



LUSAKA EVIDENCE-TO-ACTION DECLARATION ON CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS



I. PREAMBLE

1. The Lusaka Declaration, one of the key outcomes of the [CLARExchange Forum 2025](#), calls for immediate action to move from evidence to impact. This Declaration focuses on evidence to action recommendations for climate resilience in informal settlements. From 6-9 May 2025, over 200 scientists, policymakers, practitioners, community leaders, and community residents from the CLimate Adaptation and REsilience (CLARE) community gathered in Lusaka for four days to exchange knowledge and insights on actionable evidence from [across projects supported by the CLARE Programme](#).
2. CLARE is a flagship research programme on climate adaptation and resilience, funded mostly (about 90%) by UK Aid through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and co-funded (about 10%) by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. CLARE is bridging critical gaps between science and action by championing Southern leadership to enable socially inclusive and sustainable action to build resilience to climate change and natural hazards.
3. Several CLARE projects are undertaking action research to reduce impacts of extreme weather events that disrupt water and sanitation systems, particularly in informal settlements. Approximately two billion people lack access to safe drinking water, with half experiencing severe scarcity at times, worsened by climate change and population growth. Vulnerable communities such as informal settlement residents face disproportionate risks that impact health, livelihoods, food security, economies, and jobs. With over 1.2 billion people already living in informal settlements and a projected 3 billion people expected to live in them by 2050, informal settlements face some of the most devastating impacts of climate shocks, especially in Africa and Asia. Without access to actionable multi-hazard early warning systems and services, adaptation resources, or viable options for adaptation, and without a voice in decision making, these communities are disproportionately impacted by climate shocks, which manifest clearly in water and sanitation crises. While the work of CLARE is broad, convening in Lusaka under the exceptional co-hosting of the University of Zambia highlighted our collective work on these issues and the potential to ensure the research we support has a positive impact in these critical areas related to inclusive climate adaptation and resilience.
4. Given this context, the guest of honour at the CLARExchange Forum 2025, Hakainde Hichilema, the President of the Republic of Zambia, who was represented by Zambia's Minister of Green Economy and Environment, called for a rapid transition from evidence to action and for increased Southern leadership and investment in climate action. This call provided the basis for this Lusaka Declaration. The Declaration amplifies the importance of climate research to inform equitable action for adaptation and resilience in the water and sanitation sector in informal settlements in Africa and the entire global South.
5. We, the participants in the CLARExchange Forum 2025, composed of researchers, policymakers, community leaders, practitioners, women, and youth from over 35 countries gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, acknowledge the urgent need to bridge the divide between scientific evidence and tangible action for water security in informal

settlements in the global South. Through this Lusaka Declaration, we affirm our shared commitment to resilience for those living and working in informal settlements who face harsh impacts, recognizing that communities such as Kanyama and Kalikiliki in Lusaka stand at the frontlines of intensifying floods, droughts, and systemic infrastructure failures that exacerbate the impact of climate change on water systems.

II. EVIDENCING THE CRISIS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

6. Our collective evidence and synthesis from various sessions during the CLARExchange Forum 2025 confirm that residents in informal settlements live in a constant state of 'living extremes'. The following realities ground our call for action on evidencing climate resilience in informal settlements in Africa and the entire global South:

- **Compounded Vulnerabilities:** Residents face multiple and intersecting hazards, including flooding, droughts, and extreme heat, exacerbated by limited urban planning and infrastructural systems including poor drainage, low quality housing, unstable livelihood systems, and waste mismanagement.
- **Socio-Economic Impacts:** Climate disruptions cause chronic effects on livelihoods, public health, and education, as well as power outages from drought-driven power cuts. All these disproportionately negatively impact low-income households, small but life-saving businesses, women and youth entrepreneurs in informal settlements.
- **The Limitation of Conventional Research:** We recognize that traditional research that is limited to libraries or uses highly extractive research practices often fails to address current or prevent future problems. There is a critical need for 'humble science' - people-centred research that values lived experience and is co-designed with communities for impact. The humble science framing needs to address structural challenges that perpetuate inequality and exclusion.

III. FOUNDATIONS FOR EVIDENCED CLIMATE ACTION

7. To reasonably transform research into impactful action, we urge placing high priority and commitment on the following foundational features of climate adaptation evidence and action:

- **Prioritizing Southern Leadership and Local Ownership:** We urge research institutions and funding agencies to prioritize Southern leadership on climate issues, ensuring that global South institutions serve as hubs for solutions and knowledge convening. Projects must be generated in collaboration with institutions and communities in Africa and the wider global South to ensure projects are rooted in local realities and benefit more from local expertise.
- **Valuing Lived Experience:** We acknowledge that evidence should reflect and be rooted in 'lived experience'. Participants at the forum emphasized that the problem is not a lack of community resilience, but an over-reliance on residents' coping capacities in place of structural change. The delegates recognize the remarkable resilience and adaptability demonstrated by residents of informal settlements. However, participants underscore the need for more inclusive planning processes, deeper community engagement, and appreciation of multiple knowledges.
- **Focusing on Delivering Lasting Change:** We aspire for systemic shifts in structures, behaviours, and values that go beyond incremental change. This requires addressing the root causes of vulnerability, including power dynamics, gender inequality, and

structural marginalization both during knowledge generation processes and in policy innovations. We urge actors, including funding agencies, to recognise the importance of ‘local agency’ for driving systemic societal change.

- **Considering Intersectionality and Inclusion:** We believe that climate action must recognise gender and social inclusiveness, understanding that communities are not homogenous and factors affecting climate vulnerability – and the interactions among those factors—must be considered and addressed. We must intentionally empower women, youth, and marginalized groups not merely as beneficiaries but as leaders and agents of change.

IV. CALL TO ACTION

8. **Mobilise and Support Community-Led and Locally Grounded Innovation:** We call for learning to be incorporated from successful community-driven adaptation models, such as the Urban Green Innovation Centres, which transform former garbage sites into hubs for sustainable urban solutions like hydroponics, organic fertilizer production, community mobilization, and use of Nature-based-Solutions (NbS) within localised contexts and settlement-wide scales.
9. **Strengthen Inclusive Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS):** We must invest in MHEWS that blend multiple knowledges including indigenous and local knowledges and lived experience with scientific forecasting for improved risk communication. This ensures that climate information is culturally relevant, trusted, and reaches the most vulnerable in a timely and actionable manner.
10. **Redefining Masculinity and Gender Roles:** We recognize that traditional gender norms are being challenged by climate pressures. We call for gender-transformative approaches that acknowledge shifting roles, promote shared responsibility, and create safe spaces for both men and women to build resilience for all.
11. **Bridging the Institutional and Financing Gap:** We urge governments and local authorities to integrate findings from inclusive and action-oriented research into national plans, such as National Development Plans and city-wide development plans to ensure sustainability beyond project funding cycles. We further call for specific national government and city authorities to make dedicated budget provisions for climate action targeting urban development, informal settlement upgrading, and development of climate secure WASH infrastructure and systems. This is critical for Africa where very few municipal authorities have dedicated climate change departments with annual budgets.
12. **Strategic Communication and Storytelling:** We call for use of creative methods, including poetry, documentaries, art, and animation, to communicate complex climate messages, speak to on-the-ground hard realities and ensure that the voices of the marginalized are heard on both local and global platforms.

V. STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS AND OUTREACH TOWARD GLOBAL PLATFORMS

13. The CLARE community pledges to use this Declaration to influence local and global-level dialogues, including at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 31 in November 2026. Further, the Lusaka Declaration responds to the request for a strong call on evidencing climate action, moving from knowing to intentionally acting. The Government of Zambia is free to use this Declaration to amplify messages and call for more action. Other CLARE Community members are

encouraged to publish this Declaration on their websites. We seek to use this Declaration to, among other things:

- Inform and encourage funding agencies and government bodies to prioritise investment in programmes that directly address the challenges highlighted within this Declaration. Such programmes should focus on closing capacity gaps and fostering stronger connections between research and practical action, ensuring that funding is strategically allocated to maximise impact and advance sustainable, inclusive solutions.
- Develop and track indicators that capture behavioural, policy, and systemic shifts arising from climate research.
- Foster transdisciplinary collaboration involving multiple strands of social and natural sciences, and community knowledge and lived experience to address complex climate challenges.
- Establish benchmarks to measure the impact of nature-based and biodiversity-centred solutions to water insecurity in informal settlements.
- Call for increased funding and collaboration between global North and South institutions working to address the issues identified including funding that is built on the foundations outlined in section III.

VI. CONCLUSION

14. The CLARExchange Forum 2025 provided a renewed sense of purpose; that the journey from research to resilience must be bold, inclusive, locally grounded and delivered in the spirit of mutually beneficial partnerships involving global South and global North institutions. By standing in solidarity with communities in informal settlements and valuing their agency, we can move from witnessing vulnerability to catalysing lasting positive change.

For and on behalf of: The CLARE community convened at CLARExchange 2025 in Lusaka, with leadership from our local co-hosts at University of Zambia

