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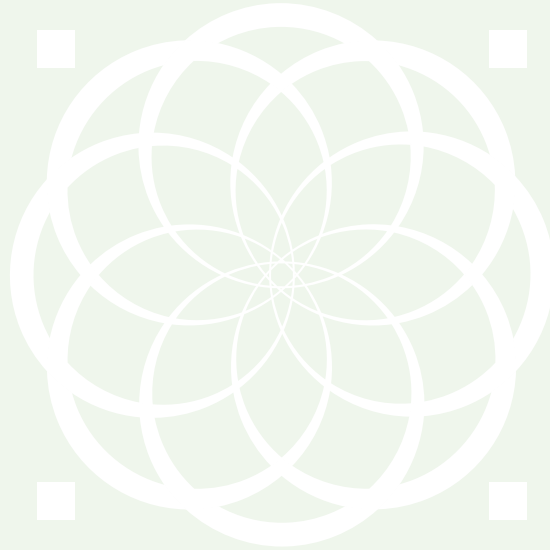
Focus Group Discussions Outcome Report

Climate Justice in Egypt

October 2026

Strengthening Inclusive Civil
Society Action in the Arab Region
Towards Achieving Climate Justice





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Project:
**Strengthening inclusive civil society action in the Arab Region
towards achieving Climate Justice**

September 2026

INTRODUCTION

Under the project UDF-23-996-RAS as a National Focal Point and implemented in coordination with the Arab NGO Network for Development, the New Woman Foundation brought together civil society representatives and key stakeholders in Egypt and organized Focus Group Discussions mainly aimed to

- Collect in-depth feedback from civil society representatives that are underrepresented in policy discussions at national, regional and international levels, advocacy spaces on climate justice related issues
- Enable facilitated information exchange on civil society perceptions, local indicators of climate change, its impacts including civil society group whose work (i.e. research, project, community engagement etc) cover groups who face direct impacts from climate injustices
- Identify top priorities and key considerations for achieving climate justice
- Initiate a Community of Practice on climate justice that will provide the space for collaborative learning process of 'thinking together' on climate justice issues at national level engaging youth and women groups

To ensure a flexible engagement of diverse groups FGD sessions were organized in 3 meetings on 30 June, 21 July and June 23, 2026 in Port Said. Including civil society representatives, diverse beneficiary and stakeholder groups NWF engaged a total 41 participants to the discussions. The sessions adopted a semi-structured, open discussion format based on a guidance document that included a set of key themes and questions(annexed), while also allowing participants to raise other issues and experiences they deemed important. The discussion was not limited to direct answers to questions but also facilitated the exchange of experiences and feedback on participants' contributions. This allowed for the emergence of topics and discussion points not necessarily explicitly addressed in the guide. The discussion was treated as a space to explore the diverse perceptions and experiences of the participants, rather than as a questionnaire to elicit predetermined answers. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the recurring ideas and issues within the discussion, as well as the experiences and examples that helped explain the participants' positions on the issues raised.

SECTION 1

FGDs WITH CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES

The discussions with the participants revealed that the question of the role of civil society in addressing climate change cannot be answered by identifying a set of isolated activities or interventions. This role is intertwined with the nature of the state and its policies, and with civil society's capacity to access information, produce knowledge, influence legislation and policies, and reach affected communities.

The discussions demonstrated that civil society does not operate from a vacuum; there is already existing experience in awareness-raising, community engagement, agro-ecology, litigation, advocacy, and knowledge production. However, the fundamental challenge lies in the inability to consolidate this experience and transform it into a collective force capable of influencing public policy. This aligns with the research objective of moving from exchanging experiences to identifying ways to develop the role of civil society and launch a community of practice on climate justice. The discussions addressed the following points:

The concept of climate justice and the most affected groups

The discussions revealed that for the participants, the concept of climate justice was not merely about distributing the impacts of climate change, but rather linked from the outset to a broader question of injustice, inequality, responsibility, and rights. It was emphasized repeatedly during the discussions that not everyone plays the same roles or bears the same harm, and that climate change does not affect a homogeneous society, but rather its impacts are distributed unevenly within and between countries. **In this context, the poor, women, and people with disabilities were highlighted as the most vulnerable to discrimination and impacts of climate injustices.** This approach is particularly important because it shifts the discussion from treating climate change as a natural phenomenon to viewing it as a social, economic, and human rights issue.

One participant linked *the emergence of the concept of climate justice to the attempt to connect climate change with human rights, while simultaneously criticizing the tendency of some governments in the Global South to reduce the concept to specific rights such as the right to water and life, neglecting other rights and the social impacts of climate change.* The example of women emerged in this context, where climate change can lead to increased violence or reduced access to education, meaning that the effects of climate extend into areas not typically reflected in traditional climate indicators. Likewise another important point raised in the discussion was that **vulnerability is not a monolithic category; within the groups described as affected, there are even more vulnerable groups.** This was evident in the discussion on heat stress, where one participant pointed out that ***"the most vulnerable societies contain even more vulnerable groups,"*** implying that defining the affected group in a general way can mask significant differences within it.

The connection between climate justice and labor and workers' rights was also highlighted. When the concept of a just transition was raised, the question for participants was not simply how to move to a less fossil fuel-dependent economy, but rather: what happens to workers during this transition? And how can we speak of a just transition when agricultural workers are not even registered in protection systems? **Therefore, adaptation and a just transition were linked to fundamental rights, including occupational safety and health.** This dimension becomes even more apparent when moving from the concept to field experience. One participant presented an example from a village in the Eastern Province, where women suffer from health problems, have lost some forms of support, and are not provided with state-funded treatment. At the same time, the wages of working women have declined due to companies entering the area, purchasing land and crops, and bringing in workers from outside the local community. He also pointed out the lack of basic facilities for working women, such as bathrooms, and the resulting reduction in their workday. This example does not so much demonstrate a specific climate impact in itself as it reveals the social context into which climate shocks enter. A society already suffering from weak social services and protection, and precarious employment, is more vulnerable to exacerbated damage when conditions of production, resources, or climate change. **Therefore, climate justice, as reflected in the discussions, cannot be separated from social justice, employment, and social protection.** The discussion also addressed the expansion of the climate justice concept and its linkages to non-economic losses and damages. **Participants pointed out that the impacts of climate change cannot always be measured in monetary terms, as there are losses related to lives, resources, livelihoods, and access to food, in addition to displacement and violence against women.** The disappearance of certain agricultural seasons and their associated social practices was cited as an example. *The disappearance of the apricot season in Fayoum, for instance, not only means the loss of a crop but also the disappearance of practices women used to engage in, such as preparing apricot paste at home, as well as the loss of seasonal income linked to these seasons.*

Thus, climate justice, as revealed by the groups, goes beyond the question of who receives funding. It delves into a deeper question: who loses what as a result of climate change? Who has the capacity to protect themselves? And who bears the cost of the loss? This is a crucial angle for understanding the rest of the discussion's outcomes, because participants did not treat adaptation as merely a set of technical solutions, but rather linked it to economic and social policies and the nature of public services, work, and agriculture.

A significant disagreement also emerged regarding the meaning and role of civil society itself within this vision. While one participant argued that civil society should act as a link between the government and stakeholders, striving to achieve a balance between the two, other participants felt that using more measured or diplomatic language does not necessarily resolve the issue of the relationship with the state. They believed the problem might be deeper than language, stemming from a fundamental lack of recognition of civil society as a qualified party or partner. This difference is significant because it reveals that climate justice is not simply about agreeing on the affected groups, but also raises the question of who has the right to define the problem, formulate solutions, and represent those affected before the state.

Key Environmental and Climate Issues in Egypt According to Participants' Perceptions

The discussions revealed a multitude of environmental and climate issues that participants consider priorities in the Egyptian context, emphasizing that these issues cannot be separated from prevailing economic and social conditions and development patterns. **The discussion also showed that environmental challenges are not limited to the direct impacts of climate change, but also include accumulated problems in the management of natural resources, services, and infrastructure.** This makes some climate impacts more severe for the most vulnerable groups and regions.

Water was at the forefront of the issues discussed by participants, addressing both the scarcity of water resources and water quality, sanitation, and resource management. The discussion on water was linked to agriculture and adaptation, as well as to public health, reflecting the interconnected nature of environmental issues in Egypt.

Agriculture emerged as a central issue, not only because agricultural production is affected by rising temperatures and changing climatic conditions, but also because of the situation of small farmers and the pressures they face on agriculture and natural resources.

Participants also addressed **pollution** in its various forms as a fundamental environmental issue, linking it to health and quality of life. The discussion also highlighted the importance of **waste management and recycling**, recognizing them as areas that can combine addressing an environmental problem with creating more sustainable alternatives and practices

Experiences related to the reuse of agricultural waste, native seeds, and agroecology were also discussed, indicating that addressing environmental problems is not limited to mitigating damage but can also include exploring local alternatives.

Another prominent issue was the changes occurring in the **marine environment, lakes, and fisheries**. Participating fishermen shared firsthand experiences of the transformations the marine environment has undergone during their years of work, linking rising temperatures to the disruption of ecosystems and changing fishing conditions. These experiences reveal the importance of knowledge gained through daily practice in understanding environmental changes, particularly in sectors directly dependent on natural resources.

Heat stress and rising temperatures also emerged as issues whose impact extends beyond the environment to health and work, especially for those working in exposed or highly heat-prone environments. The climate issue was thus linked in the discussion to **occupational safety and health and working conditions**, underscoring that the effects of climate change are not limited to natural resources but also extend to the bodies of workers and their ability to continue working.

Discussions also touched upon **urban development, land use, trees, and green spaces**, and the contradiction between some urban planning procedures and practices and the goals of adaptation

and environmental protection. Interest was also expressed regarding building codes and their suitability to changing temperature conditions, as well as the importance of preserving trees and green spaces as part of the response to climate risks.

These issues collectively reveal that environmental and climate priorities in Egypt are not isolated matters, but rather intertwine with water, agriculture, health, employment, energy, urban development, and natural resources. **Therefore, addressing them requires policies that transcend narrow sectoral approaches and link environmental protection with improved living conditions and reduced vulnerability, while taking into account the differences between regions and groups that are affected to varying degrees.**

Climate Policies and Strategies in Egypt

The discussions revealed widespread criticism of the National Climate Strategy. However, the criticism was not limited to its content, but also extended to the way it was produced, the perspective from which it was developed, its relationship to existing economic and social policies, and its ability to be translated from a document into actionable policies.

One of the most prominent criticisms was that the strategy, according to the participants, did not begin with a clear analysis of the reality and the roots of the climate crisis. One participant pointed out that *it does not offer a clear analytical vision of what has happened, nor does it adequately identify who caused the crisis or the relationship of neoliberalism to it*. Furthermore, it continues to address the issue within an outdated framework that focuses solely on the environment, rather than viewing climate change as a crisis intertwined with economics, politics, and society. In this context, privatization emerged as a key element that participants believe must be incorporated into the adaptation analysis. The strategy was linked to public services that help people adapt, such as healthcare, and questions were raised about what happens when these services or facilities become subject to privatization. One participant also linked *the strategy's focus on adaptation rather than mitigation to broader economic choices, arguing that this emphasis carries implications beyond a mere technical choice between two policy types*.

This criticism became more pronounced when the discussion shifted to the agricultural economy. Participants argued that, despite Egypt being an agricultural country, the strategy did not adequately address the agricultural economy and the impact of climate change on small farmers, who represent a significant segment of society. This observation reveals a gap between the nature of the economy and the affected communities, on the one hand, and the sectors and groups that receive attention within the document, on the other. Criticism of the strategy also extended to its production process. Several participants pointed out that it was hastily prepared in the year of the climate conference, leaving insufficient time for consultations and the participation of civil society and experts. Participants also noted a paradox: while the strategy is supposed to be a comprehensive framework for state policies, some felt that the state itself did not adequately involve its various institutions in its drafting. Questions were raised about the role of legislation, the judiciary, and the media, as well as the absence of participation from various government

institutions in formulating the vision. This reflects the fact that the problem lies not only in the lack of civil society involvement but also in the limited participatory and institutional nature of the strategy itself.

One of the most significant shortcomings of the strategy is its handling of non-economic losses and damages. Participants believe that the strategy does not provide an adequate framework for addressing losses related to people's lives, resources, livelihoods, and access to food, as these damages cannot be easily quantified or reduced to monetary terms. This criticism directly intersects with the earlier discussion on climate justice, revealing that, for participants, the concept of justice cannot be reduced to simply providing financial compensation for losses.

At the same time, a more critical reading emerged of the state's approach to climate finance. Some participants believe that **the strategy was designed, in part, as a means to secure funding, rather than as a tool to address the economic and social conditions that produce climate vulnerability**. Criticism also emerged regarding the treatment of loss and damage financing as an end in itself, rather than using the funds to change the policies that produce the damage or to compensate those affected.

This led to a more fundamental question: if Egypt is affected by climate change and not one of the main countries responsible for its causes, should the role of policy be limited to securing funding, or should it simultaneously work to halt the ongoing deterioration and reduce the sources of damage internally? One participant pointed out the contradiction between seeking funding and the continued use of fossil fuels and some depleting agricultural policies. The problem becomes even more apparent when comparing what the strategy says with what is happening on the ground. One participant noted that *the document may be relatively well-drafted, but the problem arises when it is translated into policy, where there is a lack of consistency between the written word and actual practices*. In this context, he cited deforestation, the conversion of gardens into kiosks, the lining of canals, the inadequacy of some building codes for heat, the absence of sufficient policies to protect people from the effects of climate change, and the lack of clear policies for a just transition and the impact of economic shifts on employment opportunities and families.

The discussions reveal three interconnected policy gaps:

- a gap in analyzing the root causes of the problem,
- a gap in participation during policy formulation, and
- a gap between strategy and actual implementation.

These three gaps complicate the question of the role of civil society, as civil society not only faces the challenge of influencing existing policies but also sometimes struggles to incorporate social, legal, and economic dimensions into the very definition of the climate problem.

Environmental and Climate Governance

The discussions reveal that the weakness of climate governance in Egypt cannot be reduced to a mere lack of institutions or the absence of the state. One participant clearly corrected this notion, pointing to the existence of a Ministry of Environment, the Environmental Affairs Agency, climate change units, a specialized negotiating delegation, research centers staffed by scientists, and the National Council for Climate Change. Therefore, the problem highlighted by the discussion is not so much institutional absence as it is a lack of coordination and collaboration among institutions. Participants noted the inadequacy of coordination mechanisms between different bodies and the departure of some staff members from these institutions, leading to a loss of accumulated knowledge and experience. This leads to the idea of “isolated islands” that has been repeated in the discussion; each entity may operate within its own sphere of influence, while the other does not transform into a single entity.

One participant described the problem as *the state treating the strategy as the sole responsibility of the relevant ministry, while other state bodies act independently*. This results in policy inconsistencies: there may be adaptation goals, while other decisions in areas such as urban development, energy, forestry, or public utilities continue in directions that may increase people’s exposure to risks. Therefore, the discussion returned to the strategy, as participants found that it cannot be evaluated in isolation from government practice, and that climate governance is not measured by the number of institutions or the existence of a strategic document, but rather by the consistency of different decisions.

Centralization also emerged as one of the biggest problems. There is a gap between the central government and the regions, whether in access to decision-makers, in representing problems, or in the ability to litigate. One participant pointed out that environmental cases may be brought from Cairo concerning problems in Port Said or elsewhere, without sufficient participation from lawyers and local institutions, which weakens the case’s ability to reflect the local reality. Centralization is also linked to another problem: the lack of clarity regarding responsibilities. One participant noted that *civil society lacks a clear map outlining “who is responsible for what,” meaning that attempting to reach an official in one agency might result in being referred to another*. This led to the idea of creating a map of government bodies, ministries, and agencies responsible for various environmental policies, enabling civil society to reach the appropriate person or entity involved in the decision-making process.

The problem of governance is not limited to access to officials, but also extends to access to information. Participants pointed out that information does not always reach civil society, and that information produced by civil society itself does not receive sufficient institutional recognition, thus not necessarily being included in state calculations or international reports. This presents a striking paradox: the state possesses research centers and scientific personnel, and civil society has field experience and close ties to communities, yet knowledge is not necessarily transferred between the two. Therefore, the weakness of knowledge governance becomes part of the problem of environmental governance itself.

Governance was also linked to parliament and legislation. Participants indicated *that some existing laws, such as the Agriculture Law, the Nile River Law, and the Environmental Protection Law, are outdated and were not designed in the context of current climate change*. They also pointed out the limited knowledge of some parliamentarians regarding climate issues, despite the presence of enthusiastic members working on them. This presents an opportunity for civil society to build their capacity and provide them with the necessary information. Conversely, participants do not view the government as a monolithic entity. One participant noted the existence of government institutions and research centers that already collaborate with civil society, and the presence of specialized personnel with whom communication is possible. Therefore, treating the “state” as a single entity may be inaccurate; there are entities with which partnerships can be built, others that require pressure or accountability, and still others that may be outside the sphere of direct influence. Here, participants highlighted the concept of mapping as more than just a list of organizations or entities; it is an attempt to understand the map of power, knowledge, relationships, and responsibilities: Who is working on what? Who has the expertise? Who is affiliated with which institution? And who could be a partner in a particular issue?

The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Climate Justice: Roles, Experiences, Challenges, and Opportunities

Discussions reveal that **civil society already possesses a wealth of diverse experience in addressing environmental and climate issues. Its role extends beyond awareness-raising and service provision to include working with local communities, producing knowledge, advocating for and influencing policies, litigating and ensuring accountability, creating local models and alternatives, and engaging with funding institutions and corporations.** At the same time, discussions have shown that this experience remains fragmented across various organizations and initiatives, and has not yet coalesced into a collective force capable of exerting sustained influence on public policy. Therefore, the fundamental challenge lies not in the absence of a role, but rather in how to organize the available expertise and transform it from disparate practices into a collective capacity for knowledge production, influence, and accountability.

i. THE ROLES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACCORDING TO THE PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS

1. Working with Local Communities and Starting from Their Needs Direct work with local communities emerges as one of the most important roles that civil society can play, especially given its ability to connect with affected groups and understand the details of problems that may not be reflected in public policies or official indicators. Participants presented various experiences in working with small farmers, organic farming, improving local breeds and native seeds, utilizing agricultural waste, and local experiences in planting fruit trees, among other initiatives. These experiences reveal an important value of civil society, which one participant described as *“producing solutions from within communities, not just transferring ready-made solutions to them.”* The discussions highlighted examples of attempts to develop alternatives linked to local resources and the actual needs of the population, such as the experience of planting fruit trees in a village

in Sohag, so that the trees become directly beneficial to the residents, which can increase the community's willingness to preserve them. The importance of these experiences extends beyond the immediate environmental aspect. This raises the question of "who defines climate solutions and who participates in their creation." When work begins with people's needs and experiences, the community becomes a partner in creating the solution, not just a beneficiary. This intersects with the criticism participants leveled at some top-down approaches, suggesting instead the necessity of asking communities what they truly need before designing interventions.

2. Education, Awareness-Raising, and Building Consciousness Education and awareness-raising were among the most frequently mentioned roles in the shared experiences. **Participants referred to working with children, eco-schools, training, climate writing workshops, popularizing science, and efforts to make climate issues more relevant to people's lives.** However, the discussion did not treat awareness-raising as an end in itself. There was clear criticism of the idea of simply raising awareness, with emphasis placed on the need for civil society to move beyond awareness-raising to engaging with policymakers, addressing officials, and monitoring issues that genuinely affect people's lives, such as spending and its impact on women's health. In this context, some educational experiences gained particular value because they did not rely solely on information transfer but linked learning to practice. The experience of working with children through collecting, reusing, and transforming waste into tools has transformed an abstract environmental issue into a practical activity in which children can participate and understand its impact. This experience reveals that awareness is most effective when it translates into practice and participation, and when it is linked to people's ability to act. Therefore, the role of civil society in education is not limited to increasing climate knowledge, but can extend to building the capacity of individuals and communities to understand, articulate, and participate in addressing problems.

3. Knowledge Production and Linking Local Experience to Research: Discussions showed that civil society possesses an advantage not shared by many other institutions: its proximity to affected communities and direct experience with their problems. **However, participants also pointed out a gap between this experience and the production of research-based knowledge capable of influencing policy.** Some organizations possess accumulated field experience, solutions, and expertise, but they do not always have the data and studies that allow this experience to be translated into usable advocacy evidence. Therefore, the importance of collaboration with universities and research centers was highlighted, so that partnerships can combine civil society's knowledge of the reality on the ground with research and analytical tools. This issue is even more crucial in climate-related matters, as these are complex issues where the environment intersects with the economy, labor, agriculture, health, and urban development. Therefore, no single organization can possess all the necessary expertise. Networking with researchers and specialists becomes a means not only to obtain information but also to transform the fragmented knowledge within civil society into knowledge that can inform policymaking. **At the same time, participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that the knowledge produced is not detached from the beneficiaries/affected parties, but rather that the community itself is a source of knowledge.** This was evident in the discussion about local seeds, farmers' experiences, and the solutions they are developing, as these are experiences that should be documented and transformed into knowledge upon which to build.

4. Advocacy and Influencing Legislation and Policies: The groups presented clear experiences in advocacy and communication with decision-makers. **Among these was the experience of preparing a guide to environmental law for parliamentarians and organizing sessions with them. This experience demonstrates that civil society can play a role that goes beyond simply presenting demands to providing the necessary knowledge and evidence to decision-makers.** The experience also showed that influencing policies requires a thorough understanding of the issue and the ability to present it in a way that can be utilized within legislative institutions. Participants emphasized the importance of those communicating with parliamentarians being thoroughly familiar with all aspects of the issue, or as one participant put it, “well-prepared” and possessing sufficient information. However, experiences revealed that producing evidence alone does not guarantee influence. Disagreements arose regarding the nature of the language used with the state; some believe it is crucial to use language that opens avenues for dialogue, while others argue that the problem does not always lie in the style of discourse, but rather in the lack of recognition of civil society itself as a qualified party in the decision-making process. Therefore, advocacy, as demonstrated by the participants’ experiences, requires a comprehensive set of tools: knowledge, evidence, relationships, networking, and the ability to build collective pressure.

5. Strategic Litigation and Accountability Litigation is one of the avenues in which civil society has practical experience. Participants presented cases related to trees and other environmental issues, as well as experiences related to drainage and infrastructure projects. These experiences reveal that litigation can be a tool for accountability and policy change, but it requires more than just legal expertise. A problem of lacking local networking emerged when a case is filed in a governorate by actors based in Cairo without sufficient participation from lawyers and organizations in the same governorate. **Therefore, communication with lawyers in the regions was proposed as a prerequisite for making litigation more relevant to the local context and more effective in addressing the issue.** Participants also shared experiences in using complaint and accountability mechanisms with international financial institutions. Complaints to the World Bank were cited, resulting in action and compensation, along with an experience related to the European Investment Bank and a drainage project. Based on this experience, a proposal emerged to establish an observatory for loans and projects related to the green transition. This observatory would allow for monitoring funding and projects, identifying violations, and filing complaints. This proposal reveals the potential for civil society to shift from reacting to violations after they occur to building mechanisms for early detection and ongoing follow-up.

6. Creating Models and Alternatives: Civil society emerges in the participants’ experiences not only as an opponent of policies but also as capable of testing practical alternatives. Participants presented experiences in agroecology, breed improvement, agricultural waste utilization, eco-processing, and native seeds, along with other local models. These experiences reveal the importance of the experimental role of civil society; it can test a small-scale model, document its results, and then use the experience to advocate for and demand broader policies. This was clearly evident in the discussion on adaptation, where one participant argued that *civil society cannot assume the role of the state in implementing adaptation on a large scale, but it can generate alternative policies and create experiences that can be learned from. The focus should be on mitigation and*

reduction, not adaptation. Therefore, the value of these experiences lies not only in their direct results but also in their ability to provide practical evidence of the possibility of alternatives.

7. Civil Society as a Link Between the State and Societies: A vision has emerged that views civil society as a link between the government and stakeholders, enabling it to convey the needs of communities to the state and, conversely, to explain policies to the public and negotiate their amendment. In this view, the relationship with the state is not necessarily one of constant confrontation, but rather can combine dialogue, negotiation, and advocacy. However, experience has shown the limitations of this mediating role. Not every disagreement with the state can be resolved through dialogue, and not every government institution is equally open to civil society. Therefore, the ability of civil society to function as a link depends on the existence of genuine spaces for participation and its recognition as a partner, not merely on its ability to choose an appropriate discourse.

II. INTERNAL CHALLENGES LIMITING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The groups revealed that the obstacles facing civil society are not all external. In addition to constraints related to funding, information, and access to decision-makers, there are internal problems related to fragmentation, weak networking, and the exchange of knowledge and expertise. There is also a lack of specialized technical expertise in various climate issues.

1. Weak Transfer of Experience and Knowledge Accumulation within Civil Society Participants indicated that expertise already exists, but part of the problem lies in the lack of sufficient mechanisms to preserve and transfer this expertise. Therefore, the concept of “institutional memory” emerged as a fundamental question: What happens to knowledge when its owner leaves? Does the expertise remain within the organization or leave with them? The weak transfer of expertise also takes a horizontal form among organizations. **Discussions indicated that organizations working in related fields do not always share information or the results of studies and reports, and that competition for funding or visibility may contribute to the continuation of this situation. As a result, accumulated expertise and experience may exist within multiple institutions without being transformed into shared knowledge that other actors can benefit from.**

This problem is particularly significant given the nature of climate issues, which require the long-term accumulation of knowledge and experience. Each institution may have to rebuild its expertise entirely if mechanisms for documentation and exchange are not in place, while sharing expertise can save time and resources, prevent the repetition of mistakes, and build upon existing achievements. It is noteworthy that participants did not view this problem as merely a lack of communication, but rather directly linked it to the capacity of civil society to exert influence. Weak knowledge sharing means that civil society does not fully utilize its existing resources. One entity may possess expertise in research, another in advocacy, a third in litigation, and a fourth in relationships with state institutions, but the lack of coordination prevents the pooling of these resources for collaborative action. Participants described this as civil society reproducing some of the very problems it criticizes in state institutions, such as operating in isolation and failing to

form a cohesive bloc. One participant noted that *“the government may exclude civil society from some dialogue processes, but civil society itself cannot always form a clear bloc that compels the government to acknowledge its presence.”* Therefore, expanding the space for civic participation depends not only on the state’s willingness to open this space, but also on civil society’s own ability to organize its collective power and formulate common positions.

2. Funding and Sustainability: Funding emerged as a key challenge to the sustainability of civil action. Many organizations’ reliance on project funding means that the continuation of some activities is tied to the priorities of funders, while climate issues require long-term work and the accumulation of knowledge and experience. In response, participants presented experiences in seeking alternative resources, such as trusts, cooperatives, local financing mechanisms, and financial models tailored to the needs of communities. **These experiences indicate that the pursuit of financial sustainability is not separate from climate justice itself. The ability of organizations to continue working with communities, documenting their problems, and monitoring policies is largely dependent on their ability to maintain relatively stable and independent resources.**

3. Restrictions on Access, Participation, and Information Discussions highlighted difficulties in accessing information, noting that information produced by civil society itself does not always find its way into official institutions or approved reports. Problems related to access to decision-makers and the gap between the central government and the regions also emerged. This directly impacts civil society’s ability to fulfill its various roles; a lack of information weakens research, weak research weakens advocacy, and difficulty in accessing officials limits the ability to translate knowledge into policy, while weak local participation weakens the ability of issues to represent the affected communities.

iii. THE ADVANTAGES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The discussions reveal that civil society, despite the challenges it faces, possesses a number of strengths that grant it an important role in addressing environmental and climate issues. These advantages are not only related to the number or diversity of organizations, but also to their location, expertise, and relationships with local communities, as well as their ability to generate knowledge, propose alternatives, and access areas that official institutions cannot reach to the same extent.

1. Proximity to Local Communities and Understanding of Their Problems One of the most prominent strengths revealed by experience is the ability of civil society organizations to work closely with local communities and address their problems directly. **This proximity provides civil society with knowledge that cannot be obtained solely from official reports, as it is formed through daily interaction with people and their economic, social, and environmental conditions.** The importance of this characteristic is particularly evident in climate issues, where the effects of environmental changes vary from one community to another. The experiences presented by participants in agriculture, working with small farmers, using local seeds, trees, and agricultural waste demonstrate that organizations can grasp the details of problems and solutions that arise

from within the community itself. This enables them to convey the voices of affected groups to decision-making bodies.

2. Possessing Accumulated Field Experience Organizations do not start from scratch when dealing with environmental and climate issues, but rather possess accumulated experience gained through years of fieldwork. This was evident in the diverse experiences presented by participants, ranging from agricultural and environmental work to awareness-raising, advocacy, litigation, and engagement with funding institutions. The importance of this experience lies in the fact that it provides civil society with practical knowledge of what can be implemented and what difficulties it faces on the ground. Field experience also allows for the testing of ideas and models before they are proposed as public policies, which empowers civil society to offer alternatives based on actual practice, not just theoretical concepts.

3. Flexibility and the Ability to Innovate Solutions and Alternatives: The experiences presented by the participants reveal an ability to innovate local solutions and experiment with alternatives outside traditional frameworks. Examples include experiments in organic farming, utilizing agricultural waste, eco-manufacturing, local seeds, and fruit tree cultivation. The significance of this feature lies in the fact that civil society is not limited to criticizing existing policies, but can also play an experimental role: testing an idea on a limited scale, monitoring its results, and then using the findings of the experiment to advocate for or demand its expansion. This allows it to offer public policy practical models instead of merely making general demands.

4. Diversity of Experiences and Tools within Civil Society: The focus groups demonstrated that civil society does not possess a single type of experience. Some organizations possess expertise in research, others in fieldwork, others in awareness-raising, and still others in advocacy or litigation, in addition to expertise related to funding, accountability, and dealing with international institutions. This expertise represents a resource that can empower civil society to develop integrated interventions.

5. The ability to produce knowledge and connect it to reality: Civil society possesses a significant advantage in its ability to produce knowledge grounded in real-world experience. Its experience working with communities enables it to identify problems that may not appear in general indicators. Furthermore, the **presence of research, human rights, and environmental organizations within the civil society sphere provides the potential for producing studies, reports, and evidence. This advantage is amplified when research knowledge is combined with knowledge generated by the communities themselves.** For example, the experience of farmers is not merely personal; it can be documented, analyzed, and transformed into knowledge that can be used in discussions about agricultural and climate policies.

SECTION 2

FGDs WITH STAKEHOLDERS & BENEFICIARIES

The FGD engaged a total of 14 participants including workers in the fishing industry and related professions, construction workers, 3 female workers in a ready-made garment factory. Although limited in number the exchanges provided insights in key issues covered in the guidance document.

Participants' Perception of Climate Change and its Impact on the Work Environment and Livelihoods

The focus group results revealed a clear disparity in participants' understanding of the concept of climate change. However, this disparity was not solely related to educational level or occupation, but also to the degree to which economic activity is linked to natural resources, the level of economic stability, and access to professional organizations and training. Participants' experiences appeared to be a direct reflection of their different positions within the labor market, as their understanding of climate change varied according to their daily working conditions and livelihood priorities. Fishermen, with experience ranging from fifteen to thirty years, were the most able to connect climate change to the environmental transformations that lakes and the sea have witnessed in recent decades. They not only used some scientific concepts but also explained the relationship between rising temperatures and the disruption of marine ecosystems. One participant defined global warming as: "It's a global phenomenon resulting from increased pollutants... gases are returning to Earth, and this is the reason for the temperature increase." Despite the simplicity of this definition, it reflects an attempt to understand the phenomenon within its general framework. **However, a deeper understanding came from long practical experience, as fishermen were able to observe the transformations that occurred in the marine environment through continuous comparison between the past and present.** One of them explained: *"We felt the lakes change due to global warming... the seasons became disrupted; we no longer knew when the season would begin and end."* Another added: *"The plants in the water have changed... dodder is no longer found except in certain places."* **These testimonies indicate that fishermen do not perceive climate change as merely a rise in temperatures, but rather as a change in the entire ecosystem, including plants and marine organisms, breeding and migration seasons, and the natural conditions upon which their profession has depended for decades.**

In contrast, the perception of construction workers and day laborers seemed more closely tied to their direct experience and immediate impacts of climate change. When asked about the concept of climate change, they didn't offer a scientific definition but rather linked it to rising temperatures and industrial pollution. One of them said, *"I heard the term but didn't pay attention... but it's gotten so much hotter."* He added, *"The Sinmar factory is harmful to the environment, and people are ending up in the chest hospital because of it."* These responses reveal that this group's focus is

on the immediate effects on their daily lives, such as heat or pollution-related illnesses, without connecting these phenomena to the broader climatic context.

This disparity cannot be explained as a lack of environmental awareness as much as it reflects the differing priorities imposed by their economic circumstances. Day laborers repeatedly expressed that finding employment is the primary challenge in their lives, and that thinking about climate change remains secondary to the search for a daily livelihood. This is clearly illustrated by one participant's statement: *"We're working, we don't care if it's hot or cold... we're just thinking about finishing the job and getting paid."* Another said: *"We're completely out of it... nobody sees us."* Elsewhere, a worker summarized his suffering by saying *"I have five children in school... I might work for twenty days, or I might be unemployed."* These testimonies reflect how poverty and economic vulnerability reshape individuals' priorities. **When the ability to meet basic needs is uncertain, long-term environmental concerns take a backseat to the demands of daily survival.** Therefore, the lack of concern for climate change among some groups should not be interpreted as a lack of awareness, but rather as a direct consequence of socioeconomic vulnerability, which makes securing income, food, and shelter more urgent than considering future environmental risks.

As for the garment factory worker, her understanding of climate change fell somewhere between the two groups. The participants linked the phenomenon to increased pollution from factories and cars, but they focused mainly on the impact of rising temperatures in the work environment, and the accompanying physical exhaustion and decline in productivity. One of the workers said: *"There is more exhaustion... we suffer more health-wise... we get more short of breath... and winter is better."* She added, *"The heat reduces effort, slows down pace, and makes it harder to breathe."* These testimonies reveal that the workers' awareness is primarily focused on the immediate effects of climate change within the workplace, while largely lacking an understanding of the long-term impacts that could affect the industry itself. This became evident when she was asked about her needs for adapting to climate change. She replied, *"I want central air conditioning... and if I can't change it at the factory, I'll get air conditioning at home."* This answer should not be interpreted simply as a suggestion for improving the work environment, but rather as an indication of how some workers understand the concept of adaptation. **From their perspective, adaptation consists of individual solutions that help them cope with current conditions, without considering the broader environmental or economic impacts of these solutions.** The increased reliance on air conditioning itself is a model of solutions that may mitigate the immediate impact of rising temperatures on individuals, but if it depends on energy-intensive sources, it could lead to increased energy consumption and exacerbate the climate problem in the long run. This response also reveals another gap in climate risk awareness. The worker focused on immediate health and physical impacts, while the discussions failed to connect climate change with the future of the garment industry itself, or its potential future impact from the shift towards a low-carbon economy, changes in global production patterns, or disruptions to supply chains—factors that could affect job stability within the sector. **This highlights the need to broaden awareness campaigns beyond simply explaining the effects of increased heat, extending to clarifying the long-term economic repercussions of climate change on various productive sectors.** It is also noteworthy

that the level of awareness correlated with the degree of professional organization and access to information. Fishermen, most of whom are members of unions or cooperatives, were the most frequent users of environmental terminology and the most frequent linkers of climate change to public policies. They also mentioned their participation in climate or occupational safety training and meetings, although they criticized the limited scope of these activities. On the other hand, construction workers and day laborers lacked any similar organizational framework, which was reflected in their limited access to information or participation in awareness-raising activities, as well as the absence of any entity representing their interests or conveying their experiences to decision-making circles. **These findings collectively indicate that awareness of climate change is not determined solely by the degree of exposure to its impacts, but is shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including the nature of the occupation, the level of economic vulnerability, the presence of professional organizations, and access to knowledge and training. They also emphasize that awareness and adaptation programs cannot rely on uniform messages for all groups, but must consider the diverse circumstances and needs of workers and link social justice with climate justice, since the most vulnerable groups are often the least able to engage with environmental issues, despite being the most exposed to their impacts.**

Adapting to Climate Change: Individual Solutions that Increase Worker Vulnerability

The focus group findings revealed that adaptation to climate change within the sectors studied is largely individual, lacking institutional policies to help workers cope with increased risks. Participants' adaptation was not linked to developing production methods, providing protection, or improving the work environment. Instead, it took the form of emergency responses aimed at preserving income, even if it resulted in increased physical and economic burdens. In the fishing sector, environmental changes have necessitated a complete reorganization of the workday. Fishermen have had to adjust their out-of-sea schedules to maintain fish quality, as rising temperatures are causing some of the catch to spoil before reaching markets. One participant explained, *"Before, we'd set out at dinnertime, and the fishmonger would come in the morning to collect the fish... Now, we set out at ten o'clock at night because the fish can't withstand the heat anymore."* However, this change hasn't eased the workload; on the contrary, it has been accompanied by longer fishing trips and decreased productivity. One fisherman said, *"A fisherman used to fish for three or four hours... Now it's twelve."* Another added, *"Before, we could catch twenty kilos in three hours... Now it takes us three days."* These testimonies reflect that adaptation is achieved by doubling the effort and working longer hours, without a corresponding improvement in production or income. This leads to a depletion of human capital and increased economic and health vulnerability for workers.

In the construction sector, the picture of adaptation is even harsher. Despite acknowledging the rising temperatures and changing weather patterns, the workers emphasized that they have no option to reduce their working hours or stop working during heat waves, as their income depends entirely on daily wages. One participant expressed this sentiment, saying, *"We work regardless*

of whether it's hot or cold." Another added, *"Sun or rain... we work."* A third worker stated, *"If I stay home, I won't have anything to eat."* These testimonies reveal that **for daily laborers, adapting to the climate does not mean changing working conditions, but rather enduring the conditions as they are, no matter how harsh, because the cost of stopping work outweighs the health risks of continuing.** This highlights a close relationship between economic vulnerability and adaptability. Workers who rely on daily income lack the flexibility to make decisions that reduce their exposure to climate risks, making poverty itself a contributing factor to increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change.

Climate Change Reshapes the Local Labor Market

The effects of climate change have not been limited to decreased production or increased working hours, but have extended to reshaping the labor market within coastal communities. Many participants explained that the decline in fishing productivity has led many workers to abandon the profession altogether and seek alternative sources of income. One participant remarked, *"Many people have left the profession... they and their wives now work in the investment zone."* Another said, *"I left fishing... I now sell fish."* A participant also explained that the city of Ezbet El-Borg has witnessed a large-scale migration of fishermen: *"Half of the fishermen have left the country... and migrated to Greece, Cyprus, Italy, and Turkey."* These testimonies reveal that **climate change, along with other economic pressures, has become a factor driving the redistribution of labor across different sectors, and even international migration, with all the social and economic repercussions this entails for local communities.**

The impact of climate change extends to entire value chains. One of the key findings of the discussions was that the decline in fishing activity doesn't only affect fishermen, but also all economic activities linked to the sector. Those working in the fishing equipment industry clearly explained this relationship, with one saying: *"We depend on the fishermen... anything that affects them affects us."* He added: *"If the fisherman stops working, the whole town (meaning his place of residence) stops working."* Participants also pointed out that the decline in production affects not only the net-making industry and fishing equipment, but also extends to the women who clean the fish, fishmongers, transport drivers, and vegetable vendors in the markets, highlighting the interconnected nature of the local economy in coastal areas. These findings indicate that **assessing the economic impacts of climate change should not be limited to measuring losses in the fishing sector alone, but should also include the associated value chains, on which a large number of workers depend.**

Women Between Wage Work and Invisible Work

The focus group showed that women bear a double burden as a result of climate change, not only due to working conditions, but also due to the continued responsibilities of caregiving and domestic work. A worker at a clothing factory explained that the high temperatures led to in-

creased physical exhaustion inside the factory, saying, “It’s more exhausting... we’re more physically tired.” She added, *“The heat reduces our energy and makes it hard to breathe.” But as soon as the workday ends, other responsibilities begin at home, which she expressed as follows: “I finish my work at the factory... and go home to start another day.”* The discussions also revealed the precarious situation of women working in the informal economy, especially those who clean fish or make fishing supplies from home. Many of them work without contracts, insurance, or protective equipment, for low wages based on daily production. One participant said about shrimp cleaning work, “You can sit from dawn till noon peeling shrimp... and earn twenty pounds per kilo.” Another added, “If you get hurt, you go get stitches and then go back to work.” When asked about the group most affected by crises, most participants agreed that women face greater risks. This is not only due to caregiving responsibilities, but also because women often lose their jobs more quickly, while their opportunities to find alternative employment are more limited. One participant said, “If a woman leaves her job... it’s not easy to find an alternative opportunity.” These findings confirm **that climate change does not produce gender-neutral impacts, but rather interacts with the existing division of labor between women and men, leading to increased vulnerability for women, especially those working in the informal or low-wage economy.**

The Role of Civil Society in Supporting Climate Change Adaptation and Achieving a Just Transition

The discussions revealed a clear divergence in participants’ perceptions of the role of civil society. This divergence was linked to their economic circumstances, their level of integration into the labor market, and their interaction with unions or NGOs. The results also showed that the most organized groups, such as fishermen and garment factory workers, were better able to distinguish between the roles of the state and civil society. These boundaries appeared less clear among day laborers and construction workers, whose lack of access to basic services influenced their expectations of society. Regarding the role of civil society participants discussions revealed

1. Confusing Charity with Human Rights Discussions revealed that construction workers and day laborers’ experience with civil society was mostly limited to charities and seasonal aid, which influenced their perception of its role. When asked about civil society organizations, their responses immediately focused on in-kind or financial assistance, expressing a lack of trust in its effectiveness. One participant said, “It’s all talk... we get nothing but talk from them.” Another added, “They offer aid... but with humiliation. Who would accept humiliation?” These testimonies reveal that the relationship between this group and civil society remains governed by the charitable model, which provides temporary assistance without leaving a lasting impact on their economic conditions or their ability to cope with crises. In contrast, fishermen presented a different perspective, associated with human rights organizations, cooperative societies, and unions. They emphasized training, capacity building, awareness-raising, and advocacy for rights, reflecting Greater engagement with organizations working in the development and human rights fields, not just the charitable sector. These findings highlight the need to distinguish between the charitable role, which focuses on relief and

short-term aid, and the human rights and development role, which aims to empower the most vulnerable groups, defend their rights, and enhance their resilience to climate change.

2. Confusion Between the Roles of Civil Society and the State The confusion among some participants was not limited to distinguishing between charitable work and human rights work, but also extended to failing to differentiate between the responsibilities of civil society and those of the state. A number of construction workers and day laborers demanded that civil society provide job opportunities, land grants, projects, or pensions—demands that are fundamentally the responsibility of the state and its social protection policies. One participant said, “We want a piece of land to cultivate.” Another said, “We want a project to work from.” A third added, “Give us a pension.” These demands reflect not so much a misunderstanding as the extent of deprivation experienced by this group. **With the absence of social protection and the weak presence of the state in their daily lives, civil society has come to be seen as the only entity capable of intervention, regardless of the limits of its jurisdiction.** The fishermen, however, were much clearer in distinguishing between the roles of the state and civil society. They observed that civil society is responsible for raising awareness, building capacity, providing training, offering technical support, and advocating for the profession, while the state bears the responsibility for legislation, social dialogue, social protection, supporting safety measures, and involving professionals in decision-making. This distinction appears to be linked to the degree of professional organization. **The presence of unions and cooperative societies, along with the participation of some fishermen in training projects and programs, has contributed to a clearer understanding of the roles of different actors, compared to day laborers who lack any representative organization.**

3. The Capacity building role of civil society should begin at the local level, not in the capital. One of the most frequent criticisms raised during the discussions was the concentration of civil society activities in Cairo and Alexandria, depriving workers in the governorates of opportunities to benefit from them. The fishermen pointed out that traveling to attend training represents a significant financial burden, especially for daily or seasonal workers, and many cannot afford to leave their jobs or the transportation costs. One participant said, “We hope that associations will truly care for these groups and go to them where they are, because people don’t have the luxury of traveling.” He added, “I was the only one who attended the training.” A garment factory worker added, “Not everyone goes to the factory; only two or three people do.” This reflects not a lack of desire to learn, but rather the centralization of services and training programs, which deprives the most vulnerable groups of access. Therefore, **expanding the scope of civil society interventions requires not only increasing the number of programs, but also geographically redistributing them so that they reach local communities instead of waiting for workers to travel to them.**

4. CSO Intervention should move away from general programs to responding to actual needs. The discussions revealed that the quality of civil society interventions is not only related to providing activities or training, but also to the extent to which these interventions are based on the needs of the target groups and their participation in the design phase. The results of the focus groups showed two different patterns of practices; On the one hand, some participants noted that some organizations consult with them before designing projects or interventions, while others felt that

many programs are designed in advance, without a sufficient understanding of the different needs of various professions. One fisherman said, “*Some organizations take our opinion into account when designing projects.*” However, he clarified that this approach is still limited and does not represent the prevailing practice, which is reflected in the nature of interventions that do not always respond to the priorities of workers or the specificities of each sector. This gap was clearly evident when discussing occupational safety and health training programs, which participants presented as examples of general programs that do not take into account the differences in work environments. One fisherman said, “The training is comprehensive... what works for a fisherman is different from what works for a farmer or a factory worker.” This testimony reveals that the problem does not lie in the lack of training, but rather in its design. Some programs are presented as suitable for all sectors, even though the nature of the risks differs fundamentally between fishermen, construction workers, garment factory workers, and others. Fishermen need training in maritime safety, dealing with extreme weather conditions, and rescue equipment, while construction workers need skills to prevent heat stress and workplace injuries, and factory workers need training in chemical and respiratory hazards and improving the work environment. The garment worker also pointed out that training does not reach all workers directly, but is limited to a small number who then pass the information on to their colleagues, thus limiting the benefit to all workers from these programs. **These findings indicate that the effectiveness of civil society interventions does not depend on the number of training sessions conducted, but rather on the quality of the design process and the extent of participation of the target groups in determining the topics and priorities. The most impactful interventions are those that stem from the needs of local communities and are designed in partnership with the professionals themselves, rather than relying on standardized training models applied to all sectors.** These results confirm that involving target groups in the design of interventions is not merely a means to improve program quality, but is a fundamental principle of a just transition, which is based on ensuring the participation of workers and local communities in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Therefore, the shift from centrally designed interventions to participatory interventions is a prerequisite for increasing the effectiveness of climate change adaptation programs and enhancing the confidence of local communities in civil society institutions.’

5. The role of Unions as a Gateway to Empowerment Discussions revealed that the existence of unions was a significant factor in raising awareness, accessing training, and facilitating participation. Fishermen, as members of cooperative societies and unions, indicated their participation in some meetings and consultations, and some received specialized training, even if it remained limited. A garment factory worker explained that being part of the formal sector afforded her advantages unavailable to informal workers, saying, “I have health and social insurance, and I have an employment contract.” She added, “The union is important; it amplifies our voice, and when I travel for training, I take it as a union assignment.” In contrast, construction workers and day laborers lacked any union organization or representative framework to defend their interests or make their voices heard, which resulted in fewer opportunities to access training, information, or even awareness of institutions that could support them. These results demonstrate that **trade union organization is not limited to defending workers’ rights, but also serves as a channel for accessing knowledge, building capacity, and enhancing resilience to climate crises.**

Participants' Priorities for the Required Role of Civil Society

The discussions revealed that participants view civil society not merely as a provider of aid, but as a partner capable of contributing to strengthening local communities' resilience to climate change, provided that its interventions stem from the daily realities of workers and respond to their actual needs. The priorities raised by the participating groups varied according to their economic circumstances and level of organization, but several common issues emerged clearly.

1. Raising Awareness and Linking it to Daily Life Although fishermen were the most knowledgeable about the concept of climate change, they observed that awareness within local communities remains limited and that there is a need to simplify concepts and connect them to daily practices that affect livelihoods. One fisherman said, *"The most important thing now is awareness."* This wasn't about providing theoretical information about climate change, but rather about raising awareness among workers about how to adapt to changing seasons, manage risks, conserve natural resources, and avoid practices that further degrade the environment.

2. Reaching the Most Marginalized Groups (Informal Workers/Women/People with Disabilities) Participants emphasized that one of the most significant challenges is the concentration of civil society activities in major cities, while local communities, especially in coastal and rural areas, remain less likely to benefit from these interventions. One fisherman said, *"We hope that organizations will genuinely pay attention to these groups and go to them where they are, because people don't have the luxury of traveling."* This statement indicates that the low participation isn't due to a lack of interest, but rather to economic and logistical constraints that prevent many workers from leaving their jobs or bearing the costs of transportation. This makes decentralization a prerequisite for the success of civil society interventions.

3. Balancing Direct Support and Capacity Building While daily laborers focused on their urgent needs related to income and social protection, fishermen emphasized that civil society's role should not be limited to providing aid, but should extend to capacity building, technical support, and training to cope with new challenges. One participant said, *"We want awareness... and we want young people coming in to find alternatives, benefit, and ensure a fair transition."* This statement reveals an understanding of the importance of investing in knowledge and skills as part of the adaptation process, rather than simply providing temporary crisis responses.

4. Enhancing Social Participation The discussions showed that participants are not only demanding the implementation of new projects, but also want to be part of the process of prioritizing these projects. One fisherman noted that some organizations do listen to their opinions before designing projects, but clarified that this is still more the exception than the rule. These findings indicate that community participation should not be limited to data collection, but should extend to all phases of the project, from needs assessment and intervention design to monitoring implementation and evaluating results.

5. Civil Society as a Partner in Just Transition The discussions reveal that participants expect civil society to play a role that goes beyond simply implementing activities. They envision it as a mediator between local communities and decision-makers, an advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable groups, and a partner in building long-term solutions. This means that, from the participants' perspective, civil society should work to:

- Design participatory interventions based on the needs of each professional sector.
- Raise awareness among local communities about climate change and connect it to their daily work
- Deliver activities and training to the most affected governorates and regions.
- Develop specialized programs that take into account the diversity of professions and needs.
- Support professional and trade union organizations as channels for worker representation.
- To play a supportive and advocacy role in conveying the demands of the most vulnerable groups to decision-makers.

Thus, civil society is not seen as an alternative to the state, nor as its adversary, but rather as a partner in building resilience, empowering local communities, and ensuring that policies for a just transition are more responsive to the needs of the most affected groups. As we have seen, and as the participants have expressed, the main challenge lies not so much in the absence of civil society interventions, but rather in how these interventions are designed, where they are implemented, and the extent to which target groups are involved in setting their priorities. Discussions revealed that interventions are most effective when they stem from the needs of local communities, consider the specificities of each profession, and are implemented close to the target groups, rather than relying on general or centralized programs that do not always respond to the realities of workers. Participants also emphasized that building resilience to climate change is not achieved through training or awareness campaigns alone, but requires a genuine partnership with professionals in designing and prioritizing projects. However, this partnership, while important, remains limited in its impact if it is not translated into public policies that respond to the needs of local communities. This led the discussions repeatedly to the role of the state as the primary actor responsible for legislation, regulation, and guiding development paths.

The Role of the State: Development, Social Protection, and Social Dialogue in Addressing Climate Change

Discussions revealed that participants do not view climate change as a natural phenomenon separate from public policies. Rather, they believe its effects are exacerbated by the absence of social protection, weak dialogue with stakeholders, and the implementation of development projects that do not always consider environmental and social dimensions. Thus, participants' demands extended beyond addressing climate change to include a call for a fundamental re-assessment of how the state manages development, employment, and social protection. The exchanges shed light on:

1. The Absence of Social Dialogue and the Exclusion of Stakeholders

The most frequent theme among participants, including fishermen, was their feeling of being excluded from the decision-making process, despite their extensive knowledge of the marine environment, fishing seasons, and the changes occurring within it. One participant said, “We are all union members, and when we attend a government plan meeting, none of our input is reflected in anything we said... Our participation is merely symbolic.” Another added, “We want genuine social dialogue on anything related to work and regulating the fishing profession.” A fisherman pointed out that the responsible authorities rely on technical studies and consultants without utilizing the accumulated experience of the workers themselves, saying, “They consulted the offices, the engineers, and the experts... They didn’t consult the fishermen and farmers.” These testimonies reflect a feeling that current participation is limited to formal consultations, without influencing final decisions. They also reveal a gap between the technical knowledge upon which public policies are based and the local knowledge possessed by professionals, which could contribute to designing more realistic and sustainable interventions. This contradicts the perspective of climate justice, where the effective participation of stakeholders is a fundamental condition for ensuring that policies respond to the needs of the most affected communities and minimize the unintended negative impacts of development interventions.

2. Development without adequate assessment of environmental and social impacts

Participants did not object to the idea of development or infrastructure improvement, but rather focused their criticism on how some projects are implemented and whether they take into account the nature of ecosystems and the livelihoods of local communities. Fishermen pointed out that the development and dredging of Lake Manzala, despite aiming to improve the lake’s conditions, had, in their view, led to the destruction of natural habitats that fish depend on for feeding and reproduction. This, they argued, was reflected in a decline in fish production and a decrease in biodiversity. One participant said, “Before the dredging of Lake Manzala, we used to catch about 20 kilos in three hours... now it takes three days.” Another added, “The fish build nests and homes... the environment has been destroyed. Where will the fish go?” Several fishermen also linked industrial projects built near the sea and lake to rising water temperatures, changing water color, and the decline of some fish species. One fisherman said, “The factory’s cooling system is in the middle of the water... the water itself has changed color.” Regardless of the scientific explanation for this relationship, these testimonies reflect an awareness among local communities that project evaluations should not be limited to economic returns, but should also include their environmental and social impacts on groups whose livelihoods depend on natural resources. **The findings also indicate that the absence of environmental and social impact assessments with the participation of local communities can be counterproductive, with some development interventions becoming a new source of vulnerability instead of enhancing resilience to climate change.**

3. Lack of Social Protection Exacerbates the Impacts of Climate Change

Discussions revealed that weak social protection systems were among the most significant factors increasing participants’ vulnerability to climate change. Construction workers and day laborers explained that they lack even the most basic forms of protection, such as health insurance,

social security, or alternative income when work stops. One participant said, “If you go to bed, you won’t find anything to eat.” Another added, “I have no insurance or medical treatment... I have nothing to prove I’m a citizen.” One worker recounted how he was forced to return to work the very next day after sustaining an injury, despite the doctor’s recommendation for him to rest, because he had no other source of income. Similarly, fishermen indicated that high insurance costs, coupled with declining incomes and increased fishing expenses, have led many to stop paying their contributions. One participant said, “The priority has become fishing expenses.” **These findings reveal that climate change alone does not increase vulnerability, but its effects become more severe when coupled with weak social safety nets, forcing workers to bear health and economic risks without any protection.**

4. Supporting the Transformation Instead of Burdening Workers with its Costs

The fishermen discussed several new measures related to regulating the profession and enhancing safety, such as the use of tracking devices or rescue equipment. They emphasized that they do not object to developing the profession or raising safety standards, but rather to bearing the full cost of these transformations without any support. One participant said, “There are new things like GPS... the government must help and provide facilities, but the idea of coercion and high prices is difficult.” Another added, “Safety requirements are very expensive... and the government is not helping.” These testimonies illustrate that the success of new policies depends not only on enacting legislation, but also on providing funding and support mechanisms that enable the targeted groups to comply, especially in sectors that rely on small and informal labor. **This is one of the fundamental principles of a just transition, which is based on not burdening the most vulnerable groups with the cost of environmental transformation alone, but rather sharing this cost equitably between the state, the private sector, and society.**

The State from the Participants’ Perspective

The discussions reveal that participants are not only calling on the state to provide financial support, but also to redefine its relationship with local communities by adopting more participatory policies, linking development plans to local expertise, strengthening social protection, conducting environmental and social assessments before project implementation, and providing the necessary support for implementing the required transformations. The findings indicate that achieving adaptation to climate change is not only linked to project implementation or infrastructure development, but also to the state’s ability to build trust with local communities, recognize the expertise of professionals, involve them in decision-making, and ensure that the most vulnerable groups do not bear the sole burden of environmental and economic transformations.

Intersecting the Visions of Actors and the Experiences of Beneficiaries

When compared to the perspectives of actors in focus groups, the beneficiaries' group reveals a clear convergence in their understanding of the role required of civil society. Both groups agreed on the importance of starting with the needs and actual circumstances of affected groups, and that civil society should move beyond awareness-raising to actively address issues and policies that impact people's lives, reaching the most vulnerable groups in regions and sectors most exposed to environmental and climate impacts. They also converged on the importance of linking climate issues to economic and social issues, particularly employment, income, health, and social protection, and not treating climate change as an environmental issue separate from the conditions that determine people's ability to adapt. This convergence reinforces the actors' emphasis on the necessity of involving local communities in knowledge and solution production, and the beneficiaries' recognition of the importance of ensuring that interventions are relevant to their actual needs and the nature of their problems. Conversely, the beneficiary group adds an important dimension that civil society should consider: the gap between the role that actors perceive themselves to be playing and what actually reaches the groups that are supposed to benefit from this role. Civil society's expertise in research, advocacy, litigation, networking, and developing alternatives does not necessarily translate into tangible impact for affected groups. Hence, the importance of not measuring the success of an intervention solely by the number of activities, training sessions, or studies conducted, but rather by their relevance to people's needs and their ability to effect change in their capacity to adapt, participate, and influence. Furthermore, the beneficiaries' experiences necessitate that civil society view them as knowledge holders and experts, not merely as target groups. Their experiences in work, environment, and livelihoods can contribute to defining the problem, setting priorities, and designing solutions. Therefore, the challenge facing civil society is not limited to developing its internal tools and capacities, but extends to reviewing the gap between the knowledge and roles it produces and what actually reaches communities, and transforming participation from merely listening to the needs of affected groups to a genuine partnership with them in building solutions and policies.

Community of Practice

At the conclusion of the discussion sessions, the concept of a *Community of Practice* was proposed and launched as an extension of collaborative work that brings together participants in Cairo and the governorates, especially young groups interested in climate change and climate justice. It provides an opportunity to exchange experiences at the national and regional levels, propose practical ideas on adaptation, implement local activities and case studies, and engage with other groups in partner countries in the research project through online events.

CONCLUSION

The discussion sessions revealed that climate change, as perceived by the participants, cannot be addressed as an environmental issue separate from its economic, social, and human rights contexts. The impacts of climate change were linked in the discussions to poverty and vulnerability, working conditions and income, health, social protection, agriculture, and livelihoods, with a clear emphasis on the fact that these impacts are not distributed equally, and that those already suffering from more fragile economic and social conditions are more vulnerable and less able to adapt. This led to the emergence of the concept of climate justice as a framework that goes beyond the distribution of damage and funding to broader questions of rights, responsibility, the ability to protect, and participation in shaping solutions. At the same time, the discussions revealed a gap between the existence of institutions, strategies, and policies, on the one hand, and their ability to operate coherently and in an integrated manner, on the other. According to the participants, the problem lies not only in the absence of institutions, but also in weak coordination, centralization, unclear responsibilities, difficulty accessing information, and the gap between written policies and actual practice. It also emerged that limited participation in policymaking is one of the reasons for the limited ability of these institutions to respond to the actual needs of affected groups.

Civil society emerged in the discussion as possessing significant potential and expertise, stemming from its close ties to local communities and extending to knowledge production, awareness-raising, advocacy, litigation, creating alternatives, and influencing policies. However, this potential is hampered by internal challenges, including weak networking and experience sharing, a lack of knowledge accumulation within institutions, and a shortage of specialized personnel and expertise, in addition to challenges related to funding, access to information, and decision-making. The discussions also revealed that civil society needs to move from fragmented efforts to building greater collective capacity for influence and accountability. This conclusion gains even greater significance when compared to the experiences of beneficiaries. It becomes clear that the challenge lies not only in civil society possessing the roles and tools, but also in the extent to which these roles reach the most affected groups and translate into tangible impact on their lives. Furthermore, the success of this role remains contingent on the existence of a state that embraces genuine social dialogue, recognizes the expertise of professionals, and integrates development policies with social protection and decent work policies. This ensures that climate change adaptation becomes part of a broader process aimed at achieving a just transition that guarantees the most vulnerable groups do not bear the sole burden of environmental and economic crises. In addition strengthening the role of civil society in climate justice requires combining its expertise in advocacy, knowledge production, and policy influence with the knowledge possessed by affected communities through their daily experiences. This means shifting from treating affected groups as objects of intervention to engaging them as partners in defining problems, setting priorities, developing solutions, and evaluating policies. Thus, the sessions conclude that **promoting climate justice is not only about developing environmental and climate policies, but also requires addressing the socioeconomic conditions that produce vulnerability, improving governance, coordination, and participation, and building a more cohesive civil society that is more connected to the communities whose interests it is meant to represent and whose rights it is meant to defend.**



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