Climate Change Governance and Development Cooperation in Zambia: Navigating Stakeholder Interactions

A Research Paper by

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Disclaimer:

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Abstract

In an era of intensifying climate impacts, the question around who governs climate change, and how, is increasingly important. Whilst, global climate governance is embedded with conflicting interests, such tensions most starkly materialize in the Global South, where power asymmetries between International Development Actors (IDAs) and local actors are more prominent. Drawing on qualitative semi-structured interviews in combination with secondary sources, this research explores how IDAs working in Zambia shape national climate change action and discourse. Notably, it focuses on the international and local perspectives of IDAs roles in Zambia's climate governance landscape to examine how governance is structured or understood. Drawing on theoretical concepts including norm-localization theory, the coloniality of power and the depoliticization of climate change, the research findings explore underlying tensions which shape the relationships between local and international actors. The findings show that IDAs develop their authority through technocratic dispositions of climate

change, epistemic control and conditional financing. Within this context, local actors try to negotiate their own priorities, agency and knowledge through resistance or aligning with agendas. This contributes to a governance architecture which values IDAs for their resources and technical skills, whilst pushing local actors into implementation roles in which local and indigenous knowledge is marginalized. By exploring these dynamics, this thesis contributes to a nuanced understanding of transnational climate governance which can inform more inclusive, localized and participatory approaches to climate coordination. Importantly, it highlights the every-day practices of negotiation between IDAs and local actors, and how this contributes to the existing policy frameworks and climate solutions being implemented in Zambia.

Relevance to Development Studies and Social Policy

The governance of climate change projects carried out by International Development Actors (IDAs) is critically-relevant to the development trajectories experienced by Zambia. By exploring the governance dynamics of climate change between IDAs and local actors guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), empirical insights will shed light on the development practices which contribute to climate change action and discourse in Zambia. The findings might contribute and be informed by critical development theories including norm localization, state and local capacities, anti-politics, governmentality, top-down development and more. As climate change is a complex issue which converges with all forms of development including education, health, and economics it is critical to understand the dynamics which shape the policymaking of climate change and the impacts this has on social provisioning.

Keywords

Climate Governance, International Development, Norm localization, Anti-politics, Depoliticization of Climate Change, Governmentality, Development Cooperation, top-down development, Donor Agendas

Word Count: 17, 473

List of Abbreviations

CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CEJ	Centre for Environmental Justice
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DMMU	Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
IDAs	International Development Actors
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MGEE	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PA	Principle-Agent Model
PPCR	Pilot Program for Climate Resilience
SCRALA	Strengthening Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro-Ecological Regions I and II in Zambia
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TI-Z	Transparency International Zambia
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WFP	United Nations World Food Program
ZCCN	Zambia Climate Change Network
ZEMA	Zambia Environmental Management Agency
ZIPAR	Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1. Research Problem

As one of the most significant challenges of the 21st century, climate change is a transnational contemporary issue which disregards our definitions of national borders, requiring effective and collaborative solutions. Despite climate change causes being largely rooted in the historical emissions of 'the industrialized Global North' it disproportionately impacts countries from the Global South (Shan, 2023, p. 10-11). Countries in Africa are "among the most vulnerable to climate change and the least prepared to handle this global challenge" (African Union, 2014 as cited in Zulu et al., 2025, p. 2). As a landlocked country in Southern Africa, Zambia is particularly vulnerable to changing climate patterns, with an economy powered by rain-fed agriculture, hydroelectricity and natural resources (Thomas et al., 2023, p. 6-7). Given this context, a complex landscape of climate change governance has emerged including diverse actors working on the international, national or local scale.

In response to demands for effective climate governance, the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) developed the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for Zambia in 2023. The NAP acts as a comprehensive long-term framework for integrating national climate resilience into economic policymaking. The NAP builds-on previous frameworks including "the National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCRS, 2010), the National Policy on Climate Change (NPCC, 2016), and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, 2016)" (Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, 2023, p.ii). Using a participatory approach that spans across actors, the NAP aims to align Zambia's development objectives of becoming "A Prosperous Middle-Income Nation by 2030" with international climate frameworks.

Against this backdrop, the UNSDCF occupies a unique governance position. As a collaborative framework developed by the United Nations (UN) in cooperation with the GRZ, it outlines a coordinated approach to national development trajectories and climate change. The UNSDCF is the key strategic instrument outlining and guiding the UN's support to Zambia for the 2023-2027 period. Within Zambia's climate governance structure, the UNSDCF acts as a bridge between domestic development actors and IDAs, supporting initiatives implemented by core UN agencies and their international partners. Additionally, it works on translating global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) into Zambia's national development trajectories. NDCs, can be understood as a countries national climate plan to reduce emissions and meet the climate objectives outlined by the Paris Agreement (UN, 2025, para. 1). Specifically, outcome four (Planet) of the UNSDCF outlines the climate objectives like climate change legislation, green economy strategies, and adaptation and mitigation (United Nations Zambia and the Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2023, p.19).

The UNSDCF delivers a roadmap for collaboration between IDAs and local actors, whilst positioning IDAs as unique actors that provide technical coordination and accountability across climate projects. The authority of the UNSDCF in Zambia's climate architecture derives from its ability to mobilize resources, provide technical capacities and enhance collaboration between IDAs and government ministries. Given this, it creates a setting in which questions of power, accountability and governance between international and local actors are negotiated. Arguably, the UNSDCF produces asymmetries in governance by pushing donor-driven decision-making processes, and marginalizing the contributions of local-development actors.

The UNSDCF in Zambia highlights a broader paradox existing in transnational climate change governance. Whilst, IDAs often stress partnerships and participatory approaches, they often create power asymmetries that dictate local agendas through objectives and control. This research aims to move beyond general existing critical literature focused on aid hegemony and donor-driven agendas by focusing on negotiation practices, mutual perceptions and conceptual framings which define the way IDAs and local actors position themselves in Zambia's climate governance architecture. For example, IDAs might perceive their initiatives as contributing to capacity-building and strengthening governance mechanisms, whilst local actors may interpret them as externally imposed strategies which fail to address community needs whilst idealizing western-models of governance over context-specific governing approaches.

The significance of this research lies in its focus on the politics of perception by interrogating how climate governance is shaped and enacted through the communicative relationships which coordinate the interactions between IDAs and local actors, and shape how actors impose, negotiate or resist climate governance dynamics. As climate governance becomes more reliant on multilevel partnerships, it becomes increasingly important to understand the perceptions and positional dynamics which can contribute to inclusive frameworks that balance international priorities with local adaptive agency.

By employing the UNSDCF as a guiding tool for both stakeholder selection and engagement analysis, this research will examine Zambia as a microcosm of global climate-development politics in which transnational policy commitments converge with the realities of local capacity and agency. The core research problem is understanding how IDAs and local actors working on climate change governance in Zambia understand their governance roles and the implications this has on practices of imposition, negotiation and resistance.

1.2. Justification and Relevance

During my time living in Zambia (2013-2020), I witnessed some of the potential impacts of climate change including the increasing severity of droughts, extensive flooding and their extremely negative socio-economic consequences. Due to its location, Zambia experiences high levels of rainfall variability, which is becoming much less predictable with the increasing impacts of climate change (Thomas et al., 2023, p.1). These impacts have caused severe food shortages, an increase in water-borne diseases, decrease in wildlife and power shortages due to Zambia's dependence on hydropower (Thomas et al., 2023, p.6 and Kalantary, 2010, p. 91-92). Within this context, large-scale climate adaptation and mitigation programmes have been driven by IDAs through frameworks such as the UNSDCF, often in collaboration with local and national governance institutions. Given the importance of climate governance in Zambia, this research is relevant as it will contribute to empirical research that critically examines how different stakeholders perceive IDAs roles. This will shed light on the decision-making logics that shape IDAs strategies, and hopefully bring forth new perspectives that can contribute to more adaptive and participatory governance approaches.

1.3. Research Questions and Objectives

The objective of this Research Paper is to explore the local and international perspectives on the role of IDAs within Zambia's climate change governance. It will focus on the dynamics between IDAs and local CSOs, NGOs and government institutions and identify relevant

themes which emerge during key informant interviews (KIIs). Through this, my research aims to highlight the complex interactions which shape the coordination of climate initiatives.

With this in mind, this research will be guided by the following main research question:

Main Question: How do IDAs and local actors perceive IDAs roles in Zambia's climate change governance, and in what ways are governance dynamics imposed, negotiated, or resisted?

In order to answer this question, the following guiding sub-questions will be addressed:

1. What climate-related strategies are implemented by IDAs, and what local implementation barriers do they identify?
2. How do IDAs conceptualize or understand their role in directing national climate governance?
3. How do local actors (Ministries, civil societies, NGOs, community organizations) understand the role of IDAs in national climate governance?
4. What are the discrepancies between local and international perspectives on IDAs roles in climate governance and how do IDAs and local actors navigate them?

1.4. Research Background and Context

In recent years, more volatile and unpredictable rainfall patterns have contributed to droughts, intense rural and urban flooding and negative social implications across Zambia. Persisting droughts have diminished and to some extent destroyed national agricultural production with climate impacts including "crop failure, livestock deaths, food and water shortages and broader economic implications" (Thomas et al., 2023, p.1). Severely, the changing rainfall patterns have also hindered the national production and supply of electricity. Zambia's long-term reliance on hydropower, comprising 88% of total energy production (International Energy Agency, 2023), has been immensely challenged by the changing rainfall patterns. Daily power cuts have become a norm with millions of people often experiencing power cuts which last over 21 hours, severely impacting the functionality of businesses, healthcare services and education (Luo and Kiwara, 2025).

In response to these climate impacts as well as other development factors, the GRZ in cooperation with the UN developed the UNSDCF for the 2023-2027 period with outcome 4 outlining key climate governance strategies. As a guiding tool they have come up with a "Planet Pillar Theory of Change" in which they identify key objectives that need to be reached to make Zambia's environmental landscape 'healthier' and 'more resilient' (United Nations Zambia and The Government Republic of Zambia, 2023, p.19). The key objectives of the Theory of Change (ToC) are listed under 4 sub-outputs. These include improving policies and programmes, strengthening responsibility, accountability and local capacities whilst building resilience. Moreover, the UNSDCF identifies the key actors which will be critical to the achievement of climate actions through partnerships between Ministries, various UN agencies, the private sector, financial funding mechanisms, local organizations including civil societies, academia and cooperating partners (United Nations Zambia and the Government of the Republic of Zambia, 2023, p.22). Notably, the UNSDCF also outlines key technical targets, as seen in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Abstract from '6.4 Results Matrix – Planet' showing technical targets (see appendix 1 for full table)

Performance Indicators	Baseline	5Yr Targets	Data Source/MoV
4.1 Greenhouse gas net emission levels	-16,815 Gg CO2 eq. (2010) (8th NDP Draft)	-25,147.9 Gg CO2 eq.	MoGEE reports
4.2. Proportion of renewable energy in total energy mix	4.5% (2019) (VNR)	9%	Rural Electrification Authority Reports

Source: United Nations Zambia and The Government Republic of Zambia, 2023, p. 49-50

1.5. Chapter Outline

This Research Paper consists of six chapters. Following this introductory chapter which introduced the research problem, questions and background, the second chapter will delve into some of the relevant conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning my data collection and analysis. This will lay the foundation for the methodology discussed in Chapter 3, and the findings presented in Chapter 4 (IDAs perspectives on Climate Change Governance) and Chapter 5 (Local Perspectives on Climate Change Governance). Finally, in Chapter 6 the research paper will synthesize its findings and present final conclusions.

Chapter 2 – Conceptualizing Climate Governance, Politics and Power

This chapter introduces the key theoretical concepts which inform this research's data collection and analysis. Figure 2 provides a brief overview of the key concepts and how they are connected, before exploring them in the following sections.

Figure 2: Conceptual Map

Source: Author's Own Construction

2.1. Power and Governance in Development

In order to analyze climate change governance in Zambia, a multi-layered theoretical framework is required to understand the relationships between international and local development actors. The principle-agent (PA) model developed by Milner (2006) and Vaubel

(2006) helps explain the tension which underlines IDA and local actor relationships. The PA model defines IDAs as 'principles' who exercise authority over climate governance and specifically dictate the implementation of projects to local actors who are 'agents'. However, within this dynamic, there are clear conflicting interests. IDAs as principles prioritize rigid technical framings of climate objectives, whilst local agents prioritize the immediate local needs of their communities. This leads to what Hawkins et al. (2006, p. 8) call 'agency slack', which they define as an 'independent action by an agent that is undesired by the principal'. In Zambia's context, this seems to manifest as local actors utilizing climate funding for non-climate priorities such as education or health, whilst also having the agency to utilize them for self-interests. This divergence is reinforced by the structural contradiction between the 'recipient's needs' and the 'donor's political goals' with both the principle and the agent focusing on their priorities (Milner, 2006, p. 4). Additionally, Vaubel (2006, p. 125) explains that the PA problem is significantly more evident within IDAs because the 'chain of delegation is more extended' which removes accountability mechanisms and increases potential for opportunism. Vaubel also points out that 'international organizations do not share the preferences of the citizens' as they have 'vested interests' which means agents have to negotiate for the needs of their citizens or communities. He explains that 'international agents are interested in the survival or growth of their organization' (p. 127) which requires improving expertise, hiring more staff and increasing their financial resources.

Within this context, Norm Localization Theory explores the strategic agency which local actors hold in reshaping the external norms imposed onto them by IDAs (Acharya, 2004). In Zambia, local actors seem to reinterpret an idealized Western model of transparent and formalized coordination by leveraging existing informal relationships to coordinate the implementation of projects. Hereby, they can actively reconstruct 'foreign ideas' in order to ensure that they are congruent 'with local beliefs and practices' (p. 245). In this process 'some key characteristics of the preexisting' norms are retained rather than being completely displaced, and Acharya explains that 'localization is simply easier, especially when prior norms are embedded in strong local institutions' (p. 247). Given Zambia's post-colonial context, and the existence of IDAs in the development context for many decades, it would make sense for norms to be localized rather than dismantled.

The localization of norms occurs within a more overarching apparatus of governmentality (Foucault et al., 2014), in which the exercise of power is being used to 'shape human conduct by calculated means' defined as the 'conduct of conduct' (Li, 2007, p. 275). Through their focus on data-driven governance, technical issues and quantifiable objectives, IDAs reflect a modern managerialist disposition which could be aligned with a neoliberal governmentality. This governmentality aims to depoliticize the governance of climate chance by framing it as a technical issue which requires efficient technical solutions. Li (p. 276) explains that this governmentality is a technique in which 'thought becomes governmental to the extent that it becomes technical, attaching itself to technologies for bringing improved states into being'. Foucault (cited in Li, 2007, p. 276) explains that by combining thought and technique (technical), one can exercise governance. IDAs working in Zambia's climate change governance can establish authority by positioning themselves as the providers of technical expertise, hence controlling the creation or recognition of legitimate climate knowledge. Thus, IDAs do not only exercise power through the PA model but also by active epistemic control and technological skills; a heterogenous assemblage of processes and calculations which establish their legitimate 'right manner of disposing things' for local agents (Li, 2007, p. 276).

2.2. Depoliticizing Climate Governance

The governance of climate change, is increasingly shaped by processes of depoliticization, a concept which helps us understand the limitations of current governance dialogues and policies. Depoliticization can be best understood by what Ferguson (1994, p. 178) coined the anti-politics machine, a process in which political conflicts are framed as managerial or technical issues by establishing development actors as 'politically-neutral artisans' who are 'almost perfectly responsive' to the 'blueprints' provided by experts. Through this process

> *'development project[s] can effectively squash political challenges to the system not only through enhancing administrative power, but also by casting political questions of land, resources, jobs or wages as technical problems responsive to the technical development intervention.'* (p. 180)

The process of depoliticization is not an inherently natural policy failure, but often a calculated and hegemonic move which reshapes contentious political dialogues into manageable problems which can be solved through technical solutions. Schulz and Siriwardane (2015, p. 3) argue that the dominant approaches to climate adaptation, particularly ones taken by IDAs, have 'technocratic implications and depoliticizing tendencies' which are characterized by 'top-down implementation of managerial, technological and governance solution[s]' (ibid.). These approaches avoid debates on power and politics contributing to the 'externalization, individualization and naturalization of socially produced risk' by failing to recognize the socio-economic causes of vulnerability. Tania Li's (2007, cited in Hajdu, 2025, para. 2) concept of 'rendering technical' further explains this process, in which IDAs strategically focus on the technical dimensions of climate issues in order to make 'them amenable to management and intervention through different technical interventions' (ibid).

The cumulative effect of these approaches contributes to a post-political condition, which Swyngedouw (2010, p. 214) identifies as the replacement of genuine 'democratic politics' with 'technocratic management and consensual policy-making'. A post-political condition contributes to a diminishing political dimension, removing debates and concerns around political climate issues such as historical emissions, green-grabbing and extractive industries whilst focusing on technical climate adaptation solutions. Using this framing, climate impacts turn CO2 into 'a fetishized and externalized foe', displacing responsibility onto an external and non-human antagonist, in order to avoid mentioning 'unevenly distributed power relations' and the prevalence of 'rampant injustices' (p. 222). Consequently, in Zambia, it seems likely that a post-political condition, has diminished the political dialogue around critical power dynamics, reinforcing the climate crisis and its impacts on vulnerable-Zambian communities (shown in chapter 4).

2.3. Practices of Power

The relationships and 'partnerships' between IDAs and local actors are systematically asymmetrical, structured by social, historical and ideological hierarchies. These asymmetries manifest in different ways. Quijano (2000, p. 216) develops his framework of the 'coloniality of power' in which he explores the domination of people through knowledge. Quijano asserts that the pursuit of modernity and process of globalization driven through capitalism was embedded within a Eurocentric and colonial perception that favors European epistemologies

and naturalizes the 'relations of domination' based on 'race'. In this framework, coloniality of power concentrates epistemic control and material control 'as a privilege of whiteness', based on a Eurocentric rational (p. 218). Whilst the dimension of race is left relatively unexplored in my research, as it would have required a more extensive analysis beyond the time, scope and word constraints of mine, the control over a people through epistemic control is explored. Using technical framings, IDAs seem to assert themselves as experts of knowledge, validating their approaches based in Eurocentric epistemologies whilst marginalizing local and indigenous knowledge approaches to climate solutions, as will be shown in chapter 4 and 5. These approaches reflect what Quijano (p. 221) explains are a way to force local knowledge to follow a linear and evolutionary sequence, which moves from 'primitive to civilized, irrational to rational, from traditional to modern, from magic-mythic to scientific'. Hereby, IDAs attempt to secure epistemic domination by deciding what constitutes as valid climate knowledge.

Drawing on Foucault, Gaventa and Cornwall (2015, p. 467) further develop concepts of structural power as they explore 'micro-practices of power'. These micro-practices are 'immanent in social relationships' and are operated by 'discourses, institutions and practices that frame the boundaries of possibility that govern action' (ibid). They follow Quijano's line of thinking, mentioning that 'knowledge is power', and by controlling knowledge one forces local actors to 'mimic the language and framings of the powerful in their efforts to be heard' (p. 466-467). This results in the creation of 'regimes of truth' in which those that control knowledge are able to decide the rules of governance. Everyday practices of governance by IDAs might constitute micro-practices of power, with their managerialist dispositions and technical climate framings asserting their domination of epistemologies. In the context of Zambia, local actors are positioned to become dependent on the expertise of IDAs, who create a narrative that the local knowledge gap incapacitates local actors. These lines of thinking build on earlier works such as Mkandawire's (2001, p. 290) 'Thinking about developmental states in Africa' which criticizes the comparison of African states with what they 'ought' to be.

Finally, a direct material consequence which can be attributed to the convergence of these frameworks is the brain drain of local capacities. Docquier and Rapoport (2011, p. 1-2) conceptualize brain drain as the 'dominant pattern of international migration' in which highly-skilled professionals generally migrate from 'developing to developed countries'. Although this can create 'positive network/diaspora externalities' through remittances, this line of thinking has been criticized, with many scholars arguing that brain drain disproportionately benefits the Global North, 'increasing world inequality' (p. 22). This research touches on how IDAs might impose their own governance strategies, creating brain drain from local organizations, as experts are drawn to international organizations. Given the attractive salaries and career opportunities provided by IDAs, many local staff might leave local organizations for international ones. This contributes to the draining of local capacities, whilst furthering the legitimacy and bureaucratic control of IDAs.

2.4. Politics of Climate Finance

The design of climate change governance is increasingly shaped by the political dimensions of climate finance. The architecture of climate finance is shaped by underlying political factors including competing donor interests, different discourses of climate change, power dynamics, and 'mechanisms for financial dissemination' (Shawoo et al., 2022, p. 1267). The climate finance ecosystem, 'now consists of a large and growing number of climate funds'

each with 'their own separate requirements for national accreditation and project approval' (ibid.). Due to the large number of actors involved in this process, as well as competing interests, the distribution of climate finance has become extremely fragmented, and created a competitive arena. The fragmented system has increased the competition between local actors, who compete for climate funds, often contributing to 'coordination challenges' (p. 1271). Shawoo et al. explain that

> *'environment ministries are experienced with mitigation efforts and tend to strongly emphasize climate mitigation efforts. Meanwhile, development ministries tend to prioritize adaptation activities and sustainable development.'* (p. 1271)

In addition, the various criteria used by different climate funds and IDAs often exclude smaller local actors who are unable to meet the requirements. This means that most of the climate funds remain within larger organizations, IDAs, and government departments.

In Zambia, local actors have struggled to coordinate the distribution of climate funds, with IDAs seeming to utilize climate funding as a mechanism to increase their bureaucratic authority. Funder and Dupuy (2022, p. 1912) highlight that 'donor agendas may shape the framing of national climate change policies' through the conditions they attached to climate funds. They present the case study of the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR), and argue that the World Bank has utilized this climate resilience project to expand their domain of bureaucratic control (refer to section 5.1.1. for more) by ensuring their staff-maintained 'significant influence on the development and implementation of the program' (p. 1906). They argue that the World Bank was able to develop the agenda of the project in line with 'World Bank interests' (p. 1907) and 'expand its mandate and legitimacy' (p. 1905) in the arena of global and national climate finance. This example highlights the existing funding dynamics which underlines Zambia's climate governance, where local actors are forced to compete and align themselves with the agendas of IDAs in order to access climate funding.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This research employed a qualitative research methodology in order to investigate the complex and nuanced perspectives of both IDAs and local actors in relation to climate change governance in Zambia. Given the subjectivity of respondent's perspectives, an abductive approach was taken, which suited the analysis of empirical data using conceptual frameworks, and helped develop key findings.

3.1. Research Methods

Document Analysis - Review of Secondary Data

In order to support the collection and analysis of primary data, secondary sources including policy documents and reports were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis which coded documents based on key themes. Secondary sources helped provide a contextual framework of IDAs, and local actors climate strategies for the data collection, whilst identifying possible interview participants. During the data analysis phase, the coding of secondary sources helped triangulate findings, supporting participants perspectives and revealing consistencies or contradictions. Two of the key policy documents which were analyzed included:

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2023-2027, Outcome 4: Planet (United Nations Zambia and The Government Republic of Zambia, 2023): This document provided an understanding of the primary climate objectives for UN agencies and their partners, whilst identifying key organizations to interview under the partnerships chapter.

- The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for Zambia (Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, 2023): This document provided insights into Zambia's 'long-term strategic framework' for tackling climate-related risks as set out by the GRZ. The NAP identifies the key climate objectives of the GRZ and outlines a comprehensive plan to tackle the increasing prevalence of climate disasters, hazards and vulnerabilities. It compiles a list of key strategies, stakeholders and actions which will be crucial to the success of the NAP.

These two documents are complementary frameworks which guide national development trajectories, whilst instructing climate governance. The NAP more broadly outlines strategies for different sectors, whilst the UNSDCF focuses specifically on the partnerships between IDAs and local actors and their strategies for 2023-2027. The UNSDCF is an entry-point for identifying relevant stakeholders, and helps this research map the priorities, partnerships and engagement of different actors.

Primary Data Collection:

In order to gain insights into my research topic, my primary data consisted of interviews with key actors. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out both in-person and online based on convenience and availability. As many of my willing participants were either travelling, in the field, or generally very busy, online interviews were more convenient. Notably, to gain unbiased narratives, questions were specifically formulated to try and avoid leading questions, giving participants an opportunity to frame their own answers.

Sampling and Recruitment:

In order to select interview participants, my research designed a purposive sampling strategy based on a four-pronged criterion-based selection plan. To ensure a variety of perspectives, my criteria included four key demographics as seen in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Four-Pronged Multi-Criteria for interview participants

Source: Author's Own Construction

Using my purposive sampling criteria and the UNSDCF framework, I identified key organizations from each demographic. After developing my criteria, I created a table with an extensive list of potential participants (Appendix 3), their relevant insights, and their organizational affiliation.

3.2. Data Collection

Following the sampling, participants were contacted through email with a brief introduction, and a request for KIIs. Initial phases of data collection were challenging with very few participants responding. In order to identify further participants, I implemented a form of snowball sampling (Roulston, 2010, p.5). After arriving in Zambia on August 8th, three preliminary chats were organized with previous professional networks, to gain feedback on the topic and to develop networks. These contacts were extremely helpful and acted as gatekeepers, connecting me to various willing participants and providing introductions in many cases. Additional participants were contacted and identified over LinkedIn, whilst many initial contacts began to respond via email. Academics and experts were found via research papers and then contacted over email.

A total of 14 interviews were conducted. Nine interviews were conducted online via Microsoft teams, whilst five interviews were conducted in person either at the participants office, a professional venue or a convenient location for them (see figure 4 below)

Figure 4: Overview of interviews

Interview Code	Type of organization	Position	Organization Structure	Online/in-person	Date Conducted	Gender
UN1	UN Agency	Climate Project Coordinator	IDA	Online	30th August	Male
UN2	UN Agency	Climate Officer	IDA	In-person	22nd August	Female
UN3	UN Agency	Program Officer and Specialist	IDA	Online	26th August	Male
UN4	UN Agency	National Project Coordinator for Climate	IDA	Online	11th September	Female
UN5	UN Partner Organization	Lead Officer on Environmental Sustainability and Climate	IDA	Online	27th August	Male
UN6	UN partner organization	Program Manager on Climate Change and Environmental Resources	IDA	In-person	25th August	Female
UN7	UN partner organization	Head of Department	IDA	In-person	25th August	Male
LA1	Local NGO focused on environmental justice	Lead Researcher	Local Actor	Online	28th August	Male
LA2	Local CSO focused on climate change	National Coordinator	Local Actor	In-person	22nd August	Female
LA3	Local CSO working on environmental governance	National Coordinator	Local Actor	In-person	28th August	Female
AE1	Research Centre and University	Lead Climate Change Researcher	Academia/Experts	Online	26th August	Female
AE2	Zambian University	Professor of Climate Change and Ecosystems	Academia/Experts	Online	22nd August	Male
AE3	Research Centre and University	Senior Climate Researcher	Academia/Experts	Online	26th August	Male
GV1	Government Department focused on environment	Member of Staff	Government	Online	29th August	Female

Source: Author's Own Construction

Interviews generally lasted between 45-90 minutes, with all of them being conducted in English. Although a written consent form was prepared prior to conducting interviews, it was not used in practice. During my initial interviews, participants were uncomfortable signing a document, even with an explanation of the consent form's purpose. From my understanding, this might reflect a skepticism of signing documents in Zambia, which could reflect mistrust in misuse of personal information. Nonetheless, participants responded they were happy to provide verbal consent in order to participate. Given this preference, I adapted my approach in order to prioritize the comfort and agency of my participants. To ensure that informed consent was still obtained, clear verbal explanations of the studies purpose, the research topic, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation were given. Participants were asked for consent verbally to both participate, and for online interviews to be able to record.

Based on the four demographics identified during the recruitment criteria, four different questionnaire guides were developed to ensure relevant themes and perspectives were addressed (see appendix 2). The semi-structured design of the interviews made conversations quite informal and gave room for open-ended discussions whilst still being guided by the structure of the questionnaire.

3.3. Data Analysis

Online interviews were recorded using Microsoft teams and were initially transcribed via Microsoft's automatic transcription feature. Transcripts were read-over and minor transcription errors were corrected. Most participants from in-person interviews, expressed a desire to not be recorded, however, reassured me of talking notes. Initial notes taken during in-person interviews were substantiated immediately after interviews to ensure maximum retention of discussions. Later, hand-written notes were wrote-up and put onto a computer. All recorded interviews and transcriptions were stored safely on OneDrive, or on a password-secure local hard drive. Using the conceptual and empirical themes identified in my data collection, data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This approach included different steps:

1. Data Familiarization: In the initial stages of data analysis, transcripts and secondary sources were repeatedly read to gain an understanding of the data.
2. Initial hand-written coding: Transcripts and secondary sources were initially coded by hand, identifying recurring themes and generating codes based on concepts or experiences
3. Atlas.ti coding: A second stage of coding was conducted using Atlas.ti's intentional AI Coding feature. Using this feature an automatic coding was conducted guided by my research questions and objectives. This substantiated my initial codes, and identified relevant quotations for different codes (see appendix 4 for Atlas.ti coding results)
4. Developing Themes: After coding, codes were categorized into potential themes. This required identifying recurring patterns such as coordination gaps, funding discrepancies, power dynamics, etc.
5. Defining and organizing themes: The identified core themes then helped structure the findings section. Findings were structured into two key chapters, with chapter 4 focusing on IDAs perspectives, and chapter 5 on local perspectives.
6. Findings and conceptualizations: Then the findings were written up using quotations and theoretical frameworks, with interview data being substantiated and triangulated by secondary sources.

3.4. Ethics and Positionality

Throughout my research process, I reflected on the ethical considerations of my research to ensure I was implementing a reflexive and deliberate ethic of care.

To protect my participants, confidentiality was ensured by assigning participants interview codes (as seen in Figure 4). Participants identities as well as contextual details (such as organization names) were carefully anonymized in order to remove identifiable information, whilst participants gave explicit consent prior to interviews.

Given my unique positionality, as a German national who has lived across both Africa (Benin, Botswana, Zambia and Tunisia) and Europe (Germany, UK, The Netherlands), I had to reflect on how this would shape my research process. My multi-cultural upbringing situated me as both an insider and outsider in this research. My residence in Zambia from 2013-2020, as well as an internship in an IDA in 2022, provided me with contextual knowledge on Zambian contexts. However, as a white-male with German nationality, even my time living in Zambia was constructed through a position of structural privilege that can be distinguished from those of many Zambian nationals. These privileges influence my relationships with participants, the narratives which are framed and my accessibility to certain actors. Notably, I believe many of these asymmetries were mitigated by the fact that in relation to me, many interviewees had more experience and expertise, giving them power to shape our discussions, challenge assumptions and also choose what knowledge to share. Further considerations were given to avoid leading questions, provide participants space to shape conversations, and to always be transparent about my research. I felt that the semi-structured and informal nature of interviews provided a comfortable space.

Importantly, my background has inevitably shaped the interpretation of data. My analysis of data is undeniably shaped by my understandings of power, governance and the production of knowledge which are rooted in European epistemologies. Given this, I have made a conscious effort to acknowledge and assess my biases, in order to maintain the meaning, context and insights provided to me by participants. I have also tried to include diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks which reflect on the existing forms of hegemonic power between the Global North and the Global South.

Furthermore, through discussions with friends and former colleagues in Zambia I have reflected on these biases, and they have reassured me of my research approach, the relevance of the topic and the potential for important insights.

3.5. Research Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations which might influence the interpretation, quality and generalizability of its findings. Firstly, as the findings are based on the perspectives collected by individuals, they rely on participants own narratives and perceptions. This means findings are shaped through participants own positionality, biases and interpretations of events. Significantly, given the complex and hierarchical structure of IDAs as well as local organizations, views shared by individual members of staff may not represent the broader perspectives of those organizations. The study tried to best mitigate this by including participants from various organizations, backgrounds and levels of expertise. Additionally, findings tried to cross-reference statements with policy documents to provide context and verify or challenge perspectives.

Another limitation was the studies sample size. Given the time constraints of the research, and a limited 3-week data collection period in Zambia, 14 interviews were conducted. This might limit the generalizability and accuracy of results, as only a proportion

of IDAs working in Zambia's climate governance context were interviewed. Notably, the sample is also somewhat skewed towards IDA participants as I found more contacts in that space. Therefore, there were seven IDA participants in comparison to only three local, one governmental, and three academic participants. Efforts were made to try and have as many diverse perspectives as possible, yet, it was more difficult to access local government and civil society actors.

Finally, my study did not give much consideration to the individual agency and background which interview participants bring into their interpretations. The background of participants depending on their time spent in Zambia, their nationality, race and gender could all influence their perceptions on different topics. In my research this was not explored, however, these factors would be very relevant for future research.

Chapter 4 – IDAs Perspectives on Climate Change Governance

Chapter four focuses on the strategic approaches taken by IDAs in relation to climate change governance in Zambia. It explores their climate programmes, their perspectives on local capacities, and their approach/conceptualisation of climate solutions. This chapter aims to address the following two research questions.

1. What climate-related strategies are implemented by IDAs, and what local implementation barriers do they identify?
2. How do IDAs conceptualize or understand their role in directing national climate governance?

Whilst also touching on and highlighting some answers to the following:

4. What are the discrepancies between local and international perspectives on IDAs roles in climate governance and how do IDAs and local actors navigate them?

4.1. Tackling climate change – IDA Approaches and State Capacities

To address question 1, this section will look at the array of different climate projects being pursued by IDAs across Zambia. These projects range from highly technical solutions to policy support and capacity building. Combined, these initiatives create a diverse and intricate system of climate change governance, which reflects the agendas and priorities of IDAs as well as the existing climate vulnerabilities in Zambia. This section will begin by providing a short overview of climate-related projects being implemented by IDAs, and reflect on their perceptions of local capacities.

4.1.1. Improving Climate Resilience in Agriculture

Given the importance of agriculture in Zambia, various initiatives are focusing on improving the climate resilience of agricultural practices. Changing climate patterns have continuously threatened the agricultural sector, with a prolonged drought in 2024 contributing to a national emergency being declared due to food insecurity, with about 45% of planted maize crops being destroyed (Euronews, 2024: para. 2-8). As Zambia's agricultural sector 'is predominately rainfed' it is extremely vulnerable to changing rainfall patterns and increased droughts (Thomas et al., 2023, p. 6). Hence, various IDAs have prioritized the climate resilience of Zambia's agricultural sector.

Participants UN5 and UN4 mentioned they were working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture in Zambia to promote smart agriculture and 'improve the productivity of the farmer' in terms of climate resilience. UN4, noted that her organization is teaching farmers to grow Genetically Modified (GM) crops, which are more resilient. She explained that her organization

'*is basically introducing climate smart agriculture to the farmers… So, this includes the farmer field schools where we teach the farmers how to grow particular crops… And you do it by comparing it to what they originally do, so, if they've been farming maize and you're trying to introduce a faster maturing maize variety, you always need to ensure that you incorporate this with a local variety so that they're able to compare that what you're doing. The other avenue that we use is through training of trainers.'*

UN4 explained that they have built multiple 'centers for excellence' through which farmers are taught farming practices, solar irrigation systems and new adaptive techniques or knowledge. These centers are also important hubs of information dissemination, as lessons

learned are shared within farming communities. Similarly, participants UN4, UN3 and GV1 mentioned contributing to the Strengthening Climate Resilience of Agricultural Livelihoods in Agro-Ecological Regions I and II in Zambia (SCRALA) project. This is a collaborative effort to improve agricultural productivity, funded and implemented by various IDAs including the UNDP, FAO, WFP, GCF and the GRZ.

4.1.2. Reframing Capacity-Building

The climate strategies being pursued by participants from IDAs also revealed a focus on the capacity-building of local and state actors. Every single interview participant from an IDA mentioned capacity-building as a key pillar of their work, emphasizing the importance of increasing local skills and supporting stronger institutional outreach. For example, a core mission for UN4's organization is

> *'more of building institutional capacity within the government circles… [and] increasing the capacity of the officers within the Ministry.'*

She mentioned that the SCRALA project had been very effective in supporting the training of officers from the government, and it had helped farmers become more resilient to climate shocks. UN4 also mentioned:

> *'I think that international organisations help the local organisations because there's a sort of knowledge transfer there, there's capacity building.'*

Here she explains that the transfer of knowledge which occurs from IDAs to local actors contributes to the capacity-building of local actors. UN3 also mentioned 'building the capacity of duty bearers' (referring to the government), whilst UN1 talked about providing 'technical support' to ensure that local actors can develop capacities. UN6 and UN7 from an EU-funded UN partner organization, equally noted that part of their mandate was to build CSO partnerships and help local NGOs with capacity-building.

However, there seemed to be some nuance around the current state of local capacities. Some participants argued that local capacities already exist, however, they are not being utilized. Participant UN1, pointed out the depth of indigenous knowledge which exists, explaining that their organization is trying to

> *'tap into the local knowledge and technology that has been existing for years, if not centuries.'*

UN1 explained that local actors have localized knowledge which is crucial in determining the long-term efficacy of climate projects. Similarly, UN4 mentioned that they were trying to include the capacities of local actors in their farming initiatives explaining that local actors:

> '*have that indigenous knowledge within their communities, so it's always good to have that indigenous knowledge respectfully added to whatever you're doing. So, for example, for the curriculums that the farm schools are using and the crops that are being selected, this always comes from the communities.'*

On the contrary, other interviewees perceived, a 'knowledge gap' amongst local actors which prevented them from effectively addressing climate issues. UN6 and UN7 believe climate change can get very technical, and that the existing 'knowledge gap' prevents local actors from effectively engaging with the conceptualization or development of climate solutions. They mentioned that local actors were included more in the implementation phase using call for proposals, whilst IDAs were the project coordinators, given their climate expertise and knowledge. Similarly, although UN4 had highlighted the capacities of local actors in terms of

indigenous knowledge and contextual-information, she also noted limitations in terms of government capacities. When discussing the coordination of new climate projects, UN4 explained:

> *'The government, that's where the challenges are coming up. I mean, of course we know that we have capacity issues even within the government. We have staffing issues within the government. So, it's a little bit difficult even for them to keep track of you know, new projects, especially if it's a smaller project that's coming in you know.'*

Here she explains that often IDAs would be working on similar projects in the same areas, whilst being unaware of each other's working presence. This meant projects would often be duplicated, or that some areas would have various climate-supporting programs whilst others had none. UN4 believed that this was a failure from the government side, noting that 'we are relying on the government' to coordinate this. UN1 reiterates this stating:

> *'So ideally, governments supposed to take up that responsibility of ensuring that there is coordination, but that mostly doesn't happen… in a number of these coordinating committees, we ensure that we the support government.'*

UN1 mentions that the responsibility to coordinate different projects often falls onto IDAs, with them taking on responsibility in coordinating committees to support the government. UN1 also notes that

> *'Sometimes, and in most cases, you find that there's a lot of duplication in implementation because actors do not talk to each other they just talk to government and the government doesn't refuse support… so they'll just allow you to do your work, and at the end of the day, you realize that you are working in the same areas, you are getting the same people and you are not really efficient with your resource allocations… I need to mention that there have been a lot of improvements in that.'*

Like UN4, UN1 mentions the problem of project duplication, however, he recognizes that there have been significant improvements in the coordination between actors.

Clearly, the dialogue around existing capacities or lack thereof cannot be described as a simple opposition, but is rather a question of different types of capacities. Local actors are understood to have indigenous and contextual knowledge that could support and inform climate initiatives. Some IDAs seem to be considering this, whilst others are not engaging with this dialogue. This is often framing local actors as having a lack of 'technical expertise', limiting their potential engagement. Moreover, institutional actors who have significant outreach, are hindered due to staffing issues and lack of formal training. The variety of perspectives shared by interview participants suggest that a nuanced understanding, which does not sideline local actors due to 'technical deficits', but rather recognizes the diverse strengths of each actor could contribute to more effective climate solutions.

4.1.3. Policy Support and Funding

IDAs are also providing the GRZ with policy-support and funding. Respondents noted that in collaboration with the GRZ they have co-created important new climate policies including the tracking and updating of Zambia's NDCs. UN1 mentioned that through their collaboration with the GRZ, they have been able to construct one of the most comprehensive NDC implementation frameworks in Africa. Notably, all IDA participants mentioned supporting the GRZ with funding for climate initiatives. UN7 mentioned a $5 million budget support (reward) from the EU, if the Zambian government published their NDCs data during 2025. UN6 and UN7 also mentioned that the new 'political state' was 'more friendly to

climate strategies and more open to the west' which has created policy momentum around climate change. Here they were referring to the current government elected in 2021, which has shown more political will in regards to climate action. Zulu et al. (2025, p. 6) explain that Zambia's 'President Hakainde Hichilema's attendance of the CoP 26 meeting in 2021' reflects 'his desire to engage in side meetings aimed at mobilizing resources for climate action in Zambia'. UN2 shared a similar sentiment explaining

> *'that well with this government compared to the previous government we have much more of an opportunity [to create climate-related projects].'*

Another strategic approach being taken by IDAs is supporting local actors through funding and grants. UN5, mentioned that his organization is providing various forms of 'grants to local partners'. Through grants, local organizations are then able to focus 'on building resilience' in terms of climate, including making policy recommendations based on their climate needs. UN5 explains

> *'We are supporting and sub granting on two sides. So, for the sub grantees, their focus is on building resilience and agroecology practices. The second part is women and youth leadership in agriculture, and climate action. The third part is lobbying and influencing policies. So, the local communities look at what kind of policies within the environmental space that they could utilize and basically help them to analyze the gaps and make policy recommendations in terms of parliamentary submissions.'*

Notably, his organization works on providing grants for climate resilience projects within local communities, and funding the development of policy recommendations. UN5, however, raised concerns about the 'conditionalities' associated with grants and explained that a lot of the funding in his organization comes with specific agendas. He explained that often grants require hiring consultants based abroad, like in The Netherlands, and he mentions:

> *'You know these grants and loans that we talk about most of the time come with conditionalities and everyone has got an interest. In reality, you are giving on the one side whilst taking on the other side.'*

He also explained that he believes IDAs have vested interests rooted in a 'capitalist mindset' and that 'they've transformed into something else' than what they set out to be. For him, it is incomprehensible how IDAs have been working in development cooperation for so long, but have been unable to truly solve issues. He wonders if IDAs stay in countries because they

> *'continue to have an interest in it. What is it? It's because there is resource extraction. There is a lot of exploitation, debt burden that has, you know, ravaged these countries and especially the Global South. And that has not helped.'*

Altogether, the findings show that IDAs are pursuing various climate strategies. Smart and climate resilient agriculture are at the forefront of many programs, whilst capacity-building, knowledge-transfer and funding/policy support are similarly important. Differing perceptions of local capacities have contributed to different approaches by different IDAs, with some focusing on including local and indigenous knowledge, whilst others have pushed local actors into the role of implementors of projects. Moreover, whilst IDAs have supported the GRZ and local actors through funding and policy-support, interview participants shared doubts about the conditionalities and agendas associated with funding. The complex interplay of different perspectives reflects a unique climate governance space in which IDAs shape climate-strategies through their conceptualization of climate change.

4.2. Climate Change as Technical and Manageable

Interviews with staff from IDAs, as well as policy documents, revealed a consistent conceptualization of climate change governance. Climate change was framed as a technical and manageable issue which required high degrees of scientific and technocratic solutions. UN6 and UN7 reflected on the importance of bringing in international actors who have significant 'technical expertise', mentioning that IDAs can support local actors by providing 'technical support'. In line with this approach, various interviewees from IDA organizations reflected that climate change solutions must be measurable, and that technological fixes should be driven by climate data. UN1 mentioned that

> *'International actors will provide what we call, technical support, to ensure that there is capacity and support'* and ensure that *'monitoring and evaluation is included in the implementation of all projects which have a climate consideration.'*

A key part of this perspective is how IDAs mobilize and leverage scientific knowledge and resources, to position themselves as uniquely equipped actors in climate change governance. For example, UN6 and UN7, mentioned that due to the nature of climate change being a technical issue, it requires IDAs to fill the local knowledge gap. They explain that local actors do not have the capacities or climate knowledge to address these issues, and hence cannot be effectively involved in the solutions.

These perspectives resonate with arguments by Schulz and Siriwardane (2015, p.6) which note that dominant climate change discourse often reflects technocratic and managerialist dispositions which risk depoliticizing climate governance by naturalizing vulnerabilities. They mention that 'predominant adaptation approaches, theoretical as well as practical still underestimate the discursive-generative role of power imbalances in shaping human vulnerability' (ibid.). Essentially, dominant climate strategies pursued by IDAs often focus on technocratic solutions, without understanding the structural inequalities that shape human vulnerability, specifically in the Global South. Vulnerability to climate change is an interconnected process which includes 'levels of education and access to healthcare; economic factors relate to wealth and employment opportunities; and political factors involve issues of governance and access to power' (Osorio et al., 2025, p. 11). Notably, Osorio et al. (2025, p.12) explain that the 'Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have begun to recognize colonialism as a key contributor to the vulnerability of a social group to climate change'.

Given Zambia's post-colonial context, it is crucial for IDAs to understand that climate vulnerabilities are deeply entwined with socio-economic inequalities which have been shaped by colonial legacies. Various potential examples of the persisting impacts of historical hegemony that shape contemporary North-South power dynamics can be found. Early this year, a Chinese mining company had a toxic waste spill in Zambia which has been described as

> *'one of this year's worst environmental disasters, [with] a significant impact on the environment or local communities… Video of the spill, lasting a half day and releasing millions of gallons of waste, shows gushing brown sludge rushing into the countryside. The highly acidic waste full of heavy metals surged into rivers and streams, killing aquatic life and leaving behind a layer of bloated, dead fish.'* (Surma, 2025, para. 1-3)

Another example can be seen in Kabwe, a town in which an estimated '140,000 Zambian children and women of childbearing age were sickened by [a] colonial-era lead mine' with '95% of children in Kabwe suffer[ing] [from] elevated blood lead levels' (Short, 2022, p. 1).

Examples like these can be found across Zambia, with it being exploited for its vast natural resources, driven by 'capitalist interests' and harming already-vulnerable communities (Frank, 2024, para. 4). A lens which underestimates the structural inequalities that shape human vulnerability, risks reducing the climate crisis to data and technical solutions without addressing persisting colonial legacies, foreign agendas and profit-driven industries.

Arguably, by shaping climate change as a technical issue, IDAs can position themselves as neutral entities with the technical expertise to tackle climate change issues. AE3, who has worked in climate change research in Zambia, noted the concept of 'rendering technical' by Tania Li (2007). Rendering technical describes how IDAs exclude 'the processes that impoverish people and focus on the conduct of the poor', by rendering 'complex social, economic and political problems' as technical they make them 'amenable to management and intervention through different technical solutions' (Li, 2007, cited in Hajdu, 2025, para. 2). AE3 argues, through this process you remove a political dimension and depoliticize climate discourse, helping IDAs build collective consensus. AE3 stated:

> *'But then the donors come in and say, oh, this is a technical problem. There are not enough balls in this area or they need new crops seeds, right? Because that then becomes a sort of problem that everybody can agree on or that's not so dangerous and so on.'*

AE3 refers to donors suggesting there not being enough 'balls' (referring to footballs or playgrounds) in an area or a need for 'new crop seeds' to highlight donors focus on technical needs, or a lack of technical infrastructure. AE3 importantly touches on the depoliticization of climate change which echoes Ferguson's (1994) conceptualization of the anti-politics machine, in which development initiatives have a form of policymaking but no politics. During his research Ferguson (1994, p.181) mentioned that

> *'One "developer" asked my advice on what his country could do "to help these people". When I suggested that his government might contemplate sanctions against apartheid, he replied, with predictable irritation "No, no! I mean development!" The only advice is accepted is about how to "do development" better.'*

Ferguson reflects on a historical case where a development agency opposed sanctioning apartheid as it was not related to development. Although this example by Ferguson is over 30 years ago, and development work has changed much since, we can still recognize existing lessons. Then, like now, IDAs separate development work from political framings by making it technical. By using technical framings, IDAs in Zambia are seemingly able to either avoid politically-contentious debates relating to structural inequalities, or to build consensus, either way developing their bureaucratic power and influence.

Although much literature focuses on how IDAs contribute to the depoliticization of climate change, my findings suggest that in Zambia, technocratic framings are also imposed by local actors. However, their motivation for a technical solution, generally did not come with a rejection of political framings, but rather a desire for technical solutions for imminent needs in an environment of high vulnerability. For example, LA3, the national coordinator for a local CSO, mentioned needing IDAs support in funding and implementing a project on solar-powered boreholes. Similarly, GV1 noted that IDAs helped with the capacity building of local organizations, and their support was necessary for the technical requirements of climate issues. LA1 also mentions that the technical support from IDAs was important to bring in 'innovation and science', however, he also suggests that:

> *'a lot of the solutions that are being proposed are also very technical solutions which people believe the only expertise for those solutions are based in the Global North.'*

He notes that technical support from IDAs had to be combined with the 'lived experiences' of local communities who had contextual-knowledge directly related to their needs.

Significantly, the depoliticization of climate change, is enhanced using a consensus-driven language in which climate change is showcased as a global threat. Interviewees from both IDAs and local actors described climate change as a universal issue which required everyone to work together. UN5 explains that

> *'If people are genuinely concerned to say, lets collaborate and address the climate crises, because it is not only affecting the Global South but also the Global North is impacted, then it is about having coordinated voices… dialogues and open and honest conversations.'*

This perspective was reiterated by UN6 and UN7, who mentioned that their focus was on 'establishing partnerships' in order to tackle the global and wide-reaching nature of climate change. This consensus-driven framing follows what Swyngedouw (2010, p.214) refers to as the post-political condition, where the climate crisis is elevated to the floor of public and collective concern whilst foreclosing genuine dissensus. Through this climate change becomes a hollow symbol, a point of collective rallying, which promotes the interests of diverse actors without debates about inequalities or development trajectories. In Zambia this has arguably manifested in a post-political condition, which shrunk the political-climate dialogue and tunneled discussions into technical discussions on climate adaptation. This has removed a focus on structural climate dimensions such as land ownership, livelihoods and climate justice. For example, in both the NAP and the UNSDCF there is not a single mention of land-ownership or historical emissions and no direct mention of climate justice. Whilst the NAP does touch on land-use, its definition reflects technocratic dispositions stating

> *'Land use change refers to a change in the use or management of land by humans, which may lead to a change in land cover. Land cover and land use change may have an impact on the surface albedo, evapotranspiration, sources and sinks of greenhouse gases…'* (Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, 2023, p.4).

This definition neither includes issues of green-grabbing which can be understood as the 'appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends' (Fairhead et al., 2012, p. 237), nor does it include issues around land ownership. Land ownership is particularly relevant in Zambia, as local communities 'are at risk of displacement and losing their livelihoods' with 'foreign investors and local elites' purchasing land, often even in the pursuit of protecting the environment, whilst locals are pushed onto 'less fertile' land (Pearce et al., 2021, p. 16). Definitions like this are found throughout the NAP and UNSDCF, loaded with technical jargon, solely focusing on natural impacts rather than including structural human-produced inequalities.

Important to note, within a post-political condition, the depoliticization of climate change is never an absolute process. AE3 explains that climate change

> *'is always deeply political, so the depoliticization is just something that happens at the superficial level as I don't think its ever really effectively depoliticized. It's just an attempt.'*

He mentions that by depoliticizing climate change on a superficial level, IDAs can maintain an appearance of neutrality whilst still pursuing geopolitical interests. For example, participants (UN6 and UN7) working for an EU-funded IDA, reflected that climate change is a technical issue, however, also maintained the position that they were working to strengthen 'EU interests' and support 'EU companies in Zambia'. Funder et al. (2017, p. 6) summarize this well when they explain that

> *'although policies and project documents may serve to depoliticize adaptation… they are at heart deeply political in nature. Analytically, we must therefore go beyond studying climate change interventions as an isolated field of technical practices, and instead approach them as political arenas linked to broader ongoing struggles over power and resource control between the involved actors…'*

Ultimately, by framing climate change through technical targets (as seen in figure 1), IDAs seem to shape Zambia's climate change governance through capacity-building initiatives, the implementation of technological solutions, whilst positioning themselves as the ideal neutral actor. This analysis aligns with Ferguson's (1994, p.255) belief that international development often expands foreign administrative reach with the appearance of technical innovations, whilst Swyngedouw's (2010, p.215-222) perspective also notes that such governance landscapes maintain the status-quo for IDAs without leading to transformative change. However, these findings also suggest that technical solutions are often desired by local actors and communities, as solutions to cope with immediate needs. In Zambia, it seems that IDAs technical lens is supporting a consensus-based post-political order that positions them as capable climate experts, whilst local actors are framed as lacking technical capacities. The reality of a depoliticized discourse, reflects the challenges of climate change governance that is both politically transformative and responsive to imminent community needs.

4.3. Negotiating coordination

To address research question 1 and 2, this section will present findings on the implementation gaps and governance discrepancies undermining Zambia's climate approach, from the perspectives of IDAs. Respondents consistently pointed out challenges in actor coordination reflecting a desire for a central coordinating body and the conversion of funding into climate adaptation. Yet, to simplify these as technical implementation gaps would fail to recognize their deeper significance. Using conceptual frameworks such as norm localization theory, Foucault's governmentality, and the principal-agent problem will help reveal the negotiating processes which are inherent in a setting where international frameworks coexist with local realities.

4.3.1. Syncing International and Local Coordination

The desire for a more systematic model of coordination was a reiterated plea by IDAs. All respondents working for an IDA mentioned room for coordination improvement, noting a big 'coordination gap'. UN2, a climate officer, explained that coordination was a persisting problem, and that it arose both between IDAs and in relation to the government. She explained that 'there should be much more collaboration between the agencies' mentioning that 'information dissemination could be increased' in order to prevent project duplication. Notably, UN2 also mentioned:

> *'There's no collaboration between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment…the Ministry of Finance will not work with the Ministry of Green Economy.'*

After following up with UN2, she explained that what she meant by this was that:

> *'The ministries basically do not communicate with each other unless the ministry of finance is disbursing climate finance. But they do not plan or coordinate on any other issues.'*

She highlights the lack of collaboration between these two ministries, through an example which had occurred at the NAP Expo just two weeks prior. She explains:

> *'I was attending the NAP Expo and somebody asked is there anybody for Ministry of Finance here. And we had very powerful discussions about the Ministry of Finance and international finance… and the Ministry of Finance was not there in attendance, at the biggest adaptation Expo… So, these partners presented why it's unattractive for partners and you know recommendations as to how to boost public-private partnerships. So, these guys presented all this and boom, there's no Ministry of Finance. You know, only the Ministry of Green Economy.'*

She mentions that at one of the largest climate adaptation Expo's, the Ministry of Finance was not in attendance, despite very productive discussions taken place in regards to financing mechanisms and ways to improve partnerships between the public and private sector. She explained that the lack of coordination and collaboration is the:

> *'missing link between the ministries and shows how they work on climate financing and climate change, and how that goes and translates. And this could be very well why we are seeing reduced funding on climate in the national budget.'*

Whilst she mentions that the lack of coordination could be contributing to a reduced level of funding for climate in the national budget, general trends show an increase in available climate funding in recent years. Acheampong et al. (2022, p. 80) explain that 'the flow of climate finance in Zambia has grown exponentially from less than US$20 million per annum in 2010 to more than US$50 million per annum in 2021, with a corresponding increase in the portfolio of climate investments in the country'.

Additionally, the Zambian Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (2024, p. 44) explain that 'In the 2024 budget, the allocation for environmental protection has increased by approximately K391 million [(€151,300)] compared to the 2023 budget'. However, UN2 might have been referring to the failure to meet the expectations for climate finance to reach 1% of the total national budget, with it standing at 0.8% in 2024 (Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research, 2024, p. 44).

4.3.2. Negotiating Localized Coordination: Power, Agency and Resistance

Another relevant perspective, was that IDAs believed climate coordination was relying on informal relationships between people rather than on formalized institutional networks. AE3, a senior climate researcher with multiple studies in Zambia, explained that whilst:

> *'there are coordination committees between the ministries, I think from what I have seen is that coordination depends a lot on the personal relationships between senior staff.'*

The idea that in order for IDAs to be able to get 'work done' they required personal relationships with ministers or members of ministries seemed to be a common consensus. UN6 and UN7 explained that the

> *'UN is extremely important in the international development field in Zambia because they have a close relationship with the government… staying in dialogue and partnership with the government is a must.'*

Using a theory of norm localization, a negotiated process of norm diffusion which 'describes how local agents reconstruct foreign norms to ensure norms fit' can be identified in this context (Acharya, 2004, p. 239). In Zambia, the westernized norm of global governance which idealizes transparent, structured stakeholder coordination exemplified by UN agencies,

is seemingly being reinterpreted and molded to Zambia's existing political culture. The 'coordination gap' being perceived by IDAs is arguably the space where the negotiation for coordination occurs. Local actors acting as entrepreneurs of pragmatic norms, localize their own methodology of coordination, in which 'local initiative…local values and identity' are crucial to coordination (Acharya, 2004, p. 251 and p. 263). Rather than there being a 'coordination failure' there is a hybridized or localized system, which uses social capital and networks to guide Zambian bureaucracy. Whilst IDAs might believe there is a failing coordination system, perhaps it is just a different system which does not conscribe to their norms. Within this system, local actors recognize the responsibilities of IDAs. AE3 mentioned that during a research study, government officials mentioned that

> *'It would be really nice if the donors could come and coordinate with us instead of with each other.'*

AE3 explains that the government identifies a lack of coordination from the IDAs, explaining they prefer to coordinate with each other rather than with them. He also mentioned that IDAs had previously set-up a donor coordinating committee on climate, which

> *'ran for a number of years, but it never really worked in practice, and also the government did not really like it. And I think for good reasons, because the government was saying why are the donors coordinating with their own coordination group, shouldn't our inter-ministerial coordination be the point of focus for all the coordination?'.*

This highlights how IDAs tried to establish a coordinating system which utilized their norms to try and overcome the 'coordination gap' which they perceived. Notably, local actors, mainly the government, disliked the idea of a donor-coordinating committee as it fragmented their localized methodology of coordination. Given an inter-ministerial coordination set-up existed, the donor-led committee might have complicated the processes of coordination. In this dialogue, IDAs seemingly identify a 'coordination gap' in which ministries struggle to coordinate, funds are misappropriated, and coordination relies on informalized relationships, whilst local government actors similarly express a desire for better coordination from IDAs.

Within this process of norm localization, there are embedded power dynamics which shape the partnerships between IDAs and local actors. This can be understood through a Foucauldian lens. As mentioned in chapter 2, IDAs often tend to recognize guide their work using data-driven metrics, technical frameworks and a managerial style based on results, which might be viewed as a configuration of neoliberal governmentality, or a tool designed to 'conduct the conduct' (Li, 2007, p. 275) of Zambian climate governance. These approaches are not neutral, but have an underlying worldview shaped by International and Global North conceptualizations of climate change as measurable, manageable and legible. Frameworks like the UNSDCF explain that climate change in Zambia can be solved by improving 'laws, policies and programmes' which improve 'knowledge and capacities… to monitor and report progress' on climate strategies that 'anticipate, respond to and recover better from climate-related shocks' (United Nations Zambia and The Government Republic of Zambia, 2023, p.18). Furthermore, in order to 'design, implement and monitor laws' which effectively solve climate issues, the GRZ should capitalize on the UN's position to 'provide technical support to inform the reforms and leverage knowledge and experiences to improve the quality and implementation capacities of the reform measures' (ibid.). Within this framing of climate change, everyday local practices can be interpreted as a form of resistance even when done without intent. Localized modalities of coordination, informal networks and governance can be interpreted as resistance to imposed foreign norms and agendas. Local knowledge practices such as 'rotational harvesting' (UN5) as well as other forms of 'indigenous

knowledge' (UN5 and UN1) can be seen as forms of resistance to an over-technicalized framing of climate change which gives power to IDAs. AE3 explained that deciding

> *'who leads who in a coordination process, in principle everybody is equal, but if everybody's equal you cannot move so, who sort of coordinates the coordination then becomes a power struggle'.*

In this power struggle, IDAs capitalize on their resources to shape the dominant discourse through a technical and quantifiable perception of climate that is rooted in knowledge systems developed by the Global North. This reflects Foucault's design of governmentality (Foucault et al., 2014), in which IDAs exercise power not strictly through authority but through the shaping of norms, forms of governance and creation of knowledge which render other actors as governable. UN5 believes that in order to

> *'guarantee and transfer power [from IDAs to local actors], I think the landscape would have to drastically change in terms of how resource distribution is being done.'*

Importantly, within this power dynamic, local actors still hold agency and power. Rather than being passive bystanders, absorbing imposed international norms, the GRZ can negotiate how different elements of international frameworks are implemented or rejected. Simple acts like utilizing an informalized coordination process over IDA-procedures can be seen as an assertion of the 'strength of prior local norms' (Acharya, 2004, p. 247). By coordinating climate governance using interpersonal relationships and a control over funding, the GRZ is able to shape norms that ensure its own authority. In order to 'be attentive to the prevailing interests and polices of ruling politics elites' governments try 'to make populations and resources governable… through a repertoire of administrative mechanisms and technologies of knowledge production' (Funder et al., 2017, p. 32). Arguably, this gives the GRZ room to negotiate partnerships with IDAs that ensure Zambian interests or self-interests are maintained. Hence, 'Climate interventions thus take place in a context where state agencies and other actors continuously seek to establish and legitimize their authority to govern resources and citizens' (ibid).

These findings describe a landscape of climate governance which is characterized by a constant and palpable negotiation process. The coordination gap identified by IDAs is established on the premise of IDAs being rational and efficient governance actors whilst local systems are deficient. The configuration in which agendas and funding are determined by foreign actors, establishes inherent power asymmetries which are resisted or reshaped by processes of localization. The perspective of capable IDAs and incapable local coordination structures, mimic persisting viewpoints of African states as 'developing states' (Mkandawire, 2001, p. 290) which idealize Global North characteristics of development. These perspectives are structured through hierarchies which have been determined and shaped by histories of colonialism and imperialism. Significantly, such viewpoints are based on the comparison of 'African states in crises' to 'idealized and tendentiously characterized states elsewhere' (ibid). Significantly, local actors have agency to resist and negotiate practices of governance and domination through everyday practices and localized norms.

4.3.3. Translating Climate Finance: A principle-agent model

An area of tension between IDAs and local actors, is the arena of climate finance. Within the coordination gap identified by IDAs, they mentioned a lack of investment in climate implementation, despite the availability of substantial climate finance. UN3 mentioned that funds dedicated to climate adaptation, were sometimes 'reprioritized' and used for other purposes such as 'social safety nets'. From a rigid technocratic perspective this might seem like a case of the misappropriation of funds. However, using the principle-agent model it can

be understood differently. Principle-agent models can be used to understand the relationships between IDAs and local actors (Milner, 2006 and Vaubel, 2006). Acting as principals, IDAs and donors dictate the implementation and use of climate finance to their agent/s being the GRZ and local actors. However, the agent, in this case the GRZ, has different priorities, and might use funding to fix immediate issues like poverty and food insecurity. Equally, the GRZ has greater information about the local needs and context which Vaubel (2006, p. 127) describes as 'information asymmetry'. Here the use of funding for different purposes can be understood as an example of 'agency slack' where an agent undertakes an 'independent action' which 'is undesired by the principal' (Hawkins et al., 2006, p.8), and allows an agent to pursue goals which follow their priorities. Notably, agents do not always repurpose funding for community needs. UN2 addresses two key points. Firstly, when discussing the misappropriation of funding she states:

> *'Do you know what the local authority does with contingency funding, 5% of the CDF, they buy cars for the Ministers.'*

She also mentions that when trying to provide support to the government, IDAs might ask

> *'what do you need for us to help you with, so that you can do this better? And the government will say, well, we need a 1-month workshop in Livingstone, sipping cocktails and stuff.'*

In these quotes, she highlights that the actions of agents can also be determined through self-interest. In the first quote, she is discussing how money dedicated to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), a government fund often supported through climate finance, is being spent on buying cars for the Ministers. The second quote highlights the tendency for climate financing to be used to design policy-workshops, where she believes not much is achieved, suggesting it is like a holiday for government officials. Moreover, she explains that the capacities of agents can also determine the implementation and access of climate funding. UN2 explains that

> *'funds are returned back to the adaptation fund, returned back to the GCF, because they were failed to be utilized… because of poor proposals… So of course, they will not provide that funding, they'll say, well, we cannot pay these guys right.'*

She argues that due to the poor quality of policy proposals, funding will often return or remain in adaptation funds like the GCF, as applications are rejected. However, Transparency International Zambia believes that 'access to these climate funds [(GCF and GEF)] in Zambia has been low in comparison to other countries [with] challenges in accessing these funds includ[ing] seemingly arduous procedures and requirements' (2024, p. 24). Explaining that the rejection of proposals might also be due to the extreme requirements needed to access these climate funds. However, TI-Z (2024, p. 6) also mentioned that their

> *'corruption vulnerability assessment also revealed significant risks pertaining to climate financing [in Zambia]. These included inadequate monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems, limited accountability mechanisms, as well as complex regulatory systems.'*

This suggests that a lack of accountability mechanisms also enables agents to use climate funding to pursue self-interests. The PA model helps us understand that IDAs act as principles of climate finance, dictating the terms of access. Meanwhile local agents negotiate immediate needs and self-interests by repurposing funding using agency slack.

Chapter 5 – Local Perspectives on Climate Change Governance

This chapter focuses on the perspectives local actors shared on the role of IDAs in climate change governance. This includes interviewees from local CSOs, NGOs, academia, government departments and local climate experts. It will present empirical findings on the governance dynamics between IDAs and local actors and touch on top-down development practices, local capacity-building and conditional climate funding. It will aim to address the following two research questions:

3. How do local actors (Ministries, civil societies, NGOs, community organizations) understand the role of IDAs in national climate governance?
4. What are the discrepancies between local and international perspectives on IDAs roles in climate governance and how do IDAs and local actors navigate them?

5.1. The firewall of climate change funding

Whilst the previous section in chapter 4 touched on the issues IDAs identified in climate finance, this section presents local perspectives on climate funding to highlight discrepancies. Climate funding promises to deliver resources for climate issues, however, local actors expressed frustration regarding the rigid criteria of access, the conditionalities associated with funding and the constrictions which prevent implementation.

At the core of these challenges, is a complex and rigid architecture of climate finance. Shawoo et al. (2022, p. 1267) explain that

> *'The climate finance architecture now consists of a large and growing number of climate funds… Each of these funds has their own separate requirements for national accreditation and project approval, and mechanisms for financial dissemination.'*

This structure which is both fragmented and highly technical creates a complex climate funding system in Zambia, which excludes many local actors from benefitting. LA3 explained that the prerequisites of climate finance, create an inaccessible financing criterion which excludes 'smaller local NGOs'. LA1 shared a similar perspective mentioning that

> *'There's so many technicalities and restrictions and this is why funding might be readily available in the climate space, but it's not easily accessed and you discover that the people that end up accessing this funding are the same multinational institutions.'*

Although climate finance is supposed to support local actors with climate needs, the intense accreditation processes make it nearly impossible for local actors to apply. LA3 mentioned that her CSO had been rejected a number of times for climate funding, because their annual 'financial turnover' was not high enough. LA2 also mentioned that

> *'Local organizations cannot access funding due to the rigid conditionalities associated with them… funding often gets stuck at a policy development level and doesn't get into implementation.'*

These arguments reflect a broader politics of climate finance coordination identified by Funder and Dupuy (2022). In the intersection between global and national climate finance frameworks, a disjuncture arises due to 'the competing preferences and actions of donors' and the way local actors 'enact climate finance coordination' (p. 1901). They note the

embedded competitiveness in climate finance, explaining that 'donors may compete' (p. 1913) with 'competing interests among donors' (p. 1901) whilst for local actors

> *'…climate finance coordination represents an opportunity to upset or consolidate existing power relations in the domestic institutional landscape not only with respect to climate financing but also in terms of how authority and mandates are distributed more broadly in the governance of sectors and resources.'* (p. 1913)

This underlying tension may explain the rigid criterions associated with funding, as different actors try to assert their interests and authority. This contributes to a fragmentation of climate architecture that can materialize as external oversight, climate criterions, accountability mechanisms and policy interests attached to funding initiatives.

5.1.1. The PPCR and Climate Conditionalities

An example is presented by Funder and Dupuy (2022) who analyze Zambia's Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR), mentioned in chapter 2. The PPCR was a project with a 12-year implementation phase (2009-2022) that aimed to improve climate resilience and coordination. Despite these objectives, the PPCR demonstrated the conditionalities and agendas associated to international climate funding. Firstly, the main donor, being the World Bank, insisted that the project be managed by a 'semi-autonomous secretariat' rather than being embedded in 'existing government functions'. This was to

> *'better monitor funding and transparency, thereby addressing long-standing donor concerns about corruption and delays in aid and more recently in climate finance'* whilst giving *'the World Bank and other donors a certain room for maneuver.'* (p. 1907)

By justifying this structure through climate finance corruption, it gave the World Bank more authority to control the distributing of climate funds, being reinforced by

> *'World Bank staff in Zambia hav[ing] significant influence on the development and implementation of the program and its support to climate finance coordination…World Bank staff argued in meetings with government staff that if climate finance coordination was to succeed it would have to operate without the constraints of conventional bureaucratic frameworks… through which donors, government agencies and NGOs could freely negotiate and allocate climate funding… The World Bank's efforts to promote the PPCR can thereby be seen as an attempt by a long-established development actor to expand its mandate and legitimacy into the climate change financing arena.'* (p. 1905-1906)

The PPCR's framework has also been criticized for the 'dominance of the World Bank Group (WBG) in the design process and proposed implementation modalities' (Seballos and Kreft, 2011, p. 36). The set-up of the PPCR reflects a clear embeddedness of donor dominance and control into Zambia's climate governance, which restricts local ownership or authority of climate finance and reinforces IDA conditionalities and objectives. This reflects a broader system in which local actors have to negotiate their agency within the conditionalities of climate finance, whilst IDAs establish influence by controlling the dissemination of funding.

5.1.2. Vertical Climate Funds

Another theme mentioned by local actors was that despite available funding, money circulated on a vertical level, staying within policy or IDAs, with little being translated into implementation. During my interview with LA3, she explained that climate funds often circulated between UN agencies and partner organizations with 'grassroots communities' always being left out. According to LA2,

> *'Funding often gets stuck at a policy development level and doesn't get into implementation.'*

This perspective was reiterated by LA1, mentioning that a lot of funding is focusing on improving climate policies, however, in a context where

> *'we've amended and repealed laws over and over whilst some policies haven't even been implemented fully… I usually ask this question in dialogue, why do we amend policies that we haven't even fully implemented?... but most of these policies, they fail to actually reach the actual needs on ground because there's no implementation. And funny enough, the funding that still comes in, it addresses policy issues.'*

LA1 explains that policies and laws continue to be amended and repealed, with policies being amended before full-implementation. Additionally, he notes that whilst current policies have failed to translate into implementation, new funding coming in is still focused on policies. LA3 also mentioned the idea of 'vertical funds' with climate resources being circulated on a 'middle-level'. LA3 mentioned that climate funds often stayed within INGOs and ministry departments, staying stuck on a policy-design level, without reaching local actors. Notably, LA3 and UN2 also mentioned that the current ecosystem of climate funding had been severely impacted by the USAID cuts, further reducing local actors access to climate funds.

Whilst IDAs perspectives focused on the misappropriation of climate funds, the perspectives shared by local actors reflect a climate finance system that aims to support climate projects, whilst maintaining the agendas, priorities and legitimacies of IDAs. In this context, local actors are forced to align themselves with funding conditions in order to negotiate their climate governance. Notably, both IDAs and local actors believed that available climate resources are often not utilized. However, IDAs associated this with poor policy proposals, whilst local actors believed that funds re-circulated through IDAs or remained stuck on a policy-design level.

5.2. Negotiating Knowledge and Power in Top-Down Governance

To answer research question 3, this section focuses on how local actors perceive the role of IDAs in coordinating or setting the development agenda on climate. Whilst IDAs have positioned themselves as technical experts, ideally placed to take on climate issues, local actors shared sentiments of imposed foreign agendas, top-down development approaches and dictators of knowledge. A theme which emerged in my discussions with local actors, was that IDAs in Zambia had their own foreign agendas. This agenda was usually imposed through a top-down approach to development and access to climate funding. LA1, a lead researcher on environmental justice, explains that

> *'Donor funding agencies, especially the UN, they want you to run with an agenda that they are already trying to work on… I would say generally they're only few instances where you find a partner that just wants to work with you and they don't really have any agenda.'*

LA1 explains that IDAs generally develop their own agenda, which already marginalizes local actors into implementation roles and forces them to 'align' themselves with the 'objectives of a donor'. GV1 shared similar opinions explaining that

> '*We usually always have to fold our sleeves just to put up that agenda norm. But sometimes we ask ourselves whose agenda are we pushing for? Because the International Development aid industry always has disasters for me, from my experience, I feel like they always come with their agendas or they have targets that they want to achieve.'*

By 'fold our sleeves' GV1 means that local actors have to give-in to, or accept the norms which are imposed by IDAs. Moreover, when she states 'disasters' she is referring to the problems she identifies within the International Development aid industry. LA2 explains that IDAs, especially

> *'The UN often pushes their agenda through a top-down approach [which leaves] no room for co-creation and co-design of projects.'*

AE1 equally shared this perspective mentioning that there

> *'is still a top down approach where the owners of the money will come and say this is what we want to do and they [(local actors)] just follow suit to say, this is what the donor is saying and these are the kinds of projects that we are going to implement.'*

The top-down approach taken by IDAs, often imposes their perspectives and epistemologies onto climate projects being developed in Zambia. This approach marginalizes local actors into implementing roles rather than thought partners, only being consulted after key decisions on project design have already been established. Interviews with UN6 and UN7 substantiate this finding, stating that they prefer to use local actors in the 'implementation phase' whilst using 'international partners' for their 'technical expertise' in project design. The top-down development approach is reinforced by IDAs technical framing of climate change, with LA3 explaining that

> *'Over-complicated and theoretical debates and perspectives on climate change marginalize the inclusion and knowledge of local actors.'*

LA3 explained that the technical framing meant that IDAs often hired 'foreign consultants', rather than considering local actors. The imposition of a top-down approach critically side-lines existing local and indigenous knowledge, reducing the governance role of local organisations to 'ticking-boxes' (LA2) for internationally defined indicators and objectives. On the contrary, IDAs can dictate the agendas of climate initiatives, holding power over the creation of project designs and the creation of knowledge. The feeling of exclusion experienced by local actors is not merely systematic, but reveals a larger epistemic imbalance based on a hierarchy of knowledge reflecting colonial dynamics. Quijano (2000) conceptualizes the 'coloniality of power', in which the global governance order is persistently operated through a Eurocentric epistemology. In this context, coloniality is not merely the domination of a people's or a state through material, but also encompasses epistemic control in which those in power decide what knowledge can be understood as logical, credible or rational. In Zambia, this materializes by IDAs control over the design of projects, making them the determiners of dialogue and knowledge. By doing this

> *'Local organizations lose their indigenous/local knowledge due to the imposed international strategies associated with funding and IDA projects.' (LA2)*

This reflects what Quijano identifies as a persisting 'Eurocentrist perspective of knowledge', a state in which 'we all have been led, knowingly or not, willingly or not, to see and to accept

that image as our own reality' (p. 222). Within an infrastructure of epistemic hegemony, local actors do not partake as partners of knowledge production, but rather are forced to take on the designs and epistemologies associated with IDAs projects, in order to negotiate their own interests. Using 'micro-practices of power', IDAs can create 'regimes of truth' in which they can use their 'control over the production of knowledge as a way of setting the public agenda, and for including or excluding certain voices and participants in action upon it' (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015, p. 467). In Zambia's context this could be understood as IDAs creating their authority not through coercion but through a subtle discursive power in which they control the parameters of expertise. Using this approach, IDAs not only become the creators of projects but also build a truth regime about climate development, one in which local actors require IDAs 'technical expertise'. Quijano (2000, p. 215) warns that this epistemic domination can contribute to a

> *'sort of dissociation, often conflictive, between our predominant cognitive perspective and our experience.'*

This can lead to local actors abandoning or being alienated from their own interpretive epistemologies and frameworks. In Zambia, this seems to be taken place where indigenous knowledge is often being replaced by solutions embedded in Global North epistemologies. LA2 pointed this out when she mentioned that local actors are losing their indigenous knowledge practices.

The implications associated with a governance system that prioritizes foreign epistemologies without understanding the localised-knowledge systems are extreme. They can include ineffective solutions, wasting of funds, destruction of indigenous knowledge and community practices, and severe impacts on communities relying on effective climate governance. AE1, a climate change researcher, explains that climate solutions in Zambia must be made

> *'in consultation with the Community that you're trying to target, because sometimes these top down approaches do not work.'*

Furthermore, she goes on to describe a situation which she had learned about whilst working with an IDA,

> *'an organization we worked with, they decided that, ok, because we know that this community is lacking water, we just send our engineers to go and put up this infrastructure. These engineers went into that village, they put up the water infrastructure, they put up the borehole and everything, but people continued to go and get water from the well. They did not consult anyone; they did not understand the context of the village. Then when they now did a review, a follow up to say but why are we seeing a situation where people that do not have water have continued to get water from the well. Then they told them that no, but where you put our borehole, there is our graveyard, and this an area we have where we bury people and for us that is a separate place. We do not just frequent that place.'*

AE1 explains that this IDA went into a local community which needed water and built boreholes to provide this. However, due to a lack of local community involvement, the boreholes were built on that community's graveyard, so the locals refused to use it. This is just one clear example of the importance of incorporating local knowledge in the process of climate change governance in Zambia.

The experiences of local actors in Zambia reveal that the climate governance space is dominated by a top-down approach which imposes foreign agendas and creates an epistemic hierarchy which privileges the knowledge of IDAs. Within this governance system, local

actors are reduced to implementation roles rather being included in the co-design of projects. This leads to situations where localised-knowledge and indigenous technologies are both ignored and to some extent destroyed through Eurocentric climate strategies. These outcomes are created through everyday governance practices which favour IDAs technical expertise including a quantifiable understanding of climate change which requires data-driven technological solutions.

5.3. The paradox of capacity-building: Brain drain or brain gain?

To address research question 4, this section highlights perspectives shared by local actors, on the discrepancies between local and IDAs perceptions of capacity-building. Whilst local actors recognized IDAs were attempting to contribute to capacity-building, they also mentioned concerns about the brain drain local actors were facing. They identified a paradox in which the building up and draining of local capacities was happening at the same time. LA1 suggests that IDAs have contributed to local capacity-building especially in terms of the

> *'UN funding on strengthening civil society voices'*, however, he also recognizes that *'there's a lot of capacity drain and brain drain from local CSOs by international NGOs, they get the best of the best because they'll give them best offers.'*

This sentiment was shared by LA3 who explained that IDAs, like the UN, often take away local capacities, with a brain drain occurring from local NGOs to IDAs. These perspectives reflect a structural contradiction, where IDAs aim to support local actors by investing in capacity building, however, the trained personnel then often end up working for IDAs. LA3 explains that individuals who receive training or become 'highly qualified' will naturally seek out better career opportunities and salaries. This dynamic contributes to a form of institutional hollowing, where capacity is continuously built-up yet not embedded in institutional or local structures. This dynamic reflects traditional theories of brain drain, which can be understood as the emigration of skilled professionals in search for better salaries and opportunities, usually weakening a countries development, and often occurring 'from developing to developed countries' (Docquier & Rapoport, 2011, p. 2). In this context it is not necessarily to another country, but is more focused on a migration from the local to the international organization. Importantly, a large determinant of this dynamic is the economic dimension. LA1 discusses the salaries in IDAs

> *'Talking about the UN, the funding is available, so you look at their salary scale and it's a whole different level. There's no difference in terms of their capacity and civil society capacity. Yes, here and there, because they are technical experts, subject matter experts… But in terms of reach, influencing capacity, civil society has that.'*

He notes that with their resources, IDAs are able to offer much higher salaries, although he believes there is not that much difference between IDAs and CSOs capacities. He mentions that IDAs may have more technical expertise, however, CSOs have more capacity in terms of outreach and influence. LA1 explains that one

> *'issue we've been talking about in the CSO space is that some donor wants you to implement a project… but you don't want to support that CSO in the salary scale for their local staff.'*

He argues that IDAs expect local actors to implement their projects, however, they don't want to provide funding for the salary requirements of their staff. This can lead to local actors

losing their ‘experts’ who seek better career opportunities within IDAs. Significantly, he states that

> *‘I feel something can be done about that. It is just to strengthen civil society, governance and growth by supporting their management and administration funding.’*

In this context, he mentions his organization has begun designing a

> *‘grant management fund, which is not a for-profit decision, but we are charging you as the UN to say in order for us to carry out your mandate or your objective, we are charging you 10% of the total project funding. This is a grant management fund to support our CSO Governance and growth.’*

Through a grant management fund, his organization is setting a precedent that a certain percentage of funds allocated to a project will be used by his organization to support the funding of their organization. The idea that trained staff often moved onto better opportunities was something which even IDA participants recognized. UN4 mentioned that while they were ‘training people’ a bit of a ‘limitation or barrier, would have to be the high turnover within government’ and trained professionals moving ‘to different areas’. Mweetwa and Chipindi (2025, p. 201) highlight that the high turnover in Zambia’s public sector can be partially attributed to a ‘lack of career advancement opportunities… alongside poor salaries’. Whilst, UN6 and UN7 simply explained that the brain drain was a natural ‘circle of life’ and that ‘people will always seek better opportunities and salaries’.

In Zambia’s context, this contributes to IDAs effectively dominating the market of employment for climate professionals, using their resources to further establish their epistemic and bureaucratic influence. Through this process they are able to monopolize the demand for expertise, contributing to their control over how knowledge is produced. Whilst discussing this dynamic with AE3 he mentioned that

> *‘I don't think it's like evil intentions or like, you know, we want to rule the world. It's like, you know, if you're leading or working in an organization you sort of become part of that whole, what is called in organizational sociology ‘sense making’, around who are we and what is our role. And so, I think it just becomes a way for these institutions to, as organizations, try to reproduce themselves and their legitimacy and their presence.’*

AE3 explains that he does not believe that the dynamic in which IDAs aim to legitimize themselves by recruiting high-level experts is manifested by bad intentions. Rather it is part of a complex sociological dynamic, in which it feels natural for IDAs to want to reproduce their legitimacy and presence, with members of staff feeling as ‘part of a whole’ and wanting to protect their position within that structure. Regardless of the intentions, this existing dynamic has contributed to brain drain of local actors and reinforced the bureaucratic and epistemic control which IDAs hold in Zambia’s climate governance.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

My research set out to explore how IDAs and local actors perceive IDAs roles in Zambia’s climate change governance and the ways in which governance dynamics were being imposed, negotiated or resisted. The following section will address how the findings have answered my main and sub-research questions.

6.1. Addressing the research questions

In regards to question 1, my findings reflected that IDAs were focusing on developing Zambia's agricultural sector, local capacity-building, providing policy support and funding climate initiatives. Agricultural projects included introducing climate-smart agriculture like GM crops, building 'centers for excellence' to train farmers, and introducing solar irrigation systems. Whilst, IDAs also focused on providing policy support, funding for new climate projects and building up local capacities. Within these projects, IDAs expressed a desire for an improved system of coordination, identifying a significant coordination gap or failure. Some IDA participants argued that local actors could not be effectively engaged as thought partners due to their lack of technical expertise's, whilst mentioning a need for improvements in inter-ministerial coordination. Notably, participants also mentioned that CSOs had capacities in terms of outreach, and pointed out the importance of local actors in providing indigenous or contextual knowledge.

IDAs governance style reflected a technocratic and managerialist disposition in relation to climate change. Focusing on question 2, IDA participants and secondary sources like the UNSDCF and NAP, created a technical framing of climate change, which positioned IDAs as holders of 'technical expertise'. By rendering climate change as technical, IDAs arguably depoliticize climate change focusing on data-driven metrics, quantifiable solutions and technological adaptation policies which risk naturalizing climate change and neglecting the structural inequalities which contribute to climate vulnerability. Through the depoliticization of climate change, IDAs can take on a politically-neutral role which ideally places them to provide the technical expertise required for climate solutions. Arguably, this has contributed to a post-political condition in which contentious debates around historical emissions, green-grabbing and resource exploitation across Zambia are not being actively discussed, whilst IDAs continue to expand their bureaucratic control. My findings also suggest that local actors, shared a similar technocratic disposition noting the importance of IDAs technical support, however, also reflecting on the importance of indigenous knowledge.

Addressing question 3, local actors reflected on the top-down development approach being taken by IDAs, and an imposition of foreign agendas. They explained that as IDAs position themselves as technical experts, local actors are forced to align themselves with their objectives in order to be involved in climate projects. This top-down approach likely contributes to IDAs having epistemic control over the validation of climate knowledge, contributing to a marginalization of indigenous knowledge and localized climate solutions. Using Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power, we can argue that IDAs position themselves as producers of knowledge rooted in Eurocentric epistemologies. Through this IDAs can monopolize the market of technical expertise in Zambia, whilst developing their authority and legitimacy. In this truth regime, local actors are excluded as thought partners and reduced to implementation roles. Local actors also mentioned that climate finance is available, however, it is often inaccessible given the access criteria, meaning it often circulated on a vertical-level between IDAs and government departments. Local actors also expressed frustration over funding conditionalities, explaining they have to align themselves with donor agendas, which contributed to implementation gaps as local needs were not properly considered.

To address question 4, my findings highlighted various discrepancies between local and international actors. Whilst IDAs perceived a 'coordination gap', using the PA model, the analysis explained that the gap might actually be the space in which local actors negotiate their interests by using funding to meet immediate needs. Additionally, the informalized structure of coordination might be a way for local actors to resist an idealized western mode of governance, by hybridizing their own localized methodology of coordination. Moreover, IDAs believed that the local 'knowledge gap' meant that they should provide capacity-building, with local actors taking on implementation roles. Local actors, however, explained that these dynamics have contributed to the brain drain of local capacities. Arguably, this has allowed IDAs to dominant the market of employment, whilst enhancing their epistemic and bureaucratic influence. Lastly, IDAs and local actors shared different perspectives around the issues of climate finance. IDAs focused on the misappropriation of funding, whilst local actors addressed the agendas and conditionalities attached to climate funds. Notably, both mentioned that climate funds were often getting stuck on a policy level without translating into implementation.

Collectively these findings help us answer our main question. In Zambia, IDAs construct their governance role through technocratic framings of climate change which can position them as politically-neutral technical experts. Through this they can expand their influence by maintaining control over knowledge and resources. This arguably allows them to dictate or shape the climate objectives and targets being pursued through projects, whilst deciding what governance roles various local actors can take on. Within this structure, local actors negotiate their governance roles often through aligning themselves with donor objectives or taking on implementation roles. However, local actors also actively resist by reshaping foreign norms, challenging asymmetric financing mechanisms and practicing localized methodologies of coordination. Ultimately, this shapes a climate governance structure that is characterized by a constant negotiation process which aims to balance the agendas of foreign organizations with the immediate needs, capacities and agency of local communities.

6.2. Implications and Future Research

This research provides insights into the diverse perspectives related to transnational climate governance. It sheds light on some of the decision-making logics and approaches taken by IDAs in relation to climate issues, and challenges simplistic notions of top-down development which marginalize local actors. Significantly, this research highlights how local actors actively negotiate, reinterpret and resist the imposition of foreign norms whilst still navigating a complex governance space in which they often have to comprise in order to assert their own agency. This study contributes to debates around the power asymmetries which continue to shape North-South relations and the epistemic control that IDAs continue to capitalize in favor of their bureaucratic influence. Moreover, this study aims to show the importance of localized and participatory approaches to climate governance, which reshape power dynamics and improve the efficacy of climate solutions.

Given the constraints of this study, there are many avenues for future research. Firstly, a more comprehensive study that includes a broader array of local and international actors might present different results or reinforce the findings of my study. Secondly, this research opens up the potential for comparative studies with other Global South contexts, which could shed light on the contextual factors that contribute to the dynamics between IDAs and local actors. Finally, a similar research focus could include the impact of social factors including

the positionality, background and nationality of interview participants on their perspectives of climate governance. This might highlight how different factors shape the way participants interpret or narrate their perceptions.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Table from '6.4 Results Matrix – Planet' showing technical targets

National Development Priorities for Pillar 4 - Environmental Sustainability **Developmental Outcomes**: 1. Enhanced mitigation and resilience to climate change 2. Sustainable management of natural resources 3. Improved environmental management		**Regional Frameworks** Africa Agenda 2063 Goal 4. Transformed economies. Goal 7. Environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities.		**Sustainable Development Goals and Targets** SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy Targets 7.1,7.2 SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production: Targets 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 12.8 SDG 13. Climate Action: Targets 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13B.		
Results	**Performance Indicators**	**Baseline**	**5Yr Targets**	**Data Source/MoV**	**Key Partners**	**Reporting UN Agencies**
Outcome 4: By 2027, ecosystems are healthier, and more people, including the marginalised, and vulnerable, are more resilient, contribute to and benefit from the sustainable management and use of natural resources and environmental services, and more effective responses to climate change, shocks, and stresses.	4.1 Greenhouse gas net emission levels	-16,815 Gg CO2 eq. (2010) (8th NDP Draft)	-25,147.9 Gg CO2 eq.	MoGEE reports	**Government** Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MoGEE) Ministry of Energy Zambia Environment Management Agency (ZEMA) **Cooperating Partners** **Civil Society Organisations**	UNDP, FAO, UNEP
	4.2. Proportion of renewable energy in total energy mix	4.5% (2019) (VNR)	9%	Rural Electrification Authority Reports	**Government** MoLNR, MoFNP Ministry of Energy MoGEE Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation (MoWDS), DMMU Zambezi River Authority (ZRA) ZEMA **Cooperating Partners** USAID, EU, WB Bilateral Donors	UNDP, FAO, UN-HABITAT, UNEP, UNCDF, UNIDO, ILO
					Civil Society Organizations **Academia** University of Zambia Mulungushi University Copperbelt University	
	4.3. Level of resilience to climate change impact attained for both human and biophysical systems, with resilience defined to include: -Access to early warning system -Access to climate information services -Capacities for preparedness, response, and recovery	Medium (2019) (VNR) -83% of households with early warning information -Percentage of households with access to climate information services (Currently no data exists but this is an area where the UN System can support government to improve monitoring and data collection) -Percentage of districts with capacities for preparedness, response and recovery	High ->80% of households with early warning information ->80% of households with access to climate information services ->80% of districts with capacities for preparedness, response, and recovery	DMMU Reports	**Government** Ministry of Agriculture MoLNR, MoLGRD DMMU, Ministry of Education, MoTS	UNDP, FAO, UNEP, WFP, IOM, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, WHO
Output 4.1: Strengthened laws, policies, and programmes for the sustainable management of natural resources, effective responses to climate change and access to inclusive environmentally friendly basic services and infrastructure are designed, implemented, monitored at national and subnational levels.	4.1.1. Proportion of population with access to electricity (SDG 7.1.1)	27.9% (2020) Urban: 70.6% Rural: 8.1% (VNR)	Urban: 75% Rural: 11%	Ministry of Energy and REA reports, UN, and other International Agencies Reports	**Government** MoLNR, MoFNP MoGEE MoLGRD DMMU Ministry of Energy Ministry of Infrastructure, Housing & Urban Development (MoIHUD) ZRA, ZEMA Cooperating Partners Civil Society Organizations Academia UNZA Mulungushi University Copperbelt University	UNDP, FA, UN-HABITAT, UNODC, UNCDF, WHO
	4.1.2. Existence of Climate Change legislation	No (2021) (8th NDP draft)	Yes	National Assembly documents and Government gazette	**Government** MoLNR, MoGEE MoLGRD Ministry of Agriculture, MoWDS	UNDP, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, FAO, UNICEF, UNCDF, WHO

					Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MoLF) DMMU ZEMA **Cooperating Partners** **CSOs**	
	4.1.3 Proportion of approved district integrated development plans mainstreaming mitigation, adaptation to Climate Change and disaster risk reduction	7.8% (2021) (8th NDP draft)	50%	District / Approved District Plans	**Government** MoLNR, MoFNP MoGEE MoLGRD **Cooperating Partners** **CSOs**	UNDP, WHO, FAO, WFP, IOM, UN-HABITAT
	4.1.4. Number of community-based organisations for natural resource management established and functional with enhanced capacity	12 (2021) (8th NDP draft)	32	MoLNR Reports/8th NDP Annual Report	**Government** MoLNR, MoGEE Ministry of Tourism **Cooperating Partners** AfDB **CSOs**	UNDP, FAO, IFAD, WHO
	4.1.5. Number of oversight state and non-state institutions with strengthened capacities in environmental protection, pollution control monitoring, supervision of environmental management plans for effective restoration, rehabilitation, and sound management of environmental impacts from mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and other industrial activities	1 (2021)	5	ZEMA State of Environment Reports	**MoGEE, MoLNR, MoLGRD, MoM, ZEMA**	UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, OHCHR, WHO
	4.1.6. Number of programmes for environmental protection, monitoring and reporting at national and sub-national level supported	0 (2021)	5	10 Local Authorities, ZEMA reports	ZEMA, MoGEE, MoLNR, MoLGRD, MoM, Ministry of Education, MoTS	UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, WHO

Output 4.2: People in Zambia, particularly the marginalized, including the most vulnerable groups, have improved knowledge and capacities to demand, adopt and implement environmentally friendly, gender-responsive and climate-smart sustainable natural resources management practices, and utilise basic services and infrastructure	4.2.1 Number of small-scale farmers implementing climate-smart agriculture	154,000 (2021) (Ministry of Agriculture Report)	Male: 378,000 Female: 567,000	MoA Reports	**Government** MoA, MoFL, ZamStats, ZMD **Cooperating Partners** **CSOs**	UNDP, UNCDF, FAO, WFP, IFAD
	4.2.2 Number of programmes supported to raise awareness on sustainable development, natural resources management, climate change and green economy	4 (2021) (8th NDP draft)	20	MoGEE Reports	**Government** MoGEE, MoFNP, MoA, Ministry of Education, MoTS **Cooperating Partners** **CSOs**	UNDP, UNCDF, FAO, WFP, UN-HABITAT, WHO
Output 4.3: State and non-state institutions and communities have capacities to translate international commitments into national and sub-national laws, policies, programmes, and financial instruments (including budgets), monitor and report on progress of implementation at all levels.	4.3.1 Number of integrated policies/strategies/plans which enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation: -National Climate change Act -Green Growth Strategy -Nationally Determined Contribution implementation and investment plan -National adaptation plan (Adapted from SDG 13.2.1)	0 (2021)	4	VNR, Policy documents issued, 8th NDP Annual Report	**Government** MoGEE, MoFNP, Ministry of Education, MoTS **Cooperating Partners** **CSOs**	UNDP, FAO, WFP, UN-HABITAT, IFAD, WHO
	4.3.2. The existence of a functional, integrated national environmental tracking and monitoring system	No (2021) (8th NDP draft)	Yes	MoGEE Reports	**Government** MoGEE **Cooperating Partners** **CSOs**	UNDP, NCDF, WHO
Output 4.4: State and non-state institutions and people in Zambia including the most vulnerable and marginalized groups have strengthened resilience and improved capacities to anticipate, respond to and recover better from crises including climate-related shocks, epidemics, and natural disasters.	4.4.1 Percentage of districts that adopt and implement disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the national strategy	30% (2021) (8th NDP draft)	50%	DMMU Reports	**Government** MoLGRD DMMU **Cooperating Partners** **COs**	UNDP, FAO, WFP, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, IOM, UNOPS, WHO
	4.4.2. Number of provinces that have a multi hazard monitoring and forecasting system which provides disease surveillance, weather forecast including flood warnings, dry spell, heat wave, etc.	1 (2021) (8th NDP draft)	10	DMMU Reports	**Government** MoLGRD, DMMU **Cooperating Partners** **CSOs**	UNDP, FAO, WFP, UN-HABITAT, UNFPA, IOM, WHO

Appendix 2

Four Interview Guides for the 14 interviews conducted, categorized into Local Development Actors, International Development Actors, Government Actors and Academia/Experts

1 - Interview Guide for Local Development Actors (NGOs, Community organizations, civil societies, research institutes)

Introduction:

Purpose: To introduce the focus of the research and ensure participants are aware of the research context. Additionally, to ensure informed consent from participants is given, and they are comfortable with continuing.

Introductory Questions:

- Thank and welcome research participant
- Introduce myself and explain my research in terms of context, research question and research focus (explain what is meant by International Development Actors (IDAs)), and introduce structure of the interview
- Could you tell me a little bit about what sort of work your organization is doing, maybe you could describe your role and how long you have been doing it?
- If relevant or not mentioned: and in relation to climate change, do you have any specific projects which are currently taking place?
- Are you familiar with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)?
- What organizations have you or your organization partnered with or worked with in the past?

Theme 1: UNSDCF and perceptions of IDAs

- In what way do you think the UNSDCF has or is shaping the national climate strategies which are being implemented by local and international actors across Zambia? Are their other frameworks which are more relevant?
- How does the UNSDCF shape or influence the way your organization works in the context of Zambia?
- From your perspective what role do IDAs like the UN and its agencies play within Zambia's national climate governance? (Probe: do they play more of a financing role, or are they active in implementation?)

Theme 2: Coordinating governance and power dynamics

- In the context of climate change initiatives, how would you describe the collaboration between local organizations and IDAs?
- Do you think there are any notable conflict of interests, or coordination issues? Potentially any important power imbalances?
- In your opinion, do you think that local actors have space to influence initiatives which are coordinated by IDAs?

Theme 3: Limitations, Opportunities and Impact

- Are there any projects on climate on which you have collaborated with IDAs, or which you are aware of? (Depends on which actor is being interviewed)
- Do you think this project contributed to improvements in climate resilience or adaptation?
- In the context of projects like these, do you think local actors and IDAs share the same idea of what needs to be implemented? Can you identify any strengths or weaknesses of the coordination between local and international actors?
- Finally, do you believe that by having many IDAs working in this context that local actors can be sidelined or perhaps pushed into smaller governance roles?

Conclusion:

- Thinking of the future, what do you think Zambia needs most in terms of climate adaptation?
- Is there anything else you would like to add, or any questions you have for me?
- Thank them for their time and valuable insights

2 - Interview Guide for International Development Actors (UN Agencies and their international partners)

Introduction:

Introductory Questions:

- Thank and welcome research participant
- Introduce myself and explain my research in terms of context, research question and research focus (explain what is meant by International Development Actors (IDAs)), and introduce structure of the interview
- Could you tell me a little bit about what sort of work your organization is doing, maybe you could describe your role and how long you have been doing it?
- If relevant or not mentioned: and in relation to climate change, do you have any specific projects which are currently taking place?
- Are you familiar with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)?
- What organizations have you or your organization partnered with or worked with in the past?

Theme 1: UNSDCF and Governance Role

- In the context of climate change, what would you say is your organization's role in Zambia? This could be in terms of financing, implementation or even just policy design
- What would you say are the key objectives or priorities which your organization is trying to address in relation to climate adaptation, mitigation or climate resilience?
- How would you say the UNSDCF has shaped or impacted the work your organization is doing?

Theme 2: Relationships with Local Actors

- Would you say that implementing the voices and needs of local actors is an important part of your project design, and if yes how do you try to incorporate these?

- Can you tell me a little bit more about how you coordinate and interact with local actors including maybe NGOs, government departments and communities?
- And in your opinion, how do you think these actors understand the role of international organizations within Zambia's national governance structure? (Probe: do you think maybe you are seen as more of a financing institution, or also implementation and policy design?)
- In Zambia, do you think that IDAs and Local actors share an equitable relationship or do you see any possible power imbalances? Do you think local actors are involved enough in decision-making processes?

Theme 3: Challenges and Impacts

- What have been some of the major successes and perhaps limitations of working under the UNSDCF in Zambia in relation to climate change?
- Do you see any opportunities or barriers in collaboration between local and international actors?
- How would you envision an ideal national climate governance structure in Zambia?

Conclusion:

- Thinking of the future, what do you think Zambia needs most in terms of climate adaptation?
- Is there anything else you would like to add, or any questions you have for me?
- Thank them for their time and valuable insights

3 - Interview Guide for Government Actors (Government departments, government agencies, ministries, etc.)

Introductory Questions:

- Thank and welcome research participant
- Introduce myself and explain my research in terms of context, research question and research focus (explain what is meant by International Development Actors (IDAs)), and introduce structure of the interview
- Could you tell me a little bit about what your department's role is in relation to Zambia's climate change response?
- If relevant or not mentioned: and in relation to climate change, do you have any specific projects which are currently taking place?
- Are you familiar with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)?
- What organizations does your department work with? Importantly, UN agencies, international organizations and also local actors?

Theme 1: Strategies and Coordination

- What are your departments key priorities, objectives and strategies in relation to improving Zambia's climate response?
- Within these strategies, how does your department work with international organizations? (Organizations identified in the UNSDCF)

- From your experience, are the climate initiatives implemented by IDAs in line with the projects or goals of Zambia's national climate response?
- Would you say IDAs and government departments coordinate well to ensure that policies are coherent? Can you identify and strengths or rooms for improvement here?

Theme 2: Governance Space

- What do you think is the role of IDAs in Zambia's climate governance space? Are they more working with financing, implementation, design or all of these?
- How do you think that Zambia's climate policies are shaped by IDAs? If at all?
- How do you view the collaboration between local actors and IDAs under the UNSDCF?

Theme 3: Challenges and Opportunities

- Do you think that the collaboration between IDAs and local actors have strengthened Zambia's national climate response? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?
- Are there any changes you would like to see in the interactions between local and international actors?
- What role do you think IDAs should play in Zambia's climate governance structure within the next 5-10 years?

Conclusion:

- Thinking of the future, what do you think Zambia needs most in terms of climate adaptation?
- Is there anything else you would like to add, or any questions you have for me?
- Thank them for their time and valuable insights

4 - Interview Guide for Academia/Experts

Introduction:

Purpose: To introduce the focus of the research and ensure participants are aware of the research context. Additionally, to ensure informed consent from participants is given, and they are comfortable with continuing.

Introductory Questions:

- Thank and welcome research participant
- Introduce myself and explain my research in terms of context, research question and research focus (explain what is meant by International Development Actors (IDAs)), and introduce structure of the interview
- Could you tell me a little bit about what sort of work your university/institute or you are doing, maybe you could describe your role and how long you have been doing it?
- If relevant or not mentioned: and in relation to climate change, do you have any specific projects or research which is currently taking place?
- Are you familiar with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)?
- What organizations have you or your organization partnered with or worked with in the past?

Theme 1: UNSDCF and perceptions of IDAs

- In what way do you think the UNSDCF has or is shaping the national climate strategies which are being implemented by local and international actors across Zambia? Are there other frameworks which are more relevant?
- How does the UNSDCF shape or influence the way your organization works in the context of Zambia?
- From your perspective what role do IDAs like the UN and its agencies play within Zambia's national climate governance? (Probe: do they play more of a financing role, or are they active in implementation?)

Theme 2: Coordinating governance and power dynamics

- In the context of climate change initiatives, how would you describe the collaboration between local organizations and IDAs? What is the role of academia?
- Do you think there are any notable conflict of interests, or coordination issues? Potentially any important power imbalances?
- In your opinion, do you think that academia has space to influence initiatives which are coordinated by IDAs? Does academia contribute to government policymaking

Theme 3: Limitations, Opportunities and Impact

- Are there any projects on climate on which you have collaborated with IDAs, or which you are aware of?
- Do you think this project contributed to improvements in climate resilience or adaptation?
- In the context of projects like these, do you think local actors and IDAs share the same idea of what needs to be implemented? Can you identify any strengths or weaknesses of the coordination between local and international actors?
- Finally, do you believe that by having many IDAs working in this context that local actors can be sidelined or perhaps pushed into smaller governance roles?

Conclusion:

- Thinking of the future, what do you think Zambia needs most in terms of climate adaptation?
- Is there anything else you would like to add, or any questions you have for me?
- Thank them for their time and valuable insights

Appendix 3

Stakeholders identified as potentially relevant for interview participation using the 4-pronged criterion and analyzing 'Partnerships' section in the UNSDCF

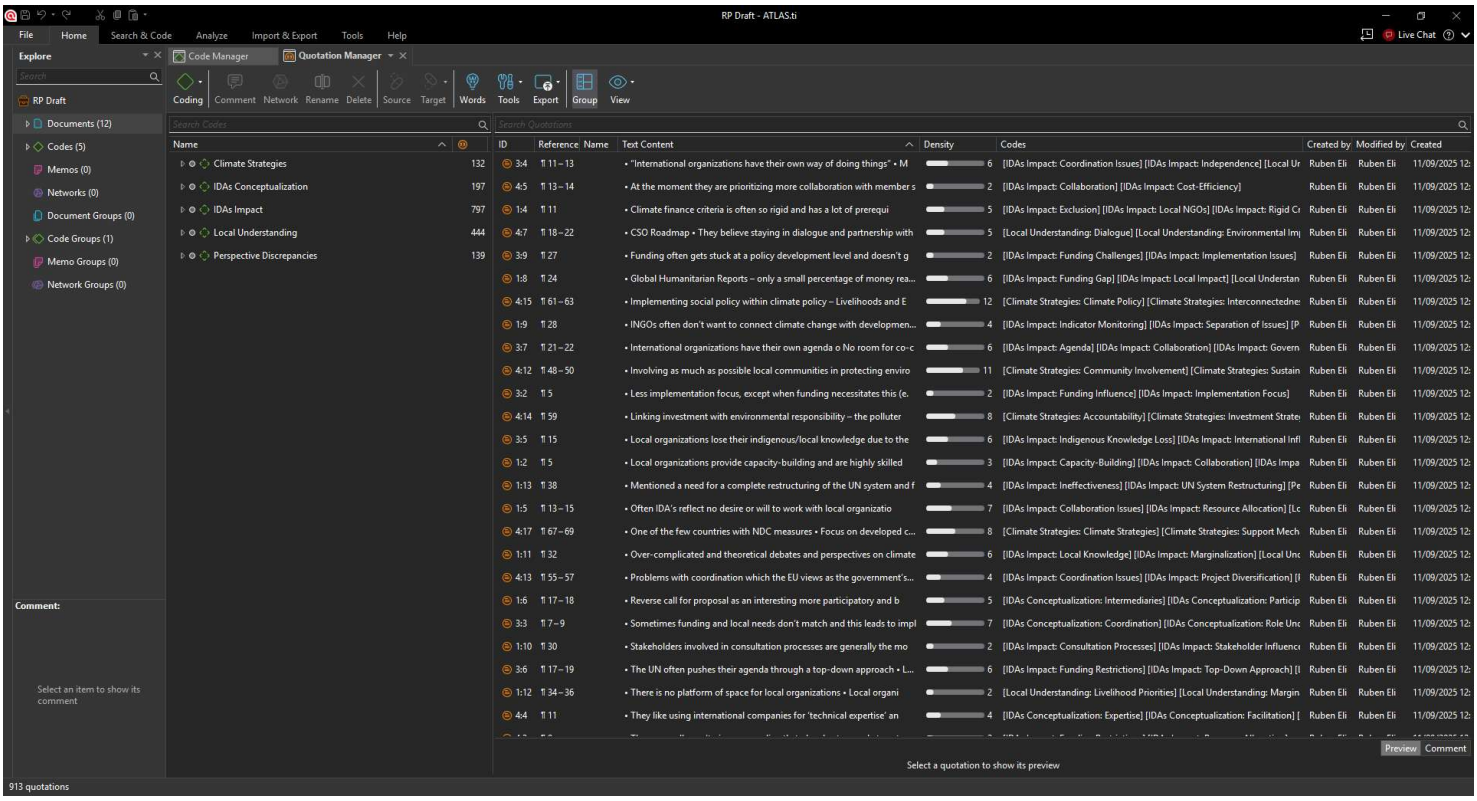
Name	Programmes or Area of Focus	Organization Structure	Possible Insights
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	Promoting sustainable development, reducing poverty and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	UN Agency identified in UNSDCF (IDA)	Their perspective on their role in national climate governance and their strategies against climate change
Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)	Aims to achieve global food security and eradicate hunger and poverty	UN Agency identified in UNSDCF (IDA)	Their perspective on their role in national climate governance and their projects around climate change
World Food Program (WFP)	Support food assistance, helping people recovering from conflict, climate disasters or other impacts	UN Agency Humanitarian Organization identified in UNSDCF (IDA)	Insights into working as an IDA in Zambia and how they perceive their role in the structure
United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)	Multiple climate adaptation projects focused on improving climate resilience	UN Agency identified in UNSDCF (IDA)	Insights on almost all of the listed sub-questions
UNDP Zambia Accelerator Lab	Focuses on innovations in energy and climate change, and partner with research institutions and local NGOs	Research Institute and partnerships with government departments (IDA)	Contemporary climate adaptation and innovation strategies, and the landscape of existing Donors
The World Bank	Funding the Strengthening Climate Resilience Project for Zambia	International Organization and Donor identified in UNSDCF (IDA)	Understand the role of Donors in local governance
Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA)	Water resource management, planning around climate change impacts, and sustainable utilisation	Semi-autonomous government institution identified in UNSDCF (Government Actor)	Insights into strengthening climate resilience and working with IDAs
Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	Responsible for developing green economy and climate change strategies	Government Ministry department identified in UNSDCF (Government Actor)	Perspectives on working with IDAs and national climate change strategies
Ministry of Finance and National Planning	Prepare the national budget and manage national finance strategies	Government Ministry department identified in UNSDCF (Government Actor)	Perspectives on working with IDAs
Ministry of Agriculture	Work on sustainable and climate resilient food production as well as protecting natural environments	Government Ministry department identified in UNSDCF (Government Actor)	Perspectives on working with IDAs, insights into climate resilience and agro-ecological programmes
Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU)	Coordinate national disaster management strategies and increasing climate resilience	Government department under the Vice President's Office identified in UNSDCF (Government Actor)	Strong insights into national climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and working with IDAs
Zambian Environmental	Protects the environment and controls pollution	Independent Environmental Regulatory	Insights into working with IDAs

Management Agency (ZEMA)		organization identified in UNSDCF (Government Actor)	
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	Aims to support 'developing' countries in achieving environmental goals through financing projects	Multilateral Environment Fund identified in UNSDCF (UN Partner)	Insights into the roles of financing mechanisms within Zambia's climate strategies
Green Climate Fund (GCF) Zambia	Funds and supports local climate adaptation strategies in Zambia	Climate Fund identified in UNSDCF (UN Partner)	Understand how IDA financing can shape climate governance
GIZ (German Development Cooperation)	Funding and implementing various climate adaptation programmes including climate resilience, water security, and landscape protection amongst others (work as a partner with UN agencies?)	International Organization and Donor identified as partner organization (UN Partner)	Understanding how IDAs coordinate and chose partners. Also, able to answer sub-questions.
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)	Numerous projects running on climate adaptation	International NGO (INGO) identified as partner organization (UN Partner)	How IDAs shape the design and implementation of climate adaptation policies in Zambia
Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR)	Conduct research on policy analysis in order to inform public policy	Think Tank identified as partner organization and during preliminary research (Local Actor	Understand how they work with IDAs and their perspectives on IDAs role in national climate governance
Policy Monitoring and Research Center (PMRC)	Carry out public policy research to support government departments and do work with climate change research	Public monitoring and research center which works closely with the government identified as climate expert (Local Actor)	Understand how they work with IDAs and their perspectives on IDAs role in national climate governance
Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA)	Fosters regional collaboration through trade and development	Independent interregional trade organization identified in UNSDCF (Local Actor)	Perspectives on working with IDAs as a partner organization
Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)	NGO which focuses on promoting environmental and climate justice through advocacy, policymaking and awareness-raising	Local NGO works closely with UN and government actors (Local Actor)	Share insights into how local actors collaborate with UN agencies and IDAs
Zambia Climate Change Network (ZCCN)	Working as a membership-based CSO, they promote dialogue and discussions around climate justice and sustainable development	Local CSO which consists of various climate members and works together with IDAs and government departments (Local Actor)	Share various insights into the work of local actors, and the collaboration between local and international actors.
University of Zambia (UNZA)	University based in Lusaka which has various experts and scholars working on climate-related topics and	University based in Lusaka (Academia/Experts)	Share insights into the role of academia within climate change policymaking, and how they view the role of IDAs in governance.

	often in relation to research with IDAs		
Copperbelt University	University based in Kitwe, which also has a number of experts, and specifically professors working on climate change and environmental protection	University based in Kitwe (Academia/Experts)	Share insights into the role of academia within climate change policymaking, and how they view the role of IDAs in governance.

Appendix 4

Atlas.ti Intentional AI Coding Results



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