

Addressing the climate and environmental crises through better governance: The environmental democracy approach in development co-operation

Alina Averchenkova, Oleksandra Plyska, Jens Wahlgren

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About the authors

Alina Averchenkova is a Distinguished Policy Fellow and the lead for the Governance and Legislation research programme at the Grantham Research Institute and the Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy (CCCEP) at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She is also a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Elcano Royal Institute.

Oleksandra Plyska is a Postgraduate student at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Jens Wahlgren is a Postgraduate student at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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Introduction:

The climate and environmental crises as governance and politics failures

While science is clear on the urgency, impacts and the range of technological and policy solutions, all political systems – including democracies – have lagged to produce the decisive action required to address adequately climate change and environmental degradation. The climate change crisis and environmental degradation are therefore to a large extent consequence of governance and political failure. Lack of political will and political commitment, short-termism, vulnerability of policies to electoral cycles, weak accountability for implementation are some examples of such failures. Not accounting for governance failures and political economy factors undermines technocratic programmes on climate change and the environment. Governance failures are repeatedly identified as a risk factor to climate action in the latest sixth assessment report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022).

Governance failures require solutions that trigger socio-political and institutional change. Since the 1990s, democratic participation has been seen by many as essential for resolving environmental problems with environmental movements and green political parties being on the rise. Most solutions to governance failures focus on political institutions and processes through enhanced transparency and accountability, citizen participation and justice in addressing the climate crisis and environmental degradation.

The mutual synergies between environmental objectives and democracy are now internationally recognised in a range of international declarations and agreements, such as Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration; the 1998 Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters; and the 2018 Escazu Agreement on these matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. The 2015 Paris Agreement also notes the importance of ‘climate justice’, public awareness, participation, transparency and access to information.

The core pillars that manifest the relationship between democratic principles and environment form an approach that is sometimes labelled as ‘environmental democracy’. These pillars are summed up in the three access rights in Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration which call for access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice on environmental matters. These core rights can then be further operationalised to include environmental coalitions, political parties, legislative and judicial oversight, open data on the environment and a strong set of democratic freedoms that allows political voices to be heard through free speech and research (WFD, 2020).

Historically most development co-operation programmes treat the objectives of strengthening key pillars of democracy (or governance more broadly) separately from objectives related to

sustainable development, specifically environmental protection. This study explores the potential for development co-operation to help address climate change and environmental degradation through greater focus on environmental governance and through an environmental democracy approach.

Part 1 reviews existing literature and dataset on the relationship between environment, climate change and democracy. It focuses on the relationship between the key pillars of governance and democracy, including access to credible environmental data, political voice and multi-stakeholder coalitions, political parties, political accountability and oversight, and access to justice, and environmental policy outcomes.

Part 2 discusses the potential to tackle the objectives related to democracy, environment, and climate change simultaneously through foreign aid programmes. The analysis draws on the fourteen semi-structured interviews with nineteen development cooperation professionals, including several UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) experts in country offices and in headquarters, staff from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and from other European donor agencies and non-governmental organisations active on climate change and environmental governance, located and operating in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America. It also draws on the presentations at the [Conference on Environmental Democracy](#) held on 29-31 March 2022. We highlight key trends in the current practice in working across environmental democracy priorities, as well as barriers to and opportunities for scaling up such interventions as part of development co-operation. Based on the analysis we highlight recommendations for development professionals.

1. Democracy and environment: Learning from existing research

1.1 Relationship between democracy and environment

The academic literature remains divided on the question of whether democratisation always leads to better environmental outcomes. However, there is a growing conception of a synergy in the relationship between the key pillars of democracy and the environment. While empirical performance of wealthy democracies on climate change has varied, democracies are expected to be better structured to protect the rights and needs of groups most at risk from climate and environmental threats (Burnell, 2012). The key features of democracies that are compatible with environmental outcomes are a relatively high value placed on human life and the quality of life; responsiveness of institutions to society's expressed concerns; accountability of governments for their performance; power diffusion, and the electorate's ability to influence politics and policies (ibid). Yet democratisation alone does not guarantee stronger environmental performance, as the mixed performance of wealthy democracies on climate change mitigation shows (Lindvall, 2021; Burnell, 2012).

Box 1: The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations Act of 2015, which is unique to Wales, requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities, and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales is appointed to be the guardian of future generations through helping public bodies and policy makers to think about the long-term impact their decisions. The Commissioner has a duty to “promote the sustainable development principle, in particular to act as a guardian of the ability of future generations to meet their needs and encourage public bodies to take greater account of the long-term impact of the things they do”, and to “monitor and assess the extent to which well-being objectives set by public bodies are being met”. The Commissioner can provide advice to the public bodies and public service boards, carry out reviews into how public bodies are taking account of the long-term impact of their decisions and make recommendations following a review.

Source: www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act (Accessed: 21/622)

Theories focusing on the democracy-environment nexus range from ‘ecological democracy’ that is critical of existing liberal democratic institutions and calls for radically transforming or dismantling existing democratic institutions, to ‘environmental democracy’ that rather seeks to reform

democratic institutions, but not to dismantle them (Pickering et al., 2020; Eckersley, 2019). Ecological democracy criticises and seeks to expand the ideals and institutions of representative democracy and calls for non-human interests and future generations to be taken into consideration (ibid). These ideas have inspired legislative innovations, such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (Box 1).

Proponents of 'environmental democracy' accept that liberalism can be considered green and call for reforms of current democratic institutions to incorporate environmental values and expand participatory governance (Pickering et al., 2020). They emphasise that it is the deliberative aspect of democracy, not democracy itself, that leads to the formation and implementation of more legitimate environmental policies, calling for the need for deliberation to be expanded across the levels of governance and include a greater number of stakeholders, most notably scientists (Machin, 2020).

Despite differences in approach, theories of ecological and environmental democracy share interest in the compatibility of democratic processes and institutions with strong environmental outcomes (Eckersley, 2019) and in the arrangements for participation, representation and deliberation that are necessary to secure democratic legitimacy in environmental decision-making (Pickering et al., 2020; Eckersley, 2019). Some studies argue that if participatory governance is expanded and environmental values are to a greater extent included in democratic institutions and governance, then democracy and the environment can indeed be considered compatible (Pickering et al., 2020). Deliberation ultimately strengthens environmental democracy as citizens are provided with more outlets to voice their opinions and push for environmental protection (Fischer, 2018). Press freedom and freedom of expression allows media outlets and civil society organisations to increase public awareness of environmental issues and climate change, while freedom of association and fair electoral competition provide an opportunity for green parties to organise and participate in political processes (Povitkina, 2018). For example, an empirical study testing the correlation between political freedom and environmental performance of 156 countries by Carayannis (2021) finds that countries with higher degrees of political freedom are expected to feature stronger environmental performances.

Furthermore, the scale of action required to address environmental crisis and in particular climate change, and the recent examples of social backlash, such as the yellow vest movement in France, highlight the democratic and legitimacy risk of making sweeping policies without using democratic institutions and meaningful citizens engagement in policy development (Youngs, 2021).

The importance of the deliberative aspect of democracy in addressing climate and environmental crisis has been reflected in the growing number of deliberative processes such as citizens' assemblies and juries. These have emerged to address lack of trust and deficits of legitimacy within government and representative institutions and to enable tackling climate change in ways that are socially acceptable (Setälä and Smith 2018; see Box 2). Significantly the sixth IPCC report mentions climate assemblies as a "potential tool for effective and democratic climate governance".

Box 2: Growing potential of deliberative democracy: Citizens' assemblies on climate change

Climate assemblies have been organised by public authorities and civil society organisations at different levels of governance, including global, national, and local. They bring together randomly selected people, reflecting the diversity of the population (e.g. by age, ethnicity, level of income, education, geography and sometimes attitudes to climate change) to learn, deliberate and make recommendations on various aspects of the climate crisis. The process is usually facilitated by an independent organisation and includes inputs from experts, aiming for balanced representation of evidence and competing points of view. By enabling ordinary people to judge evidence and ideas against their own experiences, citizens' assemblies on climate change help policymakers think differently about responding to the climate crisis and can challenge the preconceptions of what is possible to achieve politically. Climate assemblies are not meant to replace, but rather to complement other ways of stakeholder engagement such as through consultative bodies on climate change or public consultations on policy proposals.

Ireland's citizens' assembly led to the establishment of a parliamentary committee on climate action, which led in turn to a national climate plan and the implementation of legal requirement to reach net zero by 2050. The UK Climate Assembly, comprised of 108 citizens, made recommendations in 2020 for how the UK can reach its net zero target by 2050. The Climate Change Committee (CCC), the UK's independent expert advisory body, in 2021 drew on the assembly's recommendations in its advice to the UK Government on the level of the next carbon budget (CCC, 2021).

The French Citizens' Convention on Climate (Convention Citoyenne) was tasked to define measures to achieve a reduction in national greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990, in a spirit of social justice. Its 460-page report adopted in June 2020 contains 149 measures. The Climate and Resilience Bill adopted by parliament in 2021 translates a number of the measures into law – many in a modified form following revisions by the government and parliament. The Convention stimulated broad public debate on climate transition, resulting in a partial implementation of a ban on domestic flights in France.

Spain's national citizens' assembly on climate change launched in 2021 addresses the question of "A safer and fairer Spain in the face of climate change, how do we do it?". A wave of smaller climate assemblies have been commissioned by cities and local authorities around Europe.

The Washington Climate Assembly launched in 2021 was the first climate assembly in the United States. In 2021, the first global citizens' assembly on climate change was held to consider the question "How can humanity address the climate and ecological crisis in a fair and effective way?". The 100 Core Assembly members spent 68 hours together online and issued a People's Declaration for the Sustainable Future of Planet Earth.

Any assessment of the relationship between democracy and the environment should also consider that democracies come in varying forms (Pickering et al., 2020). For example, some studies find that high levels of corruption will lead to similar environmental performance across all forms of government (Povitkina, 2018). At the same time, there is strong evidence that democracy is an effective tool to reduce the level of corruption due to greater transparency and accountability (e.g., Kolstad and Wiig, 2011; Pellegrini and Gerlach, 2006). Democratic institutional improvements could thus lead to both a reduction in corruption levels, and consequently also a strengthening of environmental and economic performance, particularly in developing countries (Pellegrini and Gerlach, 2006). Similarly, countries with a longer history of democratic institutions are expected to perform better on environmental outcomes (Fredriksson and Neumayer, 2013). Ultimately, democracies will only respond better to environmental problems if they are well-functioning, meaning that the governing systems allow civil participation and a free flow of information, as well as closer co-operation among market actors to ensure the continued development of innovative solutions (Lindvall, 2021).

Liberal democracy and strong environmental performance can also be perceived as competing. Critics argue that democracy is based on finding a compromise among competing interests and values, some of which may go against environmental objectives, making the prospects for ambitious environmental policy more challenging (Fischer, 2018). Electoral cycles often make political leaders short-sighted and hesitant to introduce long-term policies necessary to protect the environment (Povitkina, 2018). The rise of populism and declining public trust in democratic institutions, as well as the urgency of the climate crisis warranting a rapid response, further exacerbates concern over the ability of liberal democracy to deliver decisive and ambitious action (Gills and Morgan, 2019; Bang and Marsh, 2018). Liberal democracy can be seen as reinforcing individualism and overconsumption and perceived as slow and not compatible with the rapid change needed (Pickering et al., 2020). An empirical study by Burnell (2012), for example, finds no empirical evidence that being a wealthy democracy correlates with commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Subsequently some scholars argue that the urgency of climate change calls for the necessity to remain open to less democratic means if these show to be better capable at avoiding environmental disasters (Mittiga, 2021; Runciman, 2018). Some scholars even see climate change as having the potential to influence the democracy-authoritarianism balance on an ideational level, for example if China would be perceived as addressing climate change in a more effective manner than liberal democracies (Hobson, 2012).

Yet any claim that non-democratic or authoritarian regimes might be better suited to deal with environmental and climate change crises rests on an assumption that the ruling government would place high value on addressing environmental objectives. While not impossible, ensuring that this is indeed the case is more challenging in societies lacking key democratic freedoms, such as access to environmental information, strong civil society, citizens' freedom to exert pressure on the government as their environmental concerns rise, etc. At the same time, these authoritarian regimes are not free from short-term pressures which also push them to trade environmental objectives for economic growth.

While it is difficult to argue that democracies are unequivocally better in addressing environmental problems, there is strong evidence that suggests that democracies generally have better environmental performance than non-democracies or autocracies (Fiorino, 2018; Li and Reuveny, 2006). This performance is attributed to the key pillars associated with democracies. Studies on environmental democracy are part of a larger research agenda that connects environmental and democratic values, including research on participation, environmental justice, transparency, accountability, and legitimacy in environmental governance (for a comprehensive overview of the different strands of research see Pickering et al., 2020). Furthermore, the debate over whether democracies or autocracies can better address environmental issues largely ignores the reality that few, if any, democratic countries would ever sacrifice their own democratic institutions for the sake of the environment. Therefore, one of the central questions of this debate becomes how to best adapt democratic systems to address these challenges.

The following sections discuss how the key democratic pillars, such as access to credible environmental data, the establishment of environmental coalitions, the oversight by the legislative and judicial branches, the freedom to express a political voice, and the pressure of political parties relate to environmental outcomes.

1.2 Access to credible environmental data

Importance of access to data

Credible, comprehensive and accessible environmental data is at the heart of environmental democracy and underpins all its other pillars, providing an information basis for oversight and accountability, including the expressions of political voice on the environment. Data is necessary for policymakers and the private sector to effectively manage responses to environmental problems, and for public, civil society, legislature and the judiciary to ensure accountability for implementation. Access to quality information informs the government about the needs and gaps in society and provides credible basis for policy decisions. It also provides a basis for civil society and citizens to monitor the state of the environment and the implementation of policies and consecutively to put pressure on the government to act upon them. Furthermore, credible and open environmental data helps the private sector and development finance institutions in investment planning. Transparency and access to information are crucial in the policymaking process and reflect the notion of democratic accountability.

Openness and transparency of environmental data also enables scientific research, which in turn contributes to better informed environmental and climate change policy (e.g. Cornell et al., 2013). It is particularly important in an environmental context because of its complexity and the need for better treatment of uncertainty, collective problem framing and the participation of multiple stakeholders.

Table 1: Examples of environmental data and its application

Type of environmental data	Example	Application
Environmental risks	Vulnerability to climate change impacts; frequency of flooding	Governmental adaptation programmes; business investment plans; flood defense infrastructure plans
Data on pollution	Air pollution; water discharge; greenhouse gas emissions	Monitoring of the state of environment; assessment of compliance with international agreements; determining the need for additional policies; lobbying for more ambitious environmental policies by civil society.
Biodiversity information	GIS data on terrestrial and marine species; endangered species; forest resources	Nature conservation plans; better informed environmental decision-making; prevention of biodiversity loss
Natural resources use	Freshwater resources use; forest and soil production	National adaptation plans; prevention of deforestation and biodiversity losses; civil advocacy against misuse of natural resources
Economic and social impacts of environmental problems	Health risks or impacts associated with pollution; economic losses from flood or extreme weather events	Design of environmental health programmes; lobby by civil society; design of just transition programmes; protection of communities affected by disasters
Impact of environmental policies	Progress in reducing emissions; cost of reductions; impact of carbon tax	Policy monitoring and evaluation; identification of policy gaps; compliance with international agreements; lobby by civil society
Environmental compliance and laws	Environmental licenses for businesses or individuals to carry out activities that could lead to pollution	Accountability mechanism for companies in the polluting industries; access to environmental justice among affected communities
Waste management	Household waste; public water and waste management systems	Conservation decision-making
Financial Disclosures	Sustainability risks or adverse impacts of investments;	Accountability for financial sector; prevention of greenwashing

(Source: Authors)

Access to environmental information is also a means to an end for access to justice, accountability, and increased participation.¹ For example, a project implemented by the EU Commission² on Education and Awareness Raising of Legal Professionals on Access to Justice (LIFE-A2J-EARL) focused on enabling greater citizen accountability and access to environmental justice through raising awareness on environmental issues among lawyers and civil society organisations. Through training, workshops and toolkits to identify and challenge the violations of environmental law, the target audiences developed capacity to overcome legal obstacles within the environmental field, provide legal advice and influence EU environmental policies.

On the other hand, poor or delayed access to environmental information negatively affects the rights of the most marginalised and vulnerable populations such as indigenous groups (Böhmer, 2022). For example, in Brazil's state of Meta Grosso, requests for information about environmental licensing of infrastructure projects are regularly delayed and take on average a year to receive a response (ibid). The failure to provide such information on time impedes the rights of indigenous communities, including the right for free prior informed consent (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People), as these projects directly affect their livelihoods and territories.

Regulatory frameworks

Recognising its central role in enabling transparency and effective environmental governance, multiple international and regional agreements address access to environmental information among their key pillars. The 1992 Rio Declaration, Principle 10, emphasises the rights of individuals to access environmental information that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. It also specifies that states shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available (Rio Declaration, 1992).

Similarly, the Aarhus Convention (1998)³ highlights the importance of public access to environmental information (such as details about the state of the environment or human health and safety matters that could be affected by climate change) the right of public participation in environmental decision-making and access to environmental law. Additionally, in 2010 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released the Bali Guidelines for states on access to environmental information to ensure compliance with the environmental pillar of the Rio Declaration, highlighting open access for all citizens, policymakers and lawyers. The guidelines also highlight the importance of ensuring that states collect and update their environmental information with details on compliance and performance.

The right to full public access to environmental information, participation in decision-making processes, and access to justice was also manifested under the Escazú Agreement in 2018: the

¹ Brice Böhmer, Climate and Environment Lead, Transparency International, Conference on Environmental Democracy 2022

² www.webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/project/details/4737#:~:text=The%20LIFE%2DA2J%2DEARL%20project,complaints%20to%20other%20appeal%20bodies

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/aarhus/>

first regional environmental agreement in Latin America. The agreement has set the grounds for environmental democracy in the region through the requirement for public involvement in environmental policies and providing relevant information that will allow the vulnerable populations to exercise their rights. Although access to information and transparency is much needed in Latin America (particularly in the extractive industry and in environmental sectors such as forestry and fisheries) the implementation of the agreement requires adjustments to the national legislation and political processes, which can be challenging (Pavese, 2022).⁴

Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, all signatory countries commit to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen adaptation to climate change through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Its Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) is designed to build trust and confidence that all countries are contributing their share to the global effort and requires countries to submit their NDC progress reports containing clear, transparent and quantifiable information about impacts achieved. The Global Stocktake that takes place every five years serves as a mechanism for keeping Parties accountable towards their commitments, revision of ambition for future climate efforts and understanding the gaps that need to be filled moving forward under Paris Agreement.

In line with international guidance, many countries have set up national frameworks for environmental data measurement, reporting and verification (MRV). For example, responding to the requirements of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), all signatory countries have established national inventories for greenhouse gases and sinks. Requirements for environmental reporting for polluters have been integrated into many national environmental and climate change laws and regulations. For example, Mexico's General Law on Climate Change creates a transparency framework and mandates the government to develop a registry of greenhouse gas emissions and short-lived climate pollutants. The law also imposes penalties for noncompliance with the requirements to submit information and provides for an annual national report on climate change. The United Kingdom's Climate Change Act (2008) requires the government to report every five years on the risks of climate change and set out how these impacts will be addressed. South Africa uses its National Climate Change Response Database to allow users to access relevant information on mitigation, adaptation and other projects throughout the country, and highlights the country's progress in reaching its emissions reduction targets (World Bank, 2020).

Setting up robust environmental data systems requires a sizeable investment. It is therefore important that the design of environmental data systems balances the requirements necessary to meet national policy planning needs, to comply with relevant international commitments and guidelines and cost-effectiveness and affordability considerations.

⁴ Rosario Pavese, Conference on Environmental Democracy, 2022

Reporting initiatives by private sector and financial institutions

In addition to governmental regulation on environmental reporting, certain industries have been developing their own initiatives on environmental information as a response to shareholder and consumer pressure and to be able to better manage their own environmental performance. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) provides most widely used guidelines and standards for sustainability reporting such as Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria or Corporate, Social Responsibility (CSR) for international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governments, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and others. It covers a range of environmental indicators for biodiversity, energy, and pollution, and provides sector standards for polluting industries such as oil and gas, coal, agriculture and fishing. Additionally, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) promotes good governance in oil, gas, and mineral resources industries worldwide, emphasising that open data and environmental reporting are fundamental to increase anti-corruption, energy transition and domestic resource mobilisation efforts. High transparency in environmental reporting enhances accountability of extractive industry stakeholders, and at the same time promotes democratic practices like civil society participation and involvement of communities in local governance (Robinson, 2022).⁵

Increased reporting and data transparency create a basis for civil society's advocacy and policy support efforts. Moreover, subnational implementation of reporting practices empowers people at the local level and increases access to information and awareness of implications on local revenues, services and jobs.

In recent years there has been growing attention to the development of sustainability disclosure and reporting standards for the financial industry, given the central importance of financial flows and investment in implementation of environmental objectives, and ensuring transition to low carbon and climate resilient development. The Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)⁶ was created by the Financial Stability Board to provide guidelines to companies across sectors to disclose and report their climate-related financial information. It aims to facilitate investment decisions by correctly assessing and pricing risk and prevent misallocation of capital. It also provides guidance for the financial services sector such as banks, asset managers, asset owners, and insurance companies on assessing climate-related risks and opportunities, and their integration into company's strategy and financial planning. The Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)⁷ builds on the TCFD framework and integrates climate- and nature-related risks into a risk management and disclosure framework. The framework is designed for individuals, investors, corporates, regulators, accounting firms, and others.

⁵ Robinson, M. 2022. [Access to Information: Trends and Challenges. Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy](#), 29-31 March 2022, London, FCDO

⁶ www.fsb-tcfid.org/about

⁷ <https://tnfd.global/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/220321-TNFD-framework-beta-v0.1-FINAL.pdf>

In turn, some voluntary initiatives are driving and informing governmental regulation and policies. For example, the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR)⁸, a European regulation introduced to improve transparency in the market for sustainable investment products, to prevent greenwashing and to increase transparency around sustainability claims made by financial market participants, has been informed by the work of the TCFD. The related Taxonomy Regulation of 2020 is a classification system, establishing a list of environmentally sustainable economic activities and sets out regulations for sustainable investing, aiming to increase transparency of sustainable investments in the region and prevent greenwashing.

In 2011, government leaders and civil society advocates came together to create a partnership to promote transparent, participatory, inclusive, and accountable governance. The Open Government Partnership (OGP)⁹ includes 77 countries and 106 local governments and thousands of civil society organisations. OGP members are making more environment and climate commitments in recent years, including publishing data and research about pollution and climate change, and some commitments seek to involve citizens in environmental policymaking through climate resiliency programs and conservation efforts.

There has also been a growth in citizen-driven environmental data collection initiatives, sometimes referred to as citizen science. Such initiatives have established themselves as an important source of data on biodiversity and water quality (Chandler et al., 2017; Hadj-Hammou et al., 2017), a tool to generate interest and engage the public on air pollution and to measure progress towards the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Fritz et al. 2019; Van Brussel and Huyse, 2019). For instance, in China greater accountability and transparency was achieved because of the Black and Smelly Waters programme, which empowered individual citizens and civil society groups to provide information about water pollution data through information technologies (Hsu et al., 2017). Increased environmental disclosures and monitoring efforts from citizens resulted in better environmental governance through holding public officials more accountable.

Global trends

In recent years, the level of data openness and availability among OECD countries has increased. States generally have improved in scores for the key pillars of Open-Useful-Reusable Government Data (OUR data) Index from 2017 to 2019 (OECD, 2019). The index is part of the OECD efforts to create a data-driven public sector and digitise governance. It measures government advancements in open data access, data availability and support for data reuse and also serves as a mechanism to facilitate public engagement in decision-making and increase public monitoring to keep governments accountable.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance/sustainability-related-disclosure-financial-services-sector_en

⁹ www.opengovpartnership.org/policy-area/environment-climate/#overview

Globally, there has also been a growing trend for increased sustainability reporting rates by the private sector in recent years. North and South America have the highest sustainability reporting rates among the top 100 companies by revenue (N100) in each individual country surveyed, while some countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and in Africa Angola, are lagging behind ([KPMG, 2020](#)). South Africa and Nigeria are among the strongest performers in Africa, with 96 and 85 percent respectively of N100 companies reporting on sustainability (ibid).

To promote open access to information governments can create digital platform and software resources for data integration, provide infrastructure such as data registers and catalogues, or implement digital service delivery to their citizens. Such data promotion activities allow for better democratic engagement of civil society, facilitating a higher degree of knowledge sharing and creating incentives for innovations. OECD has adopted guidance on how to utilise all types of data to benefit policymaking processes and tackle societal and environmental challenges (OECD, 2021).

However, some countries are still lagging in creating open sources of environmental and climate data and providing necessary open data infrastructure. The Global Open Data Index shows that overall high-income countries tend to have higher levels of environmental data openness compared to lower income states. Moreover, the performance on access to environmental data such as air and water quality is overall lower compared to other types of indicators across countries (Open Data Index, 2015).

Challenges ahead

The challenges with ensuring openness of environmental information are a general lack of credible data, as well as data being not user-friendly and not openly-licensed ([Open Knowledge International, 2017](#)). Important environmental data is rarely integrated into a unified platform by governments and the web interface for such information is often outdated or not usable for the public. These barriers make it difficult for the public, civil society and policymakers to have an accurate idea about the current state of the environment and act upon damages. Additionally, polluting industries have strong incentives not to disclose environmental harm, and often their lobby creates another barrier for having such data in open access (Kim et al., 2016). For instance, in the US the oil and gas sector lobbied against mandatory reporting requirements which were introduced as part of the government's efforts to promote transparency about environmental risks to investors (Temple-West and McCormick, 2021).¹⁰

These challenges create opportunities for lack of transparency and corruption around environmental issues that undermine sound environmental policies. Access to environmental information must be addressed and regulated at the state level. Public dialogue between governments and data users can be an effective solution to improve government information

¹⁰ www.ft.com/content/cd247b42-8119-4681-afb2-2d89e109ba08

systems to advance open data and to address some of the concerns by reporting companies around commercial sensitivity of data. The government regulations provide incentives to disclose such data and they are key to ensure that such companies abide by the disclosure of environmental information. For example, Frost (2008) showed that after the Australia's Corporations Law requiring companies to report their environmental impact was enacted, a significant number of companies in oil, gas and mining industries started reporting their environmental performance.

1.3 Political voice and multi-stakeholder coalitions

Political voice and environmental action

Political voice, or mechanisms for citizens and organisations to communicate their needs, preferences and experiences and to hold government accountable for their actions, is an essential pillar of a functioning democracy. Political voice can take many different forms, each with a unique impact on addressing climate change and environmental crises. One way to think about the strength of political voices is to look at citizens' ability to hold government accountable (Nuesiri, 2016; Goetz and Jenkins, 2002). Strengthening channels for diverse political voices to influence government action – either directly by affecting the making or implementation of policy, or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies – is an integral part of effectively responding to climate change and environmental crises.

An important measure for the potential of political voice is the freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and media freedom. Normatively, societies where citizens are aware of the importance of climate change and environmental issues and have access to outlets to gather information and express their opinions, are expected to have more ambitious policies and stronger environmental performance. However, there is need for additional empirical research exploring this relationship.

Political voice can be a difficult pillar to measure, but certain indicators may be useful. The World Bank has put together a Voice and Accountability Index¹¹ to capture the possibility for citizens to select their government, voice their opinions, freely gather, and have access to a free media. Their index is based on a report on Worldwide Governance Indicators, collecting data from over 200 countries and territories over the period 1996-2020, using more than 30 different data sources (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2021). The overall trend is that liberal democracies tend to perform better on voice and accountability than non-democracies. A similar trend can be seen in Freedom House's Global Freedom Index¹², where freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and free media constitute a good measurement of the strength of political voice (Freedom House, 2021).

¹¹ <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>.

¹² <https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiwandyear=2022>

While citizens in democracies are more likely to have access to outlets where they can express their political voice, they do not necessarily perceive their voice to be politically influential. In fact, the [Democracy Perception Index](#), developed by Alliance of Democracy, Dalia and Rasmussen Global, shows that people in democracies are more likely than people in non-democracies to state that their political voice does not matter in influencing political outcomes and that government is not acting in their interest. This highlights the importance of efforts to increase political legitimacy of democracy and trust in the democratic institutions, as discussed earlier. People will be more willing to use outlets to express their opinions if they believe that their voices influence political outcomes (Alliance of Democracy, 2018).

The growing recognition of the complex social and economic transformations required to address climate change has led to the increasing number of stakeholder consultation mechanisms emerging outside of the existing collection of democratic institutions. This is a very positive trend, which can help improve quality and support for climate policies, while at the same strengthening channels for expression of political voice making political systems around the world more inclusive. Yet having access to the outlets for political voice expression is not enough to ensure sufficient public pressure for ambitious environmental policies. Citizens need to be aware of the underlying issues, which highlight the importance of supporting public awareness and education campaigns on climate change and the environment in developing countries through international development co-operation. It is also important to minimise the influence of lobbyists and special interests from the fossil fuel and other related industries. This can be done through campaign legislation, transparency around the influencing work and contributions, and stiffer rules on lobbyists access to government, parliament, political parties and candidates.

These messages were strongly voiced at the WFD's Conference on Environmental Democracy on 29-31 March 2022. For example, Hon. Emmanuel Marfo, Chair of Committee on Environment, Science and Technology at the Parliament of Ghana noted that current parliamentary system needs democratic innovation, incorporating holistic parliamentary coordination of multisectoral environmental issues, bridging the gap between policymaking and public awareness, and building parliamentary networks to bring a level of oversight over the executives who influence climate change policies. Hon. Fadli Zon, Chair, Committee on Inter-Parliamentary Co-operation in Indonesia, highlighted the absence of mechanism to accommodate citizens voices among the key challenges in achieving effective climate policies, alongside the lack of cohesiveness among the different governmental bodies to address environmental policies, with policy processes being mostly top-down.

The role of media

Mass media and social media platforms are fundamental to strengthening and shaping political voices as they can take on the role of mediator between government and the public. Social media is increasingly used to provide and shape climate content, spurring climate action and activism by increasing information sharing and education, participation, and encouraging more environmentally

friendly behaviour (Pearce et al., 2019; Hywel et al., 2015; Anderson, 2017). Social media has also unified young climate activists in movements all over the world (Wahlström et al., 2019).

The media also plays a role in communicating government policies and making them accessible to the public. At the same time, media platforms can be used to criticise policies and to create pressure for change. Media, and especially social media, can help mobilise the public and unify social movements. For example, the [Fridays for Future](#) movement, which pushes for more ambitious climate action, started on Instagram and has since gained international support and influence largely through social media platforms. It is important to note that a state-controlled or in other ways censored media may negatively affect environmental performance in a country by spreading misinformation or restricting access to information. Overall, for media to provide constructive channel for political voice there need to be journalists in the major outlets who are well informed and understand environmental and climate change issues, and who have a network of experts to draw upon when covering these topics.

The media, and also social media, are built on the foundation of free speech, which is generally considered to be an invaluable pillar of democracy. However, some studies do problematise the notion of free speech in the context of climate deniers. For example, Latvik (2016) argues that the journalist tradition of fairly representing all opinions is problematic in the climate debate, if it means climate sceptics are offered a platform to use their voice. This can encourage overall scepticism towards climate change, bringing harm to people, which arguably provides justification for making it legitimate to restrict climate change denial. Some media outlets can also be biased towards environmentally unfriendly policies, especially if funded by vested interests. In this context variety of and competition amongst the media outlets is important to ensure accurate balance of information.

Investigative journalists play an important role as whistle-blowers, helping strengthen environmental accountability and security. For example, the Environmental Reporting Collective is a network of journalists and newsrooms from over a dozen countries, dedicated to investigating environmental crimes collaboratively. Their latest cross-border investigation, Oceans Inc., is focused on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), which has caused destruction to marine environments, as well as human rights abuses by the companies involved. The first piece in the series involved journalists in five countries in Asia who collected stories from local fishers in China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, impacted by IUU fishing and ongoing maritime territorial disputes. However, environmental journalism is risky, as the reporters covering the environment often tackle sensitive stories involving influential businesses, criminal activities or high-risk incidents, like land-use conflicts. The [2019 World Press Freedom Index](#) by Reporters Without Borders¹³ showed that hatred of journalists often turns into violence, and that the number of countries where journalists can work in complete security continues to decline while authoritarian regimes continue to tighten their grip on the media. There is need to support environmental

¹³ <https://rsf.org/en/2019-world-press-freedom-index-cycle-fear>

journalists against physical attacks, in addition to digital threats such as hacking of websites and social media accounts, as well as lawsuits, tax audits, internet harassment and other forms of intimidation. Freelance journalists and those working in remote regions are among the most vulnerable. Other measures include the building of networks and communities that can support and help defend targeted journalists, legal aid, education to inform journalists of their rights and cross-border stories that can help expose an environmental issue without endangering local reporters and partnerships with organisations working on journalism security¹⁴.

The role of political coalitions and civil society

Environmental governance faces accountability and legitimacy challenges which can be improved by strengthening civil society (Biermann and Gupta, 2011). Civil society organisations include labour unions, NGOs, community groups, charity organisations, social movements, professional associations and foundations (World Bank, 2013). A defining feature of environmental civil society organisations is their commitment to grassroots democracy and environmental protection (Pickering, 2019). Environmental movements can instil broader societal change and democratic processes. For example, the Soviet environmental movement has exerted a significant impact on the course of the early years of reforms (*perestroika*) in the late 1980s and in the 1990s (see Yanitsky, 2016; Jancar-Webster, 1998). Strong civil society fulfils several governance functions, including awareness raising and agenda setting on environmental issues, environmental monitoring and reporting; training and capacity-building and participation in public-private partnerships. For example, in Africa, civil society engagement has been shown to improve the quality of government services by enhancing transparency, rule of law, human rights and reducing the levels of corruption (Mlambo et al., 2020). Civil society can also protest or riot against laws that are unpopular or considered to be violating human rights and liberties and can help hold the government accountable by putting pressure to meet and strengthen environmental targets and policies. Empirical evidence suggests that environmental NGOs have a positive impact on environmental quality (Guangqin, et al., 2021). Including civil society actors, such as NGOs and scientific organisations, in climate and environmental decisionmaking is positively associated with popular legitimacy of global climate governance (Bernauer et al., 2013).

The recent history of grassroots environmental politics reveals a rich array of examples where social movements have changed environmental policy and practice, ranging from environmental justice to fossil fuel divestment (Cole and Foster, 2001; Klein, 2017). However, local movements face major difficulties in ensuring durability and scaling up their impacts to counterbalance broader systemic forces driving ecological degradation (Eckersley, 2019, p.15).

Policy networks and coalitions play an important role in determining climate change and environmental policies. Discourse analysis is widely used to discuss the role of coalitions in policymaking (Bulkeley, 2000; Smith and Kern, 2009). Coalitions and policy networks are typically positively associated with environmental governance and climate policy across countries. For

¹⁴ <https://internews.org/journalism-safety-and-security-trainings-start-take-root/>

example, Cesar (2011) explores the role of coalitions in the context of diversity of political preferences in the new EU member states and finds that coalition formation and agenda setting power in the EU Council of Ministers help overcome a legislative gridlock for environmental policy. Political coalitions help establish strong, unified political voices that can put more pressure on government and oversee their performance. Coalitions can influence climate change and environmental policies by having an agenda setting power, which is critical in bringing these issues to the forefront of government decision making (Pralle, 2009; Aamodt and Stensdal, 2017). A study of Brazil, India and China suggests that the influence of climate coalitions was particularly impactful in the beginning of the policy cycle during formulation of climate change policies (Solveig et al., 2017). Given the path-dependent nature of policy, advocacy coalitions create more stability in the policymaking process against exposure to external shocks and prior policy efforts; they project and predict future policy trajectories (Knox-Hayes, 2012).

But they can also, alongside citizens, oversee government performance and help push for democratic institutions and political parties to hold government accountable in cases of non-compliance. The Alliance of Small Island States ([AOSIS](#)) represents the interests of 39 small island and low-lying coastal developing states in international climate change and sustainable development negotiations and processes. On their own, none of these states would have much political power, but because they have unified under one coalition, their political voice is significantly strengthened. Such coalitions can influence climate change policies by having an agenda-setting power, which is critical in bringing it to the forefront of government decision making.

The [Coalitions for Change](#) approach adopted by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and The Asia Foundation (TAF) in the Philippines fosters collaboration of policymakers, researchers and practitioners through the "Development Entrepreneurship" approach to drive effective governance, economic development and stability and builds capacity of policy makers to implement policy reforms. The programme has already achieved positive outcomes such as increased tax revenues for public health care and more inclusive access to employment services for those with disabilities. Such multistakeholder coalitions can help advance climate change adaptation and mitigation programming in developing countries.

Democratic deliberation is expected to be more effective when there is diversity in the political voices participating. Therefore, political voices should not only be strengthened, but they also need to be made more inclusive. Development co-operation can contribute to ensuring more ambitious and effective action on climate change and the environment through supporting political voice and coalitions for change in developing countries. This may include programmes building public awareness, media trainings and support to cross-party coalitions on climate change and the environment.

In [Pakistan](#), WFD has supported the Standing Committee on Climate Change to get more experts involved in the development of policies and to develop systems to engage with civil society organisations. In [Nepal](#), NDI has worked to strengthen local community involvement in responses to annual floods, during which deforestation was identified as the cause of flooding. Supporting a

local advocacy effort to pass national forestry protection legislation, NDI then trained civil society to monitor and oversee implementation by the executive branch, strengthening democratic and environmental governance simultaneously and helping foster a solution to prevent future natural disasters.

Political voices and coalitions can help address environmental problems by raising citizens' concerns and holding governments accountable. To do so political voices need to be more inclusive and aware on climate change and environmental problems. Development co-operation can help by enhancing public awareness, enabling capacity of the media and civil society to cover climate change, and building multi-stakeholder coalitions to support policy development and implementation.

1.4 Political parties

Political parties have an important role to play in safeguarding the key pillars of democracy and advancing the environmental agenda (e.g. Ladrech and Little, 2019; Carter et al., 2018). Political parties help build bridges between citizens and government and provide an outlet to amplify the political voices of citizens, civil society, businesses and parliament. They can do this through relationships with the voters that shape public attitudes (Carter et al., 2018), their ability to influence policy outputs and strengthen accountability for their adoption and implementation (Ladrech and Little, 2019) and through party competition. Academic research on the role of political parties is well established (Bawn et al., 2012; Levy, 2003; Bolleyer, 2011), and there is a growing evidence base specifically in relation to climate change and environment (Farstad, 2018; Ladrech and Little, 2019; Carter, 2014). However, most of the research on the impact of political parties on environmental policy and performance has focused on industrialised countries, and there is a need to generate more evidence from developing countries.

Political parties and public opinion

The power of a political party rests on the public's support for a particular party, and parties will thus respond to public opinion (Ladrech and Little, 2019). In societies with strong public concern on climate change and environmental issues, political parties will be incentivised to take environmental action and to better hold governments to account (Carter et al., 2018). The extent to which political parties seek to influence environmental policies also depends on each individual party's policy preferences. These policy preferences are often rooted in the ideological positions of parties, which in turn matter both in terms of which policies are implemented and for how these policies are framed (Ladrech and Little, 2019).

Political parties respond to voter demand, but they also shape public attitudes. For example, political parties across the globe have changed their discourse to align with growing concern about climate change, fuelled by climate activists. In societies with low awareness or concern about the environment, political parties can help raise public awareness and push environmental concerns higher among the political priorities (Green-Petersen, 2019). Political parties hold great power over

which issues make it to the political agenda and which are kept out (Green-Petersen and Mortensen, 2010; Green-Petersen, 2019).

Further, the degree of division between parties holds implications for issue competition, which ultimately impacts how each policy issue will be prioritised (Green-Petersen and Mortensen, 2010). For example, a study on EU member states found that unification of party elites behind climate action is likely to shape public opinion towards considering climate change more as a threat (Sohlberg, 2016). In cases where party elites are divided on the issue, the public will be less likely to consider climate change a threat. Further, evidence shows that individuals which are less likely to consider climate change a threat are also less likely to take steps to fight climate change (Sohlberg, 2016). Thus, division among policy elites may ultimately lead to worse environmental outcomes. At the same time, political parties which are antagonistic to climate change and environmental priorities may become a significant hurdle for environmental and climate change policy (Witajewska-Baltvilka, 2018). This is the case of the US Republican Party arguing for a protection of [fracking](#), or in the Liberal Party of Australia campaigning to abolish an unpopular [carbon scheme](#).

Policy ambition and accountability

Political parties can also directly influence the level of ambition of policy outputs by shaping the strategic direction and content of policies, for example through legislation. They also help strengthen governments' accountability for adoption and implementation of climate change and environmental policies through parliamentary action. This can take place either via political parties' access to parliament and participation in the parliamentary deliberation of the key environmental policies and issues, through direct engagement with the government in political debate, or even by threatening to withdraw their support for the government and thus forcing a new election. Many climate change laws, including the 2008 [UK Climate Change Act](#), contain provisions for parliamentary oversight and require governments to report to parliaments annually on progress with the implementation of climate change targets, which forms the key accountability mechanism for these laws. Thus, strengthening existing political parties and safeguarding the ability to form new ones can be considered a key mechanism in driving environmental democracy.

It is generally agreed that competition between parties influences environmental policies (e.g. Farstad, 2018; Ladrech and Little, 2019), but whether the influence is positive depends on the social and political context. Parties can further drive policy actions through competition as voters are given a greater array of parties for which to vote (Rohrschneider and Miles, 2015). This could make political parties amplify their climate ambitions to attract votes. In Denmark, this was evident in the 2019 primary election, where political parties competed to outbid other parties' climate change targets. The ambitious carbon emission targets set by two political parties resulted in other political parties increasing their ambitions to remain relevant in the eyes of the voters¹⁵. This party

¹⁵ See www.altinget.dk/christiansborg/artikel/paa-faa-maaneder-blev-alle-politikere-klimakrigere-hvad-var-det-egentlig-der-skete.

competition ultimately led to strong political support for the [Danish Climate Act](#), which is set to reduce carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030. Cross-party consensus on climate change can help advance climate policies as we saw with the 2008 [UK Climate Change Act](#), when political parties on both sides of the political spectrum united behind an objective of strengthening climate change action.

At the same, deliberation among political parties which results in passing a climate or environmental law can create support for and commitment to its objectives, locking in political consensus (Lockwood, 2013). Such democratic participation by parties alongside citizens, civil society, businesses and scientists in deliberation processes is expected to lead to better environmental decision-making (Dryzek and Pickering, 2019; Machin, 2020). For example, cross-party consensus on climate change helped pave the way for the implementation of UK Climate Change Act in 2008, when political parties on both sides of the political spectrum unified behind a wish to strengthen climate change action (Carter, 2014; Lockwood, 2013).

Party competition sometimes may impede policy changes and overcomplicate political processes and may lead to stagnation and landing ineffective compromises (Ladrech and Little, 2019). This is often the case in politically polarised societies and areas dominated by powerful interest groups and lobbies opposed to strong environmental or climate change policies. A lack of political consensus between the main parties may jeopardise the maintenance of political commitment and can lead to policy reversal, during elections or changes in leadership. In the US, partisan division between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party remains, which has previously impeded climate change action and led to a rocky US response to international commitments, i.e., the Paris Agreement (MacInnis and Krosnick, 2020). This highlights the importance of bridging the divide in the positions of the key parties on environmental issues for achieving more ambitious policies and outcomes.

Recent trends

Across the world, public opinion on the environment, particularly about climate change, has shifted drastically over the past few years. In one 2021 survey, 64 percent of respondents from 50 different countries said that climate change was an emergency and called for more ambitious actions by governments (UNDP, 2021). In line with this trend, there has also been a growth in the number and political importance of green parties globally, with the [Global Greens](#) now consisting of 80 member parties. Green parties have increased their political importance in democracies (Grant and Tilley, 2019), and are represented in government coalitions in Austria, Belgium, Senegal, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Sweden (McBride, 2021). Most recently in Germany [Die Grünen](#) doubled their votes from 2017 to receive 14.8 percent of all votes in 2021. As a result, they became part of the new government coalition, securing, among others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In [Sweden](#), the green party Miljöpartiet, has been a regular part of a red-green alliance to form a government and has held several important ministries.

Greens have entered legislatures or controlled significant local government positions in several emerging economies and developing countries. In Latin America, Mexico's Ecologist Green Party (PVE), won 47 seats (out of 500) in the country's lower house and 9 seats (out of 128) in the Senate (McBride, 2022). Colombia's Green Alliance has played a significant role in the country's politics through holding nine seats in both the lower and upper houses of Congress, and mayor positions in the major cities, including Bogota. One green party politician, Antanas Mockus, came in second in the 2010 presidential election in Colombia (ibid).

However, this is, not a uniform trend, as large variations in green party success can be observed. Green parties are still either not present or very weak in democratic nation states such as Norway, Spain and Poland (Grant, 2018). In Africa there has been growing environmental activism, but few electoral gains for the greens. Rwanda is the only African country with greens in parliament, representing one of the few remaining opposition forces to the President (McBride, 2022). While several countries across Asia and the Middle East have green parties, few of them have achieved representation in government (ibid). A 2018 study of green parties in 32 countries over the last 45 years points to certain factors that may explain the variation in the success of green parties, such as per capita income, generation of nuclear power, the age of the green political party, and the support of left-wing parties (Grant and Tilley, 2018).

Yet across the world, voter demand for climate change action does not necessarily translate to more ambitious domestic climate policies. While a state may allow the possibility of forming political parties, if these political parties are marginalised in political decisions, or if they lack a statutory right to hold government accountable, their influence on shaping environmental policies will be limited. [The 2021 Climate Performance Index](#) rated climate policies from 57 nation states and the EU with many democratic countries seeing a decline in their climate policy score

Box 3: The UK Climate Change Act

Growing salience of climate change and environmental concerns amongst the public (especially young voters) and media beginning in 2006 has brought these concerns higher on the list of priorities for the political parties (Carter and Childs, 2018). The passage of the UK Climate Change Act in 2008, an ambitious world-leading piece of legislation with overwhelming political support, was possible to a large extent due to the strong degree of cross-party consensus in parliament on the importance of acting on climate change (Fankhauser, Averchenkova and Finnegan, 2008; Carter, 2014; Clayton et al., 2006; ClientEarth, 2009). Only a handful of MPs voted against the bill at the second and third readings, while the environmental community succeeded in strengthening the draft bill, for example on adaptation and by tightening the long-term emissions reduction goal.

Learnings for implementation

Democratic pillars can have varying degrees of presence in nation states and lead to stronger and weaker forms of democracy (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021). A nation state may allow political parties to form, but if these are marginalised in political decisions, or if they lack a statutory right to hold government accountable, their influence on shaping environmental policies will be limited. Further, while democracies tend to foster higher levels of fair electoral competition, which helps pave the way for green political parties to enter the political arena (Povitkina, 2018), this effect is not evenly distributed across all democracies. First-past-the-post electoral systems, like in the US, disadvantage the performance of smaller, green parties over the performance of traditional, established parties (Blais, 2008). In such systems, voters are discouraged to vote for green parties to avoid wasted votes. In cases where the green party does attract a significant number of votes, the votes are often taken from other environmentally concerned parties, particularly left-wing parties (Grant and Tilley, 2019), which may lead to the election of a less environmentally concerned party. This was the case in the 2016 US election, where leader of the Green Party, Jill Stein, gathered 1 percent of the votes (McBride, 2021).

This highlights the importance of increasing understanding of environmental issues among parties across the political spectrum and across the world. It is important for political parties to have their own capacity to address issues related to climate change and the environment, so they do not merely repeat the talking points of various interest groups. It is particularly important to share how other countries have advanced ambitious environmental policies, such as such as through addressing these issues in the party manifestos, environmental legislation and post-legislative scrutiny, international and national cross-party dialogues.

In this context, political consensus on climate change and environmental issues across the main parties is an important determinant of the ambition and effectiveness of environmental policies. A lack of political consensus between the main parties may jeopardise the ability to maintain political commitment and lead to policy reversal, particularly during elections and change of the ruling party or of the leader in charge (Averchenkova and Bassi, 2016).

Political parties have an important role to play in safeguarding these key pillars of democracy and advancing the environmental agenda. Yet, when countries look to spend money on environment and development projects overseas, political parties are often overlooked, not least because environmentally focused organisations do not have the relationships, skill sets, or incentives needed to successfully engage and influence political parties. There is also an inherent desire to avoid being seen as overly political or partisan by these groups, leading to a default approach of avoiding directly engaging or supporting political parties and candidates. It is also important that foreign aid programmes consider the role of political parties and include interventions to strengthen their positive influence and minimise potential negative impacts on environmental and climate agenda. Equally, the environmental agenda should be part of democracy assistance programmes targeting political parties, which has typically not been the case (including because historically most democracy assistance organisations did not pursue environmental issues per se).

1.5 Political accountability, oversight and access to justice

Importance of political accountability

Accountability is a key democratic principle, which refers to some form of political control or oversight, with actors being held responsible for their actions (Mason, 2008; Widerberg and Pattberg, 2016). Public or political accountability systems rely on the idea that governments are answerable to an electorate or political community for protecting the public good (Widerberg and Pattberg, 2016). Government accountability and transparency ensure that policies and targets are implemented effectively, and that failed or harmful policies are swiftly corrected and wrongful behaviours (e.g. corruption) exposed. Legal frameworks, such as laws and regulations, often provide the basis through which formal accountability and oversight arrangements are operationalised (Dubnick, 2011).

Often a distinction is made between political, legal, managerial and social accountability. Political accountability rests on the principle of democratic representation and on the notion that the public can exert political control through their elected representatives. The media is a key mechanism for assuring the political accountability providing access to information. Legal accountability refers to the provisions in the legal system (e.g. in laws and regulations), to ensure that the rules and obligations are enforceable by a judicial authority (Harlow, 2002). Managerial accountability aims to make those with delegated authority answerable for carrying out agreed tasks. Social accountability is the recently growing non-electoral mechanisms of pressure and control through the actions of a groups of citizens, associations, social movements and (as discussed) the media.

Strong accountability and political oversight mechanisms are expected to lead to better environmental performance, and the lack thereof has been clearly shown to be detrimental to environmental outcomes (de Silva et al., 2020; Pius Yanda et al., 2013; Tumushabe et al., 2013). For example, the lack of an independent and adequately resourced monitoring and evaluation mechanism is a significant barrier to the effective implementation of Mexico's General Law on Climate Change and the NDC (Averchenkova and Guzman, 2018). This has led many developing and developed countries implement oversight mechanisms to enhance chances of success for environmental laws and regulations.

Mechanisms for political oversight

The mechanisms for political oversight usually define: (i) the obligations that actors must fulfil; (ii) who stands accountable to whom; (iii) the purpose of determining compliance with obligations, and (iv) the course of action in cases of non-compliance (Higham et al., 2021). In the context of climate change and the environment key obligations may include, but are not limited to, the ability to set and meet emission targets, develop strategies and policies, to provide environmental information and to create mechanisms and institutions for governance (ibid).

In democracies generally the national executive branch is accountable to legislative and judicial bodies, as well as to expert bodies and citizens. Parliamentary oversight is a central element of many climate change and environmental laws. In Sweden and Germany, progress on climate action is subjected to scrutiny during the annual budget processes, while in Colombia the President is required to report to Parliament on progress in implementing target committed to under the Paris Agreement ahead of reporting to the United Nations. Some laws establish consequences for non-compliance, for example financial penalties (e.g. in Taiwan, Croatia and Kenya). Further, private actors may also be accountable in environmental matters to both citizens, who can stop consuming their goods and services, and the government, through environmental regulations.

Political oversight plays an important role in determining compliance. This can take place through the parliament, the judicial branch, independent expert assessment (as in the case of expert climate committees for example), and other forms of monitoring, for example through parliamentary and ministerial intervention, judicial orders, and orders and fines enforced by regulators in the case of non-compliance (Higham et al., 2021).

There are many examples of accountability to executive institutions being included in climate change and environmental laws. For example, in Peru, each Ministry is responsible for reporting progress on implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation to the Ministry of the Environment. In Rwanda, an independent body, the Rwanda Environmental Management Authority (REMA) oversees all implementation of environmental policy. In Ecuador, the Ministry of the Environment, Secretary of Climate Change, oversees the development of the country's national strategy on climate change. This trend is further evident in case studies from Tanzania (Pius Yanda et al., 2013) and Uganda (Tumushabe et., 2013). In both countries, scrutiny of the government's financial performance, also in the context of climate change, is carried out by the legislature and its relevant committees. The budget in both countries further undergoes external audit and scrutiny to ensure it has been designed and implemented correctly.

Access to justice and environmental defenders

Environmental courts and tribunals or 'green benches' are key for the delivery of justice relating to the violations of environmental rights and the enforcement of environmental and climate change laws. Access to justice strengthens judicial systems to ensure accountability (ESCAP, 2021). The role of the courts in ensuring governmental compliance with the environmental or climate change laws is fundamental in most democratic legal systems. In many cases, simply the creation of a clearly assigned obligation is sufficient to imply that government action will be subject to judicial review. There is strong evidence of the growing role of judicial oversight in complimenting the work of legislators, as the number of cases challenging government inaction or lack of ambition in climate goals and commitments continues to grow (Setzer and Higham, 2021). In Kenya, for example, the climate change law guarantees the right of any citizen to bring complaints related to adaptation and mitigation to court.

Though many countries have already acknowledged the value of overseeing climate performance by the government, there is consensus in literature that such measures will need to be strengthened (e.g. Sasse et al., 2020; Averchenkova and Guzman, 2018). Information is at the centre of any system of accountability. The quality and the transparency and accessibility of environmental information to a large extent determines how effective or ineffective an accountability (and oversight) system is. Hence interventions aimed at strengthening accountability and political oversight over environmental and climate change policies should also consider the pillar related to environmental information, as discussed earlier.

To strengthen access to justice in relation to climate change and the environment, it is important to promote legal remedies such as anti-strategic lawsuits against public participation (anti-SLAPP suits) and citizens' suits, as well as effective grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms (ESCAP, 2021). It is also important to adopt legal procedures for the protection of the environment, including injunctions and protective writs to prevent further environmental harm during the court case, as well as remedies that prevent activities which threaten to damage or are already damaging the environment. At the same time affected stakeholders should be given a right to seek compensation for environmental damage because of environmentally destructive activities (ibid).

A critical pillar of an effective access to justice system are environmental defenders. The United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council has recognised the essential role of environmental defenders for environmental protection and sustainability (UN, 2019). A global study on environmental justice found that in 11% of cases globally environmental defenders contributed to halt environmentally destructive and socially conflictive projects. However, they also face high rates of criminalisation (20% of cases), physical violence (18%), and assassinations (13%), which significantly increase when Indigenous people are involved (Scheidel et al., 2020). Assassinations, physical violence and criminalization occurs significantly more often in mining and land conflicts and when Indigenous groups are involved in mobilisations (ibid.). This emphasises the urgent need for developing protection mechanisms within these sectors and particularly for indigenous communities.

Environmental defenders should be given appropriate legal remedies for the redress of the violation of their rights and should not be prevented from filing legal action. This applies not only for those who engage in litigation but also for individuals who are working on advocacy, outreach, or campaigning (ESCAP, 2021). Effective support for environmental defenders should enhance the conditions that enable successful mobilisations to defend livelihoods and the environment, the provision of legal education, training, and aid, monetary support to cover related expenses, as well as networking and sharing of knowledge about successful mobilisations (Scheidel et al., 2020).

2. The environmental democracy approach in development co-operation

International development assistance is an important driver supporting sustainable development through capacity development and knowledge exchange, as well as through investment into specific environmental policies and programmes. Foreign aid also has a role in supporting key pillars of democracy and democratic transitions. This chapter discusses the potential for foreign assistance programmes to support sustainable development by bridging these priorities through an environmental democracy approach. It analyses the barriers for this approach based on semi-structured interviews with development co-operation professionals and outlines ways to scale up its application going forward.

2.1 Foreign aid and democracy

The relationship between foreign aid and strengthening democratic pillars shows strong interdependencies. On one hand, more foreign aid tends to be allocated to countries that adopt “good” policies, satisfy donors’ economic and political interests and have some democratic characteristics (e.g. Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Robertsen et al., 2015). For example, several studies show that countries that exhibit ‘good governance’ and high vulnerability to climate change impacts at the same time tend to receive more foreign aid for adaptation to mitigate these consequences than vulnerable countries otherwise (Halimanjaya, 2014; Weiler et al., 2018). Similarly, there is evidence, for example from sub-Saharan Africa, on the importance of political and historical factors for adaptation finance, which suggests that adaptation aid may be contingent upon the level of democracy and prior relationship with the donor rather than vulnerability to climate change alone (Robertsen et al., 2015).

Overall, international donors in their democracy support tend to favour recipient countries that are not backsliding into authoritarianism. Recent research shows that democracy aid tends to be more effective in countries that are already undergoing democratisation compared to aid targeting prevention of authoritarian backsliding (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2020). A meta-analysis of the US aid allocations shows that it tends to favour countries that have a track record of democratisation and human rights, with democracy being relatively more important (Askarov et al., 2022). Moreover, the domestic political environment in the donor country also matters for aid allocation, as countries with a democratic record get higher aid inflows when the higher share of the House of Representatives in the US is held by Democrats (ibid).

Strengthening democracy and enabling democratic transition has been among the key objectives of multiple donors and development finance institutions. For example, strengthening good governance and promoting democratic values are among the key strategic objectives of

development assistance provided by the US¹⁶ - the largest bilateral aid donor ([USAID, 2018](#)). It focuses on working with citizens, strengthening civil society, building coalitions for change and creating just transition.

There is evidence that foreign aid contributes to enabling democratic change and strengthening key pillars of democracy in the recipient countries. For example, an analysis of a range of 26 Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries found that more aid is positively associated with more democratic reforms implemented focused on judicial framework, governance and electoral processes (Heckelman, 2010). Another cross-country analysis of 59 democracy-aid beneficiary countries over the period of 1972-2004 finds that aid targeting democratic programmes and civil society activities leads to partial or full democratisation in the recipient countries (Kalyvitis et al., 2010). A more recent study on EU democracy aid in 126 developing countries between 2002 and 2016 shows consistent positive impact on the democratisation processes in recipient states (Gafuri, 2021). This is achieved through the mechanism of political conditionality and creating incentives for countries to adopt democratic and human rights practices and monitoring instruments as part of the aid programming. Another quantitative study uses an instrumental variable approach to investigate the effect of aid on democratic processes in 44 transitioning sub-Saharan countries in Africa, showing that economic aid facilitates transition to multi-party system, while aid targeting political reform and governance institutions stabilises multi-party regimes and decreases electoral fraud (Dietrich and Wright, 2015).

Some studies find that aid programmes that target democracy among their primary objectives are more effective in promoting democratisation compared to other types of developmental aid, mainly because they focus on strengthening the key democratic pillars such as civil society, free media, free and fair elections, electoral participation and human rights, rather than focusing on general democratic infrastructure and institutions (Gisselquist et al., 2021; Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2020). Additionally, the nature of the donor can influence the democratic outcomes within the recipient governments, particularly when the donor itself is characterised by an autocratic regime. For example, Bermeo (2011) suggests that aid provided by authoritarian donors is negatively correlated with democratisation, based on the cross-country analysis from 1992-2007.

However, there are some empirical studies that suggest that the relationship between aid and democratisation is rather inconclusive, in particular in post-war and post-conflict states (Haass, 2019; Grimm and Mathis, 2017; Knack, 2004). While aid has been shown to improve the quality of elections in post-conflict states, it may have little, or sometimes negative, impact on the rule of law overall due to the elites' rent-seeking behaviour (Haass, 2019).

¹⁶ Ro Tucci, Director for Center for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance at USAID. Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy, 31 March 2022.

2.2 Environmental democracy approach and foreign aid

Foreign aid has been a key channel for enabling response to environmental issues in developing countries and economies in transition. This included supporting the capacity of countries to address domestic environmental problems. Increasingly, this focuses on efforts to deal with global environmental issues and support the implementation of global environmental agreements, such as the Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC and more broadly to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Paris Agreement recognises international climate finance as one of the fundamental pillars in the global response to the climate crisis (United Nations, 2015).

Governance failures require solutions that trigger socio-political and institutional change through enhanced transparency, citizen participation and justice in addressing climate crisis and environmental degradation. Most such solutions focus on political institutions and processes and lie in strengthening key pillars of democratic governance, through the ‘environmental democracy’ approach. They require addressing *information gaps and uncertainty* that often obstruct decision-making. This includes improving quality, transparency and access to environmental information, such as past and projected emissions, climate risk and vulnerability assessments, scenarios for mitigation and adaptation and progress made with implementation of policies.

“The linkages between environmental degradation and climate change on the one hand and backsliding of democracy, human rights abuses and the attacks against the rules-based world order on the other hand makes it necessary to adopt a holistic approach.”

Jenny Ohlsson, State Secretary for International Cooperation, Sweden.¹⁷

Governance failures also need solutions that *augment credibility and longevity of political commitment* to policies over longer-term across multiple electoral cycles and *strengthen accountability for implementation*. This includes enhancing political oversight through strengthening the ability of legislatures and judiciaries to tackle environmental issues. Political voices and coalitions can help address environmental problems by raising citizens’ concerns and holding governments accountable. To do so political voices need to be more inclusive and aware of climate change and environmental degradation and be backed by a strong set of environmental and democratic rights that allows them to be heard through freedom of expression and speech and research. Political parties can also help strengthen environmental democracy through mediating public preferences and political voices, parliamentary oversight and through party competition. A lack of political consensus between the main parties may jeopardise the maintenance of political commitment and lead to policy reversal. Bridging the divide in the positions of the key parties on environmental issues is important for achieving more ambitious policies and outcomes.

Development co-operation can help by enhancing public awareness on environmental issues and policy responses, enabling capacity of the media and civil society to cover these issues, and building multistakeholder coalitions to support policy development and implementation. It can also help by building awareness and ability of political parties and parliaments to engage with these

¹⁷ Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy, 29-31 March 2022.

issues. For example, there is a great potential to integrate democracy and adaptation objectives in recipient countries to achieve better climate resilience (Böhmer, 2022).¹⁸ Targeting local level institutions through adaptation finance has been shown to create political opportunities leading to more fair transition, preventing inequalities, marginalisation and exclusion (Colenbrander et al., 2018).

Expert interviews with development co-operation professionals conducted for this study showed that there is a good recognition among experts focusing on environmental programmes of the importance of addressing governance and political failures, especially in the context of climate change. Lack of political will and political commitment, short-termism, vulnerability of policies to electoral cycles, weak accountability for implementation are some examples of such failures that have been mentioned in the interviews. However, few interviewed experts were familiar with the concept of ‘environmental democracy’ itself, commenting that the concept is not well understood by stakeholders. Most experts interviewed felt that that a different, simpler framing was preferable, such ‘environmental or climate change governance’ or preferably unpacking it even more and rather focusing on the specific pillars of environmental democracy discussed earlier.

“It’s evident that you cannot design an effective climate change support programme without considering all of the other governance measures and sensitivity to conflict, justice, security measures and enforcement.”

UK development professional, Latin America.

“The links between environment and climate-resilient sustainable development, and human rights, democracy and gender equality are clear.”

Strategy for Sweden’s regional development co-operation in Asia and the Pacific region 2016–2021, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Reinforcing the core pillars of environmental governance can also contribute to overall strengthening of democracies. Environment and climate change often provide a better entry point for supporting drivers of democratic change than trying to push for implementation of democratic priorities as the main objective of a co-operation programme.

“We’ve seen examples where democratic space is shrinking, but climate change is high on the agenda and not perceived as sensitive by the government as working on human rights. Working with environmental issues in these circumstances can sometimes also be a way to promote participatory approaches and local democracy.”

¹⁸ Böhmer, B. 2022. [Access to Information: Trends and Challenges](#). Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy, 29-31 March 2022, London, FCDO

Development professional, South-East Asia.

“There's a lot to learn from other fields, particularly in the peace and security and conflict resolution. Everyone who worked on nation building or large-scale peace building implementation attempts, have learned critical lessons on how to balance, shape and strengthen political will.”

NGO democracy support expert, USA.

“Environment officers are often also good governance and democracy officers... Experience of the USAID programmes in Eastern Europe in the 1990s shows that when environmental support is done right, it also raises awareness and strengthens participatory approaches including women and youth.”

Kathryn Stratos, Deputy Director, Center for the Environment, USAID.¹⁹

Climate action also presents an opportunity to mobilise citizen participation. The economic and social shifts necessary to enable transition to net zero and climate resilient economies require many of the hallmarks of democratic governance: debate, inclusion, equity, participation, justice, the rule of law. One of the priorities becomes making sure democracies deliver (Tucci, 2022).²⁰ This includes strengthening government's capacity to develop and implement policy strategies; working with citizens and shifting perceptions in society through building *coalitions for change*, creating space for citizens to express their *voice*, creating *just transition*, strengthening of civil society and countering democratic backsliding (ibid).

“One of the most exciting synergies is that issues around climate change can really mobilize public participation, particularly among youth and underrepresented groups like indigenous populations. Climate is one of the issues to demand change through a powerful positive agenda. From a democracy perspective this could be really contagious, and it galvanises broader and diverse citizen participation in a larger political process.”

Rosarie Tucci, Director, Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, USAID.²¹

¹⁹ Stratos, K. 2022. Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy, 29-31 March 2022, London, FCDO

²⁰ Tucci, R. 2022. Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy, 29-31 March 2022, London, FCDO.

²¹ Tucci, R. 2022. Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy, 29-31 March 2022, London, FCDO.

2.3 Barriers to integration of environmental governance into foreign aid

Expert interviews showed that while there is a growing recognition of the importance of dealing with governance failures especially in the context of climate change, several barriers persist to scaling up integration of governance and environmental democracy related interventions into development co-operation on environment and climate change. These barriers largely relate to knowledge, capacity, and framing; funding strategies and cycles; and measurement and reporting practices.

Knowledge and framing

Experts noted a lack of understanding about which environmental governance interventions could be and have been effective, as well as a more general shortage of practical examples. There were also knowledge gaps among the environmental experts on how to work politically, and among the governance and democracy experts on technical aspects of environmental and climate change issues. The governance departments in donor agencies often did not have an environmental specialist and were not thinking in these terms, whereas the environmental teams did not have specialists in politics and democratic governance. This has led to reluctance to focus on political economy and politics of the environment. Furthermore, the concept (or international frameworks) of environmental democracy is not widely understood, as noted earlier, and has not been an explicit or strong focus of discussions in the development co-operation community. Some experts also noted that talking about environmental ‘governance’ rather than ‘democracy’ is a more effective way to engage experts and host country governments.

Funding strategies and cycles

A challenge that all interviewed experts raised was the short-termism of funding programmes, and inconsistency of funding cycles with the longer timeframes required for meaningful governance change. Pressure to deliver short-term results against easily measurable indicators make governance interventions more challenging to integrate into environmental aid programmes.

“The challenge we face is that the way funding systems work and the way the political systems work, they don't lend themselves to investing in the kind of long-term projects required.”

UK development professional, Latin America.

“Governance issues take longer to address, and our funding tends to be short and very rarely medium term. It's normally three to five years to tackle governance well unless there are easy fixes to the issue. But where they're entrenched, you need at least a political cycle to start moving forward.”

UK development professional, Africa.

Interviews revealed that much of the development funding remains structured in thematic silos. This makes it challenging to provide technical co-operation across thematic areas, limiting the types of interventions that could lead to the longer-term political change necessary to ensure improvements in the regulatory framework, improved transparency and strengthened accountability for implementation. Experts noted an overall strategic deficit, where most development finance programmes treat objectives around strengthening governance and democracy separately from objectives related to environmental protection. Furthermore, governance objectives are often not explicitly integrated into the overarching development finance strategies on environment and climate change, making integration at the programming stage at the regional and country level challenging.

“Donor bureaucracies are structured so that you end up working in silos... There is a need to more explicitly link in a holistic way the politics of climate change to the technocratic approach.”

Democracy support NGO expert, USA.

“We need a more interdisciplinary approach to funding mechanisms and to programming more generally.”

UK development professional, Eastern Europe.

Measurement and reporting

There was a strong perception among the interviewed experts that measurement systems for environmental and climate change programmes are too focused on indicators related to physical output and emission reductions. There is a gap in the knowledge on how to measure governance change in environmental programmes, as well as around the need for integration of relevant indicators in the reporting systems.

“There are fundamental foreign policy barriers in how we structure aid systems and how we measure its effectiveness.”

Democracy support NGO expert, USA

“We need to change the mindset of donors to start looking at the importance of parliaments and political parties, and to understand that success of development assistance targeting parliament or political parties cannot be measured in only one year... It is also important to work beyond only measuring technical indicators, such as emission reductions.”

UK development professional, South-East Asia.

“We take a holistic approach, and that applies to how we are measuring change: we consider whether the work is leading to more democratic political parties, more consultative participatory processes with legislative bodies, increased awareness or expanded voice of activists. That is not necessarily how success is measured when taking a technocratic approach to environmental change.”

Democracy support NGO expert, USA.

2.3 Opportunities to address the barriers

The recognition of the importance of environmental governance and key pillars of environmental democracy in international agreements, such as the Rio Declaration; the Aarhus Convention; the Escazu Agreement and in the UNFCCC’s Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) work strand and the Paris Agreement, provides solid basis for incorporation of these issues into development co-operation.

“The full package of asks included in the [cover decision of the Glasgow work programme on action for Climate Empowerment adopted at COP26](#) provides a basic but robust checklist of the measures that any national, subnational, or local government keen to a) reinvigorate democracy and b) create the conditions for the sort of turbo-charged climate action that we need to deliver the NDCs should take...”

[Climate Democracy post-COP26: time to play the ACE](#), Rafael Jiménez Aybar, WFD
Environmental Democracy Adviser.

Interviewees noted that there is growing understanding that integrating governance priorities into technical environmental co-operation programmes helps increase interventions’ effectiveness, alongside the sustainability and longevity of change. Emerging examples include projects focused on strengthening civil society, parliaments and political parties, public opinion and participation on climate change and the environment, the capacity of the judiciary system to deal with environmental issues (e.g. through training judges) and environmental defendants programmes. However, there is further need for systematic empirical research and robust measurement of evaluation of projects in this area.

“Activities are to be conducted in a manner that strengthens the ability of regional actors to integrate an environmental and climate perspective into programmes related to human rights, democracy and gender equality, and that strengthens regional actors’ efforts to promote respect for human rights, greater opportunities for democratic participation and gender mainstreaming into programmes related to environment, climate and natural resources”

[Strategy for Sweden’s regional development co-operation in Asia and the Pacific region 2016–2021](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden.

Box 4: Georgia paves the way towards more environmental and climate change democracy

WFD's Georgia programme's theory of change recognises that achieving action on climate and environmental issues is not solely a technical, but also a political challenge. Without the necessary political will, actions required to address climate and environmental issues will not be driven forward or undertaken. The programme employs the principles of environmental democracy to generate climate and environmental ambition, encouraging citizens and civic actors to hold the government to account for delivery. WFD engages with parliamentarians, political parties, civil society, private sector and the media to catalyse greater domestic support and accountability.

Key activities include training and mentoring sessions to civil society organisations (CSOs) on local campaigning methods about environmental and climate issues. This includes sharing expertise on how best to make the case for climate ambitions by addressing local concerns, how to contribute to parliamentary enquires, and online knowledge sharing workshops between each political party and CSOs to discuss local manifesto policies; supporting the parliament on issues related to the National Energy and Climate Plan, international negotiations, post-legislative scrutiny of climate and environmental legislation; and training sessions on intersectional analysis of draft legislation.

At the time of writing, this programme remains early in its implementation phase. Some of its preliminary outcomes included delivering Political Economy Analysis of environmental and climate governance in Georgia; supporting a committee hearing on Georgia's NDC local opinion polling to identify the attitudes, concerns and priorities of electors on environment and climate change; a rapid legal analysis and legal roadmap for Georgia's NDC and conducting a blended learning course on environmental democracy for selected local councils.

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Demo Finland and other organisations have been involved in various projects to strengthen political voice, oversight, and accountability around environmental issues (see Annex 1). For example, WFD's approach to environmental democracy prioritises helping to convene diverse, sustained environmental coalitions for change with various actors working together towards common ambitions; getting more environmental data released into the public realm (and more data generated where it does not yet exist); working to ensure that environmental legislation is high quality, evidence-based, reflects the principles of environmental democracy, and is implemented in practice; and helping citizens realise their environmental rights by ensuring mechanisms and procedures exist for them to hold those who have committed environmental harms to account. WFD's programme in Georgia, for example, focuses on increasing transparency and enhancing civic participation in environmental decision making. The WFD programme in Indonesia focuses on enabling the parliament to deliver on climate action (see Box 5). In Tunisia, NDI helped build cross-

party consensus in drafting environmental legislation, while in the Solomon Islands it contributed to strengthening the political voice of young activists through a programme designed to enhance citizens' ability to hold government accountable. In Mozambique, a project by Demo Finland set up a dialogue platform for regional and national parliamentarians to facilitate co-operation in issues related to the extractive industry and helped raise awareness about environmental rights (see Annex 1 for further details).

There are also emerging good examples of explicit integration of environment and governance, human rights and democracy objectives at the strategic level into foreign aid and on the use of the longer-term theories of change. A growing array of interventions are being undertaken that tackle policy change through strengthening environmental coalitions or grassroots institutions and enhancing capacity of parliaments and political parties to develop and adopt environmental legislation and carry out post-legislative scrutiny. Learning from these experiences is an important step in addressing the barriers.

“How do we deal with the dynamics of short-termism? We think in terms of long-term theories of change. Even for one-year programmes, there's still a long-term theory of change we have in place that is linked to governance and development strategies and national development plans.”

UK development professional, Latin America.

For example, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) explicitly links strengthening of democracy and environment in its approach due to the significant overlap between these themes and their effects on human rights in developing contexts (see box 6 for a detailed case study). A particularly interesting example is Sweden's programme of co-operation with Asia and the Pacific region which, since 2015, has been among the first to adopt and implement this integrated approach (see Box 7)).

USAID's efforts to support transition to net-zero has two objectives: targeted direct action and systems change, with latter being a newer element to the strategy (Stratos, 2022).²² This is based on the recognition that fully addressing the climate crisis requires long-term sustainable change that includes all aspects of society. The ultimate objective of many programmes then becomes strengthening climate governance and inducing systemic change that increases meaningful participation at all levels of society in climate action. As result there is a need for more extensive collaboration between environmental departments with democracy colleagues (ibid).

In the UK, the recent merger of the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) into the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) offers an opportunity for closer integration of technical and political aspects of environmental and climate change aid.

“You're getting really good synergy benefits where you can amplify the finance that you're spending using the influence in the old [UK] Foreign Office through political channels... There's some good evidence there that those two agendas overlap, and they should overlap.”

²² Stratos, K. 2022. Presentation at the Conference on Environmental Democracy, 29-31 March 2022, London, FCDO

Box 5: Making Indonesia climate action deliver through Environmental Democracy

WFD began implementing its “Making Indonesia Climate Action Deliver through Environmental Democracy” project on 30 September 2021. The programme includes five workstreams. Evidence-based climate policymaking workstream envisions advocacy for climate change at regional and international forums; recommendations on Indonesia’s New & Renewable Energy Bill; including through series of expert roundtables; introduction of environmental and gender criteria in regulatory impact assessment (RIA) for pre-legislative and post-legislative scrutiny (PLS) process.

The workstream on scrutiny of government policies focuses on recommendations on Indonesia’s climate action policy and goals, including through expert roundtables and multistakeholder forums; establishing a coordination mechanism between the government and the parliament on climate action; and recommendations on the environmental provisions of Indonesia’s Jobs Creation Omnibus Law.

Green budgeting and climate financing workstream aims at introducing green budgeting framework to parliamentary budget and public accounts analysts; training parliamentary budget and public accounts analysts to implement the green budget tagging framework on government budget proposal; and developing interactive online course on green budgeting and green budget tagging.

Facilitating greater public participation in climate action is the focus of the fourth workstream, which focuses on enhancing meaningful public participation in environmental policy decision making; facilitation of the creation of a civil society network/coalition on climate action and training for civil society leaders to effectively engage the parliament. Finally, activities around enhancing gender equality and social inclusion in climate action include training for activists/civil society leaders of marginalised groups to influence environmental policy decision making, particularly on pre- and post-legislative scrutiny.

Early activities under the project are contributing to supporting important policy changes. In May 2022, the Indonesian Parliament formally adopted RIA as a primary method of pre-legislative scrutiny by passing a second amendment to UU No. 12/2011 on Law Making (UU PPP). The Indonesian Parliament also began its annual budget oversight work by drafting an analysis of the government’s budget proposal. Green budgeting is incorporated into the analysis for the first time.

“Given the limitation of resources and political challenges, a potentially strategic and productive way forward would be going in with more technical and practical priorities but making sure that environmental governance and political component is in the background and the opportunity to address it is considered pretty much in every programme”

UK development professional, Africa

The tangible impact on governance systems necessary to address climate change and environmental crises requires that development co-operation strategies and programmes:

- Ensure longer-term sustained investment and engagement with and support to the key governance actors (inside and outside of the governments), given that change in governance takes longer to take effect.
- Apply an interdisciplinary approach to funding mechanisms and to programming; and ensure closer integration and collaboration among the programmes targeting democracy and climate change/environmental priorities.
- Ensure that measurement of success does not solely focus on immediate short-term gains, but addresses longer-term systemic change in governance systems, processes and capabilities necessary to address climate crisis.
- Strengthen diplomatic political engagement on environmental governance from the capitals in the regional and national offices.

Box 6: Sida: Human rights-based approach

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) applies an integrated human-rights based approach to its work, where it puts inclusion of marginalised and discriminated communities at the core. Climate change and environment is one of three thematic priorities and the main objectives in most of the strategies that steers Sida's work. Sida funds programs in collaboration with intergovernmental and governmental actors, civil society, multilateral and research organisations in developing countries.

Especially in Sweden's strategy for regional development cooperation in Asia, an integrated approach combining democracy, human rights, gender with environment, climate change and biodiversity is explicitly due to the significant overlap between these themes and their effects on human development in the region. Sida has delegated to the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok to lead the programmatic work. One of such programs is a Regional Asia Pacific Programme of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, which promotes better alignment of the universal access to human rights and environmental outcomes, recognising the overlap between these areas in the context of natural disasters. The programme includes capacity development of media representatives on human rights, strengthening human rights education and research at universities and providing recommendations on the issues of rights to a healthy environment, displacement, climate change and disaster.

The Embassy's programming also incorporates the rights of women and those who are marginalised and affected by environmental degradation. One of the outcomes of the integrated approach is greater gender equality in recipient countries, measured for example through the increase in the number of women leaders and greater female participation in the governance processes on the grassroots level. One of the partner organisations that works with the Embassy is Empower - Women for Climate-Resilient Societies, focusing on building women's resilience to climate change in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam, and at regional level e.g. ASEAN. The program targets empowerment of women to participate in decision-making processes, inclusion of gender and human rights in climate and disaster risk reduction policies and building climate resilience using renewable energy. Additionally, the WAVES initiative of a non-profit organisation RECOFTC supports gender inclusive leadership initiatives within the local communities in the public and private sectors in Southeast Asia. It aims to build the capacity of leaders on gender equality, incorporate these issues into policies, and strengthen women leadership skills. Both programs address more inclusive governance to build resilient societies that can respond to environmental degradation and natural disasters.

Box 7: Sweden's regional development co-operation with Asia and the Pacific Region

This Strategy has been rooted in the principles of environmental democracy for the past few years. The strategy for 2016-2021 determined that the collaboration should strengthen the ability of regional actors to integrate an environmental and climate perspective into programmes related to human rights, democracy and gender equality, and strengthen the efforts to promote respect for human rights, democratic participation and gender mainstreaming in the programmes related to environment, climate and natural resources. The strategy for 2022–2026 builds on the same principles and sets as its key objectives contribution to human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality; environmentally and climate-resilient sustainable management of ecosystems and biodiversity, and sustainable use of natural resources; with integration between these two goals. The strategy also has a country window for Cambodia with focus on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Implementation of the strategy is accompanied by measures to augment capacity to work across themes internally and externally. The former includes a system of internal support, through dedicated policy officers for each issue area, human right, environment, and climate change, in the headquarters to provide technical support to the country/regional teams, and helpdesks that can help programme managers with working across themes, including on questions regarding integration or how to assess partners and proposals. The work is also supported by the academic partners. Externally, there have been trainings on the integrated approach for the prospective programme partners and bringing together partners from the different thematic areas to see how their work could link to, strengthen, or complement each other (Interview with Swedish government officials, 2022).

In 2021, the team in charge of the regional cooperation with Asia and the Pacific region undertook a survey of programme partners on their experience with the integrated approach. 58 out of 60 institutions that have responded to the survey considered that the Government of Sweden should continue with applying the integrated approach going forward. The respondents noted that human rights, gender equality, environment and climate change are interconnected, this requiring an integrated approach for effective and sustainable results. Some also highlighted the importance of enhancing access to justice in environmental matters, which requires integration across the themes. Among the benefits of the integrated approach the partners mentioned that it has enabled partnerships between environmental and human rights experts and practitioners and led to improved “access to justice” outcomes; enhanced integration of approaches across development teams and partners; enabled promotion of gender equal and rights based approaches; has led to increased number of national civil society consultations and inputs into the government-run policymaking processes, more frequent participation of grassroots women and increased number of women leaders.

Some partners commented that it has led them to pay more attention to gender inclusion at the rights of those most impacted by environmental degradation and climate change; and impacted their own strategic planning.

One of the challenges mentioned by the partners is accounting for the inclusion of human rights and gender equality in a way as to ensure they are not overshadowed by environmental efforts. There are human rights violations and gender-related issues in contexts of extreme poverty that are not necessarily connected to environment or climate change. Implementation of programs by Sida's partner organisations must have clear methodology to account for interlinked themes without undermining or diluting the key objectives of the integrated approach. Furthermore, it was noted that more research and best practices are needed on how to implement the integrated approach in regional development cooperation, especially on environment and climate change.

Recommendations for development co-operation decisionmakers:

- Launch dialogues or joint action groups to exchange experiences around the challenges and best practice to design, implement, oversee and measure impact for blended programming and gather examples on how integration has worked in different sectors and political contexts. These should include donor agencies, implementing institutions, civil society, local partners and academic experts.
- Improve understanding about the importance of governance as an issue within climate change and environmental agenda among the senior development co-operation leadership.
- Introduce cross-cutting objectives into development co-operation strategies and explicitly articulate the value of working politically and working on governance in a democratic way in the context of climate and environment development co-operation programmes.
- Tap into experiences of the country offices and embassies in the development of overarching strategic priorities and programming at the regional and the global level.
- Recognise environmental and climate governance explicitly as part of the governance advisors' technical toolbox and include a recommendation for a political economy analysis as part of climate change and environmental programming.
- Develop systems of indicators for measuring governance change in environmental and climate change programmes.
- Fund pilot, multi-disciplinary programmes that bring together democracy assistance organisations with environmental organisations and learn what works and does not. Consider collaboration with philanthropic foundations working in this space.
- Fund programmes designed specifically to advance Aarhus and Escazu commitments, as well as to implement Action on Climate Empowerment (ACE).
- Focus on programmes that advance the key pillars of environmental democracy, including access to credible environmental data, political voice and multi-stakeholder coalitions, political parties, political accountability and oversight, and access to justice.
- Enhance access to environmental information through support to the development of regulatory frameworks and systems for environmental data collection, monitoring and evaluation, and open access data platforms. must be addressed and regulated at the state level; dialogue between governments and data users; regulations on data disclosure and enforcement systems.
- Support strengthening political voice and multi-stakeholder coalitions on climate change and the environment by focusing on interventions that help enhance public awareness, enable

capacity of the media and civil society to cover climate change, and building multi-stakeholder coalitions to support policy development and implementation.

- Support mechanisms for meaningful stakeholder and citizen engagement in climate change and environmental policy making and implementation, including citizens assemblies and stakeholder consultation mechanisms as part of national ACE action plans.
- Consider supporting the interventions to strengthen the positive influence and minimise potential negative impacts of political parties on environmental and climate agenda, including programmes to raise awareness and build internal capabilities of political parties to work on these issues, as well as support to cross-party initiatives on climate change and the environment; and to include the environmental agenda in the democracy assistance programmes targeting political parties.
- Support programmes focusing on strengthening accountability, oversight and access to justice on environment and climate change, including capacity building of parliaments, civil society, policy makers and other stakeholder to development draft legislation, pre- and post-legislative scrutiny, support to capacity building of and collaborative networks among judges and environmental defenders.

Annex 1: Selected examples of environmental democracy projects in development co-operation

Project title/ Headline	Relevant pillars of ED*	Location	Key activities	Key outcomes	Organisation
A better deal: new law passed in Lebanon on oil and gas taxation	Political oversight Accountability	Lebanon	WFD's programme in Lebanon has focused on strengthening parliamentary oversight of oil and gas in Lebanon and providing support and technical advice to the Public Works, Energy, Water and Transport Committee and the Research and Information Department.	-The support has, among other things, improved the capacity of MPs and staff to manage the oil and gas sector in an effective and transparent way, enhanced institutional capacity of parliamentary committees; and improved access and openness to Parliament for CSOs engaged in the oil and gas sector. -In September 2018, the Parliament ratified the Transparency of Oil and Gas law. -WFD's programme contributed positively towards the adoption of the law and ensuring its compliance with international standards.	WFD
Combating air pollution in Kyrgyzstan	Political voice Including expert voices in deliberation	Kyrgyzstan	-Actions taken to reduce air pollution -NDI's six-stage policy development approach aims to create sustainable policy solutions by providing elected representatives with evidence, research and citizen input. -NDI assisted MPs in identifying experts who could help them understand the key causes of Kyrgyzstan's air pollution problem.	-Kyrgyzstan's parliament, passed the Clean Air Bill on June 25, 2020 -The legislation seeks to incentivise electric car manufacturing through the exemption of certain customs and taxes. -NDI's six-stage policy development cycle allowed MPs to increase their knowledge and involvement not only in more effective and inclusive processes, but also in efforts to protect the environment and environmental stewardship.	NDI

Drafting Effective Environmental Legislation Through Cross-Party Collaboration	Political oversight	Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –NDI has supported Tunisian Members of Parliament since 2014 in conducting their legislative and representative duties. –NDI provided technical advice on crafting effective legislation; connected parliamentarians to environmental experts; and convened civil society and government officials to exchange information on local environmental challenges and priorities. –NDI organised a working session among MPs, technical experts and civil society representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Establishment of the Sustainable Development Network (SDN) –Members of SDN succeeded in passing 31 out of 37 proposals. –The SDN encouraged the passage of a law prohibiting the use of plastic bags, which went into effect in Tunisia in January 2021. 	NDI
Forging consensus to get a crucial climate bill passed in Uganda	Political voice Political coalition	Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –WFD offered support to co-ordinate all the actors involved, to review the National Climate Bill of Uganda and generate consensus and advocate for its passage. –WFD convened a high-level roundtable that brought together all these actors in one room. –WFD supported a lobby meeting with the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament, WFD parliamentary champions and members of the climate change committee to solicit support for when the bill was tabled on the floor of parliament. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –A week after the lobby meeting, the bill was tabled for a second and third reading and was passed without opposition. –The passing of the bill received a positive response from many Ugandans. –The bill will enable Uganda to pursue its voluntary mitigation targets under the Paris Agreement of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the energy supply, forestry and wetland sectors by 22% by 2030. 	WFD
Fostering environmental democracy in Pakistan	Open data Political voice Political overview Accountability	Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –WFD provided technical support to the Standing Committee on Climate Change (CCC), including developing a guide for the committee to proactively develop systems to engage with civil society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –The National Assembly’s Committee on Climate Change has become a leading institution to bring together people and expert voices to develop policy initiatives. –It is creating opportunities for experts 	WFD

			<p>organisation.</p> <p>–WFD’s technical assistance included developing online public engagement tools such as public petitions, public hearings, an expert database, and an opportunity to share research on matters related to environment and climate change.</p>	<p>to voice their concerns or share their data on issues related to climate change.</p> <p>–A year-long plan has been developed, which highlights the structured parliamentary approach for oversight while creating avenues for collaboration with a civil society organisations.</p> <p>–The agenda of the parliamentary committee has been proposed and voted upon by the experts of the field taking in account the voices from academia, think-tanks and community groups.</p>	
Georgia paves the way towards more environmental and climate change democracy	<p>Political oversight</p> <p>Political voice</p>	Georgia	<p>In 2018-19, WFD supported the Georgian parliament through two separate programmes to establish the practice of holding thematic inquiries and to conduct post legislative scrutiny (PLS), with the overall intention of improving the legislature’s oversight function. Both programmes had an environmental focus.</p> <p>WFD provided assistance to the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee (EPNRC) of the Georgian parliament to conduct two separate thematic inquiries on ambient air pollution and municipal waste management.</p>	<p>Through its support for these processes WFD has helped to improve the participation of citizens in environmental decision-making by supporting the parliament to produce recommendations based on well-structured, transparent and solution-oriented collaboration with civil society organisations and individual citizens, in addition to other stakeholders, such as government and the private sector.</p>	WFD
Green Caucus on Climate Change Responds to Citizen	<p>Political voice</p> <p>Political oversight</p>	Kosovo	<p>NDI is tackling climate change by working to strengthen the development of issue-based caucuses in Kosovo’s Assembly, including a recently formed Green</p>	<p>–The Speaker of Parliament at the time and the current President, Dr. Vjosa Osmani, also agreed that the environment was among the top three priorities of parliament and vowed to</p>	NDI

Environmental Priorities	Accountability		Caucus. In October 2020, with support from NDI, Kosovo’s Green Caucus held hearings with civil society organisations about environmental degradation in Kosovo focused on air pollution, waste mismanagement, illegal exploitation of forests and the use of coal.	take action. –The formation of the Green Caucus. –Greater focus on the environment within and outside parliament	
Helping Lebanese lawmakers achieve the sustainable development goals and uphold human rights	Political scrutiny Accountability Open data	Lebanon	–Building awareness and knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals among MPs and members of the Parliamentary research centre through policy papers, a survey of the relevant legal framework in Lebanon and technical support to the committee. –WFD provided technical training to members of the Parliamentary Research Centre in Lebanon on how to report on progress made towards the sustainable development goals. –WFD has helped simplify information on sustainable development.	–This information will enable deeper and more effective scrutiny of the Government of Lebanon’s commitment to the SDGs. –These developments mark a step in the right direction to achieving the sustainable development goals and upholding human rights standards in Lebanon.	WFD
Improving the oversight role of the Mozambican Parliament and provincial assemblies in extractive industries sector	Political oversight Political voice Accountability	Mozambique	–Demo Finland set up a project in 2017 supporting the democratic governance of extractive industries and natural resources. –The project aims to enhance the oversight role of the Parliament and six Provincial Assemblies on the extractive industries and to increase their capacity to assess the implementation of the existing legislation on natural resource	–The project set up a dialogue platform for regional and national parliamentarians to facilitate co-operation in issues related to the extractive industry. –The training of the Parliamentary Committees has raised awareness in the Parliament about the effects and dynamics of the extractive industry sector and its oversight role has improved.	Demo Finland

			<p>management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The second phase started in 2020. –Training of provincial parliaments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –The parliament is holding more hearings on extractive industry issues with the government, which are carried out with more technical knowledge than before. –Awareness about environmental rights has improved, as well as the Parliament’s intervention in this area. 	
Innovating Legislative Procedures to Address Lead Contamination	–Political oversight	Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –NDI, with support from the United Kingdom’s Good Governance Fund, assisted the Parliament of Georgia to use a new oversight mechanism to conduct an in-depth study, called a “thematic inquiry,” into lead contamination. –NDI helped a parliamentary working group, led by the Chair of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Committee, develop key research questions; review relevant policy documents, regulations and studies; and identify independent experts to testify. –NDI supported the working group in organising public hearings with representatives of the executive branch at the national and local level to ensure a detailed understanding of the scale of the challenge and policy responses to date. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –The working group produced a report with 20 recommendations for government action, including developing a plan for testing additional products for lead contamination; preparing a needs-based assessment of public sector capacity to regularly monitor lead contamination; and creating guidelines for construction and renovation of old buildings, particularly kindergartens. –Strengthened relationship between the parliament and citizens by engaging them in the oversight process and responding to citizen priorities. –Demonstrated the importance of engaging experts, from civil society and academia, to ensure oversight processes are evidence-based. 	NDI
Local Empowerment in Mali: Waste Management	Political voice	Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –NDI supported a deliberative process that included citizens, civil society and government officials to analyse the problem of waste management, recommend solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> –A public education campaign on youth radio spread the word and encouraged Koniakary residents to participate, which they did through sanitation committees, neighbourhood watch committees and 	NDI

			and develop a public education campaign.	community clean up days. – Koniakary has created a sanitation, health and environment position in the local administration. –Environmental concerns have also been integrated into Koniakary’s five-year development plan, the Program for Social, Economic and Cultural Development (PDSEC).	
Overhauling Tunisia’s water code: Ensuring equitable and sustainable distribution of water	Political voice Political oversight Accountability	Tunisia	–In January and February 2021, NDI helped organise a series of national and regional knowledge sharing sessions in which these civil society organisations, local governors, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and experts from the Sustainable Development Network discussed local challenges and solutions to accessing clean water. –NDI facilitated a parliamentary study day, where five experts from the Sustainable Development Network, UNDP, and GIZ presented on different components of the water code. –NDI will work to ensure that Tunisian citizens and government institutions work together to enhance the country’s environmental resilience.	–The creation of a parliamentary study day and knowledge sharing sessions to improve communication between different stakeholders. –Results of these efforts are still missing.	NDI
Solomon Islands Youth Lead advocacy for integrity in the natural	Political voice (especially young people)	Solomon Islands	–NDI launched a 10 month programme to help young activists develop the skills to advocate on behalf of their communities and the environment in Solomon Islands. –This was implemented in response	–25 emerging youth leaders from the Solomon Islands have been selected to attend a two-phased programme, which includes a three-month in-depth course on Inclusive Monitoring and Advocacy for Transparency and Accountability.	NDI

resources management and environmental sectors	Political oversight Accountability		to survey, which showed citizens demanded more political integrity and sound decision-making. –NDI will leverage youth's sense of agency in affecting change in the economic sectors most vulnerable to corruption and mismanagement. –It will help them develop strong working relationships with government officials, local organisations and traditional leaders.	–This aims to strengthen their ability to hold government accountable – still waiting to see the actual outcome.	
Strengthening response to floods in Nepal	Political voice Accountability Political oversight	Nepal	–NDI worked with local communities to strengthen their involvement in disaster responses to annual floods. –After facilitating dialogues between environmental experts and community leaders, deforestation was identified as the underlying cause of flooding. –Supporting a local advocacy effort to pass national forestry protection legislation, NDI then trained civil society to monitor and oversee implementation by the executive branch.	–Nepal had a new law to protect forests and prevent floods. –NDI's approach strengthened democratic and environmental governance simultaneously -- and helped foster a sustainable solution to prevent future natural disasters.	NDI

Source: Authors based on the websites of the projects.

* The pillars of environmental democracy that are relevant for each project in this column were assigned by the authors of this report, based on the original project description.

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