



Convening Town Hall COPs across Sub- Saharan Africa

CONNECTING CLIMATE ACTION AT ALL LEVELS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive summary

The Town Hall COP initiative, launched by ICLEI Africa in 2025, is transforming how climate action is planned and implemented across Sub-Saharan Africa. Inspired by the structure of the UN Climate Change Conferences, Town Hall COPs provide an inclusive, locally grounded platform where communities, local governments, and national representatives co-create solutions that inform NDCs, NAPs, and Global Stocktake reporting.

By October 2025, 18 Town Hall COPs had been convened across six Sub-Saharan African countries, engaging over 2,000 participants, from mayors and national ministries to youth and civil society. The dialogues surfaced more than 300 local commitments and generated actionable insights on waste, livelihoods, and education as pillars of resilience.

In a global first, South Africa's Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) formally endorsed the Town Hall COP model, embedding it in the country's NDC process and demonstrating its power to connect national targets with community priorities.

The outcomes are clear:



From waste to worth

Cities are driving circular economies that turn waste into jobs and cleaner environments.



Securing futures

Climate action is protecting and creating livelihoods in renewable energy, nature, and mobility.



Awareness into action

Youth and communities are leading local transformation through education and civic engagement.

As Africa prepares for COP32 in 2027, Town Hall COPs stand as a proven, scalable mechanism for inclusive, multilevel climate governance, linking local leadership to national ambition, and turning commitments into tangible results for people and the planet.

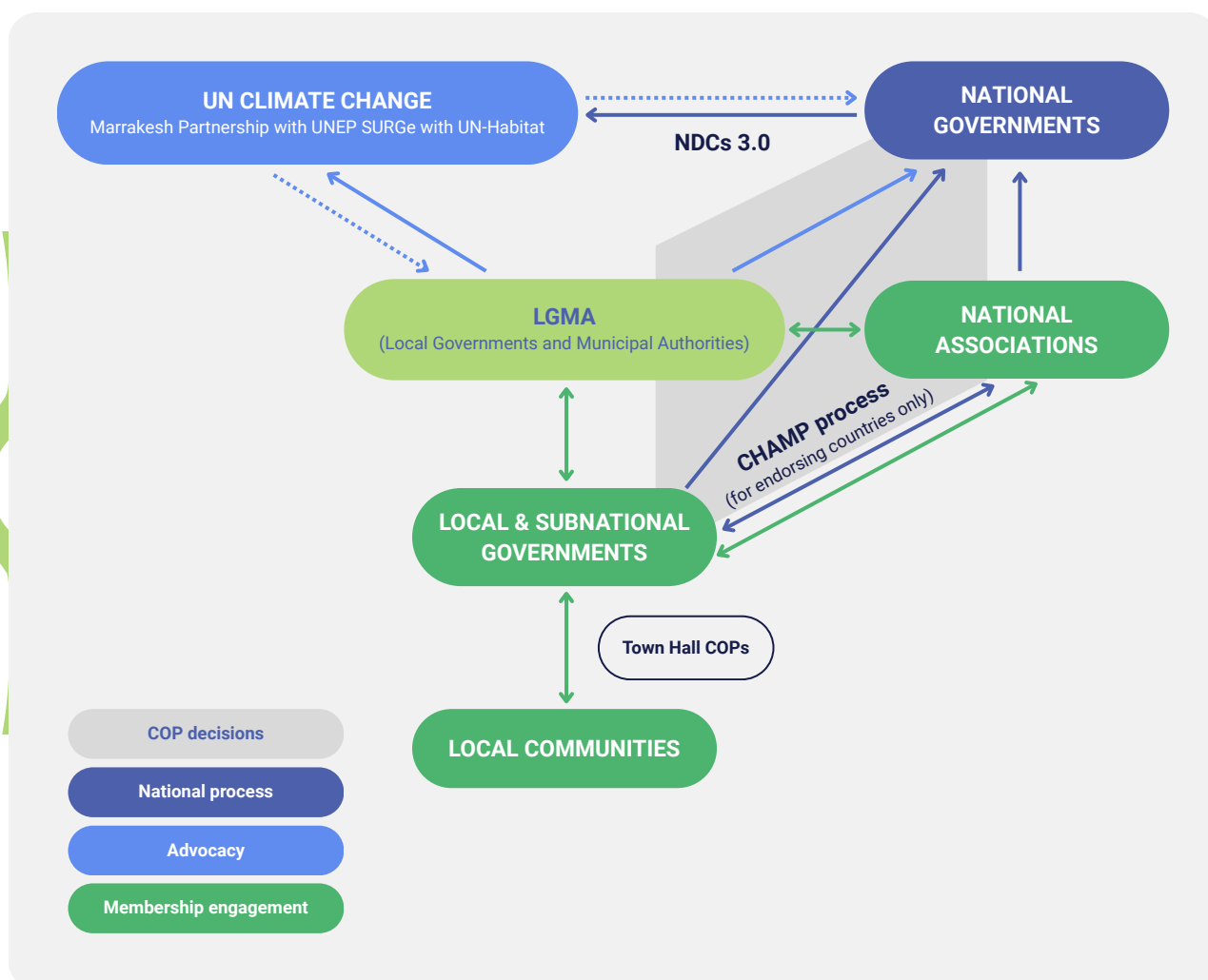
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the partnership and commitment of all local governments, community representatives, and technical partners who co-hosted Town Hall COPs across Sub-Saharan Africa. Special recognition goes to the Urban Movement Innovation Fund (UMI), whose support made the integration of the Visioning Framework possible.

We also extend appreciation to the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) for pioneering national endorsement of the model; the Rwandan Ministry of Environment and the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) for regional collaboration; and the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency under ICLEI's leadership for linking outcomes to the UNFCCC process.

We extend our gratitude to all facilitators, city teams, and communities who made these dialogues inclusive, inspiring, and impactful.



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WHAT IS A TOWN HALL COP?

What is a Town Hall COP?

Launched in April 2025, ICLEI's Town Hall COPs were inspired by the structure of United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COPs) and designed to give local governments and communities a practical and inclusive space to discuss climate goals, review progress, and identify pathways for enhancing local climate action in alignment with national plans and global commitments.

Through this model, Town Hall COPs become a local expression of the COP30 Presidency's "mutirão" call – a global collective effort grounded in local action. Each event mobilised diverse local voices to identify climate priorities, showcase on-the-ground solutions, and connect directly with national and international processes. By surfacing self-determined contributions and aligning them with national and global frameworks, Town Hall COPs turned the spirit of mutirão into a practical, participatory model for climate action everywhere.



Town Hall COPs are community-led

Town Hall COPs are built around the needs and priorities of each host community. The format is flexible and adaptive, allowing organisers to focus on locally relevant issues, from clean energy access and waste management to disaster preparedness and resilient livelihoods. Some hosts used the platform to make national climate plans more accessible, translating complex policy into practical local conversations, while others highlighted local climate leadership by showcasing successful projects, gathering community input, and building new partnerships.



Town Hall COPs are nationally relevant

With new national climate plans — Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs 3.0) — due at COP30, the 2025 Town Hall COPs created a chance for communities to ensure their priorities and experiences informed national policy. Each event aimed to strengthen the bridge between local realities and national ambition by inviting national government representatives, sharing locally developed outcomes, and maintaining dialogue after the event. The insights generated at the local level now provide valuable inputs for NDC and National Adaptation Plans (NAP) implementation, updates and global climate discussions.



Town Hall COPs are transformation-oriented

Town Hall COPs explicitly connect climate action to daily life. They highlight the intersections between resilience, health, jobs, nature, justice and affordability, showing that climate action is not an isolated agenda but a foundation for well-being and equitable development. ICLEI provided guidance and tools to help hosts design dialogues that were inclusive, solution-focused, and transformative—ensuring that discussions spoke directly to the lived realities of community members.

In summary

Town Hall COPs demonstrate that inclusive, multilevel climate governance is both possible and powerful. By translating global processes into local action, they give citizens and local governments a tangible stake in shaping climate decisions. The following section explores ICLEI's role in supporting and facilitating these processes across Sub-Saharan Africa.



Kampala, Uganda

WHAT IS A TOWN HALL COP?

ICLEI's role in Town Hall COPs

Town Hall COPs provided a platform for communities to take ownership of the climate conversation. Their outcomes are being shared with national governments and integrated into global processes through ICLEI's role as the Focal Point of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency to the UNFCCC.

Since the first climate COP in 1995, the LGMA Constituency has served as the official voice for local and subnational governments within the UN Climate Change process, connecting them directly to global decision-making. The 2015 Paris Agreement marked a turning point by recognising the essential role of these governments in achieving and enhancing NDCs. Since then, the LGMA has consistently advocated for systems that recognise, engage, and empower local and subnational governments as central actors in global climate strategies.

Through the Town Hall COPs initiative, ICLEI operationalised this vision. Local communities provided inputs that local and subnational governments can use to assess progress and align their plans with national priorities. These inputs also feed upward into the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnership for Climate Action (CHAMP), which encourages national governments to systematically integrate local action into national NDC finalisation and implementation processes.

The LGMA works on behalf of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, a joint global policy advocacy platform that brings together major international networks of local governments under a common voice for climate action.



Nairobi, Kenya (photo credit: Sharp Focus)

ICLEI Africa's facilitation role

At the regional level, ICLEI Africa adapted the Town Hall COP Toolkit and reporting framework to the needs of Sub-Saharan African cities. The African secretariat provided additional resources, logistical support where needed, and direct facilitation during events. This hands-on approach ensured that each Town Hall COP was contextualised to the host city, reflecting its priorities, challenges, and climate action opportunities.

Through these engagements, ICLEI Africa gathered first-hand accounts from mayors, community groups, and youth representatives—insights that reveal both innovative local solutions and systemic gaps requiring targeted support. This process also helped identify practical pathways for scaling and replication across the region.

The 2025 Sub-Saharan Africa Town Hall COPs focused specifically on helping local stakeholders understand their role in NDC3.0 implementation and identify concrete contributions to national climate targets. Leveraging our extensive network, ICLEI Africa invited national government representatives to participate in these dialogues, achieving national presence at 60% of all events and enabling direct exchange between policy-makers and community leaders.

Another key contribution was the facilitation of visioning exercises, guiding participants to approach discussions through a forward-looking, solution-oriented lens. This encouraged cities to explore transformational possibilities and identify immediate, achievable next steps.

Linking local outcomes to national and global processes

Beyond facilitation, ICLEI developed a reporting and synthesis framework that allows outcomes from Town Hall COPs to be captured as part of NDC and NAP implementation tracking and reported through the LGMA Constituency into the UNFCCC process.

Through this mechanism, Town Hall COPs are not just events—they are an entry point into a continuous cycle of local dialogue, national feedback, and global reporting. The model strengthens transparency, fosters mutual accountability, and positions local governments as central partners in achieving national climate commitments.



Sub-Saharan African Town Hall COPs: Impact and reach

The 2025 Sub-Saharan African Town Hall COPs represented the first coordinated effort to localise the COP process, bringing together citizens, local governments, and national representatives in shared dialogue. Building on ICLEI Africa's facilitation and the momentum from visioning exercises, these events demonstrate that inclusive, multilevel governance is both achievable and impactful.

Impact in numbers



18 Town Hall
COPs across **6**
countries



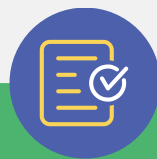
2082
participants



60% of events
attended by national
government
representatives



10 deep-dive
dialogues generating
direct NDC inputs

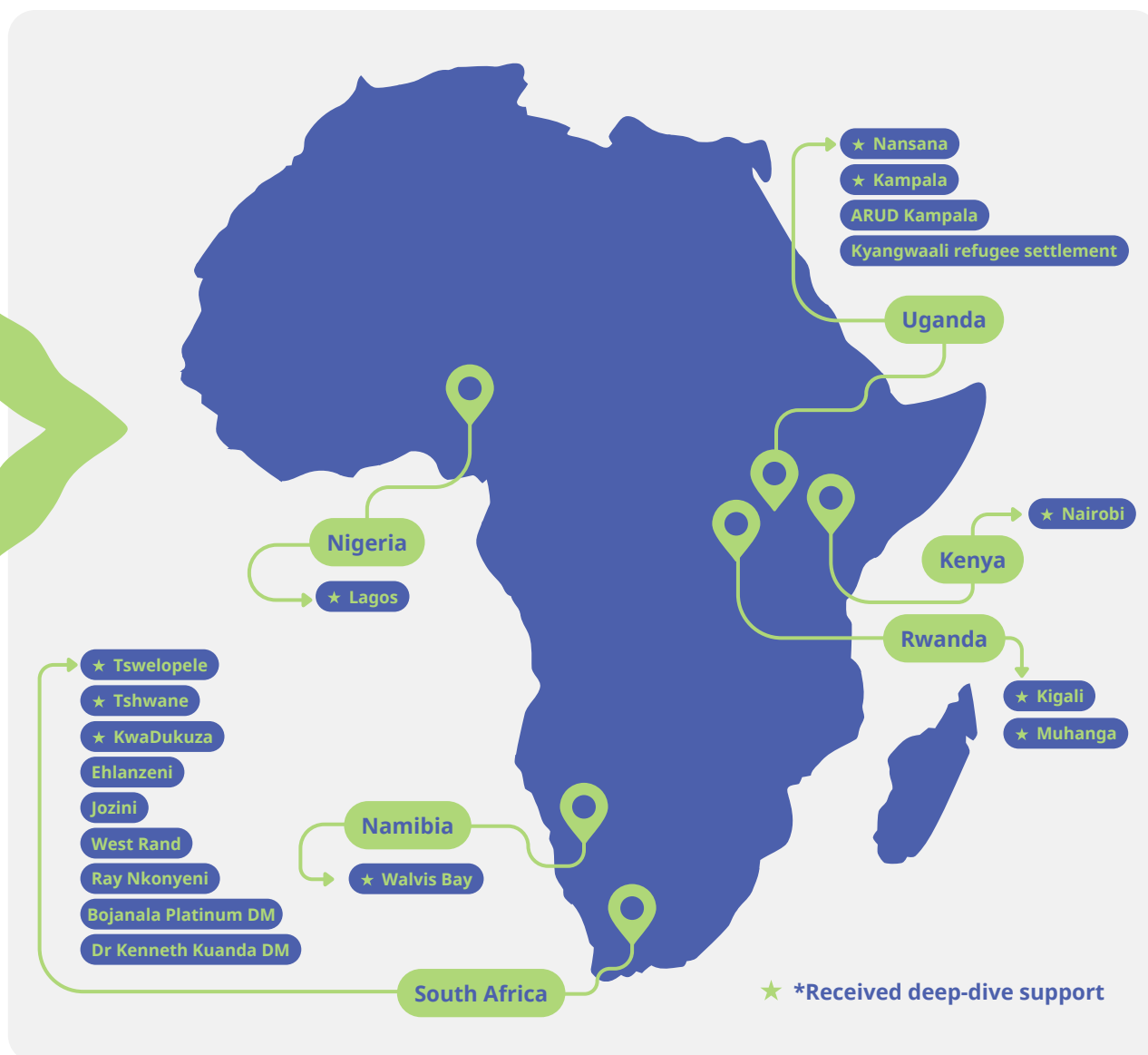


Over **300** local
commitments identified
for implementation
tracking

Together, these events have created a continent-wide network of cities and communities advancing inclusive, data-driven, and locally owned climate action.

Together, these dialogues created a continent-wide network of cities and communities advancing inclusive, evidence-based, locally led climate action. They also built a strong foundation for future national adoption and replication of the Town Hall COP model.

Regional reach and participation



By the end of October, a total of 18 Town Hall COPs had been convened across six African countries.

Of these 18 events held by October:

- 9 (50%) were held in South Africa
- 4 (22%) in Uganda
- 2 (11%) in Rwanda
- The remaining in Nigeria, Namibia, and Kenya

In total, 2,082 participants engaged directly in the dialogues, reflecting strong demand and ownership of the process.

The South African events had the highest participation, accounting for 58% (1,209 people) of all attendees. The Ugandan events represented 29%, showing broad regional engagement and replication potential.

ICLEI Africa provided deep-dive technical support to ten focus cities — Nansana, Kampala, Lagos, Walvis Bay, Kigali and surrounds, Muhanga, Tswelopele, Tshwane, and KwaDukuza — ensuring more structured facilitation, synthesis of insights, and alignment with NDCs and local climate priorities.

This expanding participation underscores how Town Hall COPs are helping to institutionalise inclusive dialogue as a core component of Africa’s climate governance landscape.

Key themes emerging across Town Hall COPs

Across the ten deep-dive dialogues, the most prominent themes included:



Climate mitigation and adaptation

The two most frequently discussed priorities reflect cities’ commitment to balancing emissions reduction with resilience-building.



Renewable energy, nature, and land use

Participants emphasised the need for integrated resource management that links energy access, ecosystem restoration, and food security.



Waste management, Just Transition, Loss and Damage, and climate finance

These topics highlighted the growing interest in locally led adaptation finance, equity, and livelihood protection.



Multilevel governance

Dialogues consistently stressed the need for stronger coordination between local and national government tiers.

This diversity of focus areas illustrates how Town Hall COPs foster systems thinking, integrating social, environmental, and economic dimensions of climate resilience. They are not merely consultation spaces—they are co-design platforms for climate solutions.

Ensuring inclusivity and equity

ICLEI Africa and its partners embedded inclusive participation principles across all Town Hall COPs.

Accessible venues and timing

Events were held in community-friendly spaces and scheduled for maximum attendance.



Removing barriers

Financial support for transport and childcare was provided in select locations such as Muhanga, Kigali, and Lagos.

Language inclusion

Interpretation and translation services were offered to ensure full participation across linguistic groups.



Targeted outreach

Youth, women, informal workers, and community-based organisations were proactively invited to shape the discussions.

Hybrid participation

Some dialogues included virtual options for remote engagement, expanding reach and accessibility.



Together, these measures fostered an environment where every voice counted, enabling diverse communities to co-create actionable outcomes and reinforcing trust between citizens, local governments, and national authorities.

From participation to policy influence

The scale and inclusivity of the Sub-Saharan African Town Hall COPs demonstrate their value as national policy support tools. Each event produced concrete, evidence-based inputs that can feed into NDC implementation, National Adaptation Plan development, and progress reporting.

By connecting local priorities to national frameworks, the Town Hall COPs are helping to bridge the implementation gap, transforming community-level innovation into national climate action.





THREE TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN TOWN HALL COPS

Three takeaways from the Sub-Saharan African Town Hall COPS

Across all 18 Town Hall COPS, three cross-cutting lessons emerged that reveal how African cities are redefining climate action from the ground up. These insights illustrate the potential of community-led dialogues to generate tangible pathways for transformation, from waste to worth, from vulnerability to opportunity, and from awareness to sustained action.

1. From waste to worth: Rethinking urban waste management

Across the Town Hall COPS, waste management emerged as one of the most urgent and defining challenges for Africa's rapidly urbanising cities. With urban populations projected to double by 2050 and more than 60% of residents already living in informal settlements, the pressure on local infrastructure and waste systems is intensifying. As the world approaches and risks overshooting the 1.5°C warming threshold, poor waste handling, through open dumping, burning, and blocked drains, will continue to magnify climate risks such as flooding, air pollution, and disease outbreaks, particularly in informal and underserved areas.

Yet many cities are reimagining waste as a resource rather than a burden. Through recycling, composting, and biogas innovation, municipalities are turning waste into an opportunity for emissions reduction, public health improvement, and green job creation. These locally driven circular economy initiatives demonstrate that when communities are empowered, waste can become a cornerstone of both resilience and sustainability.

Town Hall COP discussions highlighted the need for systemic support, from formalising waste-pickers and improving collection infrastructure, to integrating waste management into NDC and NAP implementation frameworks. National governments can build on these local innovations by scaling up circular economy initiatives that combine environmental impact with economic inclusion.



2. Securing futures: Climate action that protects and transforms livelihoods

Livelihood security was a central and recurring theme across all dialogues, underscoring the deep link between climate resilience and socio-economic stability. In a region where informal employment accounts for up to 85% of all jobs, and where climate change is already disrupting agriculture, fisheries, and small-scale trade, exceeding 1.5°C of warming will further deepen vulnerability.

Participants emphasised that protecting livelihoods requires placing nature and people at the heart of resilience. Healthy ecosystems, wetlands, urban forests, and green spaces are critical for sustaining livelihoods and adaptive capacity. Cities called for safeguarding existing jobs and new job opportunities in renewable energy, nature-based solutions, e-mobility, and the circular economy, highlighting that climate action must drive inclusive growth, not displacement.

To achieve this, cities advocated for transparent governance and formal participation mechanisms, such as climate councils, community monitoring platforms, and public accountability dashboards. These enable citizens to co-own local climate action and track results.

Through the Town Hall COPs, mayors and communities across Sub-Saharan Africa showed readiness to lead. When local voices shape national NDC implementation, climate ambition becomes both socially just and practically achievable, ensuring adaptation and mitigation efforts strengthen, rather than erode, livelihoods.



Walvis Bay, Namibia

3. Awareness into action: Empowering communities and youth for change

The Town Hall COPs underscored that mindset shifts and public awareness form the foundation of effective climate action. As African cities urbanise at unprecedented speed, it becomes critical for citizens to understand how climate change connects to their daily lives, from waste and flooding to health, energy access, and livelihoods.

While many countries have ambitious NDCs, participants noted that bridging the gap between national commitments and local implementation remains a challenge. Communities and youth emerged as powerful agents of change, capable of driving this shift. With Africa home to the world's largest population, investing in climate literacy, education, and civic engagement offers one of the continent's greatest levers for long-term resilience.

By fostering a cultural shift that normalises sustainability as a shared civic duty, cities can transform awareness into collective action, accountability, and enduring resilience.

Synthesis

Together, these takeaways illustrate the strength of the Town Hall COP model as a locally grounded mechanism for national implementation. The dialogues revealed that when waste, livelihoods, and education are treated not as separate issues but as interconnected pillars of resilience, cities can simultaneously advance social equity, environmental protection, and economic opportunity.

For national governments, these insights offer practical entry points for scaling successful local initiatives through NDC implementation plans, adaptation finance mechanisms, and CHAMP-aligned multilevel collaboration frameworks.





SHOWCASE

South Africa

South Africa became the first country in the world to officially endorse the Town Hall COP Initiative at the national level. Through a formal letter of support, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) recognised the Town Hall COP model as a platform for inclusive national climate planning and local implementation of the country's NDC. ICLEI Africa and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) partnered to roll out Town Hall COPs across the country, ensuring communities could directly engage in shaping climate priorities. The endorsement also aligned with South Africa's G20 Presidency priorities, particularly around innovation for sustainable development and participatory climate policy.

"Multi-level action on climate change is crucial for us. We are a country with three levels of government, and we have to work together because we cannot wait. Our municipalities are in the forefront of climate disasters".

~ Dorah Marema: Portfolio Head: Municipal Sustainability at SALGA



National endorsement in action

Through this national backing, ICLEI Africa and SALGA jointly facilitated nine Town Hall COPs across South Africa, with three deep-dive events receiving intensive technical and facilitation support from ICLEI Africa.

These gatherings accounted for the majority of total participation across the continental initiative – bringing together 1,209 of the 2,082 participants (58%). They became vital spaces where local stakeholders, community representatives, and government officials could discuss climate priorities, explore solutions, and co-design actions aligned with the NDC.

Importantly, these events enabled national representatives to hear local experiences first-hand, bridging a critical gap between policy design and on-the-ground realities. The process established a feedback loop between communities, municipalities, and national authorities, strengthening both accountability and trust.

From dialogue to action

South Africa's Town Hall COPs have proven that structured, participatory dialogue can translate national ambition into local implementation.

Through these events

- Local priorities were embedded in national frameworks, ensuring the NDC 3.0 reflected the real needs of communities and municipalities.
- Permanent platforms for participation were launched, such as the Tshwane Climate Action Forum, designed to sustain multilevel collaboration beyond the COP cycle.
- Youth leadership was strengthened through initiatives like the KwaDukuza Stewardship Programme, which mobilises young residents around climate action, education, and urban greening.
- Municipal capacity was deepened through peer learning and co-development of action plans linking local resilience priorities to national adaptation pathways.

The process demonstrated how bottom-up dialogue can accelerate top-down policy implementation, reinforcing the “whole-of-society” approach envisioned in South Africa's Climate Change Act.

Replicable lessons for other countries

South Africa's experience shows that when national governments institutionalise Town Hall COPs as a recognised participation mechanism, they unlock multiple benefits:



Clearer reporting and evidence for Global Stocktake processes



More responsive NDC and NAP implementation through continuous citizen feedback



Enhanced trust and accountability across governance levels

This model of endorsed, co-owned climate dialogue offers a blueprint for replication across the continent. By embedding Town Hall COPs into national climate governance, countries can make their NDCs both more inclusive and more effective—turning global ambition into tangible, locally led results.

WHY IS VISIONING ESSENTIAL FOR AFRICAN CITIES?

Why is visioning essential for African cities?

Sub-Saharan African cities are undergoing change at speed and scale seldom seen before. As the fastest urbanising region in the world, African cities are growing at an average rate of 3.5 percent per year. By 2050, the continent is expected to add nearly one billion people, rising from 1.5 to 2.5 billion residents, with 80 percent of this growth occurring in cities. Today, more than 60 African cities already have populations exceeding one million.

These rapidly growing cities face the complex challenge of providing for expanding populations amid aging infrastructure, fiscal constraints, and limited governance capacity. Yet they are also hubs of ingenuity, informality, resilience, and diverse knowledge systems. African cities are therefore sites of both immense opportunity and increasing risks, positioned at a critical inflection point for the continent's development trajectory.

As the world moves toward overshooting the 1.5°C temperature goal, cities across Africa face escalating threats from climate-related disruptions, resource scarcity, and economic volatility. These conditions demand that African cities not only prepare for disruptive change but also actively shape their futures, mitigating impacts, while navigating the deep uncertainty.

Simply put, what we know now is inadequate for the magnitude of change ahead. African cities must equip themselves with tools and processes that expand the boundaries of current thinking, enabling them to imagine, test, and plan for alternative futures.

The role of visioning

In this context, visioning processes create structured spaces for cities to think beyond day-to-day challenges and to design innovative, context-specific solutions commensurate with the scale of transformation required. Visioning provides a way to explore and interrogate possible, probable, and aspirational futures, using these insights to make informed decisions in the present and to set a collective direction for long-term change.

To support this, ICLEI Africa integrated visioning exercises into the 2025 Sub-Saharan Africa Town Hall COPs, applying the Three Horizons Framework to guide participatory dialogue.

Methodology: The Three Horizons Framework

The methodology was adapted from the '*Visioning fair transitions in African cities*' project, made possible through the support of the Urban Movement Innovation (UMI) Fund, a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Using the Three Horizons Framework, ICLEI facilitators helped participants explore:

- Desired future states for their cities (Horizon 3).
- Their current realities and systematic challenges (Horizon 1),
- Identifying actionable interventions to contribute to transitioning from the current realities towards an aspirational future (Horizon 2),

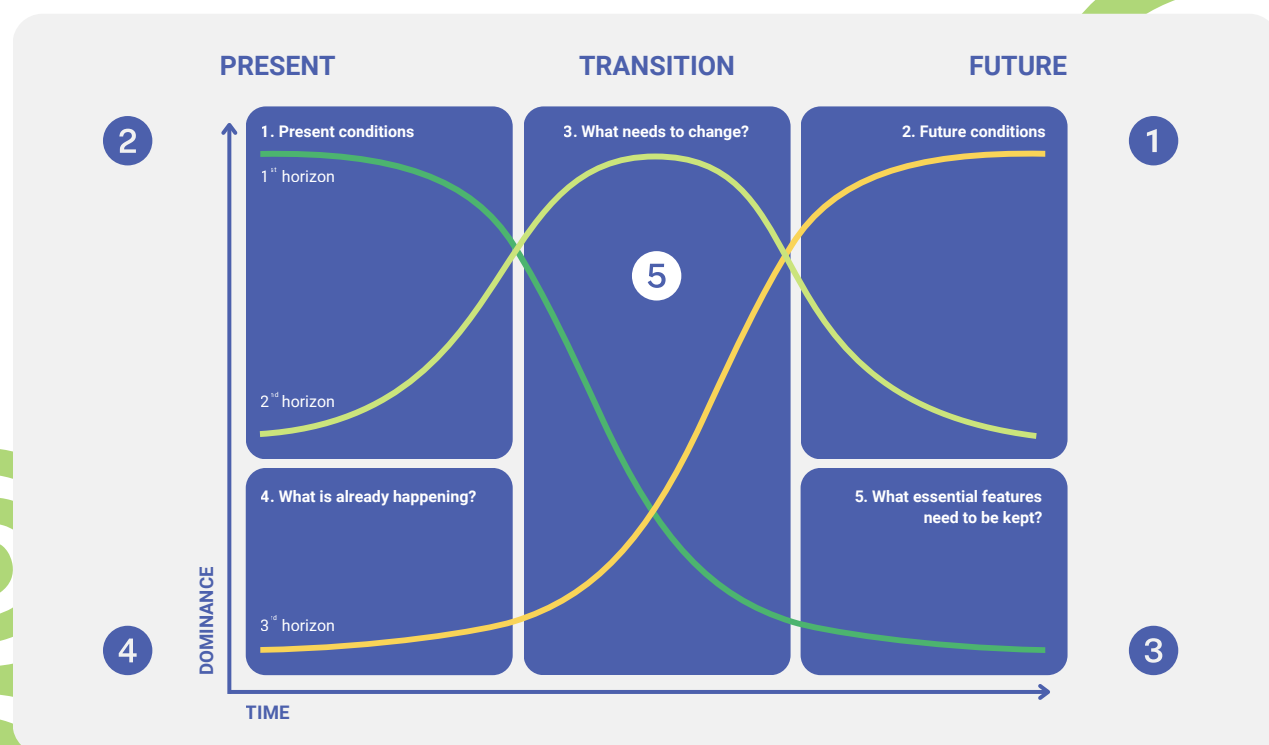
Participants were encouraged to identify priority needs and aspirations within the context of climate action and to pinpoint potential intervention points for moving from their current reality toward their envisioned future. This process provided communities, local governments, and stakeholders with a practical way to link future visions to immediate policy and investment choices.

A timely opportunity: Linking visioning to NDCs

The 2025 Townhall COPs were held at a critical policy moment, the preparation of new NDCs. Visioning exercises, therefore, provided a window of opportunity for cities to influence the design of these national climate commitments so that they better represent urban realities, needs, and priorities.

This opportunity arises once every five years within the UNFCCC cycle. The Town Hall COPs ensured that African cities could use this moment strategically, not only to share their vision for the future but to ensure that national climate plans are informed by the lived experiences and aspirations of urban communities.

The figure below provides a summary of the different elements of the Three Horizons Framework and the questions each group explored to complete this visioning exercise. What follows is a description of five key outcomes from applying the Three Horizons Framework in these Townhall COPs in a selection of African cities.



WHY IS VISIONING ESSENTIAL FOR AFRICAN CITIES?

Outcomes of visioning processes at Sub-Saharan African Townhall COPs

The visioning exercises conducted during the Town Hall COPs revealed how communities and local governments imagine the future of their cities, and what must change to get there. The results reflect five shared visions that cut across geography and context: investing in natural systems; transforming energy and mobility; reforming governance; revolutionising waste; and shifting mindsets through education.

Together, these visions form a coherent picture of African cities that are greener, fairer, and more resilient, places where climate action enhances well-being and opportunity.

1. Investing in natural systems to support well-being and resilience

Vision for the future	Present situation
African cities achieve a balance between urban life and healthy natural systems. Restored urban forests, wetlands, and parks are recognised as essential infrastructure that receive sustained investment. Climate-resilient drainage systems, durable roads, and well-designed housing protect lives and assets. Natural assets are valued as strategies for health, food security, and community resilience, while urban food gardens provide nutritious, affordable, locally grown produce and strengthen social networks.	Rapid urbanisation, deforestation, encroachment on wetlands, and loss of green spaces are common, causing erosion, flooding, and biodiversity loss. Poor waste management leads to the pollution of rivers and drains, while water crises reveal systemic inefficiencies and waste. These pressures undermine both ecological health and human well-being. Access to affordable, nutritious food is limited, particularly for low-income households reliant on cheap, processed foods.

Enacting change

Driving change requires incentivising grassroots action while reforming city planning and management systems.

Repair natural infrastructure

1

Create “Green Army” brigades, youth teams funded and trained to clear waste from rivers, wetlands, and drains. This reduces flood risk, restores ecosystems, and creates green jobs.

Build water security

2

Implement municipal leak-fixing programmes and promote rainwater harvesting through subsidies and building-code reforms. Incentivise property owners to install systems that turn rainfall from a hazard into a resource.

Empower communities

3

Support community and school food gardens on underused land to enhance food security. Combine clean-ups and tree planting with environmental education to nurture a culture of stewardship across generations.



Nairobi, Kenya (photo credit: Sharp Focus)

2. Cultivating decentralised, reliable and affordable energy and transport systems

Vision for the future	Present situation
Cities are powered by clean, affordable, and reliable renewable energy from solar and wind. Public transport is dignified, efficient, and inclusive. Safe, connected infrastructure makes walking and cycling practical, cost-effective, and preferred. Widespread adoption of electric vehicles and e-mobility reduces air pollution and improves public health, creating modern, people-centred, low-carbon cities.	Many African cities rely on expensive and polluting fossil fuels. Electricity is unreliable and costly, constraining households and businesses, especially the poor. Public transport is underfunded and inefficient, leading to congestion and lost productivity. Inequality in mobility means that low-income households spend a disproportionate share of time and income on travel, while unsafe streets deter walking and cycling.

Enacting change

1 Launch a city-led renewable energy revolution

Install solar panels on municipal buildings, schools, and clinics to ensure power security for essential services. Partner with financial institutions to create affordable loan schemes for households and small businesses. Develop municipal feed-in tariffs to enable two-way energy trade and local revenue generation.

2 Build a people-centred transport system

Develop safe, dedicated walking and cycling lanes linking key hubs such as townships, markets, and workplaces. Establish clean-energy bus corridors with dedicated lanes to ensure reliability and dignity in public transit.

3 Plan for the future

Modernise the electricity grid to handle distributed renewables and update planning codes for energy-efficient, compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods that reduce travel distances and emissions.

3. Building fit-for-purpose policy and governance systems

Vision for the future	Present situation
Cities are governed by accountable, transparent institutions that enable just transitions. Communities, youth, and marginalised groups have meaningful voices in decision-making. Trust between citizens and government is rebuilt through responsiveness and effective delivery. Local governments are empowered with the capacity and resources needed to drive rapid, equitable transformation.	While environmental policies and by-laws exist, they are often poorly enforced. Corruption, limited capacity, and fragmented planning undermine progress. Citizens feel disconnected from decisions that affect them, reinforcing a cycle of mistrust and inaction. City planning is frequently reactive rather than coordinated, resulting in inefficiency and vulnerability.

Enacting change

Strengthen accountability

1

Publicise and enforce environmental by-laws, and introduce transparent reporting on infractions. Establish hotlines and online portals for citizens to report environmental offenses, with quarterly public updates on actions taken.

Institutionalise participation

2

Create youth and community climate councils to co-design and monitor local projects. Formalise and support informal workers, such as waste pickers, by providing safety equipment, training, and recognition.

Build trust through transparency

3

Develop open dashboards tracking key performance indicators (e.g. renewable energy and public transport investments, trees planted, emissions reduced). Align policies across sectors to depoliticise planning and ensure long-term, coherent city development.

4. Revolutionise waste: From linear to circular

Vision for the future	Present situation
African cities are clean, waste-free, and circular. Waste is treated as a resource that powers green industries and creates jobs. Sanitation systems are inclusive and well maintained. Communities enjoy cleaner air, healthier waterways, and thriving local recycling economies.	Littering, illegal dumping, and reliance on single-use plastics are common. Drains and rivers are clogged, exacerbating flooding and disease. Informal waste pickers remain unrecognised despite playing vital roles in recycling. These challenges persist due to limited capacity, infrastructure gaps, and lack of incentives for behavioural change.

Enacting change

1

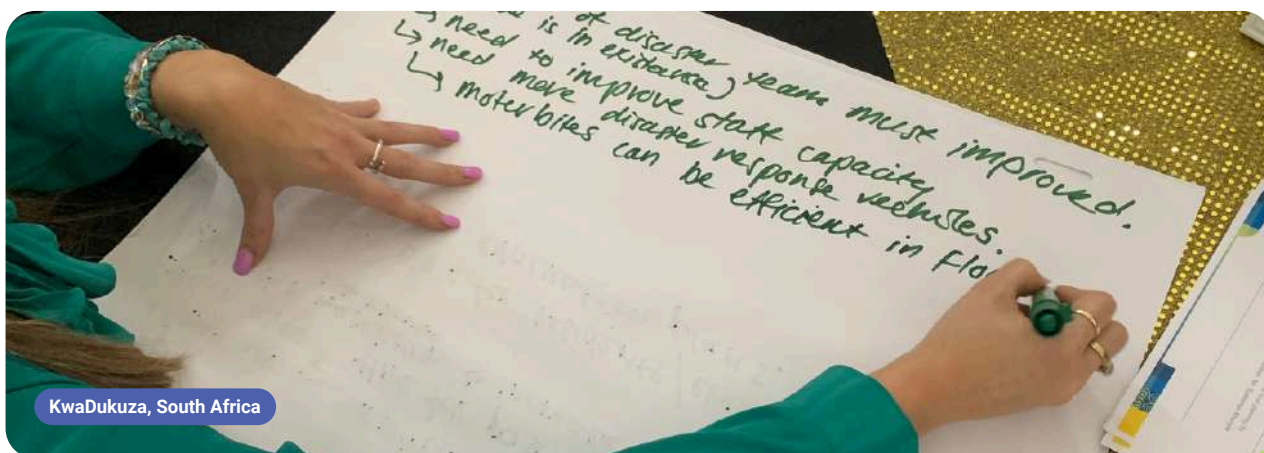
Improve waste management

Introduce citywide separation-at-source systems, recycling stations in schools and public buildings, and neighbourhood composting schemes.

2

Create value from waste

Integrate waste pickers into municipal collection systems with proper equipment and pay. Establish voucher or rewards schemes for recycling materials such as bottles and cans.



KwaDukuza, South Africa

5. Shifting mindsets: Education, awareness, and advocacy

Vision for the future	Present situation
Citizens are informed, empowered, and actively engaged in sustainability. Youth lead innovation and advocacy, while environmental education is mainstreamed into school curricula and community life. Individual and collective actions for climate resilience become a social norm.	Awareness of climate and sustainability issues remains limited, and behavioural change has been slow. Public understanding often ends at awareness rather than action. However, local NGOs, school clubs, and youth movements are emerging as strong foundations for future leadership.

Enacting change

Leverage education systems

1

Embed climate change, environmental stewardship, and sustainability into school curricula. Establish environmental clubs in all schools to provide youth with leadership opportunities and platforms for innovation.

Mobilise communities

2

Appoint environmental officers or volunteers to conduct door-to-door awareness and organise local clean-ups, urban greening, and training workshops on composting, eco-bricks, and small-scale solar systems.

Sustain civic engagement

3

Create community “climate ambassador” programmes to maintain participation and ensure that sustainability becomes a shared civic responsibility.

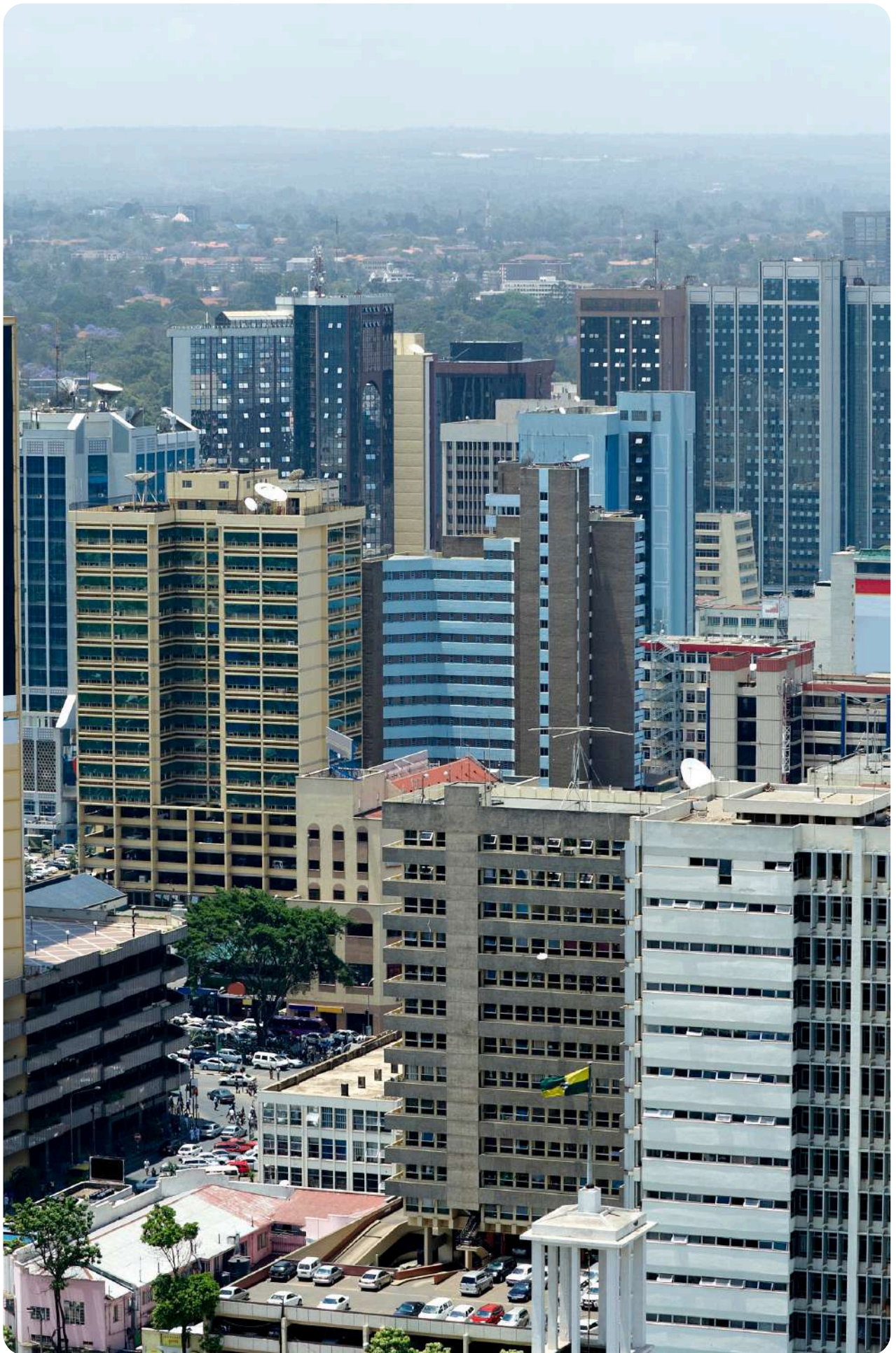
Synthesis

Across all five themes, the visioning exercises revealed a shared understanding that for African cities to be resilient and thrive in the context of rapid change, they must focus on integrated economic, social, and ecological planning and implementation. The actions identified by participants link directly to NDC and NAP priorities, nature-based solutions, clean energy, circular economy, governance reform, and public awareness, and demonstrate the power of locally defined, solution-driven dialogue.

Town Hall COPs turned abstract climate goals into practical pathways for action, showing that when communities are equipped with the right tools and spaces, they can lead transformation from the ground up.



Nairobi, Kenya (photo credit: Sharp Focus)



Town Hall COPs and the NDC processes

Town Hall COPs have emerged as a powerful and scalable mechanism for national governments to strengthen every stage of their NDC processes, from development and implementation to monitoring, reporting, and revision.

By facilitating direct engagement between national authorities, local governments, and diverse stakeholders, these dialogues streamline NDC workflows, surface locally tested solutions, and open new pathways for raising national ambition. Beyond policy alignment, they ensure that citizens are not only informed but active co-creators of climate action that affects their livelihoods, health, and urban environment.

In a world now on track to exceed the 1.5°C threshold, with Sub-Saharan African cities among the most exposed to climate risks, Town Hall COPS play a vital role in turning high-level commitments into tangible local action. They help translate national priorities into practical, community-driven interventions that build resilience, protect livelihoods, and improve the quality of urban life.

With deep expertise across Africa, ICLEI Africa is uniquely positioned to continue supporting this transition. Through facilitation, capacity building, and evidence-based reporting, ICLEI ensures that NDC commitments become inclusive, actionable, and locally owned, maximising impact across national, subnational, and community levels.

A turning point for climate governance in Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its climate governance journey. The successful rollout of the Town Hall COP model, and its first-ever national endorsement by South Africa, demonstrates the transformative potential of this approach for embedding local voices in national climate policy.

These dialogues offer governments a ready-made, replicable platform to co-create solutions that are ambitious, feasible, and rooted in real urban and community contexts. By fostering genuine multilevel collaboration, Town Hall COPs:

- Align national targets with community priorities.
- Enhance transparency and accountability in implementation.
- Catalyse the behavioural and societal shifts needed for deep resilience.

The next phase will focus on institutionalising Town Hall COPs as an integral component of national NDC governance frameworks across the region, ensuring regular, structured, and inclusive participation that informs policy updates, investment plans, and reporting under the Global Stocktake.

THE FUTURE OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN TOWN HALL COPS

Roadmap to African COP32 (2027)

As the world looks ahead to COP32 in 2027, which will return to Africa, the Town Hall COP process provides a strategic pathway to ensure that community voices and local priorities are embedded in the continent's climate agenda.

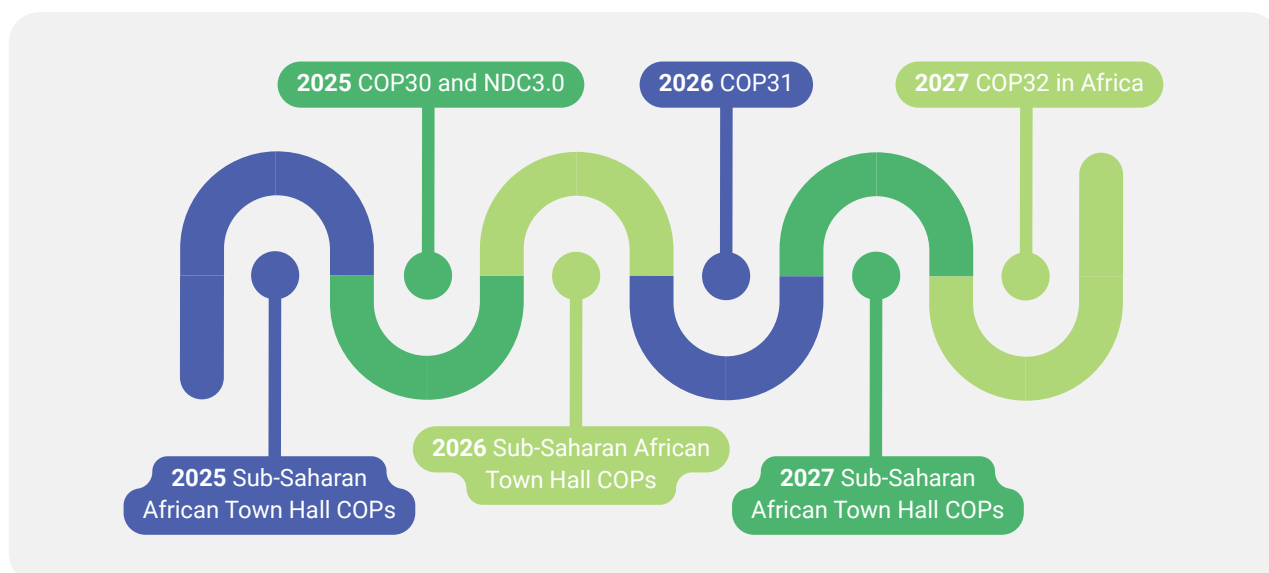
Along this roadmap, each Town Hall COP serves as a milestone, a formal entry point for convergence between national, regional, and local governments. These engagements enable countries to:

- Align local implementation with national NDC goals.
- Validate progress and feed local data into NDC reporting and the Global Stocktake.
- Engage stakeholders in co-developing adaptation and resilience strategies.
- Identify and prioritise projects ready for climate finance mobilisation.

The 2026–2027 period will be particularly critical for consolidating this work. Town Hall COPs convened in the lead-up to COP32 will provide space to:

- Reinforce multilevel cooperation and policy coherence across governance levels.
- Advocate for direct access to climate finance at the local level.
- Showcase African leadership in operationalising inclusive governance models aligned with the Paris Agreement.

With ICLEI Africa's continued facilitation, the Town Hall COP initiative will ensure that by COP32, Africa presents a continent-wide evidence base of locally led climate action that demonstrates how participatory governance strengthens both national ambition and global impact.





Nansana, Uganda



Kampala, Uganda



Kigali and Muhanga, Rwanda



KwaDukuza, South Africa



Tshwane, South Africa



Tswelopele, South Africa



Lagos, Nigeria



Nairobi, Kenya (photo credit: Sharp Focus)



Walvis Bay, Namibia



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