LIFE-AR

LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience

LIFE-AR Strategy 2026-2030

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LIFE-AR Strategy 2026-2030

Cover photo: Discussion during the elections of Parish Climate Change Committees in Uganda.
Credit: LIFE-AR Uganda

Borehole drilling in Kalungu district, Uganda. Photo credit: LIFE-AR Uganda

INTRODUCTION

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs), continue to face the gravest climate impacts despite having contributed least to the crisis. Yet the climate finance system that should support them remains slow, fragmented, short-term, and poorly aligned with their priorities. Many LDCs struggle to access climate finance at scale, and when funds do arrive, they often bypass national and local systems. The result is predictable: limited institutional capabilities, high transaction costs, and lost opportunities to build long-term resilience of people.

In 2019, at COP25 in Madrid, LDCs examined the evidence[1] about *why* climate finance was not reaching the most vulnerable people and set out their LDC 2050 Vision[2] (LDC Vision or Vision) to address these constraints. The LDC Group on Climate Change developed principles for a joint partnership with the international community, the Partnership Compact for LDC 2050 Vision[3] (the 'compact'). The compact as of June 2026 has been co-signed between 10 LDCs and 11 developed country governments.

The LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) was designed based on the Vision and compact principles and designed as a pathway to realise the LDC Vision.

The LDC 2050 vision is for all least developed countries to be on climate-resilient development pathways by 2030 and deliver net-zero emissions by 2050.

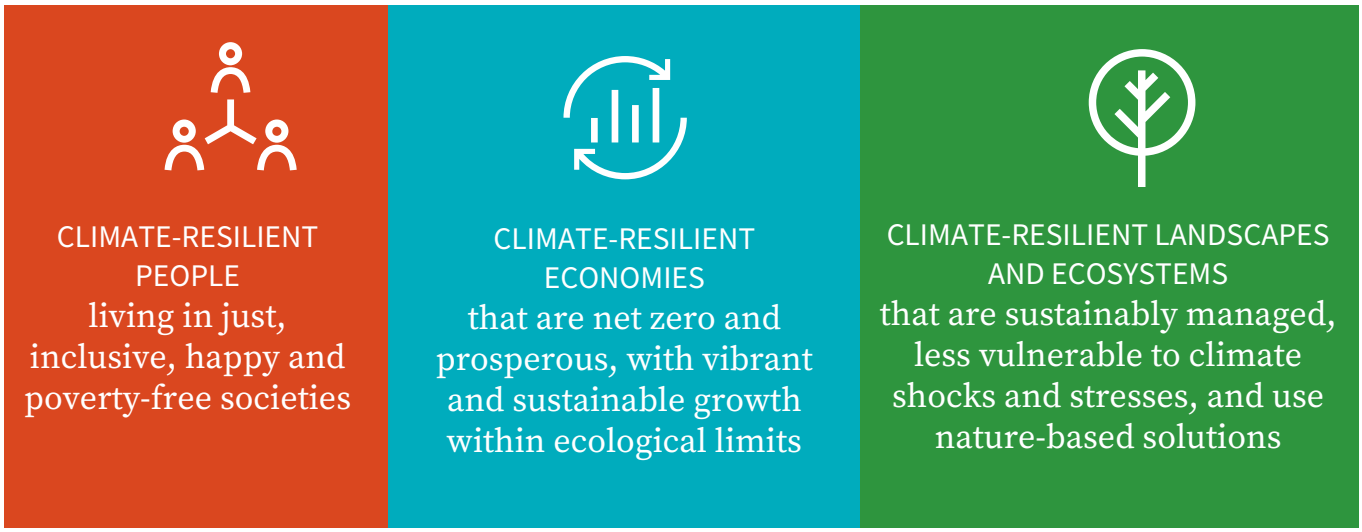

Figure 1 - The 2050 LDC Vision in a nutshell

1 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/document-library/delivering-our-climate-resilient-future-lessons-from-a-global-evidence-review/
2 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/document-library/the-ldc-2050-vision/
3 https://www.life-ar.org/documents/7/LIFE-AR-Partnership-Compact-for-the-LDC-2050-Vision_updated-COP28.pdf

1. WHAT IS LIFE-AR?

LIFE-AR is an LDC Group initiative. It is owned and led by LDCs. Political commitment from LDCs is a necessary precondition for the Initiative's existence and viability. LDCs lead the initiative in multiple ways:

- as owners of LIFE-AR and leaders of its Board;
- as participants investing resources, time and commitment to make LIFE-AR impactful;
- as creators, adopters and advocates, using LIFE-AR evidence and learning to accelerate climate finance reform;
- as champions of inclusive climate finance decision-making.

LIFE-AR's mission is to strengthen capabilities and systems in LDCs to access and manage climate finance and deliver local level adaptation by devolving power, authority and finance to local people who are most affected, including women, youth, indigenous groups and people with disabilities.

LIFE-AR is led by the principles set out in the LDC Vision and the compact.

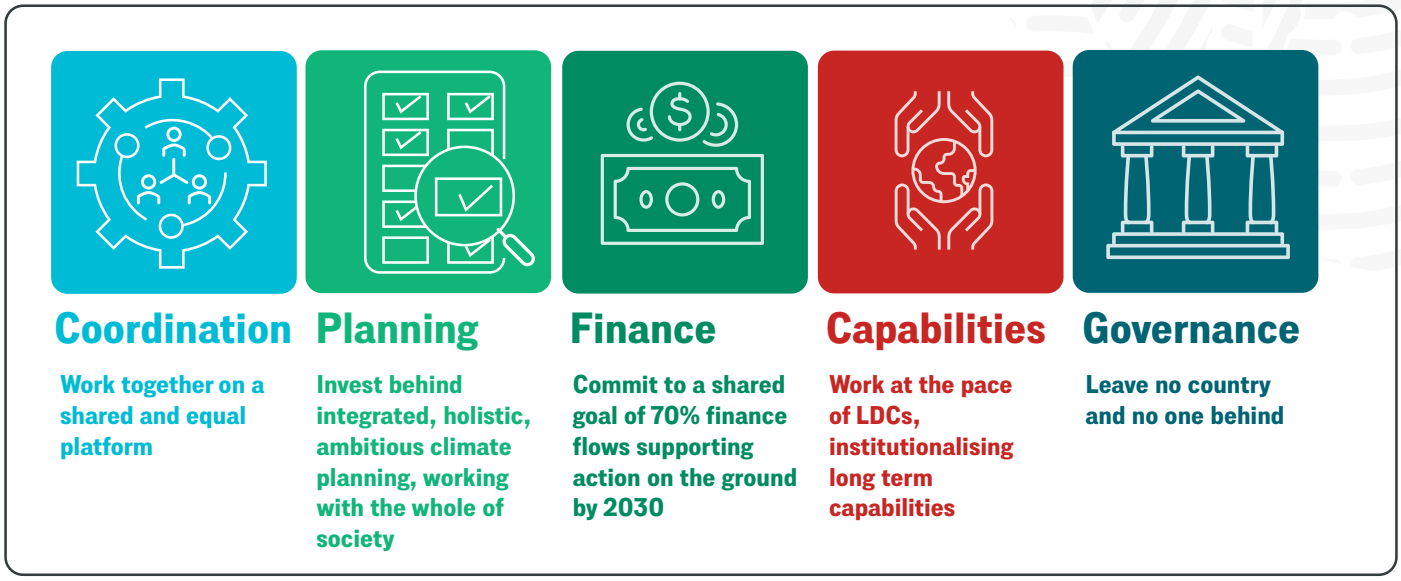

Figure 2 - The LIFE-AR principles are drawn from the LDC Vision and the compact

2. THE REVISED STRATEGY

Since 2019, LDCs have shown through LIFE-AR that a different model for climate finance is possible. LIFE-AR has demonstrated that with long-term investment in national systems and capabilities, LDCs can effectively lead and manage climate finance; strengthen national and local institutions; and create whole-of-society platforms that bring together government, civil society, communities, the private sector, and funders.

Over this time, the climate finance landscape has evolved significantly with a much-needed current focus on *action*. However, the financing gap for adaptation continues to widen which is reflected in the call from the LDC Climate Group to triple global adaptation finance[4]. The LIFE-AR 10-year strategy (2020-2030) focused on the design of LIFE-AR with a high ambition in terms of scope, and in 2024, a strategy refresh was conducted to assess how the design of the initiative has progressed. A number of aspects had changed impacted by the Covid Pandemic that slowed progress, change in funding landscape and realities of setting up governance structures. It was also noted that some of the features like setting up of communities of practice required socialisation and needed a longer set up. In 2024, the LIFE-AR board also approved transition of LIFE-AR from being hosted by IIED to an independent LDC-led Facility, with distinct roles of supporting the LDC group in the medium to long term. **For these reasons, the LIFE-AR strategy is being revised to ensure it fits in the current context as well as guiding the new LIFE-AR Facility in terms of value proposition building on lessons learnt.**

This new strategy presents how LIFE-AR will scale and deepen its work over the next four years, reflecting the evolving context, lessons learned to date and an institutional shift to a **new independent LDC-led LIFE-AR Facility**.

4 https://www.ldc-climate.org/press_release/sb62-ldcs-call-for-ambitious-ndcs-real-adaptation-progress-and-a-credible-climate-finance-roadmap/

3. WHAT LIFE-AR HAS ACHIEVED

In its first six years, LIFE-AR has supported 10 participating LDCs: Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, The Gambia and Uganda are the first cohort that signed the partnership compact in 2019, with Benin, Madagascar, Nepal and Senegal in a second cohort initiated in 2023. LIFE-AR has supported them to build their systems and capabilities; develop country-led approaches; establish national governance mechanisms; support locally-led adaptation and increase climate finance that reaches local level. LIFE-AR has learned a huge amount through this journey and Box 1 identifies four strategic lessons that have shaped this revised strategy.

The achievements so far demonstrate that with LIFE-AR's long-term support, LDCs *can* achieve their vision for transforming climate finance, and the challenge now is to scale up this success.

BOX 1: LESSONS FROM LIFE-AR'S WORK THAT HAVE INFLUENCED THE REVISED STRATEGY

1. **Investing in systems and capabilities leads to stronger leadership of climate finance by LDCs.**
2. **Providing finance to meet adaptation priorities has been key, and LIFE-AR's 'learning by doing' approach and its support towards improving LDCs' capabilities and systems has been of greatest value.**
3. **Focusing on the most vulnerable, including involving them as decision-makers in climate planning, leads to greater ability to address vulnerability in country systems.**
4. **Accelerating wider reforms is vital to achieving the speed and scale of the changes needed to deliver climate finance effectively to LDCs.**

Taking each of the elements of the Vision in turn:

PLANNING: LIFE-AR is **transforming climate planning in LDCs** from fragmented, short-term projects into a coherent, long-term, country-led system that strengthens national institutions.

The 6 Front Runner Countries have built whole-of-government and whole-of-society platforms, completed situational analyses, and designed delivery mechanisms that embed climate risk, gender equality and social inclusion into national and local planning[5]. For example, the Gambia, Burkina Faso and Uganda have improved decentralised governance and community-led participatory planning for adaptation investments.At local level, LIFE-AR has undertaken 68 exercises to strengthen local planning.[6]

CAPABILITIES: LIFE-AR supports strengthening of systems, individual and institutional capabilities to support country-led climate action. The Initiative has demonstrated that climate finance ***can be delivered using national and local systems which enhances LDC capabilities***.

LIFE-AR's vision recognises that LDCs must strengthen their own climate capabilities and reduce dependence on external expertise.[7] This means developing home-grown climate expertise, integrating technical and indigenous knowledge into planning and decision-making, learning from fellow LDCs, and sharing experience globally. By using national government staff, civil society organisations (CSOs) and academia rather than external consultants, countries like Burkina Faso and Uganda strengthened expertise, reduced costs and retained institutional knowledge. Uganda's 'training of trainers' programme and Ethiopia's community-led 'climate-smart' planning demonstrate this in practice: locally owned, scalable, and grounded in context. The priority now is to align climate finance so that investment in LDC core capabilities becomes a key feature and leaves behind greater sustainability.

FINANCE: LIFE-AR has demonstrated how **over 70% of programme resources can flow to local level** to get finance to where it matters most. This is vital as too little climate finance reaches communities, preventing them from investing in resilience.

BOX 2: BACKING LOCAL ADAPTATION PRIORITIES WITH 70% OF RESOURCES

LIFE-AR has already demonstrated how to channel climate adaptation funds to communities:

- **In Ethiopia, 85% of resource are planned to support local needs**
- **In Uganda and Burkina Faso, already more than 70% are directed to local level.**

Success for LIFE-AR should focus on total climate finance that reaches local level, not just LIFE-AR's.

5 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/achieving-integrated-planning-for-effective-climate-action/
6 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/achieving-integrated-planning-for-effective-climate-action/
7 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/strengthening-capabilities-insights-from-life-ar-countries/

Participating LDCs are increasing the volume, quality, and predictability of finance reaching local governments and communities.[8] To achieve this, they have mapped the climate-finance ecosystems, identified bottlenecks to access, and developed systems to enhance direct access to multilateral funds. Countries are showing that these shifts can influence national budgets and donor behaviour. With support for capabilities, LDCs can absorb, manage, and direct climate finance at scale to get at least 70% of finance to the local level to support community prioritised investments.[9]

GOVERNANCE: Climate finance can **empower women and vulnerable groups to engage with planning and implementation** and help them play a greater part in climate planning. LIFE-AR has supported LDCs with gender experts to support capabilities in planning and implementation.

In LIFE-AR, governance is rooted in the LDC Vision and in the principle of 'leave no country and no one behind'. LIFE-AR is supporting national platforms to enhance the accountability and transparency of the governance of finance and to ensure that decisions on financing and investments include voices of women and vulnerable groups.[10] LIFE-AR is moving beyond tracking representation to ask harder questions about who gets to decide, and how the interests of disadvantaged groups are protected. Lessons show that embedding inclusive governance in climate finance systems requires investment before climate finance flows start, to embed sustainability and country-led governance.[11]

COORDINATION: Climate finance must back national priorities and be coordinated across government and society. LIFE-AR has supported coordination and practical tools to increase capability to make cross-government decisions as well as engage the private sector and civil society.

Across LIFE-AR front runner countries, lessons show that coordination requires investment in building trust and relationships between actors who previously worked in silos.[12] LIFE-AR countries are now working across government ministries and with civil society, academia and the private sector. In The Gambia, LIFE-AR is building on United Nation Capital Development Fund Local Climate Adaptive Living's (LoCAL) previous work with local sectoral teams that integrate community climate priorities into national development plans.[13] Strengthening and connecting existing systems, rather than creating parallel ones, builds legitimacy and local ownership. LIFE-AR is supporting genuine political buy-in to sustain momentum as programmes move from design into delivery.

BOX 3: LIFE-AR AND LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION (LLA):

LIFE-AR's approach is centred on the principles for locally led adaptation (LLA). The initiative has set an ambition to deliver 70% of the funds behind community prioritised investments. This is continuously being tracked, with approaches and progress documented. LIFE-AR places marginalised groups such as women, people living with disability, the hard to reach and young people at the heart of decision making at national and local level.

LIFE-AR has put in practice all eight principles of LLA, which are aspirations for good development.[14] However, the Initiative's entry point is about transforming how LDCs access and utilise climate finance to support effective and locally led adaptation and resilience. Access to climate finance and climate governance are both critical to realising the LDC Vision of resilient people, economies and ecosystems.

In conclusion, these significant steps towards delivering the LDC Vision show the importance of the long-term, on-the-ground support that LIFE-AR is providing to LDCs. However, increased capabilities in LDCs need to be accompanied by reforms to the global climate finance architecture to deliver the scale and pace of change that LDCs need. This is why the revised strategy places greater emphasis on partnerships with other climate finance actors such as the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund and multilateral development banks to align more finance to the LDC vision and accelerate climate finance reforms.

8 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/document-library/business-unusual-approaches-to-climate-finance-allocation/

9 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/document-library/business-unusual-approaches-to-climate-finance-allocation/

10 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/document-library/ldc-global-and-national-platforms-transforming-the-climate-finance-landscape/

11 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/resilient-governance-for-efficient-climate-adaptation/

12 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/reimaging-coordination-for-climate-action-insights-from-life-ar-front-runner-countries/

13 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/resilience-made-local-life-ar-and-local/

14 https://www.iied.org/principles-for-locally-led-adaptationhttps://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/document-library/demonstrating-locally-led-adaptation-principles-in-practice/

4. LIFE-AR'S UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

LIFE-AR delivers an innovative approach in climate finance by:

- **Shifting power from intermediaries to LDC institutions;**
- **Building national capability, not dependency;**
- **Strengthening systems that outlast any project or programme;**
- **Devolving more finance and power to communities and the most vulnerable people within communities;**
- **Providing readiness services that climate funds rely on (at lower cost than traditional technical assistance); and**
- **De-risking funder investment by establishing national governance, fiduciary controls, and evidence-based climate planning.**

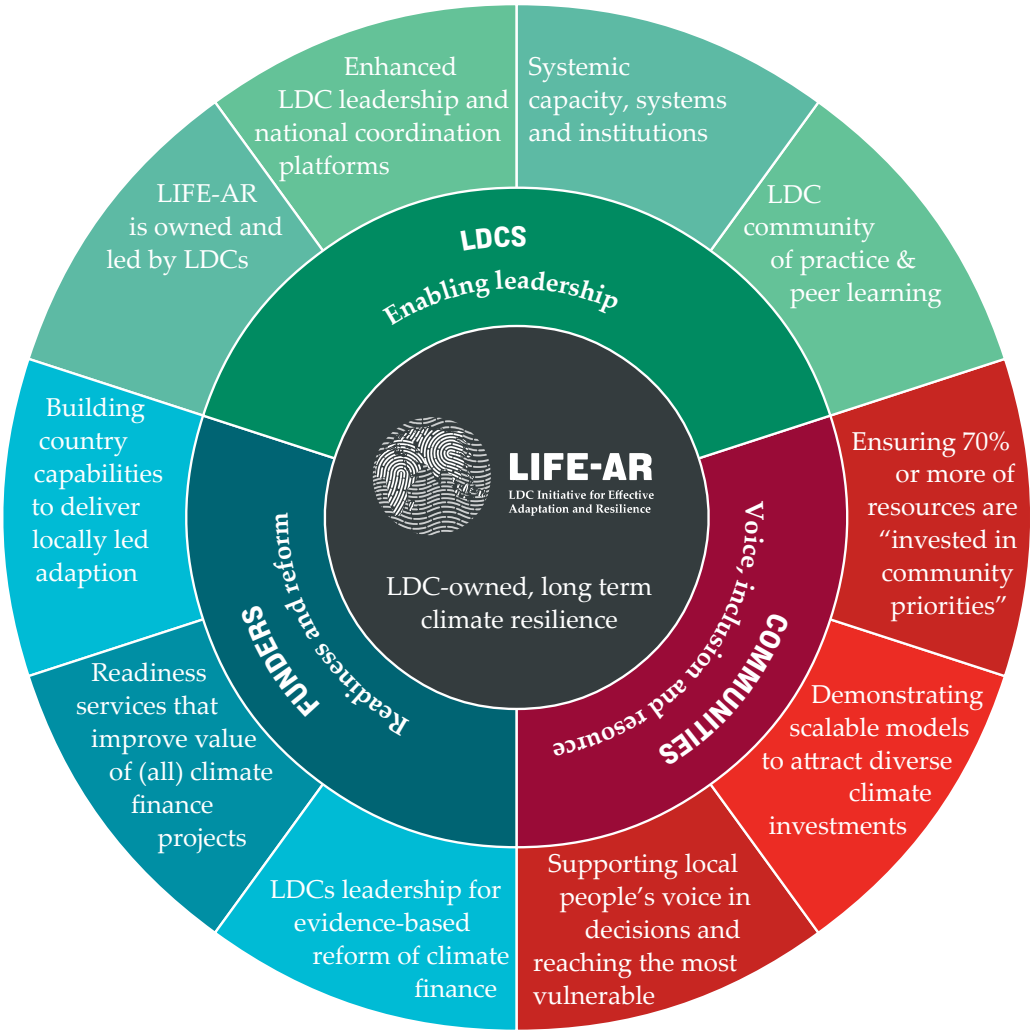

Figure 3 - The value LIFE-AR delivers for key stakeholders

Effective climate finance depends on countries having strong capabilities and institutions. LIFE-AR seeks to deliver transformative value (and strengthen the value for money and impact of all climate finance) through its work at different levels (fig 3).

- **For LDC governments:** Stronger systems and institutions; increased direct access to climate finance; empowered national and local actors; reduced dependency on external intermediaries.
- **For local communities:** Greater influence over decision-making; increased climate investments that respond to local priorities; more voice for the most impacted people including women, youth, elderly, indigenous peoples and local communities, people with disabilities and other often-excluded or hard-to-reach groups.
- **For funders:** Improved value for money; lower transaction costs; increased confidence in national systems; scalable and replicable approaches. Increasing national and local capabilities, systems and institutions will also reduce risk for climate funders.

BOX 4: HOW LIFE-AR STRENGTHENS VALUE FOR MONEY:

LIFE-AR's ambition is for LDCs to directly implement climate finance within their own national and local systems. Strengthened national capabilities and systems improves readiness of LDCs to manage all climate finance and increases value for money in four ways:

1. **Reduces transaction costs compared to delivery by intermediaries;**
2. **Retains more learning by LDCs through direct delivery of climate finance initiatives.**
3. **Increases the proportion of climate finance meeting local needs.**
4. **Amplifies voices of the most vulnerable in climate planning and improves targeting.**

LIFE-AR will work with researchers to document evidence and learning on value for money over this strategy period.

Unloading fish on Sanyang beach, The Gambia. Photo credit: s-aznar / Adobestock

Tree planting during the launch of LIFE-AR investments in Rumphi district, Malawi. Photo credit: LIFE-AR Malawi

LIFE-AR STRATEGY 2026-30: GROW, SUSTAIN, INFLUENCE

1. STRATEGIC SHIFT: FROM DEMONSTRATION TO GROW, SUSTAIN AND INFLUENCE

LIFE-AR's achievements have shown that support to LDCs helps strengthen their systems and capabilities to manage climate finance. So how should LIFE-AR scale this success, particularly in a challenging global funding context?

Over the next four years, LIFE-AR needs to achieve **three objectives** in its catalytic role to deliver the LDC Vision to strengthen country led adaptation and resilience (fig 4).

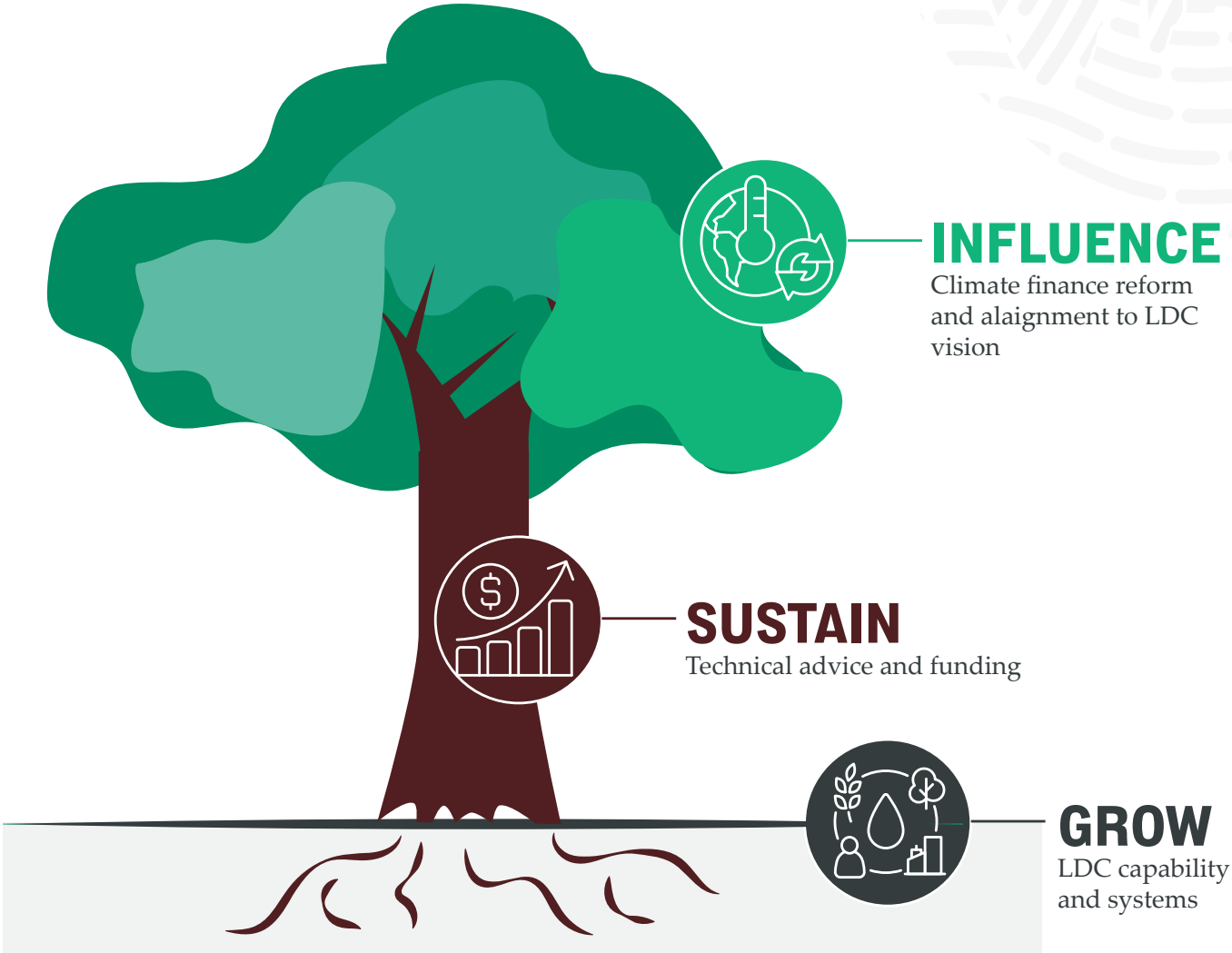

Figure 4 - LIFE-AR Grow, Sustain, Influence strategic objectives

1. Grow: Continue, deepen and expand its support to strengthen LDC capabilities and systems

LIFE-AR will continue to support the 10 participating LDCs. It will also consider supporting additional LDCs as resources allow, perhaps as some of the current countries secure more direct finance and no longer require LIFE-AR support. This encompasses the 'Establishment' and 'Test and Evolve' phases of engagement with LIFE-AR participating countries.

2. Sustain: Facilitate funding and technical support beyond LIFE-AR direct engagement

LIFE-AR's support is long term, but finite. During the 'Scale' phase of LIFE-AR support to participating countries, the Initiative's programmatic resource will reduce as countries receive more climate finance directly. LIFE-AR's focus during this period is on supporting processes for LDCs to sustain investment and scale out using other sources of funding after LIFE-AR support ends. This primarily means supporting secure direct access to climate finance. LIFE-AR will also facilitate sustainable mechanisms for peer-to-peer technical assistance and lesson sharing to ensure that the delivery mechanisms maintain the LDC principles and business unusual approaches in implementation.

3. Influence: Align climate finance to the LDC Vision

The LDC Vision is for all LDCs to be on climate resilient development pathways by 2030 and net zero by 2050. LIFE-AR cannot achieve this by direct support to every LDC. Therefore, the third objective will be to influence the wider climate finance architecture and flows to align more closely with the LDC Vision.

The following sections set out how LIFE-AR will deliver against each of these objectives.

2. GROW: CONTINUE, DEEPEN AND EXPAND ITS SUPPORT TO LDC CAPABILITIES AND SYSTEMS

LIFE-AR works through cohorts of participating LDCs who are committed to the LDC Vision and Principles. So far there have been two cohorts, and the size and timing of future cohorts will be determined by available resources. Figure 5 below shows the potential expansion of the country cohorts over the four-year timespan, indicating a possible third cohort. Cohorts are determined by expressions of interest following an invitation to all LDCs from the LDC Chair. There remains strong demand from LDCs to participate in LIFE-AR as countries (even non LDCs) in the regions are asking to join the initiative or be included in peer-learning activities.

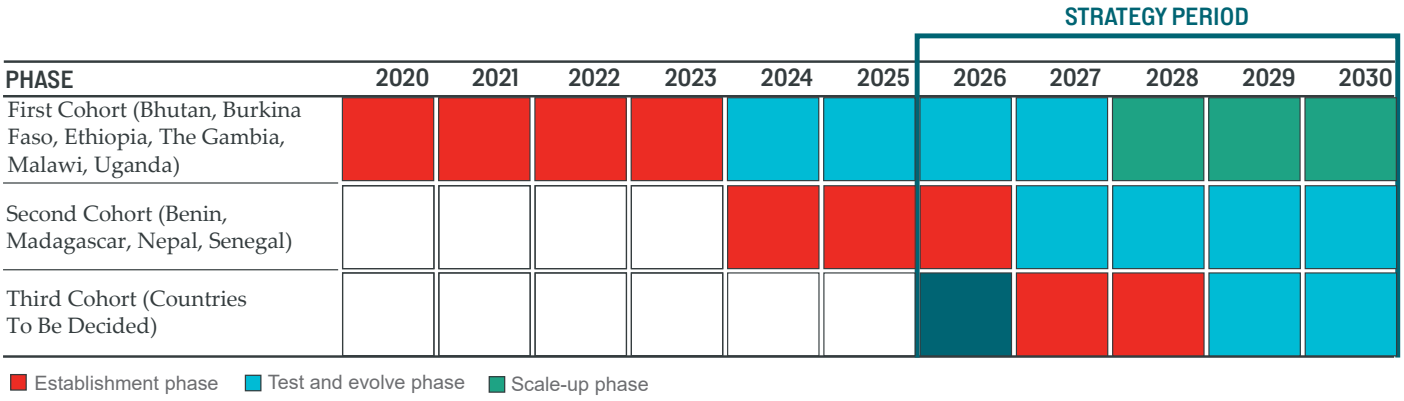

Figure 5 - LIFE-AR Growth

LIFE-AR's support to LDCs is provided in **three distinct phases**. The timelines for each phase are flexible, with the precise timing being determined by the LDC. This approach prioritises developing coordination, planning and decision-making systems that give a strong voice to vulnerable people including women, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples and local communities and young people.

Establishment (Years 1–2): National platforms and coordination mechanisms are set up, systems and capabilities for managing finance are assessed and strengthened. LIFE-AR support in this stage focuses on technical support (with LDCs investing significant time into the process).

Test and Evolve (Years 3–5): Capability strengthening and coordination support continues. Programmatic funding for locally-led programmes tests and supports national and local systems. Lessons are captured and applied. LIFE-AR resources are invested to deliver locally prioritised interventions and strengthen systems through learning-by-doing.

Scale (Years 6–10): National scaling of successful systems and interventions; increased direct access to climate finance; greater leadership of climate finance programmes by government. LIFE-AR investments scale back with a focus on cross-LDC peer learning and technical assistance. This phase of support links closely to LIFE-AR's second objective "Sustain" (see sub-section 3).

Examples of how we measure success (in participating LDCs). [15]

OUTPUTS	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	OUTCOMES
Numbers of LDCs which progress from Establishment, Test & Evolve to Scale. Examples of coordination, systems and capabilities strengthened with LIFE-AR.	Examples of LDCs using LIFE-AR enhanced capabilities to manage or secure other climate finance.	Percentage of people made more climate resilient as a result of LIFE-AR.

Table 1 - How LIFE-AR measures success on 'Grow' objective

3. SUSTAIN: FACILITATE FUNDING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT BEYOND LIFE-AR DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

LIFE-AR aims to support LDCs to access more sustainable climate finance and enhance their capabilities. LIFE-AR support under the 'Grow' objective helps to kick-start this process, but the Initiative seeks to help LDCs identify diverse and sustainable sources of finance and technical support. When LIFE-AR support ends, this can continue a virtuous cycle of stronger capabilities and systems enabling more finance to flow through LDC systems, creating further learning and capacity enhancement. To achieve this, during the Scale phase, LIFE-AR will support participating LDCs to access diverse and direct climate finance, as well as facilitating peer support that will help LDCs continue to enhance their technical capabilities. LIFE-AR will use the following approaches to achieve this:

LDC communities of practice and peer learning: LIFE-AR is supporting national, thematic and global communities of practice (CoPs) that enhance technical exchange between LDCs. Wider peer learning is another critical part of LIFE-AR with LDCs sharing insights and advice during exchange visits, and online meetings and workshops. LIFE-AR will support these learning mechanisms to inform good practice; strengthen capabilities and share lessons across countries; and inform adaptive management. Stronger capabilities will enhance a resource pool of LDC facilitators reducing need for external fly-in-fly-out consultants.

LDCs directly access climate finance: LIFE-AR supports LDC national capabilities to directly access funding from climate funds so that, in the future, most climate finance to LDCs uses national systems and institutions, instead of international intermediaries bringing higher transaction costs. LIFE-AR will also encourage more finance from the private sector and domestic resources based on individual country circumstances.

Accelerate learning and evidence generation: LIFE-AR has generated important lessons[16], but a lesson from the first six years of implementation. One of them is that there is a need to accelerate the learning, documentation and action to inform global practice and increase sharing between LDCs.

Complete transition to new LDC-owned and -led LIFE-AR Facility: Ensuring that the institutional set up of LIFE-AR is sustainable and reflects its values is also important. The LIFE-AR initiative is currently hosted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). To realise the vision of an independent LDC-owned and -led organisation, an independent not for profit company limited by guarantee has been established. This new 'LIFE-AR Facility' will host the LIFE-AR Secretariat through a transition process, set to complete in 2027.

Examples of how we measure success (in participating LDCs) [17]

OUTPUTS	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	OUTCOMES
Documented examples of significant cross-LDC learning and peer support. Learning documented and examples of it being applied in other LDCs. LIFE-AR Secretariat successfully housed by new LIFE-AR Facility with smooth transition of people, controls and finance. Climate finance proposals submitted with LIFE-AR supported capabilities.	Increase in the use of technical advisers from LDCs for capacity or systems advice (by LIFE-AR and other initiatives). Increase in the quality and quantity of climate finance proposals submitted by participating LDCs to climate funds. Increase in institutional and fiduciary capabilities in LDCs	Increase in climate finance (all sources) that uses LDC systems and capabilities. LDCs' structures, systems and mechanisms more resilient and adapted to climate change

Table 2 - How LIFE-AR measures success on 'Sustain' objective

15 Further work will elaborate the full results that will support monitoring of the strategy implementation.

16 https://www.life-ar.org/en/news-blog/document-library/

17 Further work will elaborate the full results that will support monitoring of the strategy implementation.

4. INFLUENCE: ALIGN CLIMATE FINANCE TO THE LDC VISION

LIFE-AR cannot change the system entirely by itself. Therefore, the only way to realise the full LDC Vision of every LDC becoming climate resilient, is to partner with other climate finance stakeholders and influence the climate finance architecture so that best practice climate finance becomes the norm. The changes needed include using and strengthening national and local systems to become the standard approach. It also means a greater share of finance reaching the local level. And it means giving a stronger voice and power to climate-affected people at every level in climate planning and coordination so that more finance addresses the needs of the most vulnerable.

To achieve this, LIFE-AR will:

Build partnerships to align more finance to LDC priorities and the LDC Vision: LIFE-AR operates alongside a complex array of initiatives, institutions and projects. Much of the finance and important capacity support for LDCs will come from other initiatives and partners, but these are often short-term projects. LIFE-AR will develop partnerships with like-minded organisations to support LDCs to secure the sustained capacity, systems and institutional support they need, as well as amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable to climate change so their needs are given greater priority.

Equip LDCs with evidence to influence climate finance reform: Alongside increasing capability of LDCs to manage climate finance, reforms to the climate finance architecture are critical to ensure that more climate finance reaches LDCs, uses their systems and targets local needs. LIFE-AR will support LDCs to promote reforms that will make it easier for LDCs to accelerate adoption of climate finance for their own adaptation and resilience.

Examples of how we measure success (in participating LDCs) [18]

OUTPUTS	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	OUTCOMES
LIFE-AR learning documented, examples of evidence being used to advocate for climate finance reform. New partnerships for technical support and advocacy developed	Examples of climate finance reform secured after LDC lobbying. Increase in the number of technical or financial support coming from new partners	Increase in total international climate finance flows to LDCs.

Table 3 - How LIFE-AR measures success on 'Sustain' objective

Brushwood check dam put in place for gully reclamation in Rumphi district, Malawi. Photo credit: LIFE-AR Malawi

18 Further work will elaborate the full results that will support monitoring of the strategy implementation.

5. THEORY OF CHANGE FOR LIFE-AR

IF LIFE-AR grows its support to LDCs through strengthening climate management systems and capabilities and prioritises locally led adaptation and business unusual principles in the establishment, testing and evolving and ultimately the scaling of the successful climate smart models/approaches…

AND LIFE-AR facilitates peer learning and technical support, and evidence generation through supporting robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems…

AND LIFE-AR builds external partnerships to strengthen LDCs' advocacy for reforms in the international climate finance architecture and for access to predictable, affordable climate finance…

THEN LDCs will have have coordinated and sustainable climate management structures and platforms at national and sub national levels…

AND strong technical capabilities mechanisms and systems that inclusively put the voice and needs of the people most vulnerable to climate change at the centre of climate planning…

AND they will be equipped with evidence and a stronger voice to influence climate finance reforms…

AND THEN they will be able to secure predictable, affordable climate finance aligned with LDCs priorities…

AND THEN LDCs will be on track to realise the 2050 Vision of being on climate-resilient pathways, delivering net-zero emission with climate resilient people, economies and ecosystems.

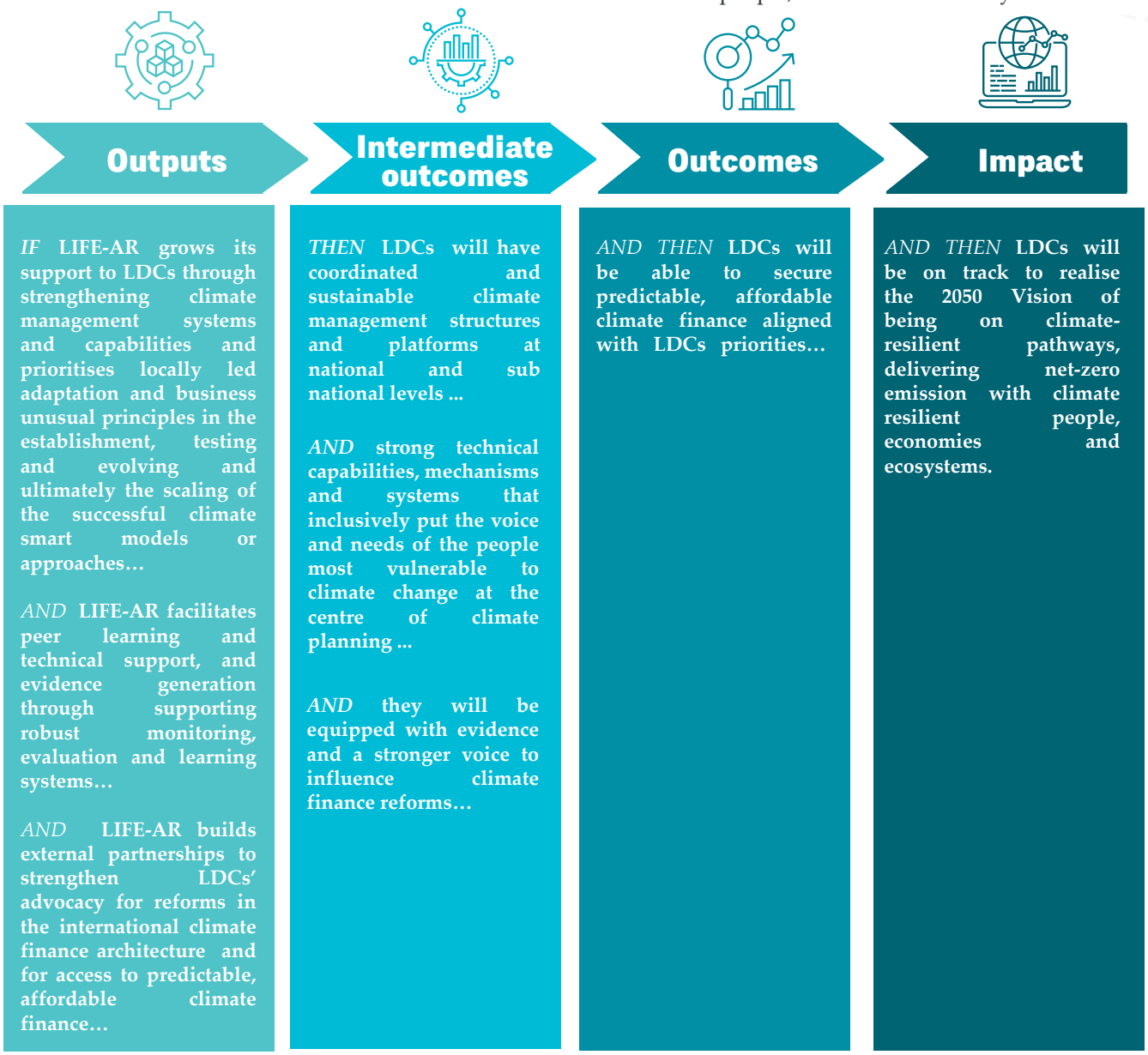

Figure 6 - Visual representation of LIFE-AR's theory of change

Families with solar panels before installation, Kembebit woreda, Ethiopia. Photo credit: LIFE-AR Ethiopia

6. GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN LIFE-AR

LIFE-AR has a firm commitment through the LDC offer of inclusive governance to address gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) at all levels of climate action, international, national and local. The commitment is embedded in governance, finance delivery, monitoring, evaluation and learning and communications processes.

To support this commitment, the initiative has established a GESI working group dedicated to developing standard protocols that will guide the GESI mainstreaming procedures within each LIFE-AR country, taking into account the different national contexts. These protocols will be tested during delivery of climate action, and outcomes will generate learning that can be used to improve the protocols and share insights more widely. The learning process are and will continue supporting country reporting on GESI, including to wider international processes such as the Global Stocktake and Sustainable Development Goals. The GESI principles are also embedded in the makeup of country national platforms and task teams.

BOX 5: GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN PRACTICE

At local level, countries have drawn on locally led committees, including men, women, people with disabilities and young people to identify resilience building investments. In Malawi, existing decision-making committees have been expanded to ensure representation of marginalised groups, while in Bhutan civil society organisations play an important part in engaging with communities. The intention is also for countries to include structural exclusion, intersectionality and gender analysis in their trainings.

7. HOW LIFE-AR OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE ARE ORGANISED

LIFE-AR operations are organised at three levels:

1. **National platforms**: LIFE-AR's work with participating LDCs is governed by memoranda of understanding. Each country has a national platform involving government and non-government stakeholders and is tailored to their context and national systems. A high-level forum of decision-makers provides overall direction across all countries, most building on existing climate change structures in the country.

2. **LIFE-AR Facility**: The Facility will house the LIFE-AR Secretariat that supports LIFE-AR operations at country level, climate finance mobilisation, supporting LDC communities of practice, learning, partnerships, advocacy and influencing.

3. **LIFE-AR Board**: The LDC-led Board governs the initiative and the Facility. It sets direction; oversees implementation; provides stewardship, accountability and leadership; and oversees financial management and governance.

Table 4 below shows the different roles of these bodies that work together, along with funders, to make LIFE-AR successful.

OBJECTIVE / DELIVERY PRIORITY	NATIONAL PLATFORMS	LIFE-AR FACILITY	LDC GROUP AND LIFE-AR BOARD
GROW: Continue, deepen and expand its support to LDC capabilities and systems	Country delivery, GESI, MEL, capability & systems support, reporting, in-country communities of practice, governance.	Technical support to national platforms and countries. Country level support, due diligence assessment support.	Leadership, guidance and oversight Board oversight, LDC advisors support & guidance.
SUSTAIN: Facilitate funding and technical support beyond LIFE-AR direct engagement	Lead/participate in peer learning, national CoPs, technical assistance to other LDCs.	Facilitate cross-country peer learning, CoPs and across countries. Global coordination. Share evidence and good practice.	Promote lessons, good practice and technical assistance sharing between LDCs.
INFLUENCE: Align climate finance to the LDC vision	Generate and share evidence, support governments to align climate finance, build country partnerships.	Communicate evidence to funders and intermediaries, policy advocacy, partnership building.	Political leadership, advocacy for climate finance reform. Share best practice at global level, incl. through UNFCCC.
Governance and Operations	National governance, financial oversight, accountability.	Financial management, financing, audit, compliance, due diligence, MEL, Board accountability.	Report to LDCs through UNFCCC. LDC chair report to LDC group.

Table 4 - Roles of LIFE-AR National Platforms, Facility and LDC Group/Board

Women standing in front of an improved cookstove in the commune of Didyr, Burkina Faso. Photo credit: LIFE-AR Burkina Faso

Crop fields in Rumphi district, Malawi. Photo credit: LIFE-AR Malawi

RESOURCING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. THE RESOURCES LIFE-AR NEEDS TO DELIVER

LIFE-AR needs resources to sustain the operations of the LIFE-AR Facility and the Secretariat team that support countries, the LIFE-AR Board and national platforms.

In addition, LIFE-AR needs resources to fund its work in bringing in new participating LDCs (Establishment, Test and Evolve and Scale stages).

2. FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FOR LIFE-AR

Whilst the funding context is challenging, LIFE-AR is demonstrating real progress and delivers important value. Therefore, it is critical that the Initiative continues to scale up its support.

Table 5 sets out LIFE-AR's funding needs over years 7-10, broken down by phases. It provides ranges with the lower end of the range being the minimum needed to deliver LIFE-AR support to existing participating countries and the upper ranges being the resources needed to deliver a full package in participating countries and to scale up LIFE-AR support to a further cohort. It is important to note that the upper end of the ranges is not a maximum or ideal level: LIFE-AR can scale up its impact further if additional finance can be secured.

COSTS IN £M	2026-2027	2027-2020	2028-2029	2029-2030	TOTAL
ESTABLISHMENT: Set country systems and capabilities	0.2	0.3	0.1 – 0.4	0 – 0.3	**0.6 – 1.2**
TEST AND EVOLVE: Build capability by delivering locally set resilience priorities	1.8 – 2.1	3.3 – 5.3	3.9 – 8.0	4.5 – 13.0	**13.5 – 28.4**
SCALE: Support scale up with direct access to climate finance, peer learning and assistance between LDCs	0.5 – 1.0	0.5 – 1.0	0.5 – 1.0	0.5 – 1.0	**2.0 – 4.0**
Secretariat and national platforms support	2.5 – 3.3	1.8 – 2.3	1.8 – 2.3	1.8 – 2.3	**7.0 – 10.2**
TOTAL	**5.0 – 6.6**	**5.9 – 8.9**	**6.3 – 11.7**	**6.8 – 16.6**	**24 – 43.8**

Table 5 - LIFE-AR funding needs up to March 2030

3. HOW THOSE RESOURCES WILL BE SECURED

To deliver systemic long-term change, LIFE-AR requires sustained multi-year funding for the LIFE-AR Facility (global coordination, standards, cross-country learning) and national platforms (country-level systems building, coordination, fund flow management, capability strengthening).

LIFE-AR's focus is on helping LDCs build the capability to lead and deliver the climate finance they need. By supporting LDCs to directly access climate finance, LIFE-AR takes itself out of the funding loop, so it is important the Initiative secures reliable multi-year funding in the short-term to fulfil this essential catalysing role. Potential sources of funds for LIFE-AR include:

1. **Bilateral donors**: have been the primary source of support for LIFE-AR to date. They will continue to be important backers and a positive influence on Climate Fund Boards to back LIFE-AR.

2. **Philanthropies**: are becoming more important. LIFE-AR offers philanthropies the opportunity to support multiple countries and bring global influence through a single initiative.

3. **Multilateral Climate funds**: given LIFE-AR's focus on increasing LDC capability to receive, manage and implement climate funding, climate funds are the most logical sources for long-term funding for LIFE-AR. Currently, the Initiative does not receive any funding from these sources but is working to address this, for example through readiness funds for LDCs.

4. **LDC Governments:** participating LDCs make major investments into LIFE-AR, through commitment of time, people, and political and practical engagement by national and local governments, civil society, and other stakeholders. They can also cofinance LIFE-AR's work through direct support to LIFE-AR where Governments are able to mobilise resources for this from their annual budgetary allocations.

The challenging funding context means that a diversified funding base is more important than ever. LIFE-AR seeks to provide long-term (10 years) support to LDCs, which is beyond funder's programme cycles. Bilateral donors face political cycles that hinder continuity. Philanthropies seek catalytic, transformational opportunities of the type LIFE-AR offers, but are also subject to political shifts as well as prone to changing their approach. Climate funds could offer long term opportunities but have structural barriers and complex processes.

There is a lot of work underway on how private investment can support adaptation, and there is potential for private sector co-financing for adaptation investments. However, during this strategy period, such investments are likely to be specific to certain countries, locations and types of investments and not a priority funding source for LIFE-AR.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE

The Board oversees accountability of LIFE-AR. It has agreed standards that are applied by all participating countries, in line with the LIFE-AR standard operating procedures. While the SOPs do not replace donor requirements, they attempt to demonstrate commitment to 'business unusual' and reducing transactional costs and support effective delivery by LDCs. The procedures cover values and conduct, including gender equity and social inclusion principles, financial controls, compliance, risk management and audit. They focus on working to strengthen countries' existing structure and provide benchmarks to allow LDCs to develop their own compliant systems. They also set the accountability framework between the national platform and the LIFE-AR Facility.

5. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

LIFE-AR's approach to MEL builds on each country's existing mechanisms for measuring and reporting. In line with LIFE-AR's 'business unusual' ethos, MEL promotes candid bottom-up as well as top-down reporting, transparency and feedback mechanisms as well as local learning and feedback. These MEL methods include outcome harvesting, 'most significant change' story gathering and scorecard assessment, quantitative data and self-assessment within and between countries.

6. MANAGING RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

LIFE-AR faces risks that could affect its ability to scale impact. The most significant are risks to funding related to funding competition and constraints within the climate finance architecture and the potential erosion of political commitment from LDCs if climate funding challenges undermine confidence in reform by LDCs. Operational risks include fraud or compliance failures and loss of institutional knowledge during the transition to the new Facility. These risks will be managed through strong political partnerships, multi-year funding agreements, robust compliance systems, independent global reporting platform and deliberate transition and knowledge-management processes.

LIFE-AR also benefits from substantial opportunities: its model offers climate funds a high-value readiness solution, community-driven capability strengthens accountability, and vibrant CoPs that enable continuous learning within and across countries.

LIFE-AR national and technical team with community members testing a borehole in Galvare, Burkina Faso.
Photo credit: Secrétariat Technique LIFE-AR Burkina Faso

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The Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) is a long-term LDC-led, LDC-owned initiative which aims to enhance climate resilience.

LDC CLIMATE CHANGE

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