



Transforming
Energy
Access

Transforming Energy Access (TEA) platform: Approaches to Local Partnership Inclusion



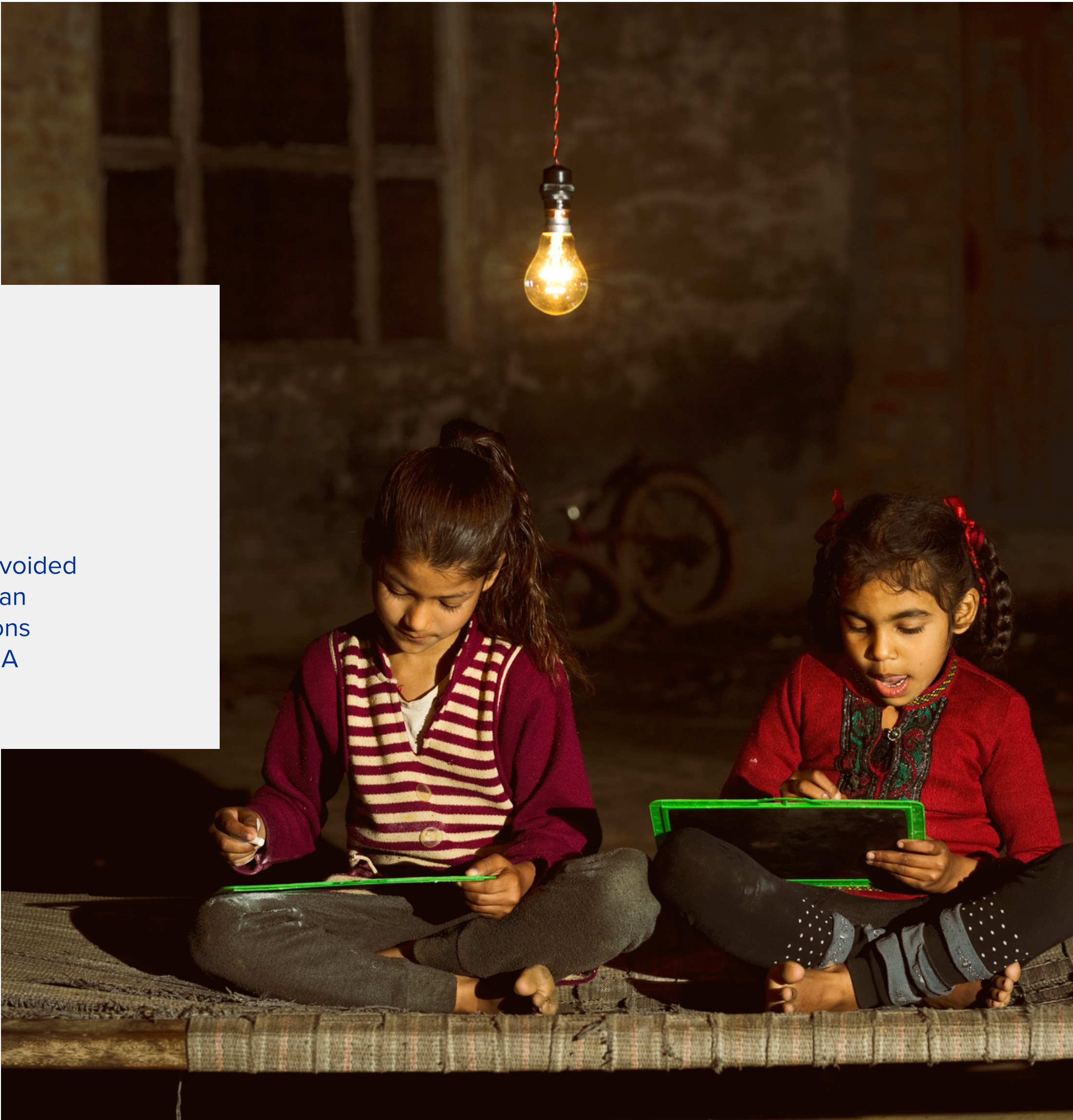
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Introduction to TEA

The Transforming Energy Access (TEA) platform is a £265.4m research and innovation platform supporting the technologies, business models and skills needed to enable an inclusive clean energy transition.



IMPACT TO DATE

29.7 m

People with improved clean energy access

152,728

Sustainable long-term jobs created and supported in the clean energy market

£1.6 bn

Additional funding leveraged for clean energy research, innovation and scale-up

4.6 m

Tonnes of CO₂ avoided as a result of clean energy innovations supported by TEA

Introduction to TEA's Local Partnership Inclusion

TEA's Local Partnership Inclusion journey began in 2019, when both a gap and an opportunity were identified during an early programme management meeting. The gap was clear: actors from TEA's target geographies were largely absent from the conversation. In a room focused on addressing Africa's energy access deficit, only one African participant was present - Dr. Elizabeth Rasekoala, serving at the time as an External Advisor to the TEA platform.

This highlighted the need for TEA to reassess its existing structures and processes, identify systemic barriers, and establish a clear pathway to meaningfully increase the participation, funding, and inclusion of local actors in both decision-making and programme delivery. In response, the African Partnership Inclusion Support Service was established, later evolving into the Local Partnership Inclusion Support Service as TEA's impact and geographies were scaled to include the Indo-Pacific.

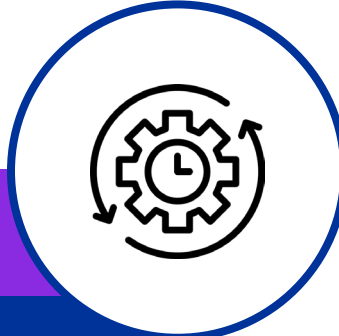
As part of this broader platform, the TEA Local Partnership Inclusion (LPI) Support Service, jointly delivered by the Carbon Trust and Dr. Elizabeth Rasekoala, encompasses the following activities, alongside this TEA local partnership inclusion approach paper:

- TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Working Group
- TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Needs Assessment
- African-led Partners
- TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Technical Assistance Facility
- [TEA Local Partnership Inclusion LinkedIn Group](#)



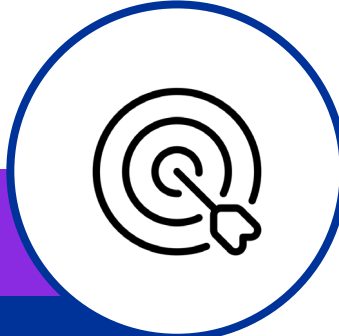
Why is local partnership inclusion important?

Enhancing efficiency



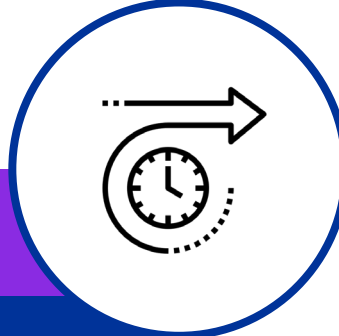
Local partners bring deep understanding of their locale social, cultural and environmental contexts. This allows for effective navigation of local nuances, and the implementation of projects that are better tailored to local needs and challenges, leading to higher adoption rates and impact. With established relationships and credibility with communities, local actors can foster trust and buy-in, facilitating smoother implementation. Locally led delivery can also enhance cost effectiveness, with reduced overheads and leveraging existing knowledge and networks.

Improved impact



Local partners have a strong understanding of local regulations and supply chains. This translates to faster project execution and reduced operational costs. By tapping into existing talent pools and training local communities, local actors can ensure that the right skills are available locally for project maintenance and operation and enable long-term sustainability of the project. Crucially, local partners bring an understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics, ensuring that projects are socially acceptable and culturally appropriate.

Long-term outcomes



Involving local actors from the beginning of project life-cycles builds local ownership in the project's long-term success, enabling outcomes to be sustained beyond the immediate funding period. Additionally, by working with local partners, international organisations can transfer knowledge and best practices. This empowers local communities to manage and maintain clean energy systems independently and ensure long-term sustainability.

Defining local and international partners

Defining 'local' is complicated, and there is no perfect definition. The term 'local' encompasses a range of characteristics, including geographic, political, ethnic, language and class, all of which will shape the experiences of 'local' actors. For the purposes of TEA's approach to local partnership inclusion, and for setting targets/ KPIs in programmes, the Local Partnership Inclusion Support Service has designed the following definitions:

Local partners:

Organisations, businesses, entities, enterprises, and entrepreneurs that are fully head-quartered in TEA's target regions*; and/or

Organisations, businesses, entities, and enterprises that are majority (over 51%) 'owned'/founded by citizens, diaspora citizens, Indigenous People, Refugees, Migrants or Forced Displaced persons of TEA's target regions; and/or

Autonomous national/regional networks/organisations/associations operating in TEA's regions/countries that are part of an international organisational, enterprise, network or institutional framework.

International partners:

International Partners are defined as organisations, businesses, entities, enterprises and entrepreneurs in the clean-energy sector that are fully head-quartered outside the TEA target regions (but which operate in these regions); and/or are 'owned'/founded/created by non-local citizens/entities.

*TEA's target regions refers to sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands.



Introduction to local partnership inclusion approaches

TEA's approaches to local partnership inclusion is a framework designed for donors, programme managers and project implementers across the TEA platform (and beyond) to increase the inclusion of local partners in programmes and funding opportunities.

The framework builds on the recommendations and consultations from the TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Working Group and the needs assessment.

'Good practice in my opinion here is where both parties are clear about the nature of the partnership in advance (e.g. fairness in distribution of funds, fairness in distribution of roles and responsibilities - so not just a northern partner that has the decision-making power, but an equal input, and intellectual ownership - meaning that the project is conceived, implemented AND communicated in a way that highlight's both organisations).'

– Local African Partner Respondent to the TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Survey 2020.



Introduction

Why is LPI important?

Defining local and international partners

Introducing and implementing LPI

1. Mainstreaming LPI

2. Increasing accessibility of quality finance

3. Build long-term capacity

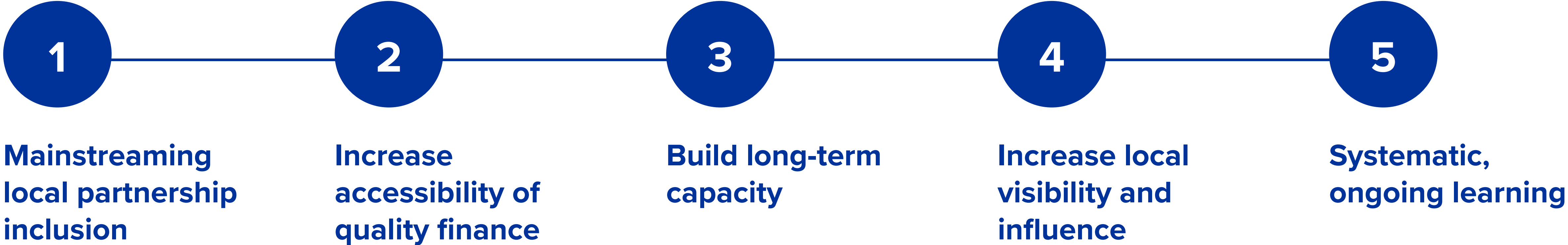
4. Increase local visibility and influence

5. Ongoing, systematic learning

Summary of LPI approaches

Acknowledgements

Five approaches to implementing local partnership inclusion



1. Mainstreaming local partnership inclusion

Funders, donors and programme managers can mainstream local partnership inclusion by creating funding requirements, frameworks and an environment that enables local entities to be at the forefront of programme delivery.

Approaches to mainstreaming local partnership inclusion

- 1.1** Strengthen oversight, requirements and the monitoring of local partnership inclusion, e.g. creating requirements/targets for local inclusion in calls for proposals and set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure and assess local inclusion.
- 1.2** Engage local voices in the design of programmes and projects, through iterative consultations or direct contracting, as well as engaging local voices in proposal calls and review processes. This can support the matching of international funding to Global South priorities and ensure that programmes are focused on addressing local needs.
- 1.3** Build the institutional capacity of local and international partners to manage and support international, collaborative projects. This can support more equitable partnerships, longevity of project outcomes and the financial sustainability of local entities.
- 1.4** Funders and programme managers can set the tone around expectations of equity, including by providing clear guidelines and recommendations for projects, and recognising and compensating the time and costs of building equitable partnerships.
- 1.5** Collaborate with Global South funders and donors to expand funding opportunities for local entities and increase the reach of the TEA platform.
- 1.6** Directly contract Global South and local organisations to manage and deliver programmes.

Example: TEA's African-led Partnership initiative directly funded three African-led Partners to deliver projects. These are:

- [The African Forum for Utility Regulators \(AFUR\)](#), whose Tariff Tool project builds capacity among regulators and standardizes the mini-grid tariff setting process.
- [CLUB-ER](#), the African Association for Rural Electrification, in partnership with SouthSouthNorth, delivers training to electrification agencies.
- [ICLEI Africa](#), which brings clean cooking access to informal settlements in African cities, working with local governments and the private sector to provide safe, affordable, clean energy to the urban poor.

Guidance questions for programme managers

Do you consult and partner with local actors to design projects that align with local needs and priorities?

What are your existing approaches and oversight mechanisms for local partnership inclusion?

Do you communicate local inclusion as a priority within your projects?

Do you build the capacity – institutional and technical – of local partners?

Do you directly partner with local organisations to deliver projects?

Setting the tone for equity entails funders creating an enabling environment that empowers both local and international entities to co-lead the processes and negotiations that facilitate their conceptualisation of a mutually agreed operational framework based on what equity within that particular partnership means, across whatever parameters they both choose to define it.



2. Increasing accessibility of quality finance

Access to flexible, high-quality finance was highlighted as a priority need for local partners. Funding designed to meet local needs and account for local market conditions can support risk management while supporting smaller, local entities to access financing.

Approaches to mainstreaming local partnership inclusion

- 2.1** Invest in locally owned businesses through: Early-stage funding to enable local partners to build capacity to take on KPIs and due diligence requirements; concessional funding, e.g. grants or investments with longer payback timelines; and de-risking instruments, e.g. pooled finance.
- 2.2** Design project-based funding which meets the needs of locally owned organisations. E.g. preparatory grants to support relationship building between local and international actors; mandatory requirements on local partner inclusion in calls for proposals; and adjust co-financing requirements to align with local markets.
- 2.3** Provide funding to strengthen local institutions, with financing directed towards building organisational capabilities, supporting long-term financial sustainability.
- 2.4** Develop flexible and adaptable due diligence processes to suit local contexts. This can include building trust from the outset, including in-person engagements and site visits. Provide technical support to local companies to improve their capacity to satisfy the due diligence requirements. (E.g. [Powering Healthcare Innovation Fund](#), [PREO](#), [Energy Catalyst](#)).

Example: [The Green GenSet Facility](#) is designed to address access to finance barriers for local solar distributors. Lean due diligence focused on sector specific metrics and upfront working capital mean that financing (in the form of quality-assured products) can be disbursed quickly, and the not-for-profit facility design enables low transaction costs. The GGF provides solar/battery genset-replacement equipment in small initial tranches which are scaled over time based on results, and detailed monitoring helps to establish track records and build investor confidence.

Guidance questions for programme managers

Have you consulted local actors in designing funding mechanisms, review processes and due diligence?

Is there scope to test new, de-risked financing mechanisms?

How do you or can you support local partners through the application and due diligence processes?



3. Build long-term capacity

Targeted training and capacity building can build institutional and technical capacity, supporting effective project delivery and enabling positive outcomes which go beyond the immediate project scope.

Approaches to mainstreaming local partnership inclusion

- 3.1** Strengthen local institutions through core organizational funding rather than only project-specific funding.
- 3.2** Provide capacity building on legal and financial management for both local and international partners e.g. on MOUs, intellectual property sharing, protection agreements, joint project planning, coordination and management, joint financial management and accountability, data management and conflict resolution mechanisms.
- 3.3** Prioritise Southern-led technical assistance where possible, e.g. identifying and partnering with local actors to develop and deliver capacity building programmes.
- 3.4** Provide targeted proposal writing training programmes for local organisations to enable more equitable competition with international entities.

Example: [The TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Technical Assistance \(TA\) Facility](#), Delivered by Nairobi-based EED Advisory, the TA Facility takes a tailored approach to develop the grant writing skillset and understanding of requirements of local partners during a grant application window. This aims to improve the chances of local partners in successfully securing grant funding.

The TA Facility has supported 22 local organisations with one-to-one pre-application support.

Guidance questions for programme managers

Do you fund institutional capacity building, in addition to project work?

Do you provide legal and financial management support to local actors?

Is your TA and capacity building support demand-driven?

Do you employ, or can you adopt, 'train-the-trainer' approaches?



4. Increase local visibility and influence

Increasing local partners' access to international funders through networking opportunities and meaningful participation in international events can increase visibility and influence.

Approaches to mainstreaming local partnership inclusion

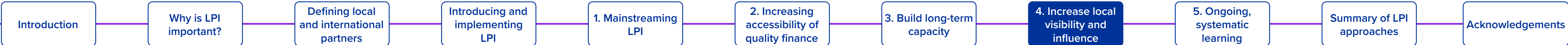
- 4.1** Enhance opportunities for local actors to network with international donors and funders to enable opportunities for advocacy and knowledge sharing, through brokerage events, international conferences and local networking opportunities.
- 4.2** Host sector meetings in Global South regions and countries. This would allow for greater participation from Global South actors, who can be excluded from events in the Global North due to visa and funding restrictions.
- 4.3** Provide financial and administrative support to enable local partners to travel to, attend and participate in international meetings and conferences.
- 4.4** Work with Global South partners to be co-conveners of meetings, workshops, events, activities.
- 4.5** Include Global South policymakers in meetings, workshops and events.
- 4.6** Develop an online portal to showcase professionals and enterprises in the Global South, facilitate networking, share funding opportunities and identify potential partnerships.
- 4.7** Review marketing and communication strategies to ensure you are platforming local partners.
- 4.8** Leverage and engage with existing sector networks in the Global South, e.g. online platforms, communities, associations (e.g. renewable energy associations).

Example: The TEA Forum 2024 took place in Kigali, Rwanda and amplified local visibility by bringing together 480 participants from 46 countries, with strong African representation.

With 17 curated sessions, 68 speakers (37% female), 14 exhibitors, and 6 site visits, the Forum created a platform for local voices to shape sector dialogue. Engagement through the TEAForum24 app – used by 280 delegates who made 933 connections – further extended collaboration and knowledge exchange beyond the event.

Guidance questions for programme managers

- Where was your last event held?
- Where is your next event?
- What is the gender and geographic diversity of your panel participants?
- Do you provide funding and support for local partners to attend?



5. Ongoing, systematic learning

Regular reviews, feedback sessions and monitoring can help to understand both the qualitative and the quantitative elements of local partnership inclusion, including social and cultural differences and local contexts, and support ongoing learning.

Approaches to mainstreaming local partnership inclusion

- 5.1 Implement and track KPIs including: for example, % (proportion) of funding that goes to local partners; and the number of local entities funded and engaged.
- 5.2 Implement bi-annual surveys for both local and international partners to understand the impacts of new interventions, the experiences of local and international partners, and to provide insights on how to improve processes.
- 5.3 Produce regular and comprehensive local partnership inclusion monitoring and evaluation reports, detailing quantitative and qualitative results and to assess delivery, progress and impacts across the key indicators and parameters for measurement and assessment.

Example: The TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Needs Assessment

In 2024, a targeted research study was undertaken in 2024 to assess how local partnership inclusion is understood across South and South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands, and how it differs or is similar in the African context. The Needs Assessment provided the TEA platform a set of recommendations on how to increase the participation and funding of local partners.

The study ensured prior recommendations remained relevant to the wider regional focus and, through consultations with the TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Working Group, established a more inclusive, standardised definition of “local partner” to guide ongoing learning and underpin the TEA Local Partnership Inclusion Support Service’s work and future regional engagement.

The study also provided KPIs for the TEA to measure its progress. These include:

- Proportion of TEA funding that goes to local partners.
- Percentage growth of number of local partners funded by the TEA platform.

Guidance questions for programme managers

Do you carry out regular surveys with local and international partners?

Do you systematically measure local partnership inclusion related KPIs?

Do you have good quality baseline data and an understanding of where your funding is directed?



Summary of local partnership inclusion approaches

Approach	Funders and financiers	Programme manager/intermediary	Project implementer
1. Mainstreaming local partnership inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set the tone, communicating expectations of equity and local partnership inclusion. Implement portfolio-level local partnership inclusion oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage local voices in programme design through consultations. Directly contract Global South and local organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with and engage communities to inform project implementation.
2. Increasing accessibility of quality finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the piloting of new, innovative finance mechanisms. Provide long-term financing where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local partners through due diligence processes. Provide early-stage funding, concessional funding and de-risking instruments. Engage local actors in the design of financing instruments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide funding to strengthen local institutions and support long-term sustainability. On-the-ground community engagement to inform finance mechanisms.
3. Building long-term capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund organisational/institutional support, as well as projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide capacity building on legal and financial management. Provide targeted proposal writing training programmes. Prioritise Southern-led technical assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide community capacity building on the operation and maintenance of technologies.
4. Increasing local visibility and influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host sector meetings in Global South regions. Develop an online portal to showcase opportunities, facilitate networking and identify partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Global South partners to be co-conveners of meetings, workshops, events, activities. Provide financial and administrative support for local partners to attend events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage and engage with existing sector networks in the Global South, e.g. online platforms, communities, associations.
5. Ongoing, systematic learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify local partnership inclusion KPIs to track and measure at portfolio level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement bi-annual surveys for both local and international partners. Produce local partnership inclusion M&E reports, detailing quantitative and qualitative results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing engagement with customers and communities to understand the project impacts and adapt approaches where needed.

Acknowledgments

This summary of approaches has been developed based on the Local Partnership Inclusion Needs Assessment led by Dr. Elizabeth Rasekoala, supported by Sebastian Lander, and reviewed by Harriet Bradshaw-Smith, Jessi Chadwick, Rifah Nanjiba, and Lucy Fellingham.

Many thanks goes to the local and international organisations who responded to the needs assessment surveys and volunteered their time and insights to inform this work.

Useful links and resources:

[NEAR Framework \(ngocoordination.org\)](https://ngocoordination.org)

[BEP Toolkit V8 \(iclei.org\)](https://iclei.org) – toolkit guiding local governments on renewable energy project design and public–private partnerships

[Local Partnerships Guide \(mercycorps.org\)](https://mercycorps.org)

[Dodson, J. \(2017\). Building Partnerships of Equals: The role of funders in equitable and effective international development collaborations, UK-Collaborative on Development Sciences \(ukcdr.org.uk\)](https://ukcdr.org.uk)

[Nakweya, G. \(2024\) 'African Research stifled by unequal Partnerships' \(scidev.net\)](https://scidev.net)

[One community: A guide to effective partnership working between principal and local councils \(local.gov.uk\)](https://local.gov.uk)

[Local authority guide to partnership working for people and nature - Nature Towns & Cities \(naturetownsandcities.org.uk\)](https://naturetownsandcities.org.uk)

[Partnering Step by Step \(thepartneringinitiative.org\)](https://thepartneringinitiative.org)

Introduction

Why is LPI important?

Defining local and international partners

Introducing and implementing LPI

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