

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Who is this pathway for?

This pathway is intended for civil society organizations (CSOs), including NGOs, advocacy groups, professional associations, foundations, grassroots movements, academic and research institutions, consumer groups, and social justice networks engaged in the built environment. It also includes citizen-led initiatives, coalitions

focused on climate justice or housing rights, and any organized community actors aiming to influence, monitor, or support building-sector adaptation policies, projects, and public-private decision-making.

Civil society organizations play a critical watchdog, advocacy, and bridge-building role in the adaptation of the buildings and construction sector. Climate risks like rising temperatures, flooding, air pollution, and infrastructure failures disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Yet many are excluded from

policy and design processes. CSOs act to ensure these groups are not left behind. They monitor government and private sector actions, raise public awareness, promote transparency, and advocate for inclusive and equitable adaptation solutions. In a sector often driven by technical or investment logic,

CSOs bring a focus on rights, justice, participation, and the lived experience of climate impacts. They are also powerful mobilizers of collective action, community resilience, and local knowledge. However, their influence is sometimes constrained by limited access to decision-making

spaces, restricted funding, and lack of alignment with sector stakeholders. Ensuring that adaptation efforts are not only technically sound but socially just depends on stronger partnerships with CSOs, who must be empowered to co-design, scrutinize, and scale just climate responses in the built environment.

Justice and resilience must go hand in hand in the built environment.

Today, CSOs are often siloed from adaptation decision-making, despite being closest to the communities most affected. In the short term, they

must be structurally included in planning and oversight. By 2030, they should be recognized as co-creators of climate-resilient policies,

empowered through stable funding, access to data, and institutional partnerships. In the long term, CSOs must be embedded

in governance frameworks and social contracts that ensure accountability, justice, and participation in climate adaptation.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Short-Term Actions

Actions	Resources & case studies	KPIs
Promote Locally Informed Understanding of Climate Hazards	Community-Based Adaptation Toolkit (IISD)	% of documented local practices integrated into awareness or advocacy materials
Identify and Mobilize Trusted Community Champions and Watchdogs	Integrating climate action into CSO programming: How-to guide (ACFID)	% of champions receiving training on climate risks and local adaptation
Curate and Share Targeted Adaptation Knowledge	Help Them Help Themselves: A Toolkit to Facilitate Transformative Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation (IOER)	Evidence of uptake or replication of shared practices by other CSOs or local authorities

Medium-Term Actions

Actions	Resources & case studies	KPIs
Monitor Failures and Hold Actors Accountable	Climate Accountability Toolkit by the Clean Air Partnership	Tangible policy changes or inclusion of CSO recommendations in local/national plans
Commit to Watchdog Roles and Build Grassroots Networks	Green Accountability Platform	Instances where watchdog actions resulted in corrective or policy improvements
Raise Community Awareness and Translate Climate Risk into Local Action	MIP4Adapt Citizen Engagement Manual	Number of citizens trained, services offered, or partnerships facilitated

Long-Term Actions

Actions	Resources & case studies	KPIs
Scale Community-Based Resilience Programs	US HUD Community Resilience Toolkit	Number of neighborhoods or settlements adopting standardized community adaptation plans
Embed Climate Justice and Advocacy into Social and Housing Policy	Build Change Housing Justice and Disaster Resilience	Number of advocacy campaigns addressing justice and equity in adaptation
Create a Culture of Climate Engagement and Share Replicable Toolkits	Habitat International Coalition	Evidence of replication or scale-up of CSO-led models by other organizations



Short-term actions

Promote Locally Informed Understanding of Climate Hazards

Goal: Ground resilience strategies in both scientific projections and local knowledge.

Description: CSOs should encourage a future-oriented yet locally grounded understanding of climate risks. This means combining forward-looking climate projections with historical weather patterns, while also capturing, documenting, and integrating local knowledge, best practices, and traditional building solutions. By highlighting how risks are evolving and how communities have adapted in the past, CSOs can provide valuable insights that inform both local resilience

strategies and innovation by other stakeholders, such as material manufacturers and urban planners. Collaboration with climate scientists, risk experts, local communities, and academic researchers will enrich this process and ensure that adaptation measures are scientifically sound and culturally relevant and accessible for non-specialist audiences.

- [Community-Based Adaptation Toolkit](#) (IISD): a practical toolkit for CSOs to combine community-knowledge, hazard assessment and adaptation planning. Helps ground scientific projections with local and traditional knowledge.
- A UNDP [Guidance Note on Community-Based Resilience-Building](#) spans disaster risk management, climate adaptation, health risk management, conflict prevention, peace building, and ecosystem management.
- This PlanAdapt [Adapting to Climate Change](#) article focuses on how CSOs can work with scientists, governments and local communities to produce contextually-relevant hazard knowledge and integrate local perspectives in adaptation planning.
- [Methodologies and Tools to Evaluate Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation](#) (UNFCCC): a compendium listing frameworks and tools for climate impact and adaptation analysis.

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Number of studies or workshops organized to document local risks and traditional practices

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- % of documented local practices integrated into awareness or advocacy materials

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Evidence that locally informed insights influenced planning, design, or materials use

Action 1

Resources

KPIs

Identify and Mobilize Trusted Community Champions and Watchdogs

Goal: Build resilience leadership by relying on established, respected figures within communities.

Description: CSOs should focus on identifying existing community leaders and groups such as teachers, tenant associations, neighborhood committees, or renters' groups who already hold the trust and confidence of local residents. These individuals and organizations can act as champions to lead resilience initiatives and as watchdogs to monitor accountability and adaptation commitments. This dual

role strengthens both leadership and transparency at the community level. CSOs should provide training, resources, and networking opportunities to empower these actors and connect them across regions through national platforms. This approach ensures continuity, avoids creating artificial leadership structures, and embeds resilience work into the social fabric of communities.

Action 2

- [Integrating climate action into CSO programming : How-to guide](#). Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) guides CSOs on building internal capacity, partnerships, and identifying champions within communities to lead adaptation.
- [Climate Security Case Study: Climate Security Observatory](#) from Alliance Biodiversity & CIAT provides examples of CSOs collaborating with community

actors and governments to embed local leadership and watchdog functions in adaptation strategies.

- [Civil society organizations’ institutional climate capacity for community-based conservation projects: Characteristics, factors, and issues](#) (Current Research in Environmental Sustainability, 2023) details what enables CSOs themselves to act effectively. Useful when training and mobilizing local champions and watchdogs.

Resources

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Number of active local “champions” or watchdogs identified and supported

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- % of champions receiving training on climate risks and local adaptation

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Number of community initiatives led or co-led by identified champions

KPIs

Curate and Share Targeted Adaptation Knowledge

Goal: Provide communities and stakeholders with accessible, actionable resources that link climate hazards to solutions.

Description: CSOs should take the lead in creating a structured, accessible and user-friendly repository of adaptation knowledge. This hub would collect and organize case studies, practical examples, and technical guidance from researchers, practitioners, and community initiatives, ensuring the information is accessible across sectors such as planners, tenants, developers, and local governments.

- [Community-led Climate Adaptation Solution Toolkit](#) designed by the Adaptation Research Alliance for community groups in informal settlements and local areas. Includes case-studies, practical tools and adaptations. CSOs can host this knowledge for local actors.

- [Help Them Help Themselves: A Toolkit to Facilitate Transformative Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation](#) by the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER) focuses on community co-creation, participatory tools, and mobilizing local knowledge. Excellent for CSOs creating repositories of adaptation knowledge for non-specialist audiences.

Action 3

Resources

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Number of case studies or resources collected and categorized by hazard or sector

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- Frequency of updates to the repository and number of downloads or shares

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Evidence of uptake or replication of shared practices by other CSOs or local authorities

KPIs

Medium-term actions

Monitor Failures and Hold Actors Accountable

Goal: Track inaction, greenwashing, or mismanagement, and drive transparency and change thereby reinforcing trust and preventing maladaptation.

Description: CSOs can document and publicize failures by landlords, developers, or public bodies to deliver on adaptation promises. Through watchdog functions, community reporting tools, or complaints mechanisms, civil society helps ensure resilience actions are not only planned, but implemented and maintained.

- [Tracking Adaptation Finance: An Approach for Civil Society Organizations to Improve Accountability for Climate Change Adaptation](#) by the World Resources Institute (WRI) shows how CSOs can monitor adaptation finance flows (who is funding what, where) and thereby hold governments/developers accountable for promises vs. actual implementation.
- [Climate Accountability Toolkit](#) by the Clean Air Partnership is a practical toolkit for transparency and accountability in climate plans and actions very useful for CSOs that want to monitor whether adaptation commitments are being met and to document failures.
- The [Accountable Adaptation research program](#) focuses on measurement and accountability in adaptation. Helps CSOs develop metrics and watchdog mechanisms to track progress (or lack thereof) around adaptation actions.

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Existence of an internal legal/policy monitoring system or designated focal point

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- Number of policy briefs or analyses produced annually

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Tangible policy changes or inclusion of CSO recommendations in local and national plans

Action 1

Resources

KPIs

Commit to Watchdog Roles and Build Grassroots Networks

Goal: Ensure accountability and sustain local adaptation through trusted civil society leadership.

Description: CSOs should commit to becoming permanent watchdogs, actively tracking policy and regulatory frameworks and monitoring their concrete implementation. By building a grassroots network of trusted community leaders, civil society can promote transparency, hold institutions accountable, and ensure that adaptation strategies are not only adopted but maintained over time. This commitment anchors resilience in both governance and local ownership.

- [Civil society organizations' institutional climate capacity for community-based conservation projects: Characteristics, factors, and issue](#) (Current Research in Environmental Sustainability, 2023) looks into what CSOs need to build capacity (governance, networks, grassroots links) to serve as watchdogs and maintain long-term presence in adaptation governance.
- MIP4Adapt has developed a [Citizen Engagement Manual](#). Although framed for citizen engagement, this manual helps CSOs set up grassroots networks, engage community champions, and maintain ongoing oversight roles.
- The [Green Accountability Platform](#) is specifically designed to support CSOs and grassroots organisations in accountability for climate finance and action

Action 2

Resources

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Existence of a network or coalition of CSOs with shared climate adaptation goals

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- Number of reports or alerts published on compliance, implementation, or funding use

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Instances where watchdog actions resulted in corrective or policy improvements

KPIs

Raise Community Awareness and Translate Climate Risk into Local Action

Goal: Empower communities to understand and act on climate risks at the neighborhood and household level by combining awareness campaigns with accessible, data-informed communication.

Description: Civil society organizations play a vital role in helping residents make sense of local climate risks and identify meaningful responses. By launching local awareness initiatives (such as climate walks, participatory mapping, community workshops, neighborhood flyers, and digital campaigns) and at the same time translating technical climate data into citizen-friendly formats like simplified maps, infographics, or short videos, CSOs can turn

abstract information into tangible, place-based knowledge. These efforts help uncover local vulnerabilities (e.g., poorly insulated homes, heat-exposed streets, flood-prone areas), while fostering a shared understanding of risk and collective ownership of adaptation. The result is informed and empowered communities that are better prepared to take action at the scale that matters most: their own streets, homes, and neighborhoods.

- MIP4Adapt has developed a [Citizen Engagement Manual](#). This user-friendly guide for communities to understand and act on climate risks, is framed for citizen engagement. Ideal for CSOs to convert technical hazard data into accessible formats.
- [Community-based participatory climate action](#) (Global Sustainability, 2023) explores methods for community participation and translating technical climate information into local action
- UN Habitat's [Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk – A Guide for Community Assessments, Action Planning and Implementation](#) provides actionable steps for community assessments of risk. CSOs can adapt this to develop local resilience workshops, maps of local hazard exposures, community briefings.

Action 3

Resources

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Number of Permanent Community Adaptation Hubs (physical or digital) established and operational

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- Number of citizens trained, services offered, or partnerships facilitated

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Evidence of improved community preparedness or reduced vulnerability over time

KPIs

Long-term actions

Scale Community-Based Resilience Programs

Goal: Move from pilot projects to systemic adoption of community-driven adaptation.

Description: Civil society should expand successful community-led resilience programs (such as neighborhood cooling centers, participatory early warning systems, or grassroots retrofitting projects) to a larger scale. By creating networks of community initiatives, CSOs can amplify impact and ensure resilience is rooted in local priorities, particularly in underserved neighborhoods while building stronger horizontal links between communities across regions.

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) [Community Resilience Toolkit](#) provides step-by-step guidance for community stakeholders to build resilience infrastructure, coordinate neighbourhood networks, and scale up from individual projects.
- Edith Cowan University [Climate Justice & Resilience Resource Library](#) offers toolkits, case studies and templates aimed at community service organisations, focusing on underserved groups

Action 1

Resources

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Number of community organizations formally engaged in resilience initiatives
- Annual funding secured or allocated for scaling community-based resilience projects
- Number of trained local facilitators, champions, or volunteers supporting community programs
- Number of formal partnerships or MOUs established with municipalities or private actors

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- % of scaled programs integrating cross-sectoral partnerships (housing, energy, water, waste)
- Frequency of peer-learning events or exchanges between communities
- Number of neighborhoods or settlements adopting standardized community adaptation plans
- Level of community participation in project design and monitoring (e.g., via participatory meetings)

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Number of households or individuals benefiting from community-led adaptation measures
- Reduction in climate-related losses or disruptions in targeted communities (e.g., flood damage, heat-related health cases)
- Increase in local policy inclusion of community-based adaptation practices
- Evidence of program replication in new regions or by other organizations

KPIs

Embed Climate Justice and Advocacy into Social and Housing Policy

Goal: Normalize adaptation as a societal priority while ensuring equity and protection for the most vulnerable.

Description: CSOs should lead efforts to embed adaptation into the cultural, political, and legal fabric of society. In addition to ongoing campaigns, public education, and advocacy initiatives, this includes advocating for climate justice provisions in housing and urban policy, such as integrating resilience into tenant protections, upgrading informal settlements, safeguarding informal workers, and guiding climate-sensitive public budgeting. This helps protect housing rights, improve working conditions, and ensure that vulnerable groups (often most exposed to climate risks) are included in adaptation planning.

Action 2

- Build Change [Housing Justice and Disaster Resilience: A Critical Link](#) advocates for integrating housing justice and climate-resilience, especially for low-income and informal settlements
- World Resources Institute (WRI) [How Improved Housing Can Strengthen Climate Resilience & Urban Services](#) explores how housing and urban services must be part of climate adaptation, particularly for vulnerable communities
- NAAP's [People's Guide to Transforming Crisis & Advancing Equity in the Disaster Continuum Toolkit](#) is tailored to community resilience and climate justice, with emphasis on inclusion, equity and vulnerable populations.

Resources

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Number of formal consultations or partnerships with housing authorities or legal advocates

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- Number of advocacy campaigns addressing justice and equity in adaptation

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Adoption of climate justice principles in public housing, planning, or labor policy

KPIs

Create a Culture of Climate Engagement and Share Replicable Toolkits

Goal: Normalize adaptation as a societal and political priority, while enabling other CSOs to replicate proven models.

Description: Civil society should embed climate adaptation into the cultural and political fabric of society through ongoing campaigns, public education, and advocacy efforts that shape public opinion and policy agendas. To accelerate this shift, CSOs can also create and share practical toolkits for their peers, packaging proven methods for running campaigns, mapping risks, or advocating for regulatory reform. This will reduce the learning curve for new initiatives, foster horizontal knowledge-sharing, and build capacity across the sector.

- A European-wide [CLIMAS](#) project produces tools and guidelines for engaging citizens in adaptation
- [Habitat International Coalition](#) enables horizontal knowledge-sharing across regions, and supports CSOs in building networks and replicable campaign toolkits for climate justice in housing and resilience.
- Climate Justice & Resilience [Resource Library](#) offers templates, infographics, campaign and advocacy materials that CSOs can customize and redistribute, supporting normalization of adaptation through culture and communications.

Action 3

Resources

INPUT INDICATORS

Measure the resources required to deliver

- Existence of at least one adaptation or advocacy toolkit produced and published

LEADING INDICATORS

Looks forward at future outcomes and events

- Number of peer organizations trained or supported to use the toolkit

LAGGING INDICATORS

Looks back at whether the intended result was achieved

- Evidence of replication or scale-up of CSO-led models by other organizations

KPIs

