>2</sup> SEA (2020).

<sup>3</sup> Climate Transparency (2018), data from 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Government of South Africa (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Government of South Africa (2015).

<sup>6</sup> CAT (2018).

<sup>7</sup> Government of South Africa (2016).

<sup>8</sup> Statistics South Africa (2018).

## CLIMATE ACTION RESPONSIBILITIES ACROSS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

**South Africa's Constitution divides powers and functions among the national, provincial and local spheres of government and prescribes cooperative government and intergovernmental relations** (see figure 1).<sup>9</sup> The notion of cooperative governance, as well the delineation of Schedule 4 and 5 functions in the South African Constitution, are critically important to the role of municipalities in environmental management, as well as the role of national and provincial government in supporting the local sphere in these endeavours.

The National Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) is mandated to oversee municipal integration and facilitate effective co-operation among the national, provincial and local spheres of government. DEFF, on its part, is the national authority in charge of coordinating climate policy development and implementation.

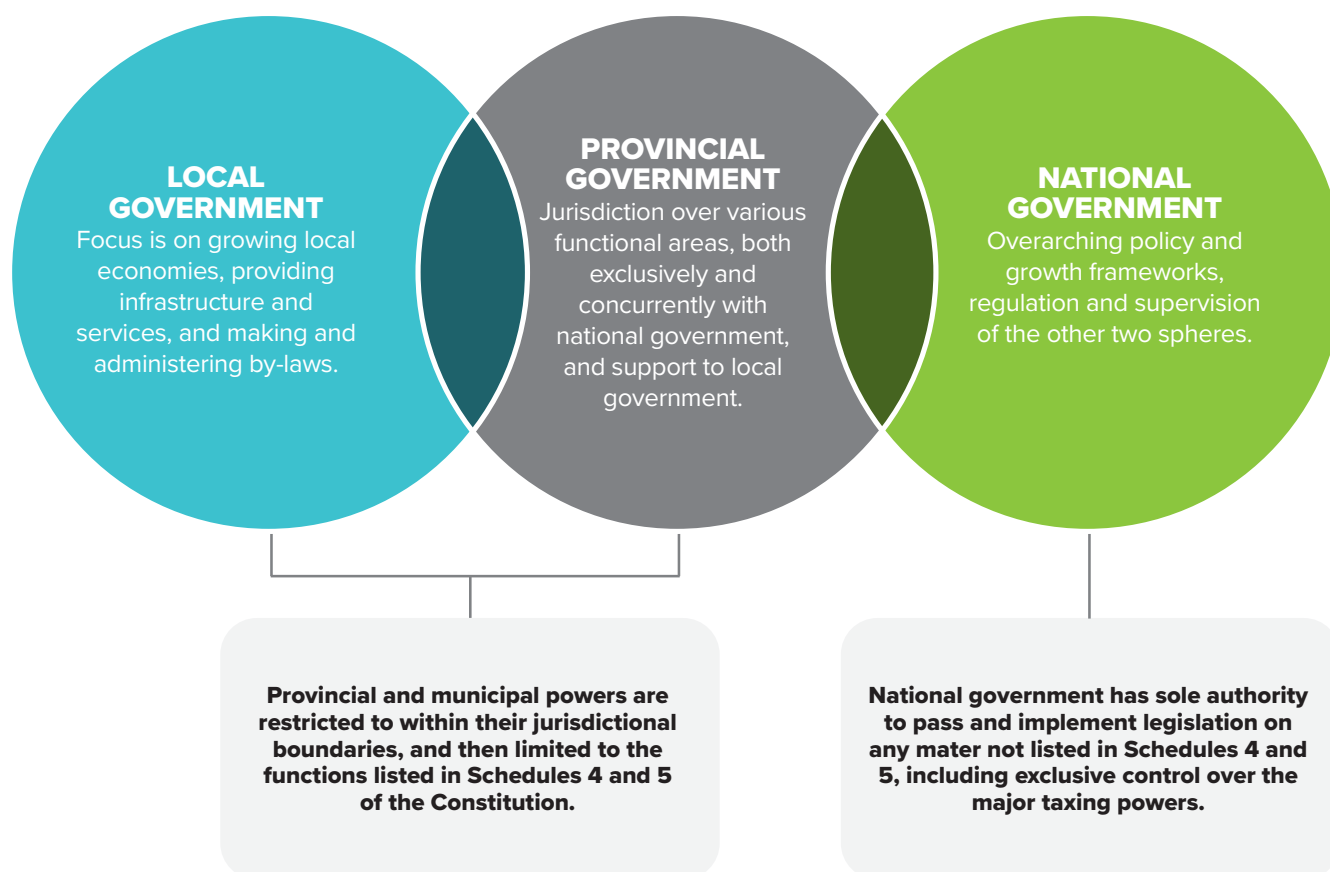


Figure 1: Distinct Powers of the Three Spheres Of Government. Source: SACN (2016).

<sup>9</sup> Government of South Africa (1996).

As part of the Constitution, local governments are required to deliver services sustainably, protect the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations and are responsible for disaster risk management. This is further specified in the National Environmental Management Act<sup>10</sup> and the White Paper on Environmental Management Policy<sup>11</sup>. In addition, the **National Climate Change Response Policy (Section 10.2.6) recognises the important role of subnational government** in climate change response, particularly in the areas of planning and urban development, the provision of municipal infrastructure and services (notably water, energy and waste management) and local disaster response.

The draft National Climate Change Bill of 2018 **places local and provincial government as key players in developing and implementing climate change plans**. These plans must address both mitigation and adaptation, they must align with national sectoral emissions targets and respond to contextual risks and vulnerabilities. Additionally, local and provincial government are required to work collaboratively to align their development plans. While the draft Act clarifies roles and responsibilities, it does not attempt to unlock challenges experienced by municipalities to implement climate change policies, notably financial and human capacity constraints.



<sup>10</sup> Government of South Africa (1998).

<sup>11</sup> Government of South Africa (1997).

## BOX 1: SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS.<sup>12</sup>

### Cooperative government

In the apartheid era, local government was not recognised as a sphere of government in its own right. The 1994 Constitution divides government into three spheres and proposes the principle of cooperative government, which assumes the integrity of each sphere, while recognising that they must work together in mutual trust and good faith to function as a cohesive whole. National and provincial government have the responsibility to support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities so they can exercise their powers and perform their functions.

### Developmental local government

Local government in South Africa is guided by the constitutional vision of developmental local government. Local governments are critical development agents that should work with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives.<sup>13</sup> Key responsibilities are to: maximise social development and economic growth; integrate and coordinate activities of private and public actors; promote democratic development, community empowerment and redistribution.<sup>14</sup>

### Intergovernmental relations

In South Africa there is a set of institutions at national, provincial and local levels that are interrelated and meant to work together, instead of compete with each other. While previously confined to national-provincial relationships, intergovernmental relations now describe various types of interactions within and between the three spheres of government.

### Types of municipalities

Local government in South Africa is made up of **278 municipalities**. These are established into 3 categories:

- **Category A: The 8 metropolitan municipalities** (metros) are South Africa's largest cities. They have unitary responsibility for all local government functions within their areas.
- **Category B: 226 local municipalities** are areas outside the metros, which usually include a town and surrounding rural areas. They share responsibility with the district municipality in which they fall.
- **Category C: 44 district municipalities** are areas that encompass between 3 and 6 adjacent local municipalities. They coordinate and provide support to local municipalities within a region.

<sup>12</sup> Republic of South Africa (2019); SERI *et al.* (2011).

<sup>13</sup> Department of Constitutional Development (1998).

<sup>14</sup> Department of Constitutional Development (1998).

## RESOURCE AND CAPACITY GAPS CONSTRAIN LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION

Many local governments recognise the critical need to be climate responsive and their mandates for developing own regulations, codes and plans for spatial development, transportation and economic planning; air and water quality controls; water, waste, electricity and gas reticulation represent important entry points for local climate action.<sup>15</sup> Yet, **only a few municipalities are currently progressive in terms of climate action.** Those are largely metros or secondary cities that are able to devote resources to developing climate change programmes. **Especially smaller municipalities are typically under-resourced and at best have one person responsible for environmental issues amongst all their other prioritised service delivery responsibilities.**

National government policy therefore stresses the **need to mainstream climate change into key municipal planning documents and service delivery.** In addition, to respond to capacity gaps, the DEFF has set up programmes to support subnational entities to carry out their growing environmental and climate-related mandates and integrate environmental management methodologies into traditional municipal planning instruments. One of these support programmes is specifically dedicated to advance local climate change planning and implementation capacity: The **Local Government Climate Change Support Programme.**



<sup>15</sup> Petrie *et al.* (2018)



# THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLIMATE CHANGE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The Local Government Climate Change Support Programme (LGCCSP) was brought to life to support local government in understanding its growing environmental mandate and tackle existing resource and capacity gaps in planning and implementing local climate actions. Led by national government and implemented by a multi-stakeholder coalition, the programme consisted of four strategic spheres of activities that include: (i) a country-wide stocktake of subnational climate change planning and implementation, (ii) local capacity-building workshops and advisory services (iii) provision of information, and (iv) vertical and horizontal dialogue and learning.

## ORIGINS OF THE PROGRAMME

When the Climate Change White Paper called on subnational governments as key actors in responding to climate change, it soon became apparent that municipalities needed support to live up to their climate action potential. To this end, the DEFF – in cooperation with CoGTA, SALGA and GIZ, with funding provided by the German Federal Ministry of Environment – formed a partnership to initiate a dedicated support process. First, the **Let's Respond to Climate Change Toolkit and Guide**<sup>16</sup> were developed to guide municipalities in mainstreaming climate change risks and opportunities into their Integrated Development Plans (IDP). The IDP is a municipal strategic master plan that guides local economic and social development. The toolkit was co-developed and piloted in five selected municipalities

across the country. Although the toolkit was welcomed beyond the pilot municipalities, it was only adopted by a handful. Typically, those were the larger metropolitan municipalities and those who had strong support from their provincial government and/ or district municipality.

Recognising the continued need for support, DEFF's Climate Change Adaptation directorate established the **Local Government Climate Change Support Programme** in 2014 to roll out the Let's Respond Toolkit and increase the pace of climate change integration into municipal service delivery plans. The programme has since been rolled out to all South African municipalities in a phased approach and consists of the following key elements.

### BOX 2: KEY GUIDELINES DEVELOPED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LGCCSP.

- The **Let's Respond Toolkit** provides guidelines and a set of practical tools for integrating climate change into municipal planning processes.
- The **Vulnerability Assessment Toolkit** provides a step-by-step process for conducting a climate change vulnerability assessment.
- The **Climate Change Response Plan Templates** can be used as a starting point to develop a municipal climate change response plan.
- The **Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit** outlines a set of steps for engaging stakeholders in the climate change planning process.
- The **Practical Systematic Guide Towards Unlocking Municipal Climate Finance** supports municipalities with designing and financing local climate action projects.

<sup>16</sup> Sustainable Energy Africa and Palmer Development Group (2012).

## THE FOUR ACTION AREAS OF THE LGCCSP

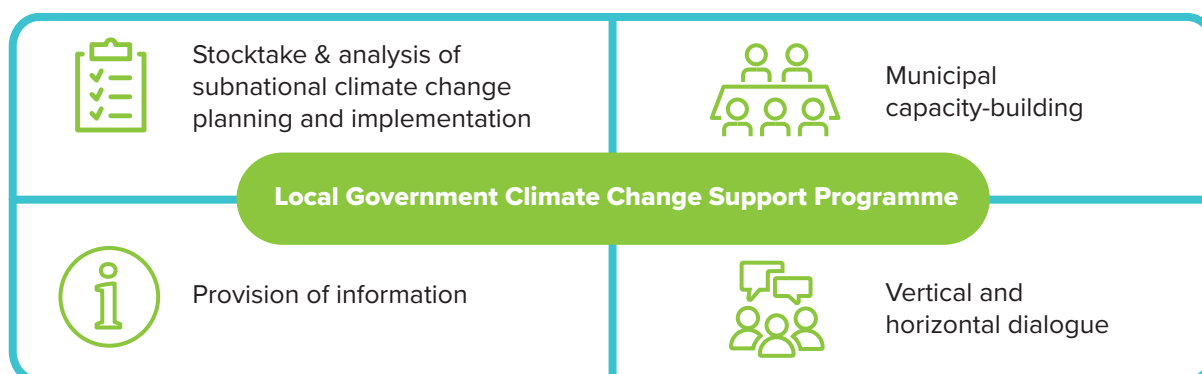


Figure 2: The four action areas of the LGCCSP

### Stocktake & analysis

The programme carried out a country-wide engagement processes to assess the status quo of climate change adaptation and mitigation planning and implementation in provinces and municipalities, and assessed what would be required to scale up implementation.

### Provision of information

The LGCCSP also invests in improving the accessibility of information on international, national and local climate data, policy frameworks and funding opportunities. The programmes' [online platform](#) provides an overview of provincial climate projections, socio-economic statistics and the status quo of provincial and district climate change policies, institutional structures and programmes (incl. key gaps). Another [information portal](#) disseminates information about international and national climate policies, projects and financing opportunities.<sup>17</sup>

### Municipal capacity-building

Capacity-building support to subnational governments lies at the heart of the LGCCSP. This includes various workshops and training formats as well as individual technical advisory services. Thematically, their focus ranges from vulnerability assessments, to supporting climate change mainstreaming, developing local plans, drafting project proposals and identifying financing opportunities. In addition, a number of corresponding tools and guidelines have been developed (see BOX 2).

### Vertical & horizontal dialogue

Complementary to local capacity-building activities, the LGCCSP provides opportunities for horizontal networking and peer learning at the municipal level. In addition, vertical dialogues serve to unlock barriers linked to communication challenges amongst the spheres of government and develop local planning instruments that are nationally and provincially coordinated and aligned.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the website was not maintained anymore.

## NATIONAL ROLLOUT OF THE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Starting with the development of a toolkit designed to guide mainstreaming climate change into municipal development planning and operations, the initiative has been scaled up and transformed into a large-scale support programme that has assisted municipalities across the country to better understand and respond to climate change. Up until today, the programme has evolved through various phases.

Following the pilot phase, the national rollout of the support programme took nearly a decade. After laying the foundation with the development of the Let's Respond

Toolkit, local capacity-building support and accompanying activities were rolled out in three phases (2014 through 2018) to cover municipalities in all 9 provinces across the country. While the programme kicked off with a focus on climate change adaptation (undertaking vulnerability assessments and developing appropriate adaptation strategies for municipalities), during the second phase DEFF's Mitigation Directorate combined their efforts with the LGCCSP and formed the Local Government Climate Change Mitigation Support Programme, which rolled out additional mitigation focused trainings to municipalities.

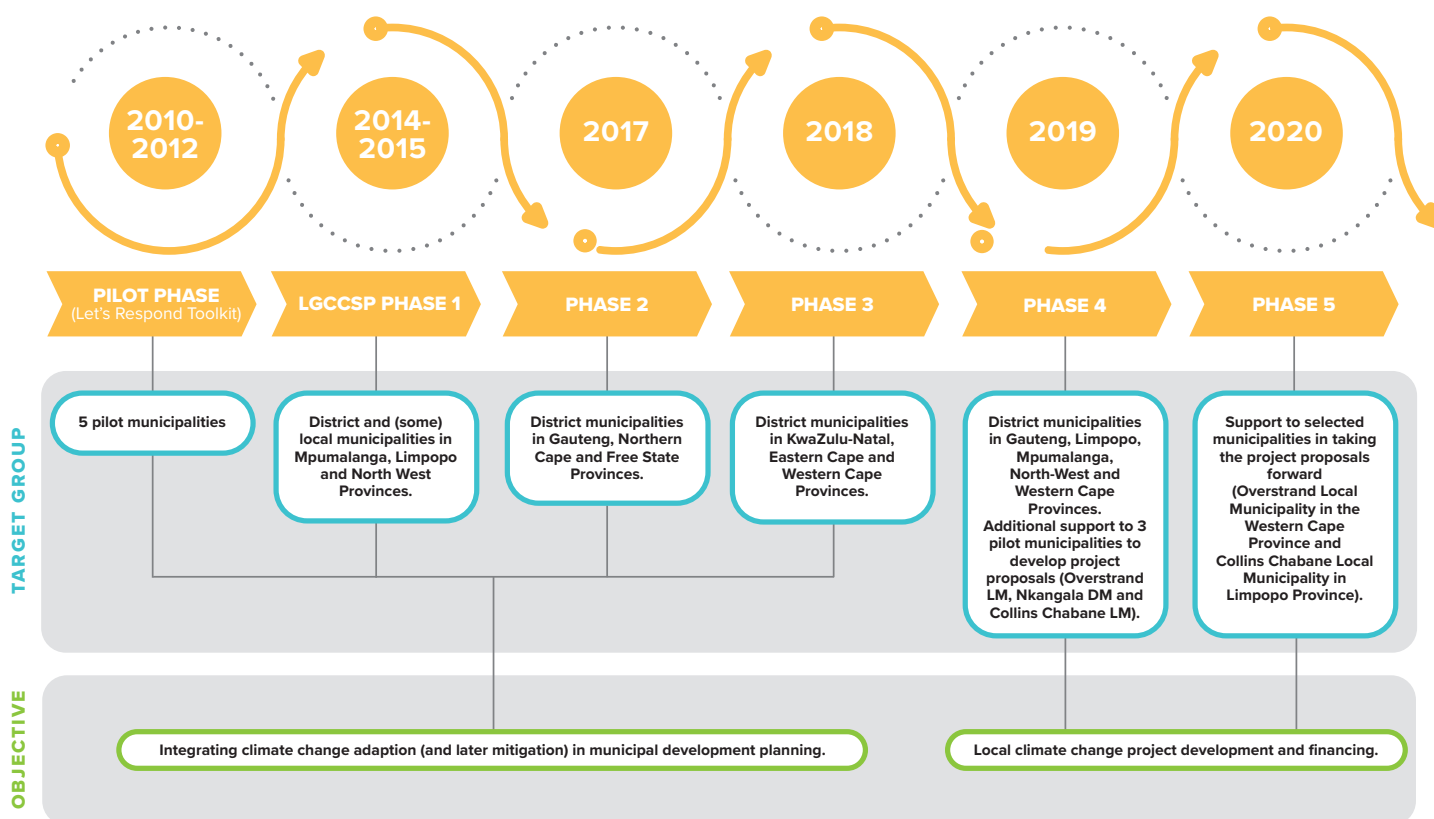


Figure 3: Roll out of the LGCCSP

After the country-wide rollout of both adaptation and mitigation training, the LGCCSP's decided to shift its focus towards **mobilising resources for the implementation of climate change solutions**. Consequently, the most recent phases developed a step-by-step guide on project proposal development and municipal climate finance. Trainings were conducted with local government officials in

five provinces to foster a thorough understanding of climate and green finance principles and integrate climate projects into municipal budgets and expenditure frameworks. The programme also provided additional support to three local municipalities on how to develop bankable project proposals in order to seek external and international climate funding.



## SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE LGCCSP APPROACH

The LGCCSP's design and national scale-out reflect an immense, iterative collaborative learning process between government levels. Key benefits that have contributed to the programme's positive outcomes include the flexible and collaborative approach that has allowed the LGCCSP to better understand and respond to changing local needs and ensured consistent communication between national and local governments.

The insights into the programme's success factors presented below mainly reflect key learnings from leading DEFF officials. Naturally, the programme also encountered a number of challenges – these are presented in the section “Challenges & Way Forward”.



### Focus on climate mainstreaming

From the start, the LGCCSP's key objective was to comprehensively incorporate climate change into local government processes and service delivery (e.g. spatial planning, infrastructure investment plans, procurement policies). There is strong evidence that involving the key service delivery departments will help institutionalise considerations and form the basis for subsequent climate-related investment.



### Flexibility and iterative learning

While the LGCCSP was rolled out in a phased approach, it started with no specific mechanism in place. Instead, the implementation process evolved through “co-learning by doing”. This flexible and dynamic approach, supported by senior DEFF management (an uncommon practice at the national level), allowed the programme to respond to changing municipal realities. At the end of each phase, a review was conducted to take stock of what was achieved and cast attention to where further work was required. In this way, each review was able to influence activities in the next iteration.



### Collaborative design

The LGCCSP's regular reviews were closely informed and guided by municipalities. This practice of working collaboratively with municipalities allowed the programme to better understand and respond to local dynamics and build trusting relationships between national and local government.



### All hands on deck: multi-level governance approach

Rather than approach district and local municipalities directly, DEFF worked with and through provincial entities to implement local capacity-building activities. DEFF's engagement with subnational government through structures such as the Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change (IGCCC) also played an important role. Such direct interactions and paying attention to the process helped build vertical relationships and strengthened provincial government's role in providing support to local government.



### Personal and political commitment

Working collaboratively across local, provincial and national levels required sustained dialogue and strong personal commitment from officials within all three spheres of government to ensure the sustainability and acceptance of the programme. The LGCCSP largely relied on individuals from DEFF who implemented training, offered constant support and generally made themselves available to local governments.



# VALUE AND OUTCOME

**The Local Government Climate Change Support Programme has made progress in tackling climate change at many different levels. It has created awareness of climate change risks and opportunities across all South African municipalities, furthered climate strategy development and planning throughout the South African territory, and firmly anchored the country's climate response policy at all levels of governance. It is also the first country-wide initiative to mobilise knowledge and resources for multi-level coordination on climate change. In this way, it represents an important stepping stone towards the development of a coherent, vertically-integrated climate governance framework in South Africa.**

The LGCCSP is the **country's first hands-on demonstration of multi-level coordination on climate change** and has produced knowledge that has shaped South Africa's climate policy framework for more than a decade. The programme produced a **country-wide stocktake of the status quo of subnational climate action** and identified key gaps and barriers at regional and local levels of government. Knowledge has been transferred from national to provincial and municipal government and across departments throughout the country. The programme has produced unprecedented, **trusted working relationships between levels of government.**

The LGCCSP approach of helping municipalities develop their own knowledge and understanding of climate change and its core practice of responsiveness and working collaboratively with municipalities has been key to building trusting relationships that form the basis for advancing low carbon thinking and practice in municipalities.

The programme's province-based training sessions and workshops have built important **stakeholder coalitions** and **co-learning networks** in which municipalities could present and discuss their climate work, share lessons and develop relations with peers. DEFF further paid attention to form **regional support networks** for municipalities, making sure to form partnerships with and closely engage stakeholders from the province in building capacity at the municipal level.

To date, the LGCCSP training has reached nearly all South African municipalities. In this way, one key outcome of the support programme is an enormous amount of **climate change awareness-raising across local governments nationwide.** Ten years of dedicated engagement have put climate change on local political agendas. Relative to the early stages of the programme, provinces and municipalities are notably more aware of climate change issues and appropriate response actions. The programme has made climate change more understandable for local authorities and showcased climate change adaptation and mitigation options across relevant municipal sectors.

The support programme has further been instrumental in bringing climate change into municipal planning and strategy. **As a result of the programme, all 44 district municipalities have produced risk and vulnerability assessments, developed climate change response plans** (with some already adopted by council), and there is evidence of municipalities incorporating climate change considerations into their strategic planning processes and documents (e.g., the Integrated Development Plan; Spatial Development Framework; Capital Expenditure Framework; Built Environment Performance Plans and/or local budgets). By focussing on mainstreaming climate action into key overarching municipal plans and service delivery functions of relevant sectors, the trainings targeted municipal officials from various departments and contributed to **strengthened cross-departmental coordination in municipalities.** However, it is not clear how many local municipalities have actually formulated climate response strategies and whether these have been integrated into IDPs.

**Institutional transformation at subnational government level is visible to varied extents.** Several provinces and some municipalities have established dedicated climate change units and/ or appointed officials to coordinate climate actions. **Scaled-up implementation of climate projects, however, remains work in progress.** After the country wide roll-out of LGCCSP trainings, it became evident that **a local implementation gap continued to exist.** Ongoing trainings and technical support with a focus on the design and implementation of local projects are expected to lead to hands-on emission reductions and resilience-building achievements.

Nonetheless, much work remains to be done to firmly entrench climate change in local, provincial and national government planning and practice. Building on the practical lessons from implementing the LGCCSP, the DEFF is now preparing a **multi-level climate change mitigation governance support framework.** The framework intends to streamline climate change governance support and guide functions, roles and responsibilities in the three spheres of government as envisaged in the National Climate Change Bill, in process to becoming an Act. The framework will be participatory action oriented and shaped by a multitude of actors from all spheres of government, organised civil society, labour unions, business and international organisations.

“We have used the learnings from the LGCCSP to improve waste management by dovetailing climate change issues within specific project objectives. E.g., when dealing with goods that the municipality purchases for these projects, the project approval committees now considers its carbon footprint.”

**SIMON MADI,**  
**Thulamela Local Municipality,**  
**Limpopo Province.**

“I feel much more confident to engage with other departments. I am able to highlight the climate change issues when policy and plans are being developed. The Programme also provided me with the much-needed skills to develop project proposals.”

**KHETHIWE MALAZA,**  
**Mbombela Local Municipality,**  
**Mpumalanga Province.**





# CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD

The LGCCSP identified and addressed a number of challenges. These are especially relevant for readers in other countries currently developing local government support programmes of their own.

## Strategic focus on district level

**Local municipalities in South Africa are severely under-resourced.** This is especially so for the smaller and rural municipalities. They often work with a small number of staff who are responsible for basic service delivery but rely heavily on the district municipalities for policy and planning support. While the support programme initially reached out to both local and district municipalities, in subsequent phases DEFF decided to **strategically focus on district municipalities** in line with the government's District Development Model<sup>18</sup>. First, districts are generally better resourced to take up and drive climate action forwards. Second, districts are mandated to provide support to local municipalities, so that they can transfer skills and guide local climate action.

## From planning to financing implementation

**Financing implementation remains a challenge.** Climate response is frequently perceived as an unfunded mandate and not prioritised by local decision-makers. The LGCCSP tried to address this by explicitly helping municipalities integrate climate change into their mandated functions and related planning and budgeting instruments. That stated, climate mainstreaming and managing change across municipal departments still requires time and resources. To close the local climate finance gap, the programme shifted in its strategic objective from mainstreaming climate change into local development planning to also focusing **on climate project structuring and financing**.

## All hands on deck in local government

**Reaching all relevant municipal departments with the training proved difficult.** LGCCSP implementers observed that it was generally challenging to get officials from departments other than environment departments to participate in training and the mainstreaming process. Due to resource constraints, typically only one municipal official attends the training workshops, which at times limits the integration of climate change as a cross-cutting issue. Climate action is indeed still mostly viewed as a task for environmental departments; however, these operate with small budgets and lack authority to interfere with the mandates of other relevant departments. For instance, resistance from planning and electricity departments was encountered. This is in part due to conflicts of interest regarding revenue-generating service delivery and the potential climate proofing of the corresponding sector.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, this **hinders the integration of climate change actions into IDPs and/or sector plans** with allocated budgets. Even though some municipalities have incorporated climate projects within their IDPs, **there are often no budgets allocated to them**. Going forward, it will be essential to work across sectoral silos. In phases 1 through 3, support largely focused on training "climate change champions" (typically from environmental or disaster management departments). However, phases 4 and 5, which focussed on project development and financing, saw that other key technical departments (e.g., electricity, infrastructure, human settlements and finance) started to actively engage. With such broader sector department participation, new and significant practical issues were raised that have brought more depth into the mainstreaming process.

<sup>18</sup> The District Development Model (DDM) was launched by national government in 2019 with the objective to improve cooperative governance. Under the model, all three government spheres are envisioned to coordinate and cooperate and integrate development plans and budgets to improve development outcomes through coherent service delivery.

<sup>19</sup> Mitigation actions such as energy efficiency and renewable energy projects decrease revenue streams for municipalities. South African municipalities acquire between 30-50% of their revenue from the sale of electricity, which is often used to cover operational costs and subsidise service delivery to poor residents. For a more detailed analysis of this crucial barrier to local climate action, see the V-LED publication [Multi-level climate governance in South Africa: Catalysing finance for local climate action](#).

### Leveraging political commitment

A similar challenge relates to getting local political decision-makers on board. Often, municipalities do not take concrete climate actions because they are not prioritised by political leaders (either provincial members of the executive council, municipal mayors or councillors). Throughout the training sessions, municipalities frequently expressed the **importance of political endorsement in order for the climate change agenda to be prioritised locally**. As a result, the LGCCSP included regular briefings of political principals on the subject of climate change and its implications in relation to municipal service delivery objectives.

### Taking citizen and civil society involvement seriously

Similarly, municipalities voice concerns over **a lack of strong support for climate action from citizens**, resulting in climate change not being a top priority. While local communities grapple with climate change impacts on the ground, they are less often aware of the types of available climate response actions. The LGCCSP aimed to address this by engaging civil society representatives in the training workshops, however, actual involvement varied from province to province. **Where NGOs and community organisations have already worked together with provincial and local governments, they have been involved**. The overall strength of organised civil society in each province played an important supportive role for the programme. However, much more needs to be done to actively bring civil society stakeholders into a bottom-up planning process. The programme plans to engage more with communities in the future. **Stronger citizen engagement is expected to have an effect on the types of policies and projects that are developed by government**.

### Integration of climate change adaptation and mitigation

Throughout the different phases of LGCCSP implementation, efforts were made to **address both climate change adaptation and mitigation**. That stated, DEFF's adaptation directorate is ahead of the mitigation directorate with respect to rolling out its support programme to municipalities. This in effect results in poor alignment when climate change projects are developed at the local level. More work is required to integrate both adaptation and mitigation actions, an approach that was improved in phase 4 through the climate finance training sessions that were intentional about the nexus approach. Such adaptation-mitigation co-benefit efforts are also underway in the update of at least four provincial strategies.





# REPLICATION

The South African Local Government Climate Change Support Programme is an ambitious capacity-building initiative led by national government to accelerate climate action at the subnational level. In South Africa, the support programme was rolled out nationwide and continues to provide training to municipalities. Although developed and implemented in South Africa, the approach and lessons from the LGCCSP can inspire other countries looking to strengthen climate change mainstreaming of subnational governments. Some key points to consider for setting up similar local government support programmes as well as recommendations relevant for South Africa's further scale-out of the programme are summarised below.

- **Provide time and resources for multi-level co-creation and co-learning.** Designing, piloting and refining the LGCCSP took years of work by a multi-level, multi-stakeholder consortium. A flexible and collaborative approach, strongly supported by senior DEFF leadership, allowed co-creation with local government. Building in reflection and learning into each phase of the training enabled the team to identify and respond to emerging local needs in each subsequent phase of the programme.

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- **Help bridge capacity gaps by providing practical tools and brokering information.** LGCCSP experiences show that ready-to-use tools and practical guidance material (such as the Let's Respond Toolkit and Guide) respond to local needs. In addition, local actors often lack access to relevant information about national and regional policy frameworks and funding opportunities that help them assess their climate change risks, mitigation potential and opportunities for action. Such practical knowledge tools and information need to be evidence-based and updated regularly.

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- **Foster a local work culture for collaborative climate action.** Local climate change planning often happens in policy silos. Rather than (only) capacitating key officers in environmental departments, support programmes require a strong focus on facilitating cross-departmental collaboration to enable integrated planning and climate change mainstreaming across sectors.

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- **Strengthen horizontal experience exchange.** Sharing knowledge and good practices can inspire replication and intergovernmental cooperation. Support programmes may initiate or build on existing inter-provincial and inter-municipal peer-learning networks – positive experience exists in South Africa for example with regional electrification fora. In addition, more advanced metropolitan municipalities can help incubate neighbouring municipalities to develop know-how and process related skills relevant for climate change management.

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- **Consider regional governments as key actors in enabling local climate action.** The LGCCSP's experiences have shown that provincial entities are well-positioned to support local climate actions. As a bridge between the national and local sphere, they can facilitate vertical and horizontal dialogue, provide support and guidance to local and district municipalities, or enable access to finance (e.g., by bundling projects for grant proposals). Local government support programmes should consider how engaging with regional governments contributes to sustainability and replicability.

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- **Accelerate climate actions of ambitious municipalities.** While the nationwide scale-out strategy of the programme has made crucial contributions to raising awareness about climate change mainstreaming in close to all South African municipalities, a local implementation gap remained. Going forward, targeted support programmes could shift focus towards accelerating actions of ambitious municipalities on a voluntary basis – reaching depth rather than scale.

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  - **Enable the institutionalisation of a support structure for local climate action.** The implementation of the LGCCSPs has strongly relied on dedicated personal efforts of a small team at the DEFF and support by its technical and funding partners. To provide local governments with more permanent access to relevant advisory services, the consortium should work towards institutionalising a dedicated support structure. This could take the form of a competence centre managed by SALGA. Ideally, this should be paired with providing access to conditional state grants, which subnational actors can access to implement local climate change projects.

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  - **Incentivise climate mainstreaming and action at the subnational level through appropriate national enabling policies.** LGCCSP's experiences highlight the importance of technical capacity-building and advisory services as a cornerstone of better local climate planning and action. That stated, they also show that capacity-building alone is not enough. Barriers such as lack of resources or incentives cannot be solved through training. Local government support programmes have to be embedded in wider national reform processes that create enabling conditions. Without supportive regulation, local climate action will depend on the commitment of individual champions and the availability of local resources. South Africa, for example, is enabling local low-emission development by moving away from a highly centralised energy system towards creating opportunities for locally produced energy.

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  - **Secure personal commitment, partnership-building and institutional leadership support.** The LGCCSP draws its sustainability from commitments by individuals across the spheres of government and authentic partnerships and goodwill built over the years. This anchors the programme and will grow further through institutional leadership support.
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