

Strategy for building on and sustaining positive impacts from UNI-LEAD



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Table of contents

1. Background and framing	5
2. Think-tank criteria in the context of sustainability	6
3. How think-tanks have fulfilled criteria	8
4. Short course learning	14
5. Project structure	15

Acronyms

ADAPTACO-Moz	Mozambique Community based Adaptation Platform
CEAGRE	Centre of Agricultural and Natural Resource Management Studies
CFU	Climate Finance Unit
COMNACC	National Committee on Climate Change of Senegal
DAE	Direct Access Entity
ENABEL	Belgian Development Agency
ESORCCAS	Oliver Tambo African Research Chair on Ecosystem-Based Adaptation in Arid and Semi-Arid Zones
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLSH	Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines
FSDMoc	Financial Sector Deepening Moçambique
FST	Faculté des Sciences et Techniques
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GGA	Global Goal on Adaptation
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IFAN	Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire
ISE	Institute of Environmental Sciences
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUPA	University Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture
LBA	La Banque Agricole
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LEG	Least Developed Countries Expert Group
LoC	Letter of Collaboration

ADAPTACO-Moz	Mozambique Community based Adaptation Platform
CEAGRE	Centre of Agricultural and Natural Resource Management Studies
CFU	Climate Finance Unit
LUCCC	LDC Universities Consortium on Climate Change
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METE	Ministry of Environment and and Ecological Transition
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MU	Makerere University
MUCCRI	Makerere University Centre for Climate Change Research and Innovations
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	National Determined Contributions
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PoC	Point-of-Contact
SchEMS	Pokhara University School of Environmental Science and Management (SchEMS)
SENELEC	Senegal National Electricity Agency
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TT	Think Tank
UCAD	Université Cheikh Anta Diop
UEM	Universidade Eduardo Mondlane
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNI-LEAD	University Leadership in Catalyzing Climate Finance

ADAPTACO-Moz	Mozambique Community based Adaptation Platform
CEAGRE	Centre of Agricultural and Natural Resource Management Studies
CFU	Climate Finance Unit
WASCAL	West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use
WWF	World Wildlife Fund



Executive Summary

This document describes a strategy for sustaining key elements of the UNI-LEAD project. This sustainability strategy is intended to showcase the success of the project, ways of building on important achievements, and identifies potential vulnerabilities that could undermine the long-term impact of the project. The sustainability strategy focuses on the think-tanks and the short courses, since these were the two main project achievements. In addition, the strategy examines the structure of the project to the extent that it has implications on project sustainability.

1. The focus on the think-tanks revolves around key indicators of sustainability in the context of this project

(i.e. institutional embeddedness, reach across the university, relevance to government needs and priorities, formal agreements, financial stability through new partnerships & anticipating emerging demands, and adaptability). The strategy examines where the UNI-LEAD think-tanks have been particularly successful, and how to build on that success, and where they face vulnerabilities. The examination of the short courses focuses on what worked well, with regards to their use as a training tool, potential vulnerabilities to the continued offering of the short courses in the context of LUCCC universities, and considerations for reducing those vulnerabilities, and bringing innovation into the training process. During the short time that the think-tanks had to establish themselves, they excelled at institutional embeddedness, reach across the university, and relevance to government needs and priorities. Dictated by the institutional contexts, they have had mixed success on acquiring Memorandums of Understanding or similar formal agreements, though with good momentum towards that goal, and the think-tanks are actively considering new partnerships and opportunities (as reflected in their respective business plans). Acquiring sustainable funding is a common concern across the think-tanks.

2. The strategy acknowledges the dynamic nature of the climate finance landscape and the need for the think-tanks to remain nimble so as to avail themselves of new opportunities.

In the inaugural phase, the think-tanks focused significantly on capacity strengthening related to broadening access to climate finance. This was a direct result of focused consultations by the think-tanks with their governments on needs and priorities related to climate finance, and the ability of the think-tank to develop products and services that respond to these needs. Going forward, the think-tanks can build on the foundation that they have established through UNI-LEAD to consider how they could offer value to: i) established and emerging funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund and Loss & Damage; ii) global frameworks, such as the UNFCCC's Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA); iii) long-term monitoring/data analysis for NDCs and NAPs; and, iv) other unique ways that the think-tank could play a knowledge brokering/matching role between expertise across the university and the evolving needs from the government.

3. Continued financing of think-tank operations is a significant concern coming out of the UNI-LEAD inception phase of small grants.

There is no secure base of direct funding for any of the think-tanks, as they complete the inception phase of their establishment and operations. However, there are factors and conditions from the inception phase that could provide a foundation for greater financial security going forward. For instance, the think-tanks' impactful use of the small grants to address specific government needs and priorities, and the strong strategic relationships that the think-tanks established with key governments ministries and agencies bode well for potential growth of the think-tanks going forward. The think-tanks have clearly demonstrated value and uniqueness, both to the government and to the university, that they can leverage¹. Furthermore, the availability of in-kind support that the think-tanks have secured from their respective host universities will provide a modest degree of financial stability in terms of administrative support.

4. The think-tanks recognize the need to be entrepreneurial in their pursuit of continued operational funds.

This could include stronger engagement with the private sector (in technical advisory and capacity development roles that address, for example, research designs on sustaining private company assets in the face of climate change). The think-tanks could also explore the potential of green bonds or climate bonds from their country's banking sector, and to explore initiatives within their countries related to localized/devolved/decentralized climate finance that would benefit from, and be compensatory towards, the think-tank's expertise. The think-tank could also consider

¹ Section 3 describes potential partnerships and funding avenues that the think-tanks have identified coming out of the inception phase.

creating, or modifying an existing, institutional board to include a mixture of senior university administration, government reps, NGO champions, private sector members, that could enhance the visibility of the think-tank, thus potentially attracting funders. The think-tanks could also consider the potential of monetizing the short courses as a training service that they provide.

5. Extending the reach of the think-tanks from solely national to potentially regional could provide another means to extend think-tank visibility and sustainability.

Demonstrating value to the wider LUCCC community and the LDC group is critical for ensuring a legacy of the UNI-LEAD project. And doing so may better position the think-tanks to play a more active role in emerging opportunities — such as the Adaptation Research Alliance’s proposal development process towards LDC co-creation, and the potential for an effort towards a proposed phase 2 of the UNI-LEAD project, as well as demonstrating value to regional initiatives such as WASCAL. The relationships and tangible products that the think-tank successfully established across their respective universities and governments produced valuable learning that could enable the think-tanks to play a vital mentoring role to other LUCCC members within their region, that would in turn further strengthen the network function of the LUCCC across a growing number of think-tanks. Indeed, non-think tank LUCCC members expressed an interest in collaborating with the think tanks to apply their skills, capacities, and resources towards regional climate change action efforts. The willingness of the LDC Chair to embrace the UNI-LEAD effort and to give it visibility within the broader LUCCC, the LDC Group, the LEG, and the UNFCCC through the COP and SBSTA forums will also be an important component of bringing visibility to the think-tank model within the LUCCC.

6. The potential of the short-courses are underutilized.

The short courses contain a rich vein of relevant information and learning on climate finance in LDC contexts. The experience by LUCCC members of offering training on the short courses has helped to advance understanding of what worked well and what needs further refinement. Going forward, the short courses have good potential, both as an intact learning resource and as a resource to inform other uses, such as for developing university curriculum, and offering certification programs and service delivery.

In consideration of the preceding six points, the following key actions can contribute towards achieving sustainability:

- A.** Increase the visibility of the think-tank experience and expertise within the LDC Group and LUCCC; this can include moving towards regional mentoring within the LUCCC, and a general effort to utilize the LUCCC network and its connections to share experiences and learning.
- B.** Continue to align think-tank efforts towards government priorities while also pursuing novel connections through university initiatives, non-governmental partners and the private sector. Look for opportunistic funding sources within these diverse efforts.
- C.** Continue to push for formal agreements (MoU or MoA) with their respective government counterpart ministries and agencies as well as private entities in order to increase their visibility and client development with the relevant public and private institutions .

1. Background and framing

The UNI-LEAD project's overarching objective is to increase the potential of LDCs to achieve scaled up and effective climate change adaptation through increasing the ability of LDC universities to engage their governments in accessing climate finance. This effort is based on the capacity of LDC universities, specifically those of the LUCCC network, to foster the provision of sustained in-country technical services for project development, policy mainstreaming, and the creation of an enabling environment for accessing climate finance, which is critically important for accelerating adaptation efforts.

Universities within the LUCCC network have, in recent years, significantly increased their ability to conduct research on climate vulnerability, impacts and adaptation aspects but they have generally lacked specific skills and knowledge related to working with governments and other societal stakeholders in developing fundable proposals for accessing international climate finance. Thus, the LUCCC universities have significant but unrealized potential to play a leadership role in mobilizing climate finance for their countries. The motivation for this project revolves around the notion that strengthening in-country capacities enables universities to engage their governments on climate finance rather than governments relying on external experts and multilateral intermediaries to develop fundable proposals. The UNI-LEAD project is unique in its focus on LDC universities as a driving force, on the ability to nurture learning across the LUCCC network, and the close linkage of the project with the LDC Group Chair throughout the implementation of the project.

This sustainability strategy is primarily focused on how:

- the UNI-LEAD model of *university-based think-tanks* can maintain a sufficient funding flow, operational efficiency, and reputation for professionalism and impact to sustain the think-tanks beyond the end of this project;
- the use of the *climate finance short courses* can serve as a training resource for the LUCCC network to use in more effectively engaging their governments;
- the *structure of the project* itself had a bearing on project sustainability and what lessons are contained within that, which could be useful in planning future projects.

Each of these three aspects is explored below.

2. Sustainability of the TT model

The think-tanks are the main component of the UNI-LEAD project and they serve as a model of intensive university-government engagement that could be expanded and scaled up through the LUCCC network. The think-tanks were conceived as university-based centers that engage diverse disciplines and expertise across the university in service to governments' demands for technical products and services related to accessing climate finance that could be provided using a fee-for-service model. This initial, pilot-phase of the think-tank establishment was made possible by a small-grants program through which the think-tanks would demonstrate value to the government, with the idea that as the think-tanks grows, it would develop a fee-for-services model for sustaining its existence and provide continued value to the government. Much of the analysis of think-tank sustainability in this strategy is based on the sustainability plans that the individual think-tanks developed in their business plans; therefore, reflecting the variable institutional and national contexts in which these think-tanks are based.

The think-tanks achieved significant progress in the inception phase, consisting of establishing the legal/institutional structure of the think-tank, engaging with government stakeholders in identifying their needs and priorities appropriate to the mission of the think-tanks, developing products and services that respond to these needs and priorities through the small grants program, and developing a business plan for future growth and sustainability. The following criteria reflect their progress during the inception phase as well as their strategic priorities going forward.

Key criteria that influence the sustainability of the think-tank model are:

1. *Robust engagement with government and society:* An important aspect of think-tank sustainability lies in its level of active engagement with government and society, through such actions as promoting science-policy dialogue, providing scientific evidence into decision-making processes, and providing training to the government, civil society and private sector entities on important adaptation issues. Continuous engagement with both governmental and non-governmental actors working on the adaptation agendas and climate finance priorities is essential. In this context, the think-tanks need to demonstrate value through acting as a conduit / knowledge broker for channeling relevant research from across the university to meet specific government needs related to climate change. Value addition also comes through the diversity of disciplines and the degree of interdisciplinary that the think-tanks can convene, and the ability of the

think-tanks to integrate research with actionable strategies related to mobilizing climate finance.

2. *Positioning of the think-tank within the university structure:* The long-term sustainability of the think-tank depends on its ability to be embedded within the university structure, demonstrate utility to the university mission, and receive partial or full in-kind support in the form of office space, and administrative and financial management functions. The ability of the think-tank to fill specific niches, and attract diverse sources of academic knowledge and disciplines, that advance broader university strategic priorities, and to have established credibility within the university are important for enabling the think-tank to be well positioned with visibility and value addition to new initiatives or partnerships emerging within the university.
3. *Financial stability, and a viable long-term financing strategy:* Financial stability is crucial for ensuring long-term continuity and growth. This can be achieved by pursuing a diversity of funding sources, such as grants, donations, partnerships with international and national organizations, as well as fee-for-service initiatives. Forming strategic partnerships with the government, universities, NGOs, and the private sector can provide the think-tanks with access to a variety of funding opportunities, while also enhancing its credibility and impact. Developing a robust financial model that combines internal resources with external funding is also important for helping to reduce dependencies and maximize sustainability. Lastly, focusing on maintaining efficient and transparent financial management will be key to building trust with partners and donors.
4. *Adaptability:* A flexible and adaptive operational framework is important for allowing the think-tank to adapt to changes in university policies or priorities. This could involve regularly reviewing and adjusting the organizational structure, leadership, and operational processes to align with new directives or shifts in the university's broader goals. The institutional and administrative structures should be designed with adaptability in mind, ensuring that the think-tank can respond efficiently to changes in its environment, whether they stem from the university, the political landscape, or external funding requirements. Diverse partnerships and a focus on shared experience will be important considerations for remaining adaptable.

3. Analysis of how well the think-tanks have met these criteria

The four UNI-LEAD think-tanks have addressed these four criteria with varying degrees of success. *In particular, the think-tanks have made significant gains with respect to criteria 1 and 2.* The phase 1 (government-stakeholder engagement and consultation phase) of the small grants established a strong foundation for opening communication channels with the government and for developing technical services and products that address specific needs of the government with respect to NDC and NAP priorities, and other climate policy priorities. This demonstration of a unique value of the think-tanks to the government (criteria 1) also provided important visibility, and a demonstration of value, to the university (criteria 2). Going forward, all four of the think-tanks have secured a measure of in-kind support from the university and are strategically well situated within their respective universities.

Criteria 1 *Key achievements in government engagement and consultation included:*



- **Nepal:** The think-tank consulted widely with government and civil society in prioritizing learning on developing a climate rationale and on GESI aspects of climate finance, and on targeting the need to address significant gaps in local and district-level adaptation. They worked closely with the Climate Change Management Division, within the Ministry of Forests and Environment, which is the lead climate change entity within the national government. This collaboration led to the creation of detailed sourcebooks on developing a climate rationale, and on gender equality and social inclusion, set in the Nepali national and subnational contexts; design of tailored training programs and materials to strengthen knowledge and skills in climate rationale development and GESI integration for multilateral climate finance proposals. Local and district-level training was an important focus of their work.



- **Senegal:** The needs analysis that led to the creation of the Senegal think-tank was conducted in collaboration with the government through the Directorate of Climate Change, Ecological Transition and Green Financing (DCCTEFV) within the Ministry of Environment and Ecological Transition (MTTE) of Senegal. More, during the pilot phase, the think-tank has created four (4) sectoral taskforces comprising academic, government, and private actors to develop project fiches with potential for development into full Green Climate Fund (GCF) Concept Notes (CN) and Funding Proposal (FP), based on the taskforces assessment of climate risks and impacts. These four taskforces have contributed to establishing a Science-Policy-Practice Interface in the sectors of agriculture, coastal

zones, energy and urbanization for adaptation projects design and adaptation finance access in Senegal. The involvement of government stakeholders working with the university think-tank, and the involvement of Senegal GCF Direct Access Entities (DAE) namely the *La Banque Agricole (LBA)* and the *Centre de Suivi Ecologique (CSE)* serves as a successful case of tripartite collaboration between university, government and accredited entity for the mobilization of financing for adaptation.



- **Uganda:** The think-tank worked closely with the Climate Finance Unit (CFU) within the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) and the Climate Change Department, within the Ministry of Water and Environment (UNFCCC Focal Point) to address government needs to track climate finance flows. The development of a national climate finance tracking tool, at the request of the MoFPED, has allowed the think-tank to show direct value to the government in assessing finance flows, and in doing so advance implementation of Uganda's NDC. The think-tank also promoted science-policy dialogues to foster sharing of science information, knowledge and best practices between the science and policy communities related to climate finance mobilisation and project preparation.



- **Mozambique:** The think-tank prioritized bridging national climate commitments with local adaptation needs, support for NDC implementation related to providing technical assistance to meet climate goals, enhancing capacity building for institutions and human resources, and offering project development support to create local actionable initiatives for resilience, and support for NAP Implementation by focusing on local adaptation planning, and sectoral integration for mainstreaming adaptation. The think-tank led an assessment process for evaluating and improving provincial and district-level adaptation planning that lays the groundwork for developing future climate finance projects. The think-tank has also engaged Mozambican climate-youth and women consortia to ensure inclusivity. At the same time, it sought to promote inclusion and collaboration between government entities at central, provincial and district levels that deal with the climate change adaptation agenda in order to bridge the gap of weak involvement and collaboration between government entities at these three levels.
- The think-tank has also engaged Mozambican climate-youth consortia to ensure inclusivity.

Criteria 2 Institutional embeddedness: During the inception phase, the think-tanks made significant progress in becoming formalized within their respective host universities.



- *Nepal:* The placement of the think-tank within the structure of the host (Pokhara University School of Environmental Management and Science, or SchEMS), with SchEMS being under the research management committee of the entire university ensures that the think-tank is part of the university. Administratively, the think-tank is not considered a new body, making it easy to modify. Furthermore, the think-tank was quite strategic in that they utilized the inherent flexibility in the university system to expand the reach of the think-tank across multiple universities within the country. This allowed the think-tank to draw from expertise across other universities. The think-tank also demonstrated value to the university by providing technical support for the establishment of a Master's level program on climate change. The think-tank does not need a formal MoU with the university because it is already formalized within an existing research cell.



- *Senegal:* Recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of climate change and climate finance, the think-tank has made significant efforts to bring together multidisciplinary teams for knowledge production, services development and partnership building toward strengthening national and sectoral capacities to access finance for climate change adaptation. Indeed, think-tank members come from various Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) institutions, including the Department of Geography (FLSH), the University Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture (IUPA), the Institute of Environmental Sciences (ISE, FST), WASCAL, and the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa (IFAN). Additionally, some members actively participate in the National Climate Change Committee (COMNACC), further strengthening their ability to develop tailored solutions. The Rectorate team has supported the think-tank activities during the pilot phase with administrative procedures, such as signing letters & MoUs and managing grant finances.



- *Uganda:* The think-tank is operationalized within the Makerere University Centre for Climate Change Research and Innovations (MUCCRI) in line with university policy. This arrangement is intended to avoid the bureaucracy and legal procedures that come with establishing an independent research entity at Makerere University (MU). MUCCRI is already established as a legal entity

with the university, and the think-tank is able to leverage its staff, space and other facilities. The think-tank is in the process of developing a Letter of Comfort with the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development — so as to have a clear roadmap for future collaborations with the Government of Uganda, thus concretizing the think-tank's role as a key supporter of national climate action initiatives.



- *Mozambique*: The integration of the think-tank within the Oliver Tambo Research Chair at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM) has created significant institutional advantages and synergies for climate adaptation work in Mozambique. In particular, the think-tank plans to play a visible partnership role with the African Research Chair on Ecosystem-Based Adaptation in Arid and Semi-Arid Zones. Due to its accommodation within the Faculty of Agronomy and Engineering, the think-tank will also be able to work in partnership with the recently created Center of Excellence in Agro-food Systems and Nutrition, the Disaster Management center still in the process of being created, as well as having the technical and financial management support of the Centre of Agricultural and Natural Resource Management Studies (CEAGRE) in its operation. The inclusion of the think-tank in the Oliver Tambo Research Chair creates a fertile space for achieving the objective of promoting political-scientific dialogue and influencing decision-making processes in the country's adaptation agenda, as the Chair's advisory committee already involves actors from the government, civil society and managers of one of the most significant research investment funds in the country.

Criteria 3 *Financial stability:*



- *Nepal*: The think-tank is housed within Pokhara University, which will provide in-kind office space, utilities, library access, lab and computer access and IT support as part of its commitment to the project. The university is also providing the opportunity for ongoing advisory services from the think-tank Coordinator, Ajay Mathema. In addition, the in-kind support from the university will be leveraged for providing office, legal services and advisory support through the Advisory Committee of the University. In terms of future funding sources, the think-tank plans to develop a fee-based services model to provide trainings for government and non- government sectors, policy review and research-based services. The think-tank will also pursue grant

funding from government and multilateral non-governmental organizations, including from ICIMOD, IUCN, FAO etc., which can provide additional resources for the activities of the think tank.



- *Senegal*: The TT is hosted by the Polytechnic School at UCAD, which provides in-kind office space and utilities. Its budget is managed by the UCAD accounting officer within the Cooperation Directorate, with an allocation of 5 to 10%. The Cooperation Directorate oversees expenditure tracking and processes all payments, including salaries and service fees. During the transition phase, the TT coordination will work voluntarily, and without compensation. Once the TT generates revenue through service fees, only the Director, Administrator, and Finance Assistant will receive fixed salaries, while other members will earn commissions based on contract gains and time dedicated to tasks, minimizing financial burdens. Following the inception phase, TT will leverage its established network and multidisciplinary consortia to apply for funding opportunities and offer services to partners such as National Electricity Company of Senegal (SENELEC), the Ministry of Environment and Ecological Transition (METE), and La Banque Agricole (LBA). The TT will also maintain and develop its partnerships with technical and financial partners and national institutions to sign agreements in order to identify their training needs and improve the think tank's sources of income.



- *Uganda*: The think-tank is situated within MUCCRI and receives in-kind support from Makerere University to mitigate overhead costs. These include: office space allotment for the think-tank and basic furnishings to support a productive working environment; additional space for small meetings, trainings and seminars; internet access and ICT support to facilitate think-tank office work, communication and online platforms for virtual meetings, trainings and social media; access to the university library resources; and administrative and advisory support for think-tank's project management and coordination e.g., finance, procurement and audits.

This in-kind support is aligned with the fact that the think-tank is being institutionalized as a Research Centre within Makerere University, in line with the University's "Policy on the Establishment of Research Entities and Institutions, 2023", and is leveraging MU's brand name and reputation. This institutionalization ensures that the established think-tank is a research entity within the university and remains in operation beyond expiry of the UNI-LEAD project. The think-tank is still pursuing a Letter of Comfort from the MoFPED to indicate future willingness to collaborate. This Letter of Comfort, along with

MoUs and partnership agreements with government entities, especially MoFPED, and other partners will be important avenues for attracting new funding sources. Thus far, these agreements have not been secured.



- *Mozambique*: The think-tank is receiving in-kind support from the Eduardo Mondlane University, and the relevant faculties, that provides for space allocation, computer facilities, and administrative and financial management, which will mitigate overhead costs. Also, the positioning of the think-tank being embedded into the work packages/research priorities the ESORCCAS Research Chair (Oliver Tambo African Research Chair on Ecosystem-Based Adaptation in Arid and Semi-Arid Zones) ensures high visibility to the think-tank and a conduit through which to pursue new partnerships. ADAPTACO-Moz is integrated within the ESORCCAS structure, specifically positioned under Work Package 4. This strategic positioning allows the think tank to leverage existing university resources while maintaining specialization on climate adaptation finance. Simultaneously, the think-tank relies on the collaboration and contribution of experts from inside the faculty and experts from other faculties and centers to provide training and other support to the target group - this approach helps to substantially reduce the dependence on the think-tank to cover the administration's costs and expertise's fees for running the think-tank.

The think tank's financial and administrative processes leverage existing university structures, with administrative and financial management provided by CEAGRE, communication support from UEM Center of Communication and Marketing, financial processes following established institutional procedures, and annual audits ensuring financial transparency and accountability. The think-tank is formulating strategic partnerships with the government (new Climate Finance Unit at the Ministry of Finance; Institute for Disaster management, Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries), universities (Technical University of Mozambique, Maryland University Baltimore), NGOs (IUCN, WWF, Centro Terra Viva), and the private sector (FSDMoc – financial inclusion). They are also building on relationships with international funders (ENABEL and SIDA) to further develop the services and visibility of the think-tank.

Criteria 4 Adaptability:



- *Nepal:* A continuous adaptability feedback mechanism has been put in place to gather input from staff, stakeholders, and partners on the think-tank's ability to evolve with changing needs, inform ongoing adjustments, monitor the effectiveness of changes, and communicate progress to think tank staff and broader stakeholders. Also, the think tank plans to develop a review process for the business plan, with the first review scheduled six months after implementation, followed by annual reviews thereafter.



- *Senegal:* The think-tank will conduct continuous action research to tackle real-world challenges in financing climate actions in Senegal, considering local contexts and gender inequalities. Additionally, it will establish a participatory, inclusive, and transparent governance structure (steering committee), involving researchers, students, government partners, particularly the Ministry of Environment and Ecological Transition and civil society representatives. The governance body will also oversee an internal monitoring and evaluation system to regularly assess activities and measure societal impact.



- *Uganda* has established an M&E framework to periodically review the think-tank's structure, objectives, policies, etc. The think-tank staff and stakeholders will be involved in capacity building activities, research, implementation and advocacy and they will disseminate the important results and other relevant information to the wider audience in the university and country. This effort is meant to ensure that the think-tank continuously monitors progress, and adjusts accordingly, as part of the organizational learning process. Moreover, the think-tank's Business Plan will be reviewed mid-way through its implementation (2027) to review performance and adjust or align to the funding sources, and the university and country priorities. An evaluation of the think-tank's performance will take place after five years.



- *Mozambique:* The think-tank is committed to maintaining flexibility through regular review and adjustment of structures and processes, international partnerships and knowledge exchange, responsive organizational design, and environmental scanning for strategic adaptation. This adaptability ensures that ADAPTACO-Moz can respond effectively to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities in the climate adaptation landscape. Furthermore, the think-tank will benefit from ESORCCAS's and

the university's institutional infrastructure. This integrated approach optimizes resource use while maintaining operational flexibility to respond to stakeholder needs.

4. Short course learning:

One of the key considerations in sustaining university- government engagement broadly across the LUCCC network concerns what role the short-courses could play in sustaining a positive impact towards university-government engagement across the network. Based on feedback from both the think-tank and non think-tank partners, use of the short courses as a training tool was most helpful in the following regards:

- The courses provided a rich vein of relevant information; the courses are filling a critical need related to understanding and operationalizing climate finance in LDCs.
- Short course 1 (the climate finance landscape) and short course 4 (developing a climate rationale) were viewed as particularly relevant to training needs across the network.
- The short courses have good potential to complement other training efforts or modalities (e.g.. Ethiopia plans to integrate the courses into a broader short course program they offer; Liberia plans to use the short course information for a climate and health initiative; Uganda plans to use the short course material for a climate finance Master's program that it is developing)

According to feedback from the LUCCC network, key constraining factors that could undermine the use of the short courses as a training tool for the government and other key stakeholders include:

- The materials are very detailed, and the level of detail makes it difficult to offer the five short courses in a consecutive fashion.
- Providing training requires resources, which are scarce within LUCCC universities. Financial shortcomings to continue to offer the courses include venue, honorarium, transportation, etc., and they limit the ability of LUCCC universities to do sub-regional training (provincial and district levels)
- The ability of the government partners to fully implement the knowledge and skills that they gained through the training. The teams do not yet have the skill level to be fully competent in being content providers for the courses.

Going forward, key factors and considerations for sustaining the relevance and utility of the short courses include:

- Present the short courses as packages of short-term training and leverage them to secure funding that can translate into service delivery/certificate programs for climate adaptation finance at national and sub-national levels.

- Incentivize university faculty to be involved via climate finance proposal development
- Work creatively with the government and the university to find in-kind resources that offset some of the training costs.
- Develop online versions of the training in order to make delivery more affordable.
- Strive towards creating an interdisciplinary team that has significant knowledge and experience to offer the course, and with the ability to involve NGOs, and district-level government representatives in the training.
- Continue to investigate opportunities to modify the short courses to fit diverse needs, such as MSc programs.

5. *Project structure in the context of sustainability*

The UNI-LEAD project concept was conceived during the Covid pandemic and reflected a centrally virtual approach to the development of project deliverables (e.g. webinars and online short-courses) in addition to the establishment of university-based think-tanks. Moreover, the original project budget was heavily tilted towards the think-tanks at the exclusion of any funds for the LUCCC Points of Contact (PoC), which made their potential engagement difficult to secure. Following consultation with the LDC Chair and the LUCCC network, START requested, and the Project Steering Committee approved, changes to the project that have implications for sustainability. The main changes to the project structure were:

1. reducing the number of LUCCC-university think-tanks from five to three², and to reallocate budget savings towards the non-think tank PoCs within the LUCCC network for the purpose of in-person engagement and training of government officials related to climate finance;
2. offering in-person, network-wide training events as an alternative to virtual webinars and virtual training-of-trainers, with the goal of fostering shared learning across the network; and
3. establishing a mixed funding strategy for the think-tanks rather than relying exclusively on fee-for-services during this pilot phase of think-tank establishment.

These changes were in direct response to the LUCCC PoCs' expressed desire for greater capacity development and for opportunities to come together for in-person training and learning that would instill greater cohesiveness within the LUCCC network. They were also in response to concerns expressed by the network as to the viability of

² A fourth think-tank was established with complementary funding from UNIDO.

the fee-for-services model in the context of whether a fee-for-services mechanism could be established and made operational by the end of what was essentially a pilot project.

The budget reallocation made possible by reducing the number of think-tanks by 40% allowed nearly all of the 13 LUCCC universities to have a modest budget for in-person interactions with their government in developing a roadmap for university-government engagement, and allowed over half of the non think-tank PoCs to convene in person training of government officials on the use of the climate finance short courses. This restructuring thus helped to advance relationship building between the university and the government, and for not only the think-tanks but for some of the active non-think tank LUCCC partner universities as well.



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