K4D | Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Political will of African governments to address climate change

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Question

What factors affect the political will of African governments to address climate change?

Contents

1. Summary

In the past ten to fifteen years, there has been a 'striking rise in discussions of politics and power in development policy circles' (Laws & Marquette, 2018, p. 1) across all sectors, including calls for 'greater attention to political economy in tackling climate change and development' (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 535). 'Political will' is the outcome of a deeply political process of contestation among political actors with diverse interests, motives, and incentives who come together in coalitions to support or oppose change.

Analysis of this process of political contestation can be guided by frameworks that identify relevant political actors, clarify their interests, motives, and incentives, and understand the relationships among the various actors including how they form coalitions to support or oppose change (Developmental Leadership Program, 2018). This rapid review briefly summarises several such frameworks, some of which offer general guidance about broad groups of issues that analysts might consider while others focus down to the level of specific factors that affect political outcomes. This report also examines country case studies from Africa and a few global comparative studies that illustrate factors that have appeared to either support or hinder the building of political momentum around action on climate change. The literature generally did not offer any evidence about gender issues in connection with these factors.

The table below summarises factors influencing political momentum for action on climate change that emerged from the literature and where this evidence is taken from, as well as identifying several potential factors whose influence on political momentum was found not to be significant. It is important to note that these factors do not predetermine outcomes in individual countries, however. They illustrate arenas for political debate, or questions to consider, but the outcomes that occur in each country are the result of country-specific processes of political contestation that may play out differently in different contexts.

Factors influencing political momentum for action on climate change	Evidence from
Centralisation of power in government	Global (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013) Global (Fankhauser, Gennaioli, & Collins, 2015)
Prospects of access to international funding	Africa, Asia, Latin America (Averchenkova, 2014) Zambia (Casado-Asensio, Wang, Moilwa, & Drutschinin, 2014; Funder, Mweemba, & Nyambe, 2018) Tanzania (Nachmany, 2018)
The structure and interests of the energy sector	Global (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013) Global (Fankhauser, Gennaioli, & Collins, 2015) Kenya (Naess, et al., 2015) Ghana (Averchenkova, 2014) Mozambique (Naess, et al., 2015) Africa, Asia, Latin America (Averchenkova, 2014) Zambia (Funder, Mweemba, & Nyambe, 2018)
Policy coordination across government departments	Africa (Lockwood, 2013) Africa, Asia, Latin America (Averchenkova, 2014) South Africa (Jakob, Flachsland, Steckel, & Urpelainen, 2019) Tanzania (Nachmany, 2018) South Africa (Trollip & Boulle, 2017) DRC (Averchenkova, 2014) Ghana (Averchenkova, 2014) Zambia (Averchenkova, 2014)

Opportunities for extension of state power in remote areas	Africa (Funder, Mweemba, & Nyambe, 2018) Zambia (Funder, Mweemba, & Nyambe, 2018) Kenya (Naess, et al., 2015)
Public knowledge about climate change	Global (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013) Zimbabwa (Dodman & Mitlin, 2015) Zambia (Casado-Asensio, Wang, Moilwa, & Drutschinin, 2014) Africa (Eguavoen, Schulz, de Wit, Weisser, & Müller-Mahn, 2013)
The electoral cycle	Global (Fankhauser, Gennaioli, & Collins, 2015) Africa (Lockwood, 2013) Zambia (Funder, Mweemba, & Nyambe, 2018) Zimbabwe (Dodman & Mitlin, 2015)
Vulnerability to climate change	Global (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013) Ghana (Averchenkova, 2014) Zambia (Funder, Mweemba, & Nyambe, 2018)
Strength of civil society	Global (Fankhauser, Gennaioli, & Collins, 2015) Zimbabwe (Dodman & Mitlin, 2015)
Framing climate change as an economic development opportunity	Tanzania (Nachmany, 2018) South Africa (Rennkamp, Haunss, Wongsa, Ortega, & Casamadrid, 2017; Jakob, Flachsland, Steckel, & Urpelainen, 2019) Africa (Lockwood, 2013)
International influences on political space and policy options	Kenya (Naess, et al., 2015) Mozambique (Naess, et al., 2015) Zambia (Casado-Asensio, Wang, Moilwa, & Drutschinin, 2014) Global (Fankhauser, Gennaioli, & Collins, 2015)
Trusting relationship between the public and private sectors	South Africa (Averchenkova, Gannon, & Curran, 2019) Ghana (Averchenkova, 2014)
Scientific evidence about climate change	Africa, Asia, Latin America (Averchenkova, 2014) Tanzania (Nachmany, 2018)

Factors that do not appear to influence political momentum for action on climate change	**Evidence from**
Left- or right-wing orientation of government	Global (Fankhauser, Gennaioli, & Collins, 2015)
The business cycle and economic crises	Global (Fankhauser, Gennaioli, & Collins, 2015)
State administrative capacity	Global (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013) Tanzania (Nachmany, 2018)
Level of democracy	Global (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013)

Source: Author's own

2. Political will and political economy analysis frameworks

In the past ten to fifteen years, there has been a 'striking rise in discussions of politics and power in development policy circles' (Laws & Marquette, 2018, p. 1) across all sectors. Until recently, the national and local politics of climate change has received relatively little attention, but the importance of politics is being increasingly recognised, including in the climate change arena (Dodman & Mitlin, 2015, p. 223; Lockwood, 2013, p. 647; Naess et al., 2015, p. 535).

The term '**political will**' is often used as shorthand for commitment and action on the part of political leaders, but the term has been criticised as being vague and lacking explanatory power. The Developmental Leadership Program[1] (DLP) argues that 'political will may be a temptingly simple and intuitive explanation for why reforms succeed or fail, but it is a turn of phrase masquerading as an explanation' (Developmental Leadership Program, 2018, p. 8). The DLP argues that political will is not exercised freely and independently by leaders, but is the outcome of a deeply political process of contestation. 'The key to opening the black box of political will lies in the interaction between institutions and individuals, or structures and agents. It requires a move… to a more dynamic and temporal view of politics as a process of contestation to establish the 'collective will'' (Developmental Leadership Program, 2018, p. 8).

Understanding the process of political contestation whose outcome is manifested as 'political will' requires an approach to political analysis that identifies relevant political actors, understands their interests, motives, and incentives, and understands the relationships among the various actors including how they form coalitions to support or oppose change (Developmental Leadership Program, 2018). Several frameworks for carrying out such analysis are briefly summarised below. Some offer general guidance about broad groups of issues that analysts might consider, while others also focus down to the level of specific factors that affect political outcomes.

Developmental Leadership Program

The DLP suggests analysing the 'black box of political will' at three levels (Developmental Leadership Program, 2018, p. 9):

- At the **individual** level, where motivated agents with incentives, values, interests and opportunities push for change;
- At the **collective** level, where individuals align their interests and form coalitions with power, legitimacy and influence to manoeuvre and operate effectively; and
- As a **process through which coalitions contest institutions**, involving legitimising and de-legitimising competing ideas about what is right for society. Challenging or disrupting institutions involves contesting these ideas through debate and through conflict, though not necessarily through violence.

Hudson, Marquette, & Waldock (2016), leading researchers in the DLP, propose a framework for political analysis comprising two steps, each with five questions to guide thinking:

1. **Understanding interests**: What are people trying to achieve, and why?
    1.1. Is what they want clear?
    1.2. Are they acting in line with their core beliefs?
    1.3. Do you understand the constraints they face?
    1.4. Is it clear who and what the key influences on them are?
    1.5. Is their behaviour being shaped by social norms about what is appropriate?
2. **Understanding change**: What space and capacity do people have to effect change?

[1] An international research collaboration operating since 2006, carrying out research on leadership, power and political processes in international development: https://www.dlprog.org/

2.1. Are they the key decision maker?
2.2. Do they have potential coalition partners?
2.3. Are their key decision points clear?
2.4. Is their framing of the issue likely to be successful?
2.5. Are they playing on more than one chessboard?

Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice (Laws and Marquette)

A comprehensive review of the evidence on thinking and working politically in development over the past decade identified the following factors that have contributed to the success of development programmes in various sectors (Laws & Marquette, 2018, p. 8):

- leaders were **politically smart** and were able to use that knowledge effectively;
- programme managers allowed **local actors to take the lead**;
- programmes adopted an '**iterative problem solving**, stepwise learning' process;
- programme staff **brokered relationships** with major interest groups;
- donors provided **flexible and strategic funding**;
- there was a **long-term commitment** by donors and high level of continuity in staffing; and
- there was a **supportive environment** in the donor agency.

The report notes, however, that 'climate and environmental governance' is one of eight 'key sectoral gaps' where there is little direct evidence about thinking and working politically (Laws & Marquette, 2018, p. 19).

Steves and Teytelboym

Steves and Teytelboym (2013, pp. 9-10) identified four sets of factors that they argue are likely to be important in influencing the political economy of climate change:

- The **international context**, seen as an arena in which national governments interact strategically, 'each seeking to benefit from the global climate change regime while reducing their costs';
- The **structure of the government**, where increasing numbers of actors who have the power to veto new policies (such as multiple chambers of parliament or levels of government with overlapping powers) leads to more difficulty in changing policy;
- The degree of **political accountability**, with more responsive democracies reacting to the preferences of the electorate; and
- The characteristics **of interest groups** which reflect underlying economic interests in society and the economic structure.

The authors examined six variables from the political economy literature which have been identified as likely to drive climate change mitigation policy (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 16):

- **Public knowledge** of the threat represented by climate change, which in turn is believed to be driven by levels of tertiary education, freedom of the media, and vulnerability of the country to climate change;
- The **level of democracy**;
- The strength of the **carbon-intensive industry** lobby;
- **State administrative capacity**;
- Per capita and total **CO_2 emissions**; and
- **International commitments**.

These variables were identified based on the authors' review of the political economy literature, but their regression analysis examining the relationships between these variables and the extent to which 95 countries around the world (including 16 African countries) have adopted climate change mitigation policies showed that the most significant variables were public knowledge about climate change (shaped by national vulnerability to climate change, levels of education, and freedom of the media), and the strength of carbon-intensive industry (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, pp. 23-24).

Jakob, Flachsland, Steckel, and Urpelainen

Jakob et al. (2019) propose a framework for guiding analysis of the political economy of energy and climate change policy organised around three elements:

- The most important **actors** that influence policy development, including societal actors and political actors;
- A list of **objectives** which matter for these actors, where societal actors are directly concerned about societal objectives, and political actors are concerned both about the interests of the groups they represent but also have specific political objectives; and
- The **context** within which policy-making takes place, which structures how policy objectives affect societal actors, how societal actors influence political actors, how political actors influence policy formulation, and how the general environment including exogenous events shapes the policy process.

In their paper, the authors provide examples of societal and political actors (such as voter groups, unions, energy-intensive industries, and others), as well as environmental, socio-economic, and strategic objectives that the groups may have, and contextual factors relevant for formulating climate and energy policy.

UNDP Low Emission Capacity Building Programme (Averchenkova)

Interviews with twenty national government representatives, international practitioners, and private sector representatives involved in the UNDP's Low Emission Capacity Building Programme identified the following factors, listed in order of importance according to the interviewees, that were felt to have 'worked in getting political commitment' to low-emission development (LED) strategies and nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMA) (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 12):

- The prospect of getting donor finance to support the work;

- Linking proposed LED and NAMA activities to sectoral development plans and goals;
- The image of the country in the international community;
- Availability of good data on emissions and potential reductions;
- Prior experience with the Clean Development Mechanism; and
- Making a voluntary emissions pledge to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

3. Factors influencing political momentum for action on climate change

Centralisation of power in government

A strong and centralised government structure makes it easier to develop the political momentum necessary to pass legislation of any kind, including climate change legislation.

A regression study looking at political economy variables in 95 countries around the world (including 16 African countries) and the extent to which countries have adopted climate change mitigation policies found that where there are more 'veto players' (actors whose agreement is necessary to enact policies, such as multiple chambers of parliament or levels of government with overlapping powers) with more divergent views, it is more difficult to change policy (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 9).

Another regression study covering 66 countries (11 of which were African) similarly found that 'strong government is important for climate legislation' (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59). 'Governments with a majority in all chambers of the legislature find it easier to legislate and are likely to pass more laws overall, not just laws related to climate change… the often contested nature of climate policy makes a strong executive particularly important' (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59).

Prospects for access to international funding

Climate change discourse is used by developing countries when seeking access to international funds, and the prospect of accessing funding is a significant motivation for African governments. A survey of policy-makers and national experts in 17 countries spanning Africa, Asia, and Latin America participating in the UNDP's Low Emission Capacity Building Programme found that 'most countries see the prospect of attracting international financing as the most critical factor in garnering domestic high-level political commitment to a climate-change agenda and in securing participation of sectorial ministries' (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 18).

Access to international development funding is increasingly linked to satisfying environmental objectives. In **Zambia**, for example, official development assistance (ODA) declined from 29% of GNI to only 11% from 2004 to 2012, but the proportion of ODA linked to 'green development' rose from 6% to 30% over the same period (Casado-Asensio et al., 2014, pp. 16-18). The country relies on climate change funding to help 'finance operation of the rural civil service and technical sector agencies… freeing up government funds for other purposes' (Funder et al., 2018, p. 35) and is currently (in 2018) seeking investments worth USD 20 billion for climate

change adaptation, illustrating that 'substantial financing is potentially in play' (Funder et al., 2018, p. 35)

The prospect of access to international finance under the banner of climate change action can be attractive both to 'developmental' and 'anti-developmental' or 'patrimonial' regimes. In so-called 'developmental states', resources would be likely to be used effectively and would support regime legitimacy; in 'anti-developmental' regimes, international finance can potentially provide a new source of rent and resources for political patronage and regime survival, but with potentially limited benefits to poor people (Lockwood, 2013, pp. 664, 666-667).

In **Tanzania**, a study involving interviews with government officials, civil society representatives, and others suggested that 'framing issues as being about climate change was sometimes a 'marketing' technique, especially for engaging with development partners.' Interviewees reported that using terms such as 'climate-smart' was useful in engaging with international funders, many of whom 'respond more positively to projects that are framed around climate change' (Nachmany, 2018, p. 3).

The structure and interests of the energy sector

Actors in the energy sector, including industry, government, and citizens, have a strong influence on governments' engagement with climate change. Understanding the structure of the energy sector and the various interests within it is important for understanding the overall political economy of climate change.

A regression analysis covering 95 countries worldwide found that 'the relative strength of the carbon-intensive industry is a major deterrent to the adoption of climate change mitigation policies and measures… In many resource-rich economies, these industries are the largest export earners, the largest employers and the largest contributors to the national tax base' and therefore strongly influence climate change policy (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 25). A second analysis of 66 countries found a similar but weaker relationship, with the number of laws related to climate change being 'negatively correlated with the share of fossil fuel and mining exports in a country' but not statistically significant (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59).

In **Kenya**, 'increasing electricity generation is among the current government's highest priorities and a core strategy for driving economic growth' but the ability of various actors and technologies to 'mobilise finance and support behind their vision of development is a function of their power' (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 537). There is strong interest in developing Kenya's oil, gas, and coal reserves, but renewable energy technologies have managed to achieve success where they have been able to align with government, donor, and private sector interests. 'Large scale wind power and geothermal energy have gained traction in formal government policy processes, due in part to the extent to which they serve the existing development priorities of government agencies, the climate change concerns of donors, the commercial interests of the international companies that are positioned to develop the resources' and large national business associations (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 538). Grid-connected solar power 'has been actively discouraged by government' through paying low prices to private sector solar power producers, while small-scale off-grid solar power has been commercially successful (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 538).

In other African countries, the existence of fossil fuel reserves has created powerful incentives against investing in renewable energy. In **Ghana**, it has been difficult to gain support for

renewable energy investment because of competition for investment from the natural gas industry, which is already heavily subsidised and is seeking investment in infrastructure to exploit new recently-discovered natural gas reserves (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 27). Similarly, 'both **Kenya** and **Mozambique** have significant fossil fuel reserves… and both countries' energy trajectories could just as easily follow a high carbon as a low carbon pathway. Power will determine which pathway is chosen' (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 542).

Resistance to change from actors in the energy sector can sometimes be overcome by appealing to other motives. A study of lessons learned from the UNDP's Low Emission Capacity Building programme suggests that it may be possible to overcome resistance from energy ministries by offering new modelling and policy evaluation tools that enable them to evaluate other benefits such as job creation, resource conservation and reduced pollution, and helping them identify new financing opportunities that are aligned with their priorities (Averchenkova, 2014, pp. 16-17).

In some cases, interests in the energy sector can align so as to support action on climate change. For example, in **Zambia**, reduced water levels in hydropower reservoirs in 2015-16 led to a major energy crisis with daily power outages in urban and industrial centres. While the political opposition and some technical experts argued that the crisis was caused by poor water and energy management, the government framed the crisis as a consequence of climate change and used it as 'an opportunity for political discourse, a source of funding and an opportunity to show action on politically sensitive issues such as food security and energy supply' (Funder et al., 2018, pp. 35-36).

Policy coordination across government

Climate change policy is 'a multi-sectoral challenge that crosses many parts of government' and departmental siloing is a barrier to adopting policies on climate adaptation (Lockwood, 2013, p. 663). This problem can be particularly serious in African countries where patrimonial regimes may lead to large numbers of ministerial appointments as political rewards, with the result that 'proliferation of ministries, each competing for resources and policy control, drives duplication and makes co-ordination more difficult' (Lockwood, 2013, p. 662). Responsibility for climate change often lies with environment ministries, which tend to be less powerful and have fewer resources than other ministries (Jakob et al., 2019, p. 14; Averchenkova, 2014, p. 11) 'This is a particularly significant challenge in Africa, where climate-change units are generally new, very small, with relatively little political power and struggling with multiple priorities. Such units are rarely integrated into the country's development and planning work' (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 11).

In **Tanzania**, for example, 'institutional infrastructure is somewhat lacking for systematically addressing climate change' (Nachmany, 2018, p. 3), with environmental issues often managed between multiple line ministries with limited communication (Nachmany, 2018, p. 4). The focal point for climate change is a small team in the Division of Environment in the Vice President's Office which collaborates with environmental units in line ministries, but these units deal with multiple environmental issues, with none designated as climate-change-specific. 'Treating climate as one of multiple environmental issues means that it remains sidelined in planning processes' (Nachmany, 2018, p. 3). **South Africa** suffers from a similar challenge as the country has a complex range of policies with responsibilities spread across multiple departments, but the agency responsible for overall coordination, the Department of Environmental Affairs, is 'a weak department in the political hierarchy' and lacks capacity, which makes policies 'vulnerable to pushback by interests that would be negatively impacted' by them (Trollip & Boulle, 2017, pp. 29,

30). Other countries have even weaker coordination mechanisms, such as the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, which has no comprehensive agricultural or energy strategy in place, making the development of mitigation strategies more challenging (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 15).

In some circumstances, building political alliances and coordinating policy relies on 'personal and historical relationships between ministries' (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 14). In **Ghana**, for example, 'coordination gaps have been effectively addressed due to the presence of a focal point who is technically knowledgeable in different areas of climate policy and who has strong networks in various relevant ministries' (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 14).

A related challenge is the lack of continuity and policy stability in many countries. 'Changes in the political power structure and in institutions result in the high turnover of decision-making actors' which 'makes it extremely difficult to build cooperation among stakeholders' (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 15). In **Zambia**, for example, 'after a major restructuring of executive power, it has been a challenge to engage various ministries and achieve stakeholder buy-in' to the UNDP's Low Emission Capacity Development Programme (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 15).

Opportunities for extension of state power in remote areas

In many African countries, 'the central state has limited reach on the ground' and state agencies compete for authority with local governments, traditional institutions such as chiefdoms, and NGOs' (Funder et al., 2018, pp. 32, 34-36). These agencies and institutions compete for power and legitimacy, and climate change policy can be one of the arenas that provides opportunities for 'asserting and legitimizing the authority and resource control of the central state in rural areas' (Funder et al., 2018, p. 36), and thus be a route for gaining and consolidating power.

In **Zambia**, the institutions of central government including the centrally-appointed district administration, state agencies, and locally-elected councils compete for influence and authority alongside traditional chiefs and their associated headman structures (Funder et al., 2018, p. 36). One example of this struggle can be seen in the districts of Kazungula and Sesheke, where major droughts and floods took place in the mid-2000s. The national government framed the disasters as a consequence of climate change with a strong likelihood of recurrence, and not only provided short-term disaster relief but also took the opportunity to strengthen the government's permanent presence in the districts with support from international donors. Controversially, the government attempted to implement a resettlement programme which took customary lands out of traditional chiefly control, seriously undermining a key component of the chiefs' power. In one district, the local chief acquiesced under considerable pressure to the resettlement scheme, but in the other, the government abandoned the scheme after strong resistance from the chief and local communities (Funder et al., 2018, pp. 36-40).

In **Kenya**, power struggles over the process of devolution are having 'significant implications for the control of energy infrastructure and policy' (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 538). Some counties have argued for more local control of the power grid, because reliable electricity supply is critical to attract investors, and some 'have been enthusiastic about supporting renewable energy' (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 539). Political battles over land use are 'acutely contested' at the local level, such as in the case of a geothermal energy project which conflicts with the Maasai people's traditional use of land (Naess, et al., 2015, pp. 538-539), and the outcomes of these local political conflicts will influence climate policy at the broader national level.

Public knowledge about climate change

Public knowledge about climate change is 'a powerful determinant of climate change policy adoption: worldwide, countries in which the public is aware of the causes of climate change are significantly more likely to adopt climate change mitigation policies than countries in which public knowledge is low' (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 24). Public knowledge of climate change is in turn shaped by the threat posed by climate change, the national level of education and the existence of free media (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 24).

In **Zimbabwe**, for example, 'despite growing levels of urbanisation… even urban dwellers consider themselves to have a rural home' and there is widespread understanding of the impacts of changing climate patterns on agriculture, with the result that 'many government and NGO officials… suggest that the country as a whole is conscious of environmental and climate change issues because of the influence of changing patterns of rainfall on agricultural productivity' (Dodman & Mitlin, 2015, p. 227). Similarly, **Zambia** is considered to be well advanced in green planning and policy-making, with strong political will to engage on green issues, due at least in part to 'relatively high levels of awareness among decision makers and the general public on these issues' (Casado-Asensio et al., 2014, p. 14).

It has been observed that in some countries, while climate change may be recognised as a phenomenon, the causes of it are misunderstood in ways that make it difficult to engage with as a political issue. For example, Eguavoen et al. (2013) report findings from various studies that poorly-educated people in various countries believe that climate change or its consequences such as droughts, floods, are beyond human influence (**Benin**), or are caused by immoral social behaviour (**Ghana**, **Tanzania**), fictitious machinery (**Senegal**), or the decline of traditional ceremonies and beliefs (**Mozambique**, **Tanzania**).

The electoral cycle

A study of climate legislation in 66 countries found that in well-developed democratic systems 'climate legislation is not generally seen as a vote winner' and that climate action is less likely to be taken close to an election (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59). Public debate on climate policy is 'framed predominantly negatively in terms of the impact climate action might have on fuel poverty and business competitiveness… Attempts to frame the debate in terms of new growth opportunities or other side-benefits are rare' (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59).

Climate change may or may not be salient as an election issue, depending on the context. In some African countries, geographic areas that are more vulnerable to climate change are often also politically marginal and 'receive fewer government services and goods, and suffer more from rent-seeking by officials (including the diversion of food aid) than do areas in the political heartlands' (Lockwood, 2013, p. 663). Where the victims of climate change are politically marginalised, climate change is less likely to be an electoral issue. In **Burkina Faso**, 'farmers' low levels of understanding of elections, voting power and political accountability have resulted in little political representation of their interests' despite their experiences of environmental degradation and climatic change (Eguavoen & Wahren, 2015, pp. ii, 15).

On the other hand, climate change is a significant electoral issue in many countries. In **Zambia**, recurring floods and droughts, the politics of food, and 'the climate change adaptation agenda in Zambia serves the immediate interests of the central government well, by providing an opportunity for political discourse, a source of funding and an opportunity to show action on

politically sensitive issues such as food security and energy supply' (Funder et al., 2018, p. 36). Similarly in **Zimbabwe** 'government officials and ministers state the importance of climate change, and it is frequently and increasingly covered in the print and electronic media' and environmental issues seem to have achieved a broad political consensus, supported by the main political parties and less disputed than other issues (Dodman & Mitlin, 2015, p. 228).

Vulnerability to climate change

The literature reports mixed findings regarding the impact of a country's vulnerability to climate change on political engagement. A global study covering 95 countries finds 'little correlation between countries' vulnerability to climate change and the adoption of climate change mitigation policies and measures', but this study focused on mitigation and the authors note that 'the countries that are most vulnerable to climate change tend to contribute little to the problem – and hence tend to focus their efforts on adaptation rather than mitigation' (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 12).

On the other hand, studies looking at individual countries suggest that vulnerability to climate change does affect countries' engagement with climate as a political issue.

In **Ghana**, for example, 'floods, droughts and other extreme weather events are becoming more and more frequent realities in the country. This has led to a relatively high level of political awareness with respect to climate change and sustainable development in Ghana, with emphasis being placed on adaptation and improving climate resilience. It is also increasingly recognised that low-carbon development policies may be mutually supportive with existing national sustainable development objectives' (Averchenkova, 2014, pp. 25-26).

In **Zambia**, climate change has become a salient issue to the public as a consequence of recurring floods and droughts that 'have increasingly become publicised in national newspapers and reported on TV' (Funder et al., 2018, p. 34). Disasters in isolated areas and in the capital are 'reported on by national media, and questions are asked of responsible ministers and their staff' which has made response 'a matter of some priority for the political leadership' (Funder et al., 2018, p. 34). 'Disaster relief and climate adaptation interventions typically address food security and smallholder agriculture on the ground, and are therefore a convenient means for the ruling government to display action' and President Lungu has publicly 'linked agriculture and food security concerns to climate change, and called for his ministries to address the issue' (Funder et al., 2018, p. 35).

Strength of civil society

The strength of civil society in a country is positively correlated with a country's adoption of laws related to climate change. A study of climate-related legislation in 66 countries worldwide shows 'a significant positive correlation between the stock of climate change laws in a country and the number of national member organisations in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature' (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59).

In **Zimbabwe**, civil society organisations are active in many spheres of activity, but play a particularly strong role in engaging with the government on climate change, which is seen as a cross-sectoral issue that affects the whole population, a less contested issue than some others (such as food security, the economy, job creation, and governance), and where there is less

funding at stake than in some other areas so the power struggles are not as fierce (Dodman & Mitlin, 2015, p. 229).

Framing climate change as an economic development opportunity

Action on climate change tends to be more common when climate change is framed as an opportunity for economic development and job creation, but the degree to which climate action is accepted as a path for economic development in a particular country depends on the outcome of national political debates.

In **Tanzania**, although climate risks are evident in the country, action on climate change has been limited since the 2015 general election as the government 'has prioritised rapid industrialisation and infrastructure development' primarily based on fossil fuels (Nachmany, 2018, pp. 1-2). The reasons for this policy shift are not clear. Currently, 'climate considerations are viewed as a subset of broader agendas – climate change is often regarded as only one way to consider issues such as development, poverty alleviation, food security and land management' (Nachmany, 2018, p. 3)

In **South Africa**, energy policy debates are primarily about economic development including jobs, cost, and environmental issues (emissions reduction). Cheap electricity prices have attracted national and foreign electricity intensive industries (Rennkamp et al., 2017, p. 216) and coal is seen as a means to foster industrial development, provide cheap electricity for households and industry, generate revenues for state and national governments, and provide jobs (Jakob et al., 2019, pp. 13-14). On the other hand, supporters of renewable energy argue for the possibility of creating new jobs in the 'green economy' while protecting existing jobs in the mining sector (Rennkamp et al., 2017, p. 217). Energy policy is heavily influenced by a small number of powerful actors including the state-owned electrical utility Eskom, the state-owned energy and chemicals company Sasol, the government Department of Trade and Industry, and a small number of large industrial consumers particularly in the natural resources and mining sector (Jakob et al., 2019, p. 14). Supporters of renewable energy policy consist 'largely of trade unions, government departments, international investors, renewable energy industries, civil society and academic organizations' as well as civil society actors such as environmental NGOs and churches (Rennkamp et al., 2017, pp. 217-218).

Agriculture is particularly vulnerable to climate change, and in many African countries it is central to the livelihoods of a majority of the population and to the national economy, making it critical for climate change policy (Lockwood, 2013, p. 661). In such contexts, Lockwood argues, a political commitment to investment in agriculture and the rural economy will be necessary as part of building political support for action on climate change (Lockwood, 2013, p. 662).

International influences on political space and policy options

International actors have a great deal of influence in national processes related to climate change, and often constrain and guide the political space and policy options available to national governments.

In **Kenya** and **Mozambique**, 'low carbon energy and carbon forestry still appear as internationally driven, with (as yet) limited national ownership' (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 542). In both cases, international agencies, multilateral development banks, and international businesses 'have a powerful role to play in shaping decisions at national and sub-national level about which

development pathway to pursue' through 'control of finance, production, technology and trade' (Naess, et al., 2015, p. 542). Similarly, in **Zambia** 'multilateral and bilateral donors have played a major role in the development of national policies… virtually all major policies, acts and plans related to disaster management and climate change adaptation in Zambia have been financially and technically supported by multilateral or bilateral donors' (Casado-Asensio et al., 2014, p. 33).

An example of how external events can stimulate political will in a country is illustrated by a global study that included an examination of approaches taken by left-wing and right-wing governments to climate change. Although The study showed that 'right-wing governments are more susceptible to external reputation effects, issuing more legislation than left-wing governments after hosting a global climate summit' (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59).

Trusting relationship between the public and private sectors

Political momentum in favour of action on climate change appears to be easier to build and maintain where there is a trusting relationship between the government and the private sector.

In **South Africa**, forums for coordination between stakeholders have been established, but tensions arise 'due to mistrust, difficulties in historical relationships, and questions around the pace, scale and form of policies… between and within government departments, state-owned enterprises, academic research centres, civil society and trade unions' (Averchenkova, Gannon, & Curran, 2019, p. 4). 'These issues are prevalent throughout South Africa's political discourse and economic structure – but climate is a policy area where constructive interaction between the public and private sector is particularly important for making progress' (Averchenkova, Gannon, & Curran, 2019, p. 4).

In **Ghana**, 'a negative experience with the CDM [clean development mechanism] in the private sector… resulted in lowered expectations and a loss of trust' and sectors 'in which competing economic and social interests come into conflict with low-carbon policies' face challenges. 'In one city for example, a bus rapid transit (BRT) system is being opposed by taxi unions, despite assurances by the government that it will secure jobs and alternative employment opportunities for affected drivers. The lack of trust between the government and the private sector in such cases is clearly an important issue' (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 28). Attempts are being made to win business support for renewable energy based on benefits such as energy access, health benefits and new employment, and by capacity building and providing better information to the private sector, including information about incentives. (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 28)

Scientific evidence about climate change

Scientific evidence about climate change does not necessarily lead to political action by itself, but good quality evidence can help to support political commitments to engage with climate issues. 'Countries that have had success in mobilising political commitment at the early stages of the process, such as Chile, Colombia and Mexico, have all noted the importance of high-quality data that had already been available due to prior work in the area' (Averchenkova, 2014, p. 14).

In **Tanzania**, interviews with government officials, civil society representatives, and other domestic actors indicated that 'a lack of credible, timely information to support decision-making is… [a] major limitation for policymakers' (Nachmany, 2018, p. 5). 'High levels of uncertainty over future projections of rainfall… and the long-term horizons used for predicting climate change, can make the political assessment of climate change a low-priority issue' (Nachmany,

2018, p. 3). Interviewees cited a need for scientific information as well as for policy options and recommendations, while noting that policymakers had limited capacity to engage with academic outputs and needed research findings to be presented more concisely (Nachmany, 2018, p. 5). Similarly, in **South Africa** a lack of good quality data is seen as an impediment to climate change policy development and implementation not only for technical reasons but also because 'the credibility of data and quantitative analysis based on that data plays a role in legitimising the policy. If questions around data and quantitative analysis can be sustained, so can questions around legitimacy of the policy' (Trollip & Boulle, 2017, pp. 10-11). Thus, good quality evidence may be able to reinforce political will.

4. Factors that appear not to be significant in building political momentum

Left- or right-wing orientation

A global analysis of climate legislation and various political factors in 66 countries (11 of which are African) found that except in 'Anglo-Saxon' countries, there was no significant difference in the propensity of left-wing versus right-wing governments to legislate on climate change (Fankhauser et al., 2015). In Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA, right-wing governments tend to engage less with climate change, but this tendency did not hold in other countries (Fankhauser et al., 2015, pp. 58-60). In all countries, left-wing and right-wing governments did tend to differ in the policies that they adopt, such as the choice of policy instruments, the role of targets, and attitudes towards particular technologies (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 59).

The business cycle and economic crises

Fankhauser et al. (2015), in an analysis of climate change legislation enacted in 66 countries from 1990-2013, do not find evidence for the role of the business cycle (p. 58) or economic crises (p. 60) in affecting governments' engagement with climate change. The authors 'find no evidence that the recent economic crisis has affected the number of climate change laws, although we can hypothesise that it might have changed their ambition. In some cases, low-carbon investment might even be seen as a potential fiscal stimulus, particularly by left-wing governments, which tend to have a more interventionist approach to economic policy' (Fankhauser et al., 2015, p. 60).

State administrative capacity

A global study covering 95 countries found that state administrative capacity does not affect governments' *willingness* to engage with climate change as an issue: 'states with low administrative capacity are just as likely to adopt climate change policies as states with high administrative capacity' (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 24).

The *effectiveness* of policy implementation, on the other hand, may of course be affected by state capacity. In **Tanzania**, for example, 'insufficient capacity and limited resources impede all actors' ability to carry out their functions efficiently and effectively', including: integrating responses to climate change into national and sectoral policies; designing, implementing,

monitoring, and enforcing policies; and coordinating between agencies and levels of government (Nachmany, 2018, pp. 1, 5-6)

Level of democracy

A regression analysis looking at 95 countries around the world and their adoption of climate change mitigation policies indicated that 'the level of democracy is not a major driver of climate change policy adoption' (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 24) However, the authors note that the existence of free media is associated with responsiveness to climate change, and that democracy and free media tend to be linked. 'Thus, the conclusion that democracy *per se* does not determine climate change policy does not mean that certain key aspects of democracy, such as free media, are not important drivers of policy adoption' (Steves & Teytelboym, 2013, p. 24).

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