

Defining Subnational Just Resilience:

Principles & criteria for
regional government action



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Regional governments stand ready to meet the challenge and Regions4 will continue to catalyse this leadership for a sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient future. I warmly invite all regions to join us to collectively build a future which leaves no one behind.

Natalia Uribe
Secretary General, Regions4

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White Paper on Just Resilience Action at the Subnational Level

1. Introduction

The concept of just resilience has emerged as a response to the interconnected challenges facing society in the context of environmental, economic and social crises. The combination of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation is exacerbating existing inequalities and increasing the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged communities (IPCC, 2019; IPBES, 2019; WEF, 2023). In this context, just resilience is defined as a holistic approach that not only seeks to strengthen the capacity to respond to these challenges, but also puts equity, social justice and the well-being of the most affected populations at the centre of the discussion (Lager, F. et al., 2023).

The concept of **subnational just resilience** is crucial to address the growing socio-environmental inequalities resulting from climate change and ecological degradation, positioning subnational governments as key actors in the transformation towards more equitable and sustainable development. In this context, **Regions4**, as a network of subnational governments committed to sustainability, plays a strategic role in integrating social justice within territorial resilience strategies. Subnational just resilience not only seeks to strengthen the response capacity of territories to environmental crises, but also emphasises the need to ensure an equitable distribution of resources, the inclusion of historically marginalised communities and the adoption of participatory governance models.

At the subnational level, state and regional governments play a crucial role in the implementation of just resilience strategies, as they have the capacity to develop policies adapted to local contexts, promoting inclusive and sustainable approaches (García et. al., 2021; Martínez & Rodríguez, 2022; López, 2020). Unlike national governments, which establish overarching policy frameworks, subnational governments have the advantage of being closer to communities, which allows them to design and implement strategies that are more aligned with territorial realities. However, for these strategies to be effective and have a lasting impact, it is essential that they are properly articulated with national and international efforts (Rolandi & Merello, 2017).

Multi-level governance plays a key role in this process, ensuring that subnational policies are aligned with key international agreements and agendas such as the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and the

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and national commitments through instruments such as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), among others. According to the RegionsAdapt report on Climate Justice (2023), coordination between levels of government enables effective policy integration, avoiding duplication and ensuring that investments in resilience are more efficient and equitable.

In this sense, considering just resilience principles in the planning and concrete actions implemented by regional governments under these global frameworks, can foster a more holistic approach and integrated solutions across all three agendas, allowing governments to expand opportunities to access different funding sources and financial mechanisms from across the climate, biodiversity and sustainable development arenas. By considering social and ecological co-benefits, such as the reduction of inequalities, the restoration of ecosystems and the improvement of the livelihoods of vulnerable communities, an approach rooted in Just Resilience aligns closely with criteria of equity, sustainability and social impact that govern many of the main international funding mechanisms.

Just resilience, as a transformative approach, simultaneously responds to multiple objectives, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable communities. In this sense, subnational governments can play a key role in implementing just resilience strategies that, in addition to addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis, respect the 'leave no one behind' commitment of the Sustainable Development Goals, promoting sustainable development and social equity at national and global levels.

1.1 Purpose of the White Paper

The objective of this white paper is to provide a conceptual and operational framework for just resilience at the subnational level (SJR). It seeks to define clear criteria for assessing and developing policies and actions that integrate social justice, equity and sustainability in the planning and implementation of resilience strategies. Just resilience should not only focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity action and sustainable development, but also on the transformation of socio-economic and environmental systems, ensuring that the solutions implemented do not perpetuate structural inequalities or exclude the most vulnerable communities.

In particular, this document emphasizes the interdependence between climate change and biodiversity, which allow us to make substantive progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs under coordinated and synergistic approaches. Ecosystem deterioration and biodiversity decline reduce the natural capacity of territories to cope

with extreme climate events and mitigate their impacts (IPCC, 2019; IPBES, 2019), while the impacts of climate change often accelerate the weakening of the ecosystems on which all forms of life on our planet depend. Just resilience must address this dual challenge by formulating public policies and implementing strategic actions that not only contribute to climate change adaptation, but also restore ecosystems and ensure the well-being of communities most vulnerable to these interrelated crises. Integrating these approaches into sub-national policies ensures that the response to the climate and ecological crises is equitable and sustainable in the long term, and that it contributes to a transformation towards a more just, balanced and sustainable society.

This document provides guidance for decision-makers in subnational, state, regional and devolved governments to design resilience strategies that are inclusive, effective and aligned with international frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It also presents practical recommendations for strengthening multi-level governance and improving coordination between different levels of government and key decision-makers. Finally, it incorporates practical criteria, to assist in assuring the integration of just resilience considerations transversally across climate, biodiversity and sustainable development planning and action.

1.2 Importance of Just Resilience for Subnational Governments

Climate change and biodiversity loss affect the world's regions and communities differently. Subnational governments can intervene directly in the territory and coordinate actions with communities, productive sectors and civil society actors (Carrillo, 2019; Regions4, 2024; Orellana & Irizarri, 2024), depending on factors such as economic structure, institutional capacity, geographic location and socio-ecological resilience. In this sense, impacts are not homogeneous, as poorer economies tend to experience greater vulnerabilities and less response capacity, while strong economies, although better prepared, also face significant challenges that can deepen structural inequalities (Pérez & Arias, 2023; Capelli, 2023; ECLAC, 2024).

Fragile economies, especially in the Global South, are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental degradation due to a combination of structural factors including dependence on primary sectors, high exposure to extreme weather events and limited institutional capacity to respond to social and environmental shocks (IPCC, 2022). Countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin America face prolonged droughts, desertification and extreme weather events such as hurricanes or floods, compromising the food security and livelihoods of populations highly dependent on subsistence agriculture (FAO, 2021).



Currently, some regions are not in a position to meet these challenges, but face irreversible loss and damage that requires remediation, deepening climate injustice. According to the UNFCCC (2023), loss and damage refers to impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided or mitigated, including destruction of infrastructure, forced displacement and degradation of critical ecosystems. These effects disproportionately affect regions with lower coping capacities, where dependence on primary sectors and high exposure to extreme weather events exacerbate structural vulnerabilities (IPCC, 2022). The lack of sufficient financial mechanisms to address loss and damage not only limits recovery, but also perpetuates historical inequalities, as the most affected communities are those that have contributed the least to the climate crisis (UNEP, 2023). In this context, subnational governments have a key role to play in articulating climate justice strategies that include access to international funds and equitable reparation measures.

In addition, biodiversity loss in these regions exacerbates the vulnerability of communities, as many of these countries depend on natural ecosystems for food, water and basic materials for construction and traditional medicine (Díaz et al., 2019). Deforestation and land degradation reduce the capacity of ecosystems to provide these essential services, forcing communities to migrate or rely on intensive agricultural practices that generate greater environmental pressures (IPBES, 2019). The inability to access adequate infrastructure and climate finance reinforces the cycle of poverty and social exclusion, deepening inequality gaps within these societies (UNDP, 2020).

In contrast, regions in countries with robust economies have greater capacities to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, through resilient infrastructure, advanced technologies and progressive climate policies (European Environment Agency, 2023). However, these countries also face significant risks, such as forest fires in Mediterranean and North American regions, urban flooding due to soil sealing, and economic losses associated with extreme weather events (IPCC, 2022). While they have efficient early warning systems and response mechanisms in place, adaptation and recovery costs are high, resulting in disproportionate impacts on certain sectors of the population, particularly marginalised communities and workers dependent on vulnerable sectors such as agriculture and fisheries (Pelling & Garschagen, 2019).

Strong economies¹ tend to have a larger ecological footprint (Wackernagel, et.al. 2002) and rely heavily on resources from poorer economies, which contributes to

¹ Strong Economy: Refers to an economic system characterised by macroeconomic stability, high level of industrialisation, productive diversification and innovation capacity. These economies have high levels of per capita income, developed infrastructure and access to sound financial markets, allowing them to better absorb the impacts of economic or climate



environmental degradation in these developing countries and reinforces neo-colonial dynamics of natural resource exploitation (Hickel & Kallis, 2020). Domestically, environmental impacts also deepen social inequalities, disproportionately affecting low-income communities living in high-risk areas or with less access to resilient infrastructure, such as efficient drainage systems or climate-resilient housing (Carter et al., 2021).

The differentiated effects of these phenomena exacerbate inequality gaps both globally and within regions. For weak economies², climate impacts force poorer populations to adopt coping strategies that may be unsustainable in the long term, such as overexploitation of natural resources, forced migration or labour informality (Olsson et al., 2014). In strong economies, while social protection mechanisms are in place, pre-existing inequalities mean that certain groups – such as indigenous communities, migrants and precarious workers – are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as they face barriers in accessing basic services and resources for adaptation (IPCC, 2022).

Inequity in the distribution of the costs and benefits of climate change adaptation leads to what is known as "climate injustice," where populations that have contributed the least to the climate crisis suffer the most from its effects (Juhola et al., 2022). In this context, just resilience emerges as a key strategy to ensure that adaptation and mitigation policies not only reduce climate risks, but also contribute to closing inequality gaps through the equitable redistribution of resources and the promotion of inclusive governance models (Béné et al., 2018).

Ensuring 'just' resilience means integrating principles of equity in the distribution of resources, ensuring that the most affected communities have access to effective and sustainable solutions. However, for just resilience to be effective, it cannot be limited to reactive responses or short-term measures that simply mitigate immediate impacts. It is essential to adopt strategic, transformative and proactive approaches that address the underlying causes of vulnerability, such as poverty, structural discrimination and

shocks (World Economic Forum, 2023). In addition, they tend to have robust institutions that ensure effective governance and access to financing mechanisms for recovery and sustainable growth (OECD, 2022). It is worth noting, that strong economy conditions vary not only between the global north and global south, but also within national contexts between different regions and territories.

² Weak Economy: Defined as an economic system with a low level of structural development, high dependence on primary sectors (such as agriculture and natural resource extraction), low productive diversification and limited access to international finance. These economies tend to experience macroeconomic instability, low resilience to external shocks and high vulnerability to climate and financial shocks due to a lack of infrastructure and strong institutions (IMF, 2023). In the global context, many economies in the Global South fall into this category, facing higher barriers to growth and adaptation to climate change (World Bank, 2023). It is worth noting, that weak economy conditions vary not only between the global north and global south, but also within national contexts between different regions and territories.



lack of access to essential resources such as land, education, finance and technology (IPCC, 2022; UNDP, 2020).

Just resilience must therefore transcend the logic of emergency and timely recovery to incorporate preventive and systemic actions that reduce the exposure and fragility of territories and communities. This implies strengthening participatory governance, ensuring that decision-making is inclusive and represents the interests of historically marginalised groups, thus promoting public policies that not only seek to reduce immediate risks, but also promote the transformation of unjust economic and social structures (Juhola et al., 2022; Pelling & Garschagen, 2019).

Investing in resilient infrastructure, sustainable productive systems and adaptive social protection mechanisms builds long-term resilience that not only reacts to disasters when they occur, but anticipates and minimizes their impacts before they materialise. Only through an approach that attacks the roots of vulnerability will we achieve a just resilience that does not perpetuate inequalities, but rather acts as a pathway for the equitable and sustainable transformation of societies.

In this context, subnational governments can play a strategic role in promoting just resilience through policies that incentivise investment in resilient infrastructure, the protection of strategic ecosystems and the adoption of nature-based approaches to solutions. In addition, they can facilitate the articulation of strategies across levels of government, ensuring that subnational, regional, landscape-scale and jurisdictional actions are aligned with national and international goals for resilience and sustainability in territory (Regions4, 2023; European Environment Agency, 2023).

In this sense, this white paper aims to serve as a compass for decision-makers, providing them with tools and criteria to integrate just resilience into their policies and programmes, fostering a territorial approach to adaptation and transformation that ensures equitable and inclusive responses in a context of effective and collaborative governance.

2. Defining Just Resilience at the Subnational Level

Subnational Just Resilience is defined as a conceptual and operational framework that enables the development of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development strategies in the face of social and ecological crises in an equitable and inclusive manner. Based on the principles of environmental justice, community participation and multi-level governance, Just Resilience seeks to ensure that climate and biodiversity responses not only integrate the needs and capacities of the most vulnerable communities, but also address the root causes of vulnerability addressed by the 2030



Agenda and the SDGs, such as poverty, discrimination, discrimination and lack of access to resources, creating just, inclusive and sustainable solutions.

2.1 Relationship between key concepts and Subnational Just Resilience

Just resilience is intrinsically linked to several key concepts that contribute to its understanding and effective implementation³. These concepts enable the structuring of strategies that ensure equity, sustainability and inclusiveness in adaptation and mitigation efforts, as well as biodiversity conservation and restoration. Each of these principles strengthens the capacity of subnational governments to address climate and biodiversity challenges, while ensuring equity and inclusiveness in the formulation of adaptation and mitigation policies and strategies.

Subnational Just Resilience operates as a comprehensive umbrella framework (see Figure 1) that consolidates diverse theoretical and normative domains -including ecological resilience, climate justice, environmental governance, adaptive planning, and territorial equity- into a unified and context-sensitive approach. Rather than replacing existing models, it synthesizes them through a subnational lens that prioritizes territorial realities, intersectional vulnerabilities, and democratic governance. Its function as an umbrella is not merely symbolic: it provides conceptual coherence to otherwise fragmented frameworks and ensures that justice and sustainability are not peripheral but foundational to resilience building.

Figure 1: Conceptual background to Subnational Just Resilience (SJR)

³ Concepts available in the annex.

Just Resilience



Locally-led adaptation (LLA), as a key concept informing the definition of just resilience, emphasises a bottom-up approach that integrates territorial needs, challenges and priorities into resilience strategies (IIED, 2021; 2022; WRI, 2021a; 2021b). By strengthening response capacity based on local knowledge, it develops contextualised solutions aligned with national policies without losing the specificity of each region. The articulation with national policies should be based on principles of intergovernmental cooperation, knowledge sharing and capacity building, allowing successful experiences at the subnational level to inform and improve national policies and vice versa.

The concepts of climate justice and just transition ensure that just resilience not only addresses the effects of climate change, but also rectifies historical inequalities, avoiding the costs of transformation falling on vulnerable populations (Juhola et al., 2022; OHCHR, 2019). Complementarily, locally-led adaptation strengthens the capacity of subnational governments to work directly with communities, integrating their knowledge and priorities into decision making (IIED, 2021; WRI, 2021a).

Transformative resilience and adaptive governance facilitate political and economic systems to evolve in an equitable and sustainable manner, ensuring that just resilience strategies are effective in the long term and adapt to new conditions (Béné et al., 2018). This goes beyond the implementation of nature-based solutions by enabling subnational governments to design strategies that not only reduce environmental

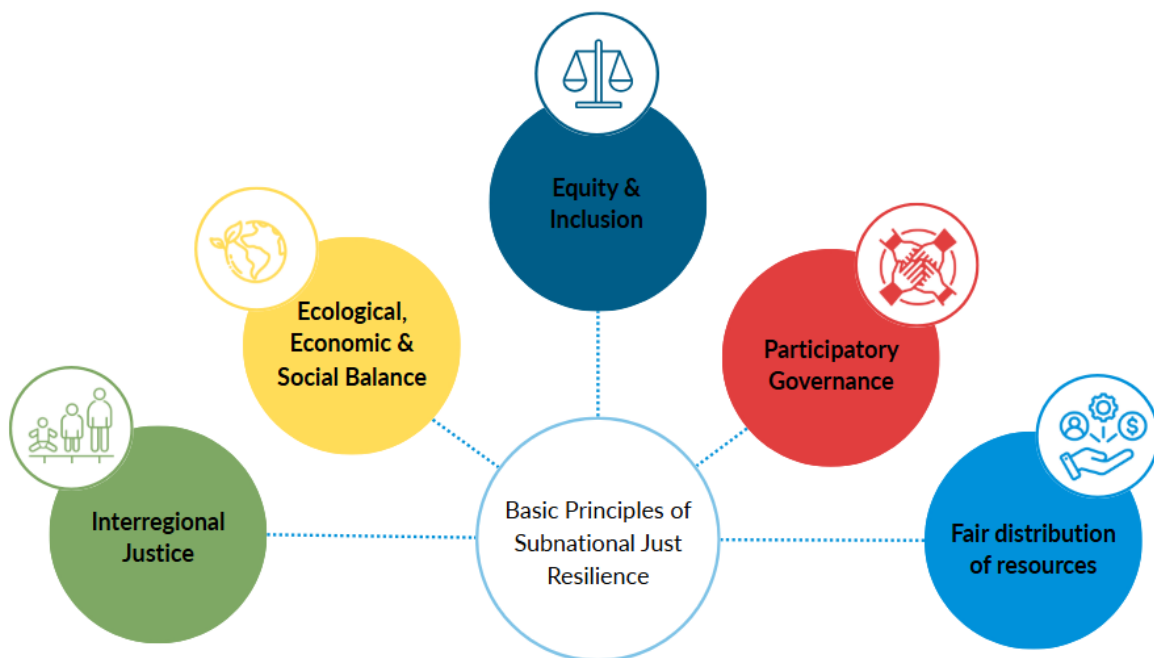
impacts, but also generate economic and social benefits at regional and local scales (European Environment Agency, 2021).

These concepts interrelate to build fair subnational resilience that contributes to national achievements in climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity and nature positivity, and sustainable development, while distributing benefits at the territorial level. By ensuring equity in access to resources, finance and governance, subnational governments can play a key role in realising a just and sustainable transition, aligned with international commitments and the needs of their communities.

2.2 Basic Principles of Just Resilience at the Subnational Level

Subnational just resilience must respond to the challenges of the climate and biodiversity crises through a transformative approach that integrates social equity, inclusion of historically marginalised groups and long-term sustainability. This innovation must be disruptive to traditional "business as usual" models. To this end, it is based on core principles that ensure that biodiversity action, climate adaptation and mitigation do not perpetuate structural inequalities, but contribute to their reduction through participatory and redistributive processes. Each principle is developed below, emphasising its relevance for the most affected groups, such as indigenous peoples, local and Afro-descendant communities, women, migrants, the elderly and people with disabilities, to name a few.

Figure 2: Basic Principles of Subnational Just Resilience



2.2.1. Equity and inclusion: prioritising historically marginalised and vulnerable populations

The principle of equity and inclusion recognises that the climate and ecological crises affects populations differently, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities. Historically marginalised communities, such as indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and rural communities, have been excluded from decision-making and the equitable distribution of resources, despite the fact that many of these communities have played a key role in ecosystem conservation and sustainable land management (IPBES, 2019).

The differentiated impact of climate change is also evident in the vulnerability of certain groups within cities and rural areas. Women, in particular, face greater difficulties due to the gap in access to productive and financial resources, in addition to their predominant role in food security and water management in many communities (UNDP,

2020). Furthermore, persons with disabilities and the elderly face additional barriers in accessing essential services and disaster response systems, increasing their exposure to environmental risks (WHO, 2021).

To ensure equity and inclusion in just resilience, it is necessary to develop public policies that adopt an intersectionality approach, considering the diversity of vulnerabilities and ensuring that adaptation programmes prioritise these groups (Juhola et al., 2022). International cooperation mechanisms, accessible financing and capacity building and strengthening programmes must also be established to enable these communities to lead the implementation of resilient solutions.

2.2.2. Participatory governance: involving local communities, indigenous groups and civil society in decision making

Participatory governance is at the heart of just resilience, as it ensures that biodiversity, climate and sustainable development strategies are designed from, with and for affected communities. Many climate policies, for example, have often been developed from a technocratic perspective, excluding community actors and reinforcing development models that do not reflect their needs and traditional knowledge (IIED, 2023).

For indigenous peoples, local communities and Afro-descendants⁴, participatory governance is crucial for the recognition of their territorial rights and the protection of the ecosystems they have historically managed sustainably (UNESCO, 2021). Similarly, climate migrants, fleeing regions affected by environmental disasters, must be included in urban and territorial planning, avoiding their marginalisation and ensuring their access to safe housing and sustainable livelihoods (Piguet & Kaenzig, 2022).

Just resilience must promote spaces for policy co-creation in which subnational governments, civil society and community actors can participate on equal terms in decision-making. This implies the creation of inclusive climate governance/restoration councils, free, prior, informed and culturally appropriate consultations for indigenous and Afro-descendant communities⁵, and digital participation platforms that facilitate citizen engagement in risk management and territorial planning (Béné et al., 2018).

⁴ Defining such towns and localities in the sense stated in UN resolution 61/295 (2007). Available at: https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_es.pdf

⁵ As established in ILO Convention 169 (1989), which can be reviewed at: https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@americas/@ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_345065.pdf, as well as the legal framework corresponding to each region, in accordance with national laws.



2.2.3. Fair distribution of resources: ensuring that investments in resilience do not disproportionately benefit privileged groups

Historically, investments in adaptation and mitigation have favoured economically strong sectors and territories with more infrastructure, leaving vulnerable communities with less access to finance and technical support at a disadvantage (Hickel & Kallis, 2020). This is similar to what happens with the restoration and conservation of ecosystems and their environmental services, which generally attract investments for large cities or industries. This has led to inequalities in the capacity to respond to climate change, deepening socio-economic gaps and limiting the resilience of groups most exposed to environmental impacts.

Rural communities, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants have been particularly affected by the unequal distribution of resources, despite the fact that their territories are home to a significant part of the world's biodiversity and play a key role in climate change mitigation (IPCC, 2022). Furthermore, women farmers, who represent 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, face greater difficulties in accessing credit, inputs and technologies for climate adaptation (FAO, 2021).

To correct these inequities, just resilience must promote inclusive financing mechanisms that prioritise investments in vulnerable communities and encourage circular economy, regenerative agriculture and community energy projects. In addition, subnational governments must ensure transparency in the allocation of resources, avoiding the concentration of funding in large infrastructures that do not benefit all populations equally, and to the extent of their possibilities, generate their own financial instruments that can guarantee just resilience.

2.2.4. Intergenerational justice: balancing today's adaptation needs with long-term sustainability

The climate and biodiversity crises impose an intergenerational responsibility, as current decisions have a direct impact on the opportunities and well-being of future generations, whether addressing an emergency or planning for it. Just resilience must balance the need for immediate responses with long-term strategies that ensure ecological, economic and social sustainability (Gabbatiss et al., 2021).

This is especially relevant in urban and territorial planning, where uncontrolled expansion of cities, overexploitation of resources and deforestation affect the capacity of ecosystems to sustain life in the future (Pelling & Garschagen, 2019). Young people, who will inherit the consequences of these decisions, must be key actors in relevant



policymaking processes, actively participating in governance, resilience strategies and territorial planning processes.

Intergenerational justice also implies protecting ancestral knowledge and recognising the role of elders in transmitting knowledge on climate adaptation, the protection of nature and sustainable land management (UNESCO, 2021). Investing in environmental education and training future generations in sustainable practices is essential to ensure just resilience in the long term.

2.2.5. Ecological, economic and social balance: integrating environmental protection with social welfare

Just resilience should not only be seen from an ecological perspective, but should integrate the social and economic well-being of communities with environmental protection. This requires strategies that combine nature-based solutions with strengthening food security, equitable access to water and employment generation in sustainable sectors (Díaz et al., 2019).

This principle is key in indigenous and rural communities, which have developed territorial management systems based on reciprocity and harmony with nature. However, in many regions, these practices have been displaced by extractivist and resource intensive development models that have led to the degradation of ecosystems and loss of livelihoods (IPBES, 2019).

Ensuring ecological and social balance implies implementing resilient territorial planning models, where the conservation of ecosystems does not come at the expense of the rights of local communities, but promotes their well-being and sustainable development. Subnational governments are well-placed to provide the opportunity and implement solutions that generate a high level of well-being, while decoupling such development from the degradation of the planet and the climate.

Furthermore, these principles must develop greener, regenerative economic and business models that generate fair and well-paid jobs in a way that decouples economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation.

3. Criteria for Implementing Just Resilience in Subnational Governments

In order to assess whether the actions that subnational governments can implement are in line with the basic principles that we have defined, it is necessary to take into consideration a set of essential criteria, which in turn allow for a clear list of irreducible criteria, so that the actions, policies and projects that are carried out are done under a Subnational Just Resilience approach.



The following tables summarize a series of proposed criteria, for each of the 5 basic principles of Just Resilience. These criteria can be applied to verify whether a project proposal, ongoing initiative, or policy has integrated elements of just resilience. The proposed criteria cover both the design phase of a project or policy, as well as the evaluation of the impact of the project or policy and can serve as a tool for subnational governments to determine how to adequately incorporate and address just resilience in their policymaking processes, project development and action implementation⁶.

By clearly distinguishing between what should be considered in the formulation phase (design criteria) and how progress and impacts should be measured (evaluation criteria), subnational projects can ensure both the integrity of their approaches and the effectiveness of their outcomes. This dual-level guidance strengthens strategic planning, promotes transparency and accountability, and enhances the legitimacy of resilience interventions in diverse territorial contexts.

There are key differences between design and evaluation criteria:

- **Design Criteria** refer to the essential elements that should be intentionally incorporated at the outset of a project. These criteria guide how a project is conceived, structured, and formulated to reflect the principles of Just Resilience. They encompass prior assessments, participatory mechanisms, or specific strategies to ensure the project is inclusive, equitable, and aligned with long-term sustainability.
- **Evaluation Criteria**, on the other hand, are used to assess how effectively the project has implemented the intended design elements and whether it has achieved the expected outcomes. These criteria are often operationalized through indicators and are applied during or after implementation to measure effectiveness, inclusion, impact, and sustainability.

This dual articulation ensures that projects are not only well-intentioned in their design but are also held to account through tangible, measurable impacts that reflect the core principles of Just Resilience.

For an action to be considered just, it must focus on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations, rather than reinforcing pre-existing inequalities. A project that is rooted in or that integrates just resilience must ensure that indigenous communities, Afro-descendants, women, migrants, people with disabilities and/or other marginalised groups have equitable access to the benefits of the intervention.

⁶ A checklist with the criteria can be found as an annex of this document.

Table 1: Principle of Equity and Inclusion of the SJR

 1-Equity and inclusion: prioritise historically marginalised and vulnerable populations	
Design criteria	Criteria for evaluation
Analysis of Inequalities and Vulnerabilities: Integrates prior assessment of the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the target communities to ensure that the intervention responds to their specific needs.	Equitable Access to Benefits: Measures how many people from historically marginalised groups participate in and benefit from the policy or initiative. Considers means of closing the gap in catering to the needs of marginalized groups.
Targeting of beneficiaries: Defines clear mechanisms to prioritise indigenous peoples, local communities, Afro-descendants, women, migrants, the elderly, youth, children, people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups.	Vulnerability Gap Reduction: Contemplates indicators on the impact of the project or policy on the reduction of social and economic inequalities, as well as (general) access if considered.
Intersectional approach: Incorporates gender, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic or other vulnerability-related analyses from the inception, and during the formulation of projects, policies or initiatives.	Community Satisfaction and Perception: Assesses beneficiary communities' perception of their level of inclusion and participation in decision-making. This can preferably be done at the level of impact assessment.

Just resilience cannot be imposed from above; it must be co-created with affected communities. Participatory and transparent design is essential to ensure that resilience actions reflect the priorities and knowledge of local populations.

Table 2: Participatory Governance Principle of the SJR

 2- Participatory governance: involving local communities, indigenous groups and civil society in decision-making	
Design criteria	Criteria for evaluation
Participation of Local Groups: Defines mechanisms for consultation and participatory decision-making, with special emphasis on indigenous peoples, local communities, Afro-descendants, community organisations and/or other vulnerable or marginalized groups.	Quantity and Quality of Community Participation: Quantifies the number and evaluates the diversity of community representatives involved in the design, implementation and/or monitoring & evaluation of the policy or project
Transparency and Access to Information: Ensures that project information is accessible and understandable to all stakeholders, in multiple formats and local languages where necessary.	Inclusive Governance Mechanisms: Evaluates the effectiveness and sustainability of the participatory spaces created. Utilizes both internal and external channels of communication and messaging, with the widest possible reach.
Respect for Indigenous and Community Governance: Includes local communities' and/or indigenous peoples' governance and decision-making systems, considering customary law.	Compliance with Free, Prior and Informed Consultation (FPIC): Measures respect for the rights of indigenous peoples in decision-making over their territory. Full compliance

	with related legal and supplementary frameworks.
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Economic inequalities largely determine the adaptive capacity of communities. A just resilience project must ensure that financial resources and investment opportunities are available to all communities, including those with the least economic capacity.

Table 3: Principle of Fair Distribution of SRJ Resources

 3- Fair distribution of resources: ensure that investments in resilience do not disproportionately benefit privileged groups	
Design criteria	Criteria for evaluation
Equitable Budget Allocation: Ensures that the distribution of resources favours the most vulnerable communities.	Equity in the Allocation of Funds: Analyses the project's budget distribution and its impact on different social groups, both in terms of investment expenditure, activities and goals.
Access to Inclusive Finance: Develops mechanisms to enable marginalised communities to access credit, productive capital, climate/biodiversity/restoration funds and/or other sources of funding or financing.	Economic Gap Reduction Impact: Measures increased access to economic and productive opportunities in vulnerable communities to different types of funds and capital.
Removing Barriers to Access:	Small Community Organisations:

Identifies administrative, technical or financial barriers to equitable participation in the project.	Assesses the percentage of resources allocated to grassroots organisations and collectives, not only to large entities, formal civil society organisations and consultancies.
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The impact of climate change and biodiversity loss transcends generations. An intergenerational justice approach involves ensuring that decisions made today do not compromise the ability of future generations to live in a safe and healthy environment.

Table 4: Intergenerational Justice Principle of the SJR

 4- Intergenerational justice: balancing current adaptation needs with long-term sustainability	
Design criteria	Criteria for evaluation
Long-term vision: Integrates strategies that guarantee the environmental and social sustainability of the project beyond its duration.	Sustainability of Results: Assesses the impact of the project on the improvement of long-term conditions and its exit strategy.
Mitigation of Future Impacts: Designs solutions that do not generate new environmental or social risks for future generations.	Replicability Capacity: Identifies best practices that can be scaled up or replicated in other regions with similar conditions and challenges.
Education and Training for Sustainability:	Integration of Youth and Children:

Includes training programmes for youth and future generations on climate resilience, sustainable management of natural resources (biodiversity) and restoration.	Measures youth and children's participation in project planning and implementation. Considers all voices so that no one is left behind.
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A just resilience project must not only reduce vulnerability to climate change, but also promote economic and ecological sustainability. Ecosystem degradation disproportionately affects communities that depend directly on ecosystems for their livelihoods.

Table 5: Principle of Ecological, Economic and Social Balance of the SJR

 5- Ecological, economic and social balance: integrating environmental protection with social welfare	
Design criteria	Criteria for evaluation
Use of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS): Incorporates strategies that restore ecosystems and generate social and economic benefits.	Environmental Impact Mitigation: Measures the effect of the project on the integrity of degraded ecosystems and their ecosystem services.
Protection of Territorial Rights: Respects the rights of local communities to their territories and natural resources, in accordance	Improvements in Quality of Life: Assesses the impact of the project on the well-being of the community (health, education, income, access to water and food, etc.).

with their cosmovision and customary law.	
Direct Social Benefits: Combines environmental conservation with access to basic services, employment and food security.	Protection of Culturally and Environmentally Important Spaces: Analyses the degree of conservation of traditional territories and sacred sites of indigenous and local communities.

The criteria proposed here make it possible to design and evaluate subnational just resilience policies, projects and activities, and to verify whether they effectively respond to the principles of equity, inclusion, participation, fair distribution of resources, intergenerational justice and ecological-social balance.

The application of these criteria ensures that the strategies implemented not only reduce the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, but also transform the structures of inequality that perpetuate vulnerability in subnational territories. These criteria can be used as a planning and evaluation tool by regional governments, civil society organisations and communities, ensuring that resilience investments are truly inclusive, sustainable and aligned with principles of social and environmental justice.

4. Case studies and best practices

Learning from case studies of best practices that exemplify subnational just resilience is fundamental to understanding how different territories have designed and implemented climate, biodiversity and sustainable development strategies in the face of climate change and environmental degradation, while ensuring equity and social inclusion.

These studies provide practical evidence on what approaches have been effective in specific contexts, allowing for the identification of best practices, common barriers and lessons learned that can serve as a reference for other subnational governments. In addition, the analysis of cases makes it possible to assess how the participation of local communities, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, women and other vulnerable



groups has influenced the effectiveness and sustainability of the actions implemented, facilitating the replicability of successful models in different regions.

They are also key as lessons learned to avoid the repetition of mistakes and to optimise the use of resources, ensuring that resilience investments are strategic and high-impact. At the governance level, these studies provide valuable information on how different levels of government have coordinated efforts, overcome institutional challenges and mobilised funding for just resilience projects. Finally, case-based learning strengthens the capacity of subnational governments to design more contextualised, inclusive and sustainable policies, promoting transformative solutions that not only respond to climate impacts, but also address the structural causes of vulnerability and inequality.

Box 6: Case Study 1

	1-Equity and inclusion: prioritise historically marginalised and vulnerable populations		
Ensure that resilience efforts prioritise marginalised and vulnerable populations, addressing systemic inequalities			
Gender focus in the Zamora Chinchipe REDD+ Plan			
The REDD+ Implementation Plan "Sembrando Vida" in Zamora Chinchipe, Ecuador, seeks to halt deforestation and forest degradation by promoting the conservation and sustainable management of forests with the participation of local stakeholders. This plan incorporates a gender approach with the aim of reducing the structural inequalities that affect women and guaranteeing their equal participation in conservation and ecosystem restoration actions. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) within REDD+ was designed based on a detailed analysis of gender gaps in the province. Priority areas were identified as follows: • Equitable access to land and natural resources. • Active participation in environmental decision-making. • Strengthening women's capacities and leadership. • Promotion of sustainable productive alternatives. • Preventing gender-based violence and strengthening support networks.			

With information from Nature and Culture International. Available at:

<https://www.natureandculture.org/es/directorio/zamora-chinchipe-construye-el-plan-sembrando-vida/>

Box 7: Case Study 2

	1-Equity and inclusion: prioritise historically marginalised and vulnerable populations		
Ensure that resilience efforts prioritise marginalised and vulnerable populations, addressing systemic inequalities			
Climate Justice as a Fundamental Pillar			
In 2023, the Government of Minas Gerais in Brazil presented its ground-breaking State Climate Action Plan in partnership with UKPACT, CDP, ICLEI and the State Environment Foundation (FEAM), the result of an extensive public consultation process. This visionary plan introduces a novel approach by placing Climate Justice as one of its four key pillars, alongside mitigation, adaptation and innovation, highlighting its key role in policy and decision-making.			

With information from UKPACT. Available at: <https://www.ukpact.co.uk/brazil-centro-basil-no-clima-landing-page>

Box 8: Case Study 3

	2- Participatory governance: involving local communities, indigenous groups and civil society in decision-making	
Incorporates inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making into resilience planning		
Co-Management Board of the Baix Empordà		
The project of the Maritime Co-Management Board of the Baix Empordà Coast, in Catalonia (Spain), focuses on the creation of a permanent space for participation where proposals for improving the management and organisation of maritime uses and activities in the area can be debated and specified. The aim of the project is to increase compatibility between these uses and activities and the conservation of the region's natural heritage.		

With information from Regions4. Available at: <https://regions4.org/csd/co-management-maritime-board-of-litoral-del-baix-emporda/>

Box 9: Case Study 4

	2- Participatory governance: involving local communities, indigenous groups and civil society in decision-making		
Incorporate inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making into resilience planning			
Free and Informed Prior Consultation to make the Pastaza REDD+ Plan			
The REDD+ PDI was designed through a process of consultation and participation of local stakeholders, with special emphasis on the seven indigenous nationalities living in Pastaza. It was developed in coordination with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition of Ecuador, ensuring that REDD+ actions are culturally relevant and respectful of territorial rights. To initiate the FPIC process, collectives within the area of implementation of REDD+ actions were identified. This process ensured that decisions on REDD+ implementation were taken directly by the communities according to their own organisational structures and deliberation times.			

With information from Regions4 and <https://confeniae.net/programas/plan-de-implementacion/>

Box 10: Case Study 5

	2- Participatory governance: involving local communities, indigenous groups and civil society in decision-making	  
Incorporate inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making into resilience planning Ensure that resilience actions benefit both present and future generations while driving systemic change		
Adaptation of indigenous communities in British Columbia, Canada		
Indigenous communities in British Columbia are leading climate adaptation initiatives based on their deep ancestral knowledge of the land. These communities are addressing challenges such as food security, wildfire and flood risk reduction, and species and ecosystem protection. For example, the Kitsumkalum Fish and Wildlife Operations Department is working with youth to better understand the impacts of climate change on food security. Similarly, Tsay Keh Dene and Carcross Tagish conduct community-based climate monitoring, while the Tsleil-Waututh Nation assesses their community's climate vulnerabilities. In addition, the Kanaka Bar Band has developed a Climate Resilience Strategy to strengthen its capacity to respond to these challenges. To support these initiatives, specific tools and resources have been developed. The Indigenous Climate Hub provides resources and tools on climate change for indigenous peoples and acts as a hub for indigenous leaders in this area. The Climate Change Adaptation Planning Toolkit for Indigenous Communities, developed by the Indigenous Environmental Resource Centre, provides tools and resources to support indigenous individuals and communities interested in climate change adaptation planning. In addition, the ReTooling for Climate Change		

platform provides resources and adaptation tools for indigenous communities, local governments and others to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

With information from the Government of British Columbia, available at:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/indigenous-communities/indigenous-adapt>

Box 10: Case Study 5

	2- Participatory governance: involving local communities, indigenous groups and civil society in decision-making	  
Incorporate inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making into resilience planning		
Building Regional Capacity for Just Climate Resilience		
Community Climate Action Hubs in Scotland		
The Community Climate Action Hubs in Scotland is an example of embedding decision-making power directly within local communities. 24 hubs were created as regional anchors for climate action, connecting grassroots groups with local councils, health boards, and educational institutions. Their primary function is to enable communities to co-design and lead climate initiatives, shape and influence local and national policy, and embed climate action into local plans. An independent evaluation of two pathfinder hubs—NESCAN in the North East and one in the Highlands and Islands—found that the hubs significantly enhanced community engagement, fostered peer learning, and strengthened collaboration across sectors. This inclusive, place-based model not only amplified local voices in climate governance but also built foundational capacity for a just transition, reinforcing communities' roles as key actors in regional climate resilience.		

With information from the Scottish Government, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/community-led-climate-action/> and <https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-evaluation-scottish-climate-action-hubs/>

Box 12: Case Study 7

	3- Fair distribution of resources: ensure that investments in resilience do not disproportionately benefit privileged groups	
Ensure fair access to funding, resources and economic opportunities related to building resilience		
Strengthening the Resilience of the Mayan Milpa: Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Adaptation in Yucatan, Mexico		
This initiative aims to strengthen the resilience of the Mayan milpa by promoting sustainable agricultural practices in eight municipalities within the Biocultural Region of the PUUC, a territory of great historical, cultural and environmental importance for the state. The approach is based on strengthening the adaptive capacities of communities to cope with the impacts of climate change in the region.		

With information from Regions4. Available at: <https://regions4.org/csd/milpa-maya/>

Box 13: Case Study 8

	3- Fair distribution of resources: ensure that investments in resilience do not disproportionately benefit privileged groups	 
Ensure community participation while driving systemic change		
Scotland's Climate Justice Fund (CJF)		
Scotland's Climate Justice Fund (CJF), established in 2012 as the world's first dedicated climate justice funding mechanism, has been trebled to £36 million for the 2021–2026 parliamentary term. Fully allocated, the CJF supports a range of programmes aimed at enhancing climate resilience in vulnerable communities across the Global South, particularly in Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia. The flagship initiative, Climate Just Communities (CJC), allocates £8 million to each of these countries, focusing on areas such as disaster risk management, climate-resilient agriculture, water and sanitation, and gender inclusion.		

With information from <https://adaptation.scot/app/uploads/2024/10/low-res-6097-as-interim-progress-report.pdf> and <https://www.gov.scot/policies/international-development/climate-justice-fund/>

Box 14: Case Study 9

	4- Intergenerational justice: balancing current adaptation needs with long-term sustainability	 
Ensure that resilience actions benefit both present and future generations while driving systemic change		
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015		
The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in Wales (UK) is a key piece of legislation that requires public bodies to prioritise the holistic well-being of the nation, encompassing social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects, for the benefit of both current and future generations. The Act sets out key well-being objectives, including "a resilient Wales" and "a more equitable Wales", which are highly relevant to climate justice.		

With information from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. Available at:
<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

Box 15: Case Study 10

	5- Ecological, economic and social balance: integrating environmental protection with social welfare	 
Integrate climate adaptation and biodiversity protection with environmental justice and nature-based solutions.		
Community Biodiversity Monitoring in Yucatan, Mexico		
As part of the international cooperation project implemented with the GCF Task Force Innovation Fund, called B Window, a Community Biodiversity Monitoring component was carried out, with the participation of 43 people from 4 communities, including men, women and youth. Participants were trained in the installation of photo-trapping stations and in the identification of wildlife species within their communities, with the aim of fostering the interest of local inhabitants in valuing biodiversity and its ecosystems.		

With information from Regions4. Available at: <https://regions4.org/csd/community-biodiversity-monitoring-yucatan/>

Box 16: Case Study 11

	5- Ecological, economic and social balance: integrating environmental protection with social welfare	 
Integrate climate adaptation and biodiversity protection with environmental justice and nature-based solutions.		
Conexão Mata Atlântica in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: conservation and restoration in line with sustainable production		
The Conexão Mata Atlântica project is a payments for environmental services (PES) initiative that recognises priority actions for conservation and restoration in the Atlantic Forest, covering three Brazilian states. In the State of Rio de Janeiro, approximately 240 farming families are compensated for their contributions to the conservation and restoration of about 2,440 hectares of land, driving socio-environmental and economic transformation both locally and globally.		

With information from Regions4. Available at: <https://regions4.org/csd/conexao-mata-atlantica-rio-de-janeiro/>

Box 17: Case Study 12

	5- Ecological, economic and social balance: integrating environmental protection with social welfare	 
Integrate climate adaptation and biodiversity protection with environmental justice and nature-based solutions.		
A milestone in conservation: Côte d'Ivoire's first voluntary nature reserve		
In December 2021, the Forêt des Marais Tanoé-Ehy (FMTE), located in southeastern Côte d'Ivoire, was designated as the country's first voluntary nature reserve, marking a milestone in the conservation of one of West Africa's most threatened ecosystems. This achievement highlights the importance of local community-led environmental management, as 11 villages took responsibility for protecting this vital ecosystem, home to critically endangered primates such as Miss Waldron's red colobus, the Roloway monkey and the white-thighed colobus, previously considered extinct.		

With information from Regions4. Available at: <https://regions4.org/actions/cote-divoires-first-voluntary-nature-reserve/>

As can be seen from the selected case studies, the framework of Subnational Just Resilience encompasses a wide range of possibilities to respond to the critical challenges in the face of the climate, biodiversity and sustainability crises, while simultaneously addressing the conditions that are often some of the root causes of vulnerability and inequity. It is not necessary for any given policy, project or activity to integrate all the basic principles; however, we can observe how each of the examples provided address aspects related to multiple principles through different elements of the criteria for design and evaluation.



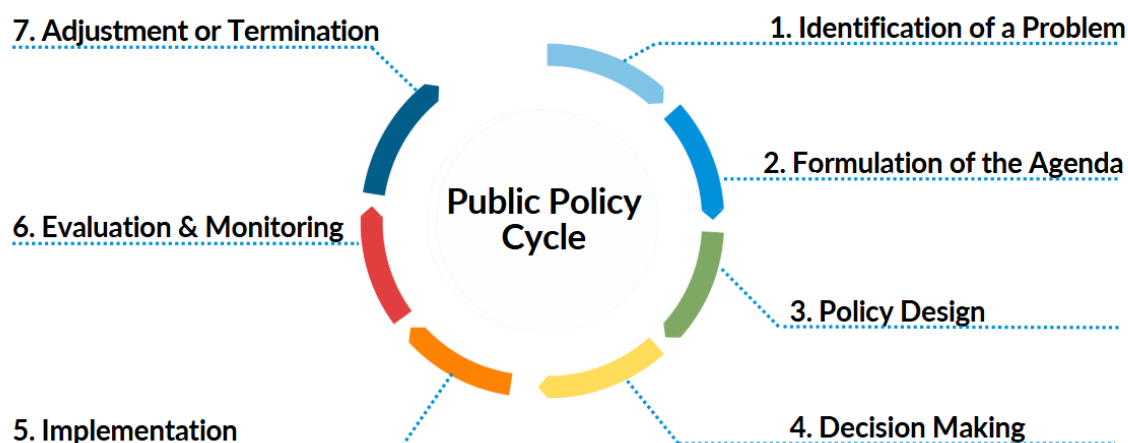
5. Public policy recommendations

For **subnational governments** to make progress in building **just resilience**, it is essential that public policies not only respond to climate and environmental challenges, but also address the structural inequalities that amplify the vulnerability of certain populations. In this sense, just resilience policies must be designed under a comprehensive, participatory and transformative approach, aligned with the fundamental principles of equity and inclusion, participatory governance, fair distribution of resources, intergenerational justice, and ecological and social balance (Juhola et al., 2022; Béné et al., 2018).

These principles cannot be understood in isolation, but must be integrated in a cross-cutting manner throughout the public policy cycle, from policy formulation and planning, through implementation and financing, to evaluation and adjustment of resilience strategies. A structured approach based on these principles makes it possible to design policies that not only strengthen the capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change, but also contribute to the transformation of governance, financing and territorial planning systems, ensuring sustainable and inclusive responses in the long term (IPCC, 2022).

The public policy cycle allows for the operationalisation of Just Resilience at the subnational level. Figure 3 illustrates the key stages of this cycle—ranging from problem identification to policy adjustment.

Figure 3: Steps in the public policy cycle



Information from Dye (2017).

To meaningfully embed Just Resilience into the policy processs at the subnational level, each stage of the public policy cycle must be reinterpreted through a justice-oriented lens. The following table demonstrates how the values related to Just Resilience can be integrated into each phase of the cycle.

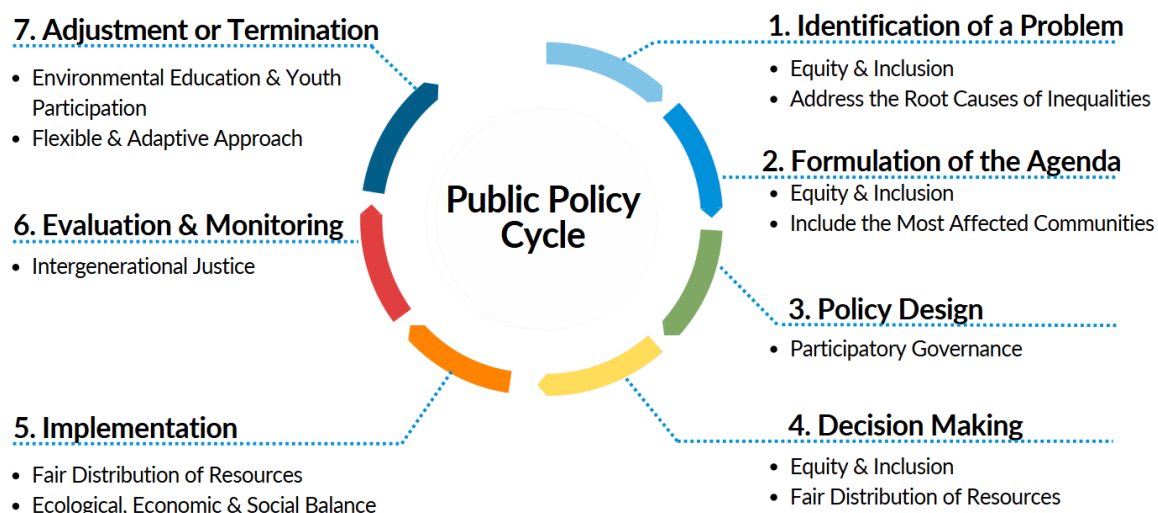
Table 6: Matching the policy cycle approach to the just resilience framework

Phases of the policy cycle	Subnational Just Resilience
Identification of the problem	Just resilience policies must address not only climate and environmental challenges, but also structural inequalities that increase the vulnerability of certain populations. Equity and inclusiveness must be fundamental principles in this phase (Juhola et al., 2022; Béné et al., 2018).
Formulation of the agenda	From the outset, historically marginalised groups, such as indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, women, migrants, people with disabilities, and/or other vulnerable groups, must be included in policy design so that their needs and priorities are considered (UNDP, 2020).

Policy design	Participatory governance must ensure effective mechanisms for consultation and shared decision-making, enabling communities to be key actors in the formulation and implementation of resilience policies (IIED, 2023).
Decision-making	Decision-making processes must include principles of equity, ensuring that resilience policies are approved based on inclusive criteria and that resources are distributed fairly (Hickel & Kallis, 2020).
Implementation	In the implementation of strategies, the equitable distribution of resources must ensure that resilience investments do not only favour privileged sectors or urban areas, but also benefit rural communities with lower adaptive capacity. In addition, priority should be given to nature-based solutions and sustainable production models (European Environment Agency, 2023).
Evaluation and monitoring	Monitoring and evaluation should incorporate the principle of intergenerational justice, ensuring that policies do not generate negative externalities for future generations. Long-term indicators should be included to assess the impact of resilience strategies (Gabbatiss et al., 2021).
Adjustment or termination	Policies should be adjusted or modified based on lessons learned, promoting a flexible and adaptive approach. Environmental education and youth participation in climate governance are essential to ensure the continuity of resilient responses in the long term (UNESCO, 2021).

The figure below further indicates the core principles that should guide each stage of the cycle.

Figure 4. Principles for each of the stages of the public policy cycle



Information from Dye (2017).

5.1 Policy and Governance Recommendations for Subnational Just Resilience

Fair subnational resilience requires strong policy frameworks and equitable governance to ensure inclusive adaptation processes and address structural inequalities (Juhola et al., 2022). Mainstreaming principles of equity, transparency and participation is key for marginalised groups to equitably access climate resilience benefits (IPCC, 2022; UNDP, 2020).

To achieve this, the following strategies are proposed:

- **Equity-focused policy frameworks:** Sub-national governments should integrate social justice into climate and biodiversity planning, ensuring equitable distribution of resources and tailor-made solutions (European Environment Agency, 2023).
- **Effective citizen participation:** Structured mechanisms are required where communities actively participate in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of resilience policies (Béné et al., 2018).
- **Intergenerational justice:** Current decisions must consider long-term impacts, avoiding compromising the well-being of future generations (Gabbatiss et al., 2021).



- **Biodiversity restoration and conservation:** Planning should integrate measures to protect ecosystems and strengthen the resilience of ecosystem-dependent communities (Pelling & Garschagen, 2019).
- **Equitable distribution of climate benefits:** It is necessary to ensure financing and resources for the most vulnerable territories, avoiding exclusions in decision-making and project implementation (IPCC, 2022).

These measures will strengthen subnational climate governance and contribute to building more equitable, sustainable and inclusive societies.

In this context, two key strategies are presented to improve the governance of just resilience at the subnational level: the development of legal frameworks that establish the mandatory nature of equitable climate planning, restoration and biodiversity use and conservation, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of its benefits, and the strengthening of participatory decision-making processes, ensuring that planning and policy implementation are inclusive, democratic, effective and achieve holistic sustainability.

5.1.1 Develop Legal Frameworks that Mandate Resilience Planning with an Equitable Approach

Just resilience requires regulatory frameworks that transcend political will and temporary mandates, ensuring effective and sustained implementation over time. The absence of clear regulations has limited equity in adaptation and mitigation processes, allowing resources to disproportionately benefit privileged sectors, while the most vulnerable communities are often left without access to finance, infrastructure and technical support (IPCC, 2022; Juhola et al., 2022). To avoid this, it is essential that subnational governments establish regulations that mandate the incorporation of climate and social justice into spatial and environmental planning, ensuring protection for those most at risk and ensuring the full application of the principle of legal progressivity⁷.

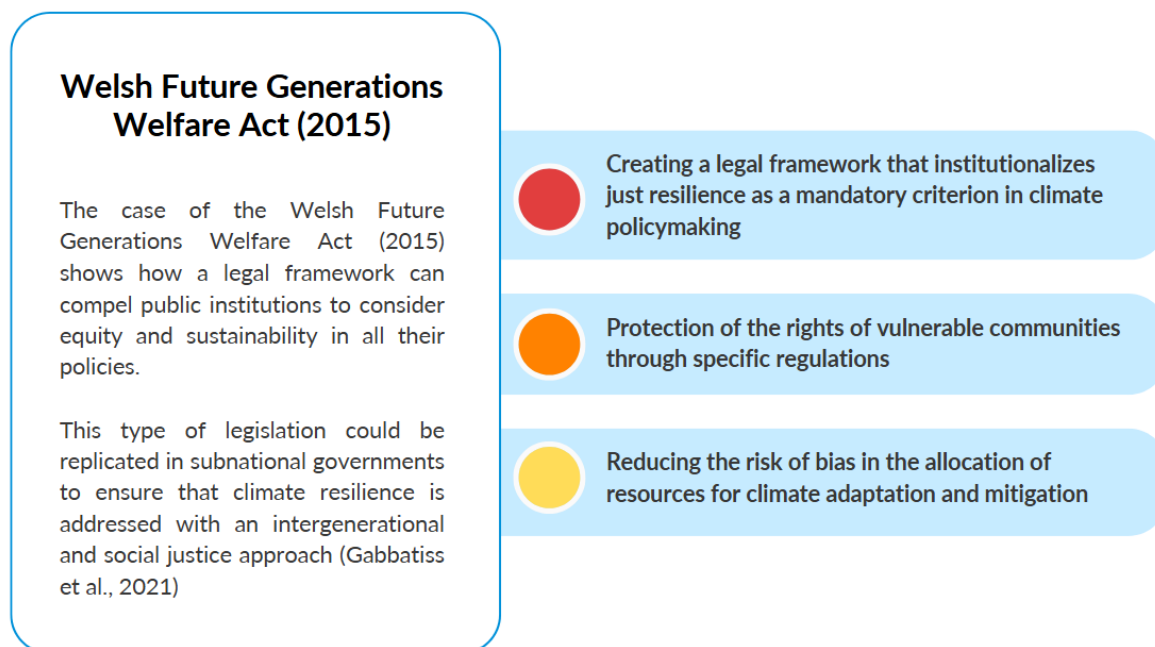
A strong legal framework must include principles of equity, participation and sustainability in climate planning. This implies ensuring the prioritisation of vulnerable communities, the fair distribution of financial and technological resources, and the creation of consultation mechanisms that include historically excluded actors (Béné et al., 2018). Lack of regulation in resource allocation and territorial planning can favour urban developments and infrastructure that exacerbate pre-existing inequalities,

⁷ The principle of legal progressivity establishes that human rights and associated regulations must advance continuously and cannot be subject to unjustified regression. In the field of environmental and climate law, this principle implies that regulations must be progressively strengthened to ensure higher levels of protection and environmental justice, avoiding setbacks that compromise the progress achieved (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [IACHR], 2021).

raising living costs or displacing communities in the name of climate adaptation or conservation (Pelling & Garschagen, 2019).

Examples such as the Well-being of Future Generations Act in Wales (2015) or community resilience strategies in cities such as Barcelona and Mexico City demonstrate that well-designed regulatory frameworks can drive equitable and sustainable climate policies (European Environment Agency, 2023). To this end, coordination between levels of government, the private sector and civil society is key, establishing binding mechanisms that guarantee resilience as a structural axis of development. Without clear and inclusive regulations, climate planning risks being fragmented, perpetuating structural vulnerabilities and limiting its long-term impact (Gabbatiss et al., 2021). It is imperative that subnational governments adopt regulations that institutionalise climate justice as a cross-cutting axis of territorial and environmental planning, thus ensuring an equitable transition towards more resilient and sustainable societies.

Figure 5: Example of legal framework and its relevance to SJR



Information from Gabbatiss et. al. 2021.

5.1.2 Strengthen Participatory Decision-Making Processes

Effective climate governance is key to just sub-national resilience, as it allows adaptation and mitigation strategies to not only address environmental challenges, but also to reinforce equity and territorial justice. However, many decisions are still made without effective consultation with affected communities, which weakens the legitimacy of policies and can lead to socio-environmental conflicts (IIED, 2023). To avoid this, it is essential that climate planning processes are inclusive and decentralised, ensuring that local actors have a real say in decision-making.

Ensuring equity in governance requires recognising the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, whose role in the conservation and sustainable management of ecosystems is fundamental (IPBES, 2019). In addition, an intersectional approach needs to be adopted, considering the structural barriers that limit the participation of women, youth, people with disabilities and climate migrants in these processes (UNDP, 2020). Without this perspective, resilience plans risk perpetuating pre-existing inequalities, excluding the most vulnerable groups from the benefits of climate action.

The equitable distribution of resources within climate governance is also essential to prevent privileged sectors from concentrating the benefits of adaptation strategies to the detriment of poor rural and urban communities (Hickel & Kallis, 2020). To this end, it is essential to establish resilience funds with social justice criteria, transparency mechanisms and accountability spaces to monitor the allocation of resources. The integration of youth in these processes is also key, given that current decisions will have direct repercussions on future generations (Gabbatiss et al., 2021).

Furthermore, governance must balance environmental protection with the development of sustainable economies, to strengthen food security and generate green jobs (European Environment Agency, 2023). To this end, subnational governments must institutionalise inclusive participation mechanisms, such as climate governance councils and those related to biodiversity and sustainable development, as well as free, prior and informed consultation (FPIC) processes for indigenous peoples and local communities (Pelling & Garschagen, 2019). Just resilience will only be possible if participatory governance structures that transform the dynamics of exclusion and strengthen the capacity for action of the most vulnerable territories are consolidated.

5.2 Financial Mechanisms and International Partnerships for Subnational Just Resilience

To strengthen and implement just resilience at the subnational level, it is necessary to develop inclusive financial mechanisms and instruments and promote strategic partnerships that facilitate access to financial resources and technical assistance. Currently, the distribution of climate finance is unequal, leaving vulnerable communities at a disadvantage in the face of environmental challenges. To reverse this situation, it is essential to establish funds with social and environmental equity criteria, streamline access to them and promote international cooperation. This will not only reduce exposure to climate risks and biodiversity loss, but also promote structural changes to ensure sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

- **Ensuring equitable access to climate finance:** Building equitable resilience at the subnational level requires accessible financial mechanisms for vulnerable communities to strengthen their adaptation and mitigation capacity. Currently, access to these funds is concentrated in actors with greater institutional and economic capacity, which widens structural inequalities and limits the implementation of effective strategies in vulnerable communities (IPCC, 2022; UNDP, 2020).
- **Targeted funds with social and environmental justice criteria:** It is essential that subnational governments design financial mechanisms that prioritise

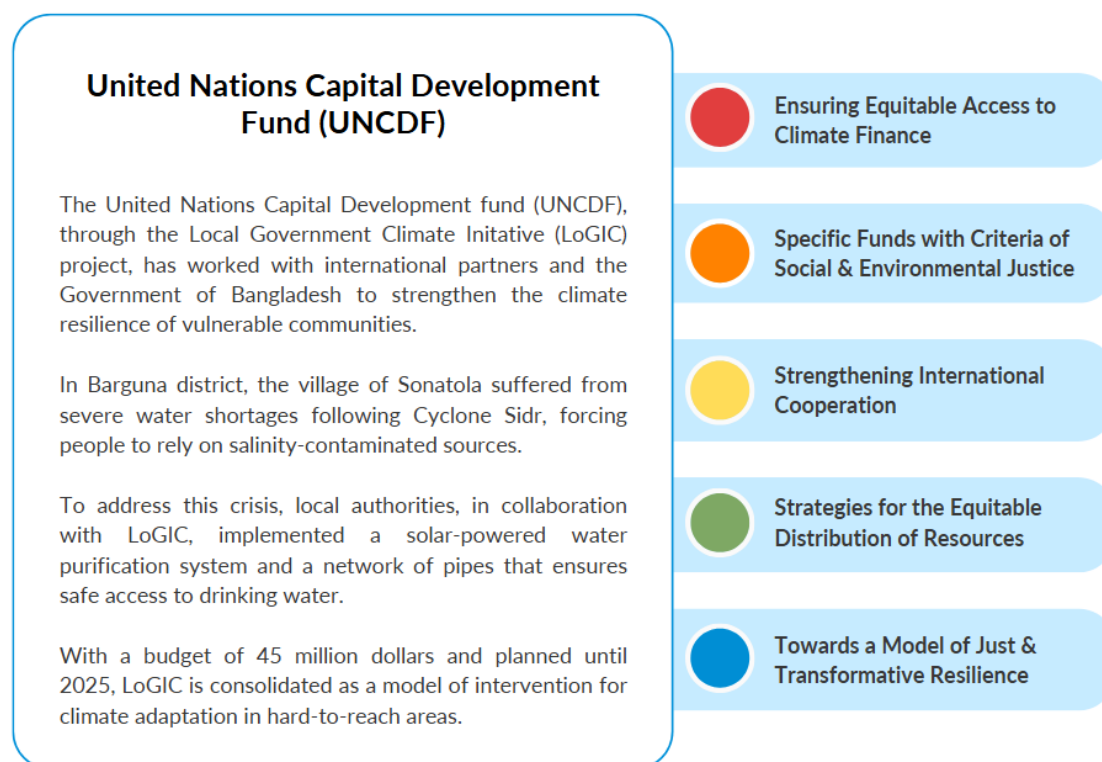


marginalised groups, such as indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, women, climate migrants, people with disabilities, rural dwellers, and/or other vulnerable groups. To this end, simplified and tailored access processes must be established, avoiding bureaucratic barriers that exclude communities and groups with less experience in managing finance (Juhola et al., 2022).

- **Strengthening international cooperation:** Subnational just resilience, particularly in the global south, cannot rely solely on government budgets. It is crucial to mobilise financial and technical resources from bilateral and multilateral agencies such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Mitigation Action Facility (MAF), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the various UN Programmes, which offer specific funds for climate adaptation and mitigation, ecological restoration, and the use, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity (Hickel & Kallis, 2020).
- **Strategies for equitable distribution of resources:** To redress the unequal distribution of funding, subnational governments should establish strategic agreements with international agencies, ensuring that resources are used to transform structures of inequality and exclusion. Funded projects should guarantee priority allocation of funds to marginalised communities, ensuring their active participation in decision-making (IPCC, 2022; Juhola et al., 2022).
- **Technical assistance to strengthen institutional capacities:** In addition to funding, international cooperation should include the transfer of knowledge, technologies and innovative methodologies. Technical assistance strengthens the planning, implementation and monitoring of resilience strategies, ensuring their sustainability and adaptation to subnational contexts. The existence of technical cooperation platforms facilitate the exchange of experiences and good practices in just resilience (Béné et al., 2018).
- **Key principles for investment planning and implementation:** Financial mechanisms for subnational just resilience must be aligned with equity, inclusion and sustainability. Participatory governance ensures that communities have a voice in resource management, preventing investments from disproportionately benefiting actors with greater economic capacity. It is crucial that financial planning considers intergenerational justice, avoiding compromising the rights of future generations and promoting lasting ecological and social balance (Béné et al., 2018).

- **Towards a just and transformative resilience model:** Designing and implementing resilience-specific funds, along with strategic international partnerships for funding and technical assistance, will enable subnational governments to move towards an equitable and sustainable resilience model. Ensuring that no community is left behind in the transition to a resilient future is key to achieving climate adaptation that not only reduces environmental vulnerability, but also combats structural inequalities (Hickel & Kallis, 2020; UNDP, 2020).
- **Mobilisation of financial resources from the private sector:** Ad hoc financial instruments and mechanisms must be generated within second-tier banks, non-bank financial institutions, and mobilisation of impact investment, to increase the competition of soft financial instruments that can, under different formulas (productive capital, guarantees, credits, payments for results, risk portfolios, among others), generate the financial conditions that allow the private sector to implement innovative forms of financing.

Figure 6: Elements of Financial Mechanisms and International Partnerships for Subnational Just Resilience in a project





5.3. Provision of Training and Resources for Subnational Governments on Just Resilience

Subnational governments are key promoters and catalysts in just resilience strategies and projects, hosting within their political territory vast numbers of communities, cities, landscapes and ecosystems: they can be a bridge-builder, efficiently linking national policy (top-down) and solution needs from the grassroots (bottom-up). One of the main challenges faced by these governments is the lack of technical capacities, access to reliable data and expertise on how to integrate climate justice, social equity and participatory governance into their resilience strategies (UNDP, 2020).

This gap limits the capacity to respond to extreme weather events or ecosystem degradation, leaving many communities without effective strategies to reduce their vulnerability. Furthermore, in countries with less access to climate finance, subnational authorities face difficulties in developing inclusive action plans, as resources are often centralised at the national level or concentrated in sectors with greater technical and economic capacity.

To overcome these barriers, it is essential to strengthen the capacities of subnational governments through training programmes and the provision of resources to enable them to design and implement just resilience policies in an autonomous and sustainable manner.

In addition to technical training, the provision of methodological tools and accessible data platforms is essential to improve decision-making. In this sense, RegionsWithNature (RwN) is an initiative created with the objective of monitoring actions on biodiversity. The RwN initiative contemplates an Action Platform (currently under development), which will serve as a tracker to measure the progress of subnational government actions in relation to the main action areas of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The platform is not intended to replace the monitoring framework, but to assess progress against the goals and targets of the KMGBF at the regional level, and to provide information that will be useful for building just resilience.

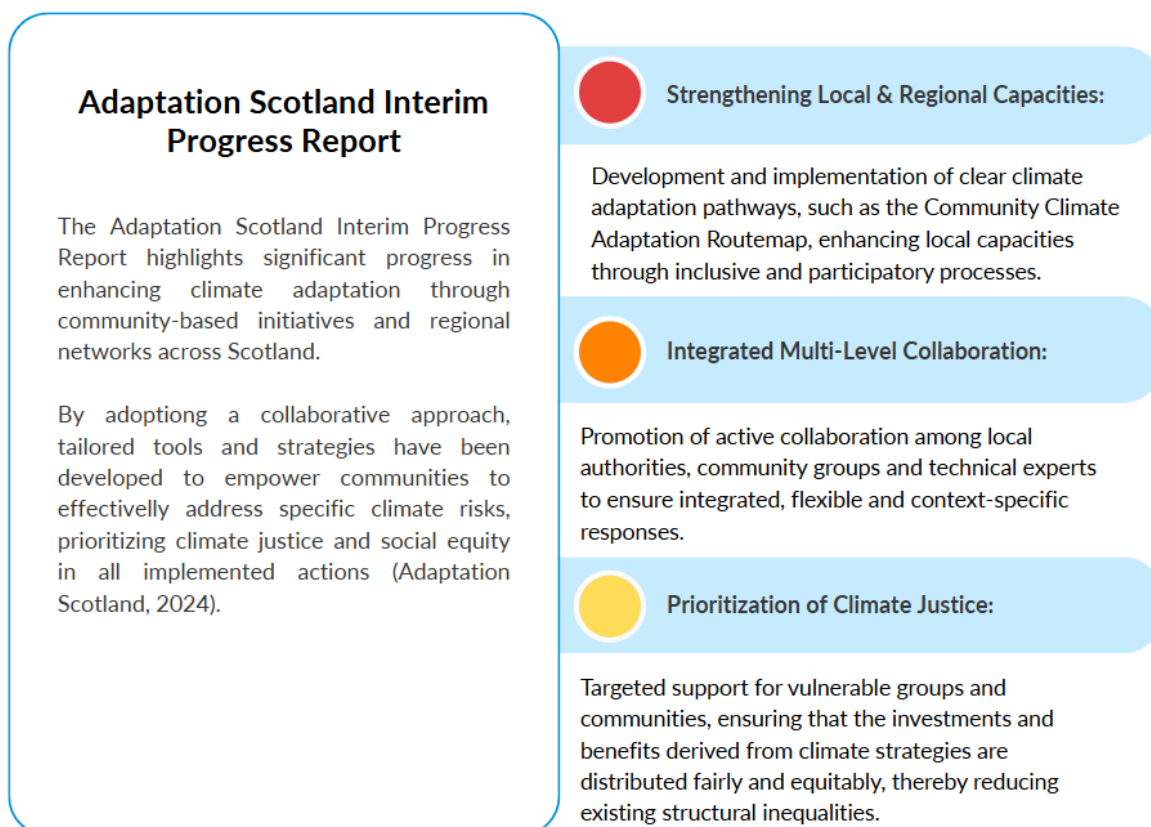
Similarly, Regions4, through the RegionsAdapt initiative, is a platform that brings together successful examples, best practices and lessons learned from more than 80 subnational governments. Such tools facilitate long-term planning and the formulation of more equitable strategies, ensuring that resilience investments benefit the most vulnerable communities.



Capacity building must go beyond technical aspects and consider training in participatory governance and climate justice, ensuring that resilience strategies not only respond to climate impacts and biodiversity loss, but also address structural inequalities.

Capacity building of subnational governments is thus a fundamental pillar for just resilience, as it enables them to act effectively in the planning and implementation of equitable and just climate, biodiversity and sustainable development policies. The provision of technical training, access to monitoring tools and the development of participatory governance strategies are key to ensuring that responses to climate change and biodiversity loss are inclusive and geared towards reducing inequalities. Without these tools, resilience policies risk benefiting only privileged sectors and perpetuating the vulnerabilities of the most affected communities. Implementing capacity building and resourcing programmes will ensure that regional governments become key actors in the fight against climate change and in building more resilient and just territories.

Figure 7: Example of action based on training and resources



Information from the Scottish Government, available at:

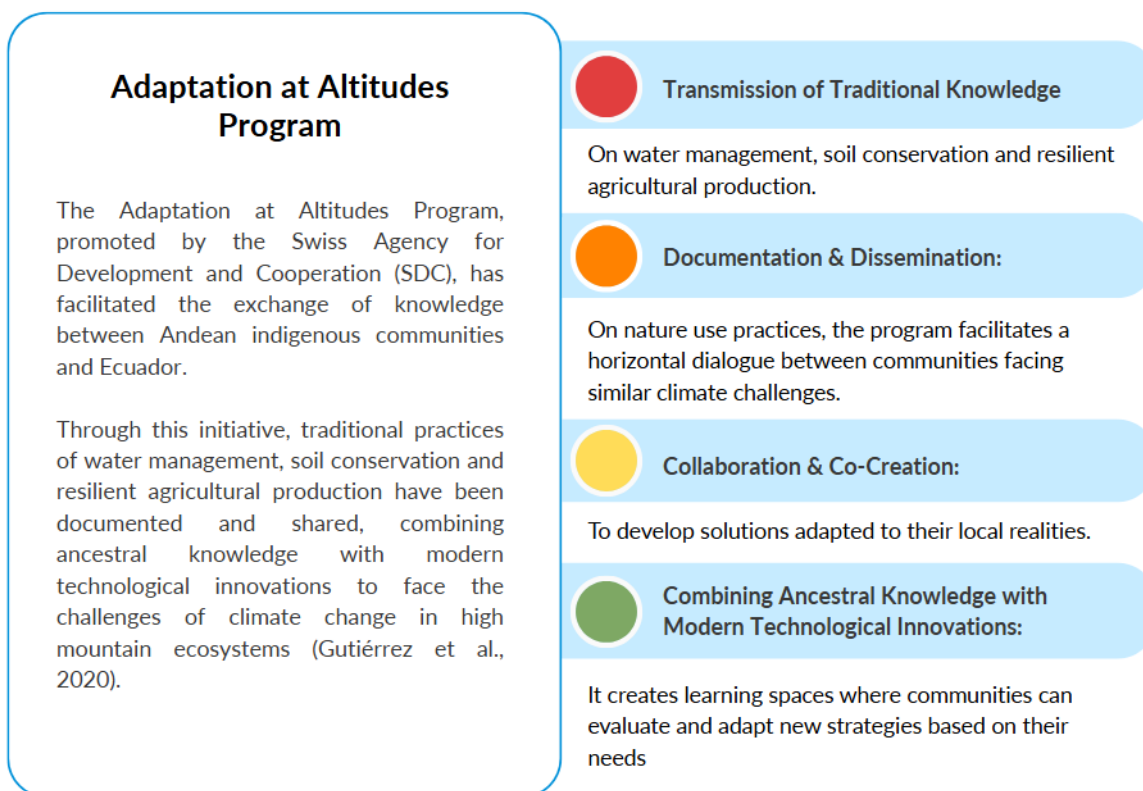
<https://adaptation.scot/app/uploads/2024/10/low-res-6097-as-interim-progress-report.pdf>

5.4. Peer Learning Networks and Exchange of Good Practices

Building subnational just resilience cannot rely on individual efforts or isolated strategies. The complexity of the challenges and the structural inequalities they face call for collaborative approaches, where the exchange of knowledge, experiences and governance models is common practice. In this context, strengthening and eventually creating learning networks between subnational governments, communities and international actors becomes a key tool to strengthen adaptive capacity and generate more integrated and sustainable responses to the climate crisis (Béné et al., 2018).

Peer-to-peer learning networks not only foster cooperation between cities, but also strengthen climate governance at the community level. One of the examples in Latin America can be seen in the figure below:

Figure 8: Example of peer-to-peer learning networks



Information from Gutiérrez op.cit.(2020).

Probably the most prominent example of subnational cooperation and learning networks on just resilience is exemplified again through the work of RegionsAdapt, an initiative launched in 2015 by Regions4, which brings together regional governments committed to climate adaptation. Through this platform, more than 80 regions around the world have developed joint strategies to strengthen their capacity to respond to climate change, promoting the exchange of information on resilience planning, adaptation financing and monitoring of climate impacts. The initiative has enabled regions to share experiences in implementing nature-based solutions and participatory climate governance models (Regions4, 2021).

In addition to exchanges between regions, learning networks can play a crucial role in strengthening national and sub-national policies for just resilience.

Building these peer-to-peer networks and sharing good practices are key strategies to strengthen the adaptive capacity of subnational governments and communities, ensuring that just resilience is not an isolated initiative, but a collective and comprehensive effort. These networks allow regional actors to learn from successful



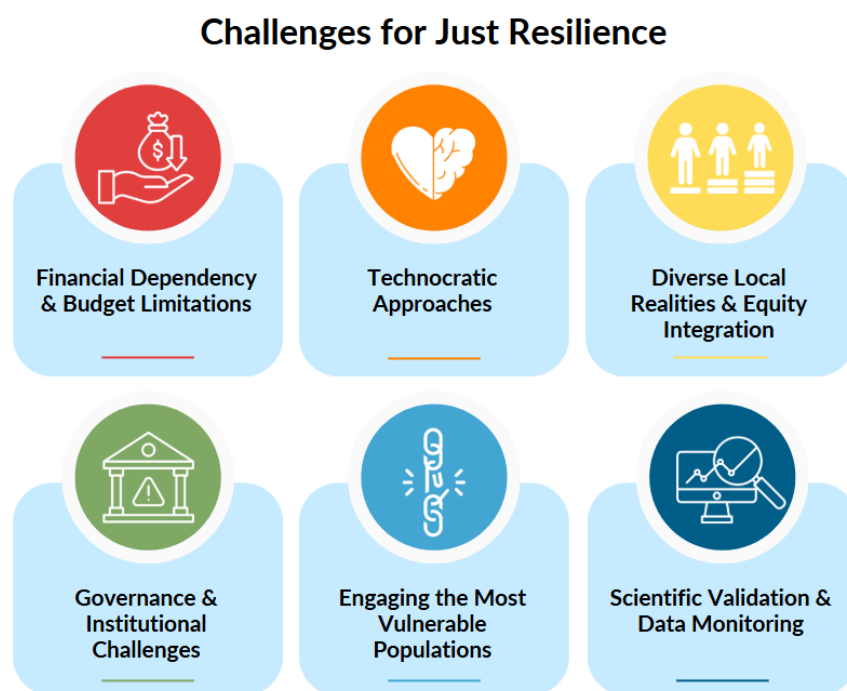
experiences, access innovative solutions and adapt strategies in a contextualised manner, thus ensuring that climate resilience investments are equitable, sustainable and transformative. Fostering cooperation between subnational governments, communities and international actors is key to building just climate policies that truly impact the most vulnerable and reduce inequality gaps in the response to climate change.

6. Challenges

Despite notable progress in the adoption of Just Resilience frameworks at the subnational level, several critical challenges remain, hindering their effective implementation. These challenges, reported by regional governments, encompass financial constraints, governance and institutional weaknesses, technocratic biases, difficulties in engaging marginalized groups, complexities arising from diverse local contexts, and inadequacies in scientific validation and data monitoring. Financial dependency and limited budgets, exacerbated by uneven resource distribution significantly threaten the long-term sustainability and equity of resilience initiatives (Chu et al., 2019).

Additionally, institutional fragmentation and shifting political landscapes often diminish policy coherence, limiting regional efforts to execute robust climate and biodiversity plans (Adger et al., 2020). A pronounced technocratic approach frequently neglects socio-cultural dimensions, creating a disconnect between technical interventions and local community realities, particularly in vulnerable regions across Africa and Latin America. Engaging marginalized groups—including women, Indigenous peoples, displaced communities and other vulnerable groups—in decision-making processes remains an ongoing struggle, amplified by entrenched cultural norms and inequitable access to resources (Pelling & Garschagen, 2019). Furthermore, addressing heterogeneous socio-environmental realities within regional policy frameworks poses significant equity integration challenges, requiring nuanced and context-sensitive solutions. Finally, limitations in scientific validation and standardized monitoring frameworks impede the accurate assessment of Just Resilience measures, weakening confidence in their effectiveness and equitable outcomes (IPCC, 2022).

Figure 9: Challenges for subnational just resilience implementation



Information gathered from the consultation process conducted by Regions4, including a survey and a virtual workshop with breakout discussions held on March 26th 2025 (which in total counted with the contributions of 26 regions including Andalucía, Basque Country, California, Campeche, Catalonia, Climate Trends/Assam State, CONGOPE, Cusco, Département de Saint-Louis, Flanders, Gauteng, Hauts-Bassins, Jalisco, KwaZulu Natal, Lombardy, Louga, Navarra, Paraná, Québec, Rabat Salé Kenitra, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Fe, Scotland, Wales, Western Province and Yucatán).

More specifically in the consultation process conducted by Regions4, the following challenges were identified:

- **Financial dependency and budget limitations:** Regions frequently highlighted financial dependency and budget limitations as major obstacles. Limited funding often undermines long-term sustainability, and the unequal distribution of resources raises concerns about fairness and equity. In some cases, regional projects face difficulties in having funds transfer from the national government level to their level although their role is often key when looking at financial sustainability.
- **Technocratic Approaches:** Overemphasis on technical solutions without considering social aspects of climate adaptation. The disconnect between technical climate and/or biodiversity solutions and the lived realities of



communities was a recurring issue, especially in African and Latin American regions.

- **Diverse Local Realities and Equity Integration:** Implementing region-wide policies that address diverse socio-environmental conditions is complex. Vulnerable populations often need more time to recover from climate disasters, and women's engagement is limited by traditional land ownership norms, particularly in male-dominated communities, requiring legal reforms for equal participation. Ensuring fairness is also challenging, as initiatives like electric vehicle subsidies may exclude those unable to afford the upfront costs.
- **Governance and Institutional Challenge:** Regulatory fragmentation, along with shifting political context (e.g., electoral cycles or conflicts), weakens the coherence and effectiveness of climate and biodiversity actions plans.
- **Engaging the Most Vulnerable populations:** Identifying and reaching marginalized groups remains a challenge. Women, Indigenous peoples, and displaced communities are particularly impacted by the lack of access to decision-making structure.
- **Scientific Validation and Data Monitoring:** Confidence in climate policies is often low due to a lack of robust scientific validation and the absence of a standardized framework for tracking progress. Additionally, limited access to disaggregated and context-specific data hampers regions' ability to evaluate the effectiveness and equity of these efforts, making it difficult to assess their true impact.

These challenges, identified through projects and implementation experiences at the subnational level, indicate that significant efforts towards the integrative approach of Just Resilience already exist in various regions worldwide. In this context, it is possible to identify initial areas of opportunity where capacity-building and targeted investments must be directed to effectively address these gaps.

7. Conclusions: Towards Just and Transformative Subnational Resilience

The climate and biodiversity crises have amplified the structural inequalities that affect the most vulnerable communities, highlighting the need to adopt a subnational just resilience approach that guarantees equity in the response to these challenges. Just resilience not only implies strengthening the adaptive and mitigation capacity of territories, but also transforming the structures of exclusion that have historically marginalised certain sectors of the population. In this sense, subnational governments play a key role in the implementation of effective strategies, as their proximity to



communities allows them to design solutions adapted to local realities and ensure a more equitable distribution of the resources and benefits of climate action.

For these strategies to be successful, the development of an international framework that recognises and enhances the role of subnational governments in just resilience is critical. Multi-level governance must facilitate the articulation between national and local efforts, ensuring that adaptation and mitigation policies include principles of equity, participation and sustainability. International financing mechanisms must also be accessible to subnational territories, ensuring that resources reach the communities that need them most and that climate investments do not reinforce existing inequalities.

The strengthening of cooperation networks between subnational governments, communities and international agencies allows for the sharing of successful experiences and the adaptation of innovative models to different territorial contexts. Networks such as Regions4 and initiatives such as RegionsAdapt, the Case Study Database and the Regions4 Biodiversity Learning Platform (R4BLP) have demonstrated the importance of these collaborative spaces, facilitating access to technical information, monitoring tools and best practices in environmental and social resilience. However, for these efforts to have a sustained impact, it is necessary to strengthen funding mechanisms that allow subnational governments to access specialised training and technical assistance to improve their response capacity.

The design and implementation of subnational just resilience projects that enable biodiversity restoration and conservation, as well as climate adaptation and mitigation and sustainable development, must be aligned with the basic principles of equity and inclusion, participatory governance, fair distribution of resources, intergenerational justice, and ecological, economic and social balance. The case studies included in this document have shown that strategies based on nature-based solutions, inclusive governance and climate justice can generate positive impacts both in reducing vulnerabilities and improving the quality of life of communities. However, for these initiatives to be scalable and replicable, it is essential to develop regulatory and financial frameworks that prioritise just resilience in the territories most affected by the climate and environmental crisis.

In this context, the policy recommendations proposed in this document aim to provide a structured and operational framework for subnational governments to integrate just resilience into their climate, biodiversity and sustainable development planning. The incorporation of clear design, implementation and evaluation criteria will ensure that resilience strategies not only reduce the climate risks and ecosystem loss, but also



promote a structural transformation that closes inequality gaps and strengthens the democratic governance of territories.

Subnational just resilience is ultimately a tool to ensure that no one is left behind in the transition to more equitable and sustainable societies. This will only be possible if regional governments have the necessary policy, financial and technical support to drive adaptation and mitigation strategies that prioritise the most vulnerable communities and promote a development model compatible with the conservation of the planet. Strengthening international cooperation, investing in learning networks and consolidating just resilience policies will enable progress towards a future in which social equity and environmental sustainability are fundamental pillars of the response to the climate and biodiversity crises.



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Annex 1: Related Concepts and their Role in Just Resilience

Just resilience is intrinsically linked to several key concepts that contribute to its understanding and effective implementation. These concepts enable the structuring of strategies that ensure equity, sustainability and inclusiveness in adaptation and mitigation efforts, as well as biodiversity conservation and restoration. The main approaches and their role in building just resilience for subnational governments are presented below:

Climate Justice: This is based on the premise that climate change does not affect all populations equally, but amplifies pre-existing inequalities. Climate justice seeks to ensure that adaptation and mitigation strategies address these historical inequalities and benefit the most vulnerable populations (Juhola et al., 2022). For subnational governments, this concept is critical in formulating adaptation policies that prioritise communities most at risk and ensure equitable access to climate finance and sustainable technology.

Just Transition: The transition to sustainable economies must ensure that the costs of change do not fall disproportionately on workers, vulnerable populations or marginalised communities (European Environment Agency, 2023). In this regard, subnational governments can implement productive reconversion strategies that generate sustainable jobs, train the workforce in emerging sectors and establish compensation mechanisms for those who may be affected by the economic transformation.

Locally Led Adaptation: This approach emphasises the role of local actors, particularly communities and local governments, in the design and implementation of adaptation strategies (IIED, WRI). By integrating traditional and local knowledge, locally-led adaptation enables more effective and contextualised responses to climate challenges, ensuring that decisions reflect the priorities of directly affected populations.

Transformative resilience: Beyond the capacity to absorb shocks and recover, transformative resilience proposes a fundamental reconfiguration of systems to make them more equitable and sustainable (Béné et al., 2018). Subnational governments have the capacity to implement structural reforms in spatial planning, infrastructure and climate governance to reduce inequalities and strengthen long-term resilience.

Transformational Adaptation is a process of structural and systemic change that goes beyond incremental adjustments to address the impacts of climate change in a profound and sustainable manner. Unlike conventional adaptation, which seeks to maintain existing structures and dynamics with incremental modifications,

transformational adaptation involves the reconfiguration of economic, social and ecological systems to reduce vulnerabilities and build long-term resilience. This approach relies on fundamental changes in governance, infrastructure, development models and the way societies interact with their environment. Its implementation requires innovation, strategic investments and changes in decision-making to ensure equitable and sustainable transitions. Transformational adaptation is crucial in contexts where climate impacts exceed traditional coping capacities, making it necessary to rethink entire systems of production, consumption and land use⁸.

Nature-Based Solutions : These strategies use ecosystems and natural processes to enhance resilience, providing both environmental and social benefits (European Environment Agency, 2021). For sub-national governments, these solutions can be integrated into land-use planning, watershed management and the protection of strategic ecosystems, ensuring equity in their access and benefits.

Intergenerational justice: Considering the long-term impact of policies is essential to ensure that future generations inherit a liveable and healthy environment (Gabbatiss et al., 2021). Sub-national governments can develop regulatory frameworks that prioritise sustainable investments and protect the rights of future generations to a safe and resilient environment, thus fulfilling the 2030 Agenda (UNDP, 2022) for Sustainable Development's central thrust of ensuring that economic, social and environmental progress benefits all people, especially those most vulnerable so that no one is left behind (UN, 2015).

In addition to these core approaches, there are other concepts that complement just resilience:

Social Capital and Community Networks: Just resilience depends not only on physical infrastructure and healthy ecosystems, but also on the ability of communities to organise, cooperate and access resources in times of crisis (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). Subnational governments can strengthen social capital by promoting supportive community networks and collaborative governance mechanisms.

Inclusive Urban and Regional Planning: Just resilience must be integrated into spatial planning to ensure that development strategies consider environmental risks and the needs of the most vulnerable populations (Pelling, 2011). Subnational governments can implement models of resilient urbanism and inclusive regional planning to ensure safe and sustainable spaces.

⁸ Developed based on information available at:

https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/FINAL_IPCCContribution_GGA_5thWorkshop_IPCC.pdf



Economic resilience: The capacity of a territory to recover from crises depends on its economic structure and productive diversification. Economic resilience implies fostering sustainable production models, ensuring access to green finance and promoting resilient jobs in sectors aligned with the ecological transition (Schoenmaker, 2021).

Human Rights and Climate Resilience: A human rights-based approach is crucial to ensure that climate adaptation and environmental conservation strategies respect and promote the dignity and autonomy of all people, especially historically marginalised groups (OHCHR, 2019).

Water and food security: Just resilience must address the equitable availability of essential resources such as water and food. Sub-national governments can implement integrated water resource management strategies and foster agro-ecological systems that strengthen food sovereignty and reduce vulnerabilities to climate change (FAO, 2022).

Innovation and Technology for Resilience: Digitisation, the use of open data and technology solutions can enhance the capacity of subnational governments to design and implement just, evidence-based resilience policies. Technologies such as early warning systems, climate modelling and citizen engagement platforms can improve governance and crisis response (IPCC, 2021).

Culture and Resilience: Cultural identity and traditional knowledge play a key role in the resilience of communities. Sub-national governments can integrate cultural practices into their adaptation strategies and promote the transmission of local knowledge as part of climate change response and environmental conservation (UNESCO, 2021).

Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Afro-descendants (IPLCs) represent key actors in building just resilience at the sub-national level. Their historical and cultural connection to their territories, their traditional ecological knowledge and their sustainable natural resource management practices give them a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Several studies have pointed out that these groups have historically been marginalised in environmental and development policy decision-making, despite the fact that their territories are home to a large part of global biodiversity and contribute significantly to climate stability (IPCC, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

These concepts provide key elements for just resilience, ensuring that the strategies implemented promote equity, sustainability and inclusion. Integrating these principles

enables subnational governments to develop policies and actions that not only address the immediate effects of climate change and environmental degradation, but also transform social and economic structures to reduce vulnerabilities in the long term.

Annex 2: Checklist of Just Resilience Principles and Criteria

This checklist is intended as a guiding tool to assess and promote the principles of Just Resilience. It is not required that every criterion be fulfilled for a project to contribute meaningfully to Just Resilience. The relevance and applicability of each principle and criterion will depend on the nature of the project, its objectives, and the specific geographical, social and cultural context in which it is implemented. Projects may demonstrate strong alignment with Just Resilience through different combinations of principles, and flexibility should be maintained to adapt this tool to diverse realities.

Just Resilience is not a static goal but a continuous process. This checklist should encourage learning, reflection, and adaptation over time, as social, environmental, and institutional conditions evolve. Likewise, this is a living checklist—one that will grow, diversify, and incorporate new elements as experiences in implementing Just Resilience actions and projects advance across regions. These evolving insights will serve to guide additional subnational governments in reaching their own goals.

Instructions for use:

- **Identify the relevant principles** based on your project's scope, context, and objectives.
- **Use the design criteria** to guide planning and development. These questions can inform project proposals, policy creation, or community consultation processes.
- **Use the evaluation criteria** to assess progress, impact, and areas for improvement during and after implementation.
- **Document your reflections**, noting which criteria were addressed, partially addressed, or not relevant—along with a justification. This will strengthen transparency and accountability.
- **Adapt and revisit** the checklist as conditions change, to foster ongoing alignment with Just Resilience principles.
- **Do you have a new and important criterion?** Do not be afraid to add it on this checklist and share with others.

Checklist:

1. Equity and Inclusion: prioritise historically marginalised and vulnerable populations.

1.1. Design Criteria:



- ☐ 1.1.1. Identifies the target community or vulnerable group, based on a context-specific analysis that considers social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors, recognizing that vulnerability and resilience needs vary across different segments of society.
- ☐ 1.1.2. Integrates prior vulnerability assessments of the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the target communities to ensure that the intervention responds to their specific needs.
- ☐ 1.1.3. Defines clear mechanisms to prioritise historically marginalised groups, such as indigenous peoples, local communities, Afro-descendants, women, migrants, the elderly, youth, children, people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups.
- ☐ 1.1.4. Incorporates gender, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic or other vulnerability-related analyses from the inception, and during the formulation of projects, policies or initiatives.
- ☐ 1.1.5. Identifies mechanisms for ongoing feedback and complaint resolution from vulnerable groups throughout project implementation.

1.2. Evaluation Criteria:

- ☐ 1.2.1 Measures how many people from historically marginalised groups participate in and benefit from the policy or initiative. Considers means of closing the gap in catering to the needs of marginalized groups.
- ☐ 1.2.2. Assesses beneficiary communities' perception of their level of inclusion and participation in decision-making. This can preferably be done at the level of impact assessment.
- ☐ 1.2.3. Monitors the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms and the level of trust from vulnerable groups in raising concerns or contributing suggestions.

2. Participatory Governance: involving local communities, indigenous groups and civil society in decision-making.

2.1. Design Criteria:



- ☐ 2.1.1. Ensures that decision-making processes involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including experts, the private sector, civil society, citizens, and local communities.
- ☐ 2.1.2. Goes further to guarantee meaningful consultation and decision-making power for Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, local communities, community organizations, and other groups who are often underrepresented or at greater risk.
- ☐ 2.1.3. Ensures that project information is accessible and understandable to all stakeholders, in multiple formats and local languages where necessary.
- ☐ 2.1.4. Includes local communities' and/or indigenous peoples' governance and decision-making systems, considering customary law.
- ☐ 2.1.5. Establishes co-design or co-management structures where local and indigenous actors share leadership roles in decision-making.

2.2. Evaluation Criteria:

- ☐ 2.2.1. Quantifies the number and evaluates the diversity of community representatives involved in the design, implementation and/or monitoring & evaluation of the policy or project.
- ☐ 2.2.2. Evaluates the level, quality, and sustainability of stakeholder participation, recognizing that participation can range from one-way information sharing, to involved consultation, to continuous collaboration.
- ☐ 2.2.3. Utilizes both internal and external channels of communication and messaging, with the widest possible reach.
- ☐ 2.2.4. Measures respect for the rights of indigenous peoples in decision-making over their territory. Full compliance with related legal and supplementary frameworks.
- ☐ 2.2.5. Tracks and reports on the responsiveness of decision-making processes to community input, including how feedback was addressed.

3. Fair distribution of resources: ensure that investments in resilience do not disproportionately benefit privileged groups.

3.1. Design Criteria:

- ☐ 3.1.1. Ensures that the distribution of resources favours the most vulnerable communities.
- ☐ 3.1.2. Develops mechanisms to enable marginalised communities to access credit, productive capital, climate/biodiversity/restoration funds and/or other sources of funding or financing.
- ☐ 3.1.3. Identifies administrative, technical or financial barriers to equitable participation in the project.
- ☐ 3.1.4. Includes provisions to monitor the redistribution of benefits over time, ensuring sustained access for vulnerable populations.

3.2. Evaluation Criteria:

- ☐ 3.2.1. Monitors and analyses the project's budget distribution and its impact on different social groups, both in terms of investment expenditure, activities and goals.
- ☐ 3.2.2. Contemplates indicators on the impact of the project or policy on the reduction of social and economic inequalities, as well as (general) access if considered.
- ☐ 3.2.3. Measures increased access to economic and productive opportunities in vulnerable communities to different types of funds and capital.
- ☐ 3.2.4. Assesses the percentage of resources allocated to grassroots organisations and collectives, not only to large entities, formal civil society organisations and consultancies.
- ☐ 3.2.5. Evaluates the accessibility and user-friendliness of funding application procedures for community-based organizations.
- ☐ 3.2.6. Monitors the redistribution of benefits overtime, ensuring the distribution of impacts and resource favours the most vulnerable communities for a sustained access in the long term.

4. Intergenerational Justice. Balancing current adaptation needs with long-term sustainability.

4.1. Design Criteria:

- ☐ 4.1.1. Integrates strategies that guarantee the environmental and social sustainability of the project beyond its duration.
- ☐ 4.1.2. Designs solutions that do not generate new environmental or social risks for future generations.
- ☐ 4.1.3. Includes training programmes for youth and future generations on climate resilience, sustainable management of natural resources (biodiversity) and restoration.
- ☐ 4.1.4. Incorporates climate or biodiversity scenarios (short/medium/long term) in project design to assess future risk exposure.

4.2. Evaluation Criteria:

- ☐ 4.2.1. Assesses the impact of the project on the improvement of long-term conditions and its exit strategy.
- ☐ 4.2.2. Identifies best practices that can be scaled up or replicated in other regions with similar conditions and challenges.
- ☐ 4.2.3. Measures youth and children's participation in project planning and implementation. Considers all voices so that no one is left behind.
- ☐ 4.2.4. Evaluates whether the project includes intergenerational dialogue mechanisms, especially between elders and youth.

5. Ecological, Economic and Social Balance. Integrating environmental protection with social welfare.

5.1. Design Criteria:

- ☐ 5.1.1. Incorporates strategies that restore ecosystems and generate social and economic benefits.
- ☐ 5.1.2. Designs solutions that do not generate new environmental or social risks for future generations and lead to maladaptation⁸.



- ☐ 5.1.3 Combines environmental conservation with access to basic services, employment and food security.
- ☐ 5.1.4. Identifies trade-offs between ecological, economic and social goals and includes strategies to mitigate them.

5.2. Evaluation Criteria:

- ☐ 5.2.1. Measures the effect of the project on the integrity of degraded ecosystems and their ecosystem services.
- ☐ 5.2.2 Assesses the impact of the project on the well-being of the community (health, education, income, access to water and food, etc.).
- ☐ 5.2.3. Analyses the degree of conservation of traditional territories and sacred sites of indigenous and local communities.
- ☐ 5.2.4. Monitors changes in community perceptions regarding environmental quality and livelihood security over time.

At Regions4, we act, we connect, we transform. We act by staying close to the territories we serve, embodying transformative change on the ground. We connect regions to each other and to the UN, ensuring their voices are heard in global discussions. We transform by driving real, localized progress in climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development.

This white paper on Just Resilience was developed thanks to the financial support from the Scottish Government, and with contributions from the work done in collaboration with Scotland and CONGOPE.

 www.regions4.org

 @Regions4

 info@regions4.org

 Chaussée d'Alsemberg, 999 1180 Brussels, Belgium

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