Published 1 February 2026 by the University of KwaZulu-Natal
https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/JICBE

Journal of Inclusive cities and Built environment. Vol. 4 Issue 5

How to cite: Ayobami Abayomi Popoola. 2026. Editorial. *Journal of Inclusive cities and Built environment.* Vol. 4 Issue 5, Pg iii-vi.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: LOCAL ACTORS AND PROCESS IN THE CLIMATE RESPONSEE

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Published 1 February 2026

THE THINK PIECE AND GAP

The underlying argument that motivated the special issue was the role of local people and actors in responding to climate change. The editors argue that responding to the climate crisis calls for a local capacity, voices and approaches to be at the forefront. The local actors' experience in climate risk, the integration of local persons in climate governance responsiveness, and the grassroots and indigenous communities' approaches in responding to climate vulnerability. These positions were forwarded along with the need for a collaborative mechanism to manage and respond to the climate crisis.

In addition to the above, Article 12 of the Paris Agreement recognised the need to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation, and public access to information. Alluding to this position as forwarded by Finnerty et al. (2024) on the morality and duty of scientists to advocate for scientific information in their publication titled "Between two Worlds: The Scientist's Dilemma in Climate Activism", this special issue posits that research itself can be a form of activism in particular circumstances, blurring the lines between traditional research and activist endeavours, most importantly, the strategic environmental advocacy tool that research serves. Therefore, this issue welcomes research findings and informed climate-driven positions that portray divergent scientific identities toward managing and responding to the climate change discourse.

THE SPECIAL ISSUE: A LOCAL CLIMATE RESPONSE

This special issue contains eight (8) articles with a focus on local communities and specific sectors of the African economy. All the articles are focused on the impact of and how local people and institutions respond to climate change. Across sectors, the impact of climate change remains extensive. There still exists a gap in knowledge on how climate change impacts the aviation industry. Kaniyo (2025) examined the impact of climate change on the aviation industry in Nigeria through the thematic analysis of interviews with stakeholders in the industry. From the interviewee the themes identified were the extreme weather conditions caused by climate change; the business and economy of commercial passenger air transport on scheduled flights (operational cost and travel demand); operational performance of the airports (facilities management); airport capacity (apron capacity, airspace capacity/ Terminal Maneuvering Areas [TMA], and Instrument Landing System); and aviation infrastructure (control tower and air navigation systems). Findings revealed that extreme weather conditions driven by climate change pose significant threats to airport operations, capacity and infrastructure. The threat identified by the author was the exposure of the

international airport in Lagos to flooding due to its proximity to the coastline. Owing to this, the study recommends that the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority [NCAA], in partnership with the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria [FAAN], develop and implement a resilience framework that will mandate climate risk assessments for all major airports, and conduct risk assessments of their new and existing aviation infrastructure.

The need for risk assessment is critical in coastline cities such as Lagos. Ayodele-Olajire et al. (2025) study - Climate Change and Megacities: Flooding along the Urbanising Atlantic Coastline of Lagos, Nigeria, through the use of a geospatial tool – satellite imagery simulates flooding and identifies flood-prone areas between 1986 and 2023 in Lagos, Nigeria. Through the Digital Earth Africa (DEA) Sandbox to evaluate the extent, vulnerability, and risk of coastal inundation, the study reveals that some areas previously inundated with water were identified as land in 2023, suggesting that water has either receded from these regions or they have been sand-filled and vis-à-vis. The application of the geospatial technology in this research demonstrates the utility of this toolbox for environmental resource monitoring and urban planning. In the context of the rapidly developing Lagos Megacity. Most importantly, a need for flood management and urban vulnerability mapping. The authors recognised that beyond the mapping, inter-agency collaboration is needed towards managing other contributory factors to flooding, such as drainage blockage and poor waste management.

In Mmolutsi (2025), the article titled Localising Global Climate Commitments: Challenges for Marginalised Communities in South African Cities. The manuscript examined the challenges of localising global climate commitments, specifically the Paris Agreement, within South Africa's marginalised informal settlements. Based on documental analysis, the study traced the Global–National–Local trajectory of climate governance. The analysis revealed persistent challenges in policy coherence, local capacity, and climate finance distribution, especially in addressing the vulnerabilities of informal settlements. One key takeaway towards enhancing the coherence of the Global–National–Local policy flow in the study, as it relates to the localisation of climate commitments in informal South Africa, was the need for multi-level coordination mechanisms that are strengthened by establishing national-to-local climate coordination platforms that will improve intergovernmental alignment, and embed climate adaptation frameworks within local governance systems. The importance of localising policies allows for the sustainable application and acceptability of such policies.

Positioning the issue within the communicative, advocacy, and radical thinking towards climate change, this special issue contains submissions that cut across all groups and societies as they relate to climate education and sensitisation. This special issue considers this critical issue as it aligns with the position of Van Eck et al. (2024). The argument was the need for climate science advocacy to redefine the boundaries of acceptable influence of values in scientific communication and offer practical strategies to move beyond the misleading myth of neutrality. The argument is that much evidence on climate response and mitigation across economies portrays 'researchers and scientists as prophets' and requires them to devise the best approach to engage society. These approaches must take into consideration the language of residents.

Recognising the importance of locally acceptable policies and climate actions, the publication of Zondi and Madzivhandila titled Climate Change Attitudes in South Africa: Evidence from Ward 6 Noodsburg, Ilembe District Municipality. The study provided a discussion on the need for the public, and in this case, residents in Noodsburg, to understand climate change. The study's focus was to understand the attitude of residents toward climate change. Key findings from the study were the mismatch and gap between climate change awareness and knowledge among residents in the local community. The authors recognise the need for improved climate messaging among the local populace. The authors alluded to the position that formulating climate change communication strategies – both for content development, and processes and structures of communication is critical for climate adaptation and mitigation. This, they believed, would contribute to improving climate psychology (attitude and mindset), education, and communication among residents.

In a related manner, Adegebo and Fadiya (2025) in 'Communicating Climate-Related Health Risks in Local Communities' argued that despite the universality of health exposure from climate anomalies, the 'climatic-jargon' used by experts in explaining climate change crises remains a limitation to understanding from non-experts. Approaching climate understanding from an inclusive perspective through the sample of children and the elderly, the

study investigated the communication tools used in disseminating climate-related health risks. Television channels remain a widely acceptable source of climate-related health information among both the young and the elderly in the study location. However, the gender profiling of the source of climate information revealed that adult males learnt about climate change and related health risks from online sources (research papers and webinars) or at school. In contrast, female respondents learned about climate change and related health risks from hospitals, traditional media, social media, and places of worship. It was recognised from the study that child respondents are critical of the framing and communication channels adopted in climate health risks. The recommendation of the study from children was the need for school outreach, newspapers, TV/radio game shows, and YouTube channels to adopt climate communication. In a similar vein, the authors recommended the need for children-friendly storybooks as a means of climate awareness and sensitisation.

To achieve this climate-driven ambition, Article 11 recognised the need for capacity-building under the Paris Agreement. To be more specific, the focus is on the role of young people play in climate change discourse. One of the manuscripts in this issue queries the young person's involvement through scientific and sociological steps towards tackling the climate crisis in our cities. In Bandura and Cherry (2020), they have alluded to the failed efforts of the adult generation in responding to climate change. They posit that the children's intuitive principles of change closely matched the formal principles of social–cognitive theory. Social media equips youth with unlimited reach and promotes large-scale environmental impact. Their ingenious practices provide the foundation for a powerful youth environmental movement (Bandura and Cherry, 2020:945). Most importantly, youth engagement and involvement in climate actions. This position emphasises the importance of the manuscript of Modiba et al. (2025) which was titled Leveraging Public Employment Programmes for an Inclusive Just Transition: Connecting Youth to the Green Economy through City-Led Partnerships in South Africa. The study alluded that public employment programmes (PEPs) are increasingly recognised as tools for advancing a just transition by addressing both unemployment and environmental sustainability. Thus, the authors iterate the need for city-led partnerships with stakeholders in the green economy through training as a sustainable and professional pathway to youth employment and empowerment. The argument was the need for youths to be actively engaged in the green economy. However, it was argued that for this to be sustainable, there is a need to reposition the EPWP as a more integrated employment and skills development platform. This can be done through deliberate institutional partnerships and funding.

Beyond the technology and communication of climate anomalies. Two manuscripts in the issue focus on the sociological perception of the climate issue. Rumutsa and Malinganiso's (2025) study – The Effects of Patriarchy on Climate Change Adaptation among Women in agro-based Mukangamwi Communal Rural Area in Bikita, Zimbabwe explored climate change adaptation from a gender lens. The study alluded to the patriarchal influence of local power in climate change adaptation among women in rural Zimbabwe. The study alluded to the nexus between culture, local institutions and climate rights of women in the local community of Zimbabwe. The study reveals that the patriarchal norms deeply influence the way climate change impacts women, particularly in communities where gender roles are rigidly defined. It was reported that, despite the role of women within the household economy, their voices and views as they relate to climate adaptation options are not captured. This is the reality despite the rich history of the Mukangamwi communal lands, in indigenous knowledge support systems in local adaptation. The importance of role description in climate change cannot be overemphasised. Aboagye (2025) in his publication – Who does what? Analysis of the roles of actors in affordable sanitation service delivery in informal settlements in Kumasi, Ghana. The author was focused on the role various actors play in environmental sanitation in the informal settlements of Kumasi, Ghana. The importance of role description is critical to collaborative planning towards improved urban management across Africa. The study's contribution to knowledge was a framework which centres on supporting households in informal communities. These tripartite affordable sanitation frameworks recognise the importance of creating an enabling environment, building capacity and partnership and a localised system of environmental advocacy and development.

CONCLUSION

The special issue recognises that various environmental stresses characterise residents and communities. This stress is further shaped by the climate change impact. However, essential to responding to climate change precarity

is building the capacity of local people and communities to respond to climate change individually. The ideology of climate change localism, which is characterised by a space-specific response system, was alluded to. Such a specific response includes the method of advocating and sensitising about climate change. This is evident in the need for a climate education approach that is class-specific (women, children, and informal settlers).

This special issue brings together eight articles that explore how local communities and specific sectors across Africa are grappling with the multifaceted impacts of climate change. The overarching theme is clear: climate change is not a distant threat—it is a lived reality affecting infrastructure, governance, and livelihoods at the local level. Collectively, this special issue emphasises the position that climate resilience in Africa demands localised strategies, sector-specific planning, inclusive governance, and bold communication. These can be achieved through infrastructure upgrades, maintenance, and/or reform, urban planning, localised policy alignment, or public engagement. The path forward lies in empowering communities to respond to climate change on their own terms—with the tools, knowledge, and support they need to thrive (see Figure 1).

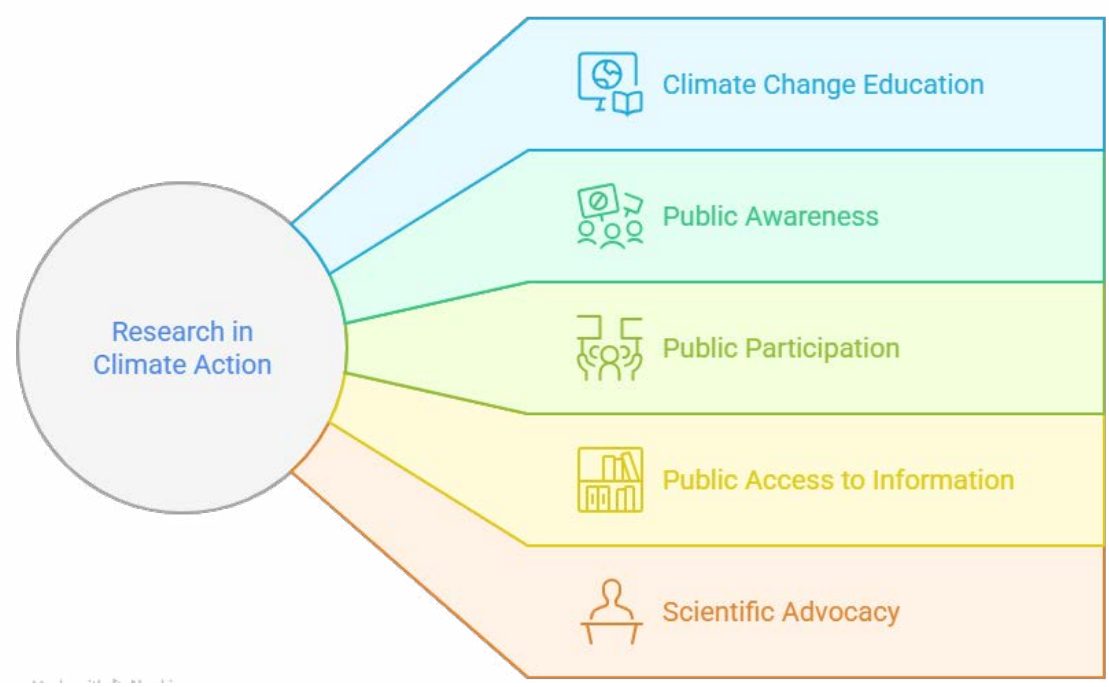

Figure 1: Unveiling the Multifaceted Role of Research in Climate Action
Source: Editor's Construct (2025)

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