



ADAPTATION FUND

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RAPID EVALUATION OF THE ADAPTATION FUND

Rapid evaluation of the Adaptation Fund

Full draft, 18 August 2023

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1. Executive summary

Since its operational launch in 2007, the Adaptation Fund (AF, or the Fund) has supported country-driven initiatives, fostered innovation, and facilitated global learning for effective adaptation actions and strategies. As per the Fund's most recent Annual Performance Report (AF, 2023a), by June 2022, its total portfolio comprised 132 completed, ongoing and ready to be launched projects in 101 countries with a total investment of more than 1 billion United States Dollars (USD). These operations are expected to benefit more than 10 million people directly. The Fund is a pioneer of developing countries' direct access modality to climate finance and a strong driver of concrete support to vulnerable communities in their efforts to adapt and build resilience to the negative effects of climate change – an endeavor that has become vital and urgent in face of the accelerating climate crisis.

This rapid evaluation synthesizes existing evidence and constitutes an input to ongoing discussions and decisions on the future overall evaluation of the Fund. It is not designed to enable accountability, assess the Fund's performance, provide actionable recommendations or comprehensively evaluate the Fund.

In this critical context, the Adaptation Fund Board (the Board) asked the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) to conduct a rapid evaluation as part of a phased approach to a comprehensive, overall evaluation of the Fund expected between 2024 and 2026.¹ Designed in close consultation with the Board and the Adaptation Fund secretariat (the secretariat), the rapid evaluation had three objectives:

- Objective 1: develop a framework to organize existing evidence around the Fund and from internal sources from the Fund
- Objective 2: synthesize evidence, lessons, and experiences to identify trends and knowledge gaps related to the Fund and its operations
- Objective 3: provide inputs to the overall evaluation of the Fund

In other words, the rapid evaluation provides both a snapshot of existing evidence and a preparatory step towards the overall evaluation.

Importantly, the evaluation focuses primarily on synthesizing existing evidence and enabling learning around a dynamic and ambitious climate fund with multiple facets. It thus constitutes an input to ongoing discussions and decisions on the future overall evaluation and other evaluative efforts from the AF-TERG. **Given distinct methodological limitations inherent to a rapid evaluation** – which does not produce new data or analysis but rather synthesizes existing evidence – **this report is not designed to enable accountability, assess the Fund's performance, provide actionable recommendations, or comprehensively evaluate the Fund.** That said, the rapid evaluation reflects a timely exercise which interrelates with the ongoing implementation of the second Medium-Term Strategy of the Fund (MTS-II, 2023-2027), as well as numerous recent and ongoing evaluative and analytical efforts by the AF-TERG and the secretariat, respectively.

The rapid evaluation was conducted between February and August 2023. It followed the initially planned sequence of steps outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), while adjusting to methodological challenges

¹ Decision B.29/7

emerging in each step. In line with its three objectives, the rapid evaluation produced the results described below.

1.1. Objective 1: Analytical framework for the rapid evaluation

Guided by a series of priority topics outlined in the ToR and based on 16 criteria identified for this exercise, this report is structured around an analytical framework covering three levels of macro, meso and micro (for more detail, see chapter 3): the Fund's overall performance and goals (macro), lessons learned concerning Fund policies, sectors, systemic issues, and country priorities (meso), and evidence from projects and activities funded by the Fund (micro) (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Analytical framework of the rapid evaluation (main levels):



Addressing guiding questions for each of these levels, the rapid evaluation is exclusively based on the in-depth review of existing documentation from the Fund, its secretariat and the AF-TERG. This review has been complemented with peer review and feedback loops with the secretariat² and the AF-TERG. The guiding questions were also presented, discussed and agreed with the Fund's Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC) at its March 2023 meeting.

1.2. Objective 2: Key findings from synthesis of existing evidence and knowledge and gaps

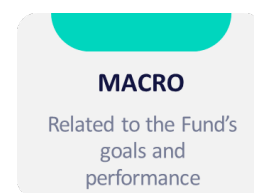
1.2.1. Findings for the macro level

Finding 1.1

The Fund is responsive to country needs, aligning with national and local policies and strategies relevant to climate change adaptation (CCA) and involving local players. Funding through National Implementing Entities (NIEs) remains limited. Locally-led adaptation (LLA) appears to be effective in operational practice but also faces inherent challenges due to weak capacities of local players.

Finding 1.2

Fund policies (Environmental and Social Policy [ESP] and Gender Policy [GP]) have systematically addressed the most vulnerable and have enabled higher quality project proposals. The Fund has not yet implemented



² On 15 March, 22 June and 10 August 2023, as well as a draft review round concluded on 15 August 2023

an intersectional approach to vulnerability and has yet to systematically and strategically address the distinct requirements of fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Finding 1.3

The Fund's niche is well-defined in MTS-II (2023-2027) and followed many of the recommendations from the MTR of the MTS-I. Ahead of MTS-II, the completion of the MTS-I (2018-2022) implementation plan showed slow progress in innovation and learning pillars, scalability constraints, and limited private sector involvement.

Finding 1.4

Both MTS enable portfolio evolution around three strategic pillars with a results focus. Furthermore, the MTS II and its implementation plan (launched in January 2023) provides opportunities to deepen key outcomes in Action (Strategic Pillar 1, SP1) while accelerating progress in Innovation (SP2) and Learning & Sharing (SP3).

1.2.2. Findings for the meso level

Finding 2.1

The Fund has implemented the ESP and GP Policies effectively, contributing to coherence and quality. The integration of equity (empowerment of vulnerable groups and distribution of benefits among them) and gender considerations has been limited in the results framework and monitoring tools.

Finding 2.2

Through the MTS-II, the Fund has improved its understanding of systemic challenges influencing its performance and impact. For example, it has identified seven cross-cutting themes. A comprehensive approach to ownership, adaptation effectiveness, and capacity-building for local players has not been operationalized, for example, through guidelines.

Finding 2.3

The Fund's work aligns with national strategies and policies through direct access and selection of topics for support for actions.

Finding 2.4

The Fund's underlying logic is not fully articulated in the MTS-II Theory of Change. It remains unclear how different processes and modalities, including funding windows, contribute to the Strategic Pillars.

1.2.3. Findings for the micro level

Finding 3.1

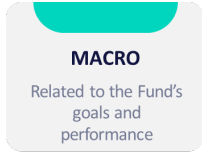

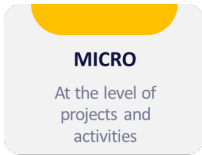
Projects completed and reviewed by final evaluations show strong relevance and coherence of projects supported by the AF. The documents provides evidence on criteria related to effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and adaptive management in



varied quality and quantity. Furthermore, the final evaluations do not systematically discuss the implication equity considerations, scalability and sustainability for CCA. Most of the evidence from final evaluations (FEs) reflects on projects that were designed and approved at the beginning of the Fund's operations and ahead of both MTS cycles.

1.2.4. Topics with insufficient evidence from reviewed documents

The documents reviewed by the team did not provide sufficient evidence on the following topics (these topics are a selection of larger lists included in the full report, see lists at the end of each chapter). The gaps are identified to support the development of future evaluations and knowledge products, for example. They do not represent gaps in the Fund strategies, policies nor operations as such.

 <p>MACRO Related to the Fund's goals and performance</p>	<p>Country ownership: comparison of operations supported through the different types of implementing entities (IEs). Synergies and coordination with other climate funds. Local players' capacities as a potential barrier for locally-based and locally-led climate change adaptation. Assessment of vulnerability for different target groups and the interrelations between them. Assessment of the cost effectiveness and timeliness of the Fund, its portfolio and modalities, and the adequacy in the use of scarce financial resources and expertise</p>
 <p>MESO Focusing on countries, issues and policies</p>	<p>Compliance with ESP and GP, including learning from it and as a way to assess policy quality and impact. Contribution of the Fund's operations to adaptation effectiveness at the country level. The relevance of funding windows to country priorities. The costs of accreditation from a point of view to efficiency.</p>
 <p>MICRO At the level of projects and activities</p>	<p>Synergies and tensions between national and local processes. Metrics for project-level impact. Intersectional approaches to equity and vulnerability in projects design and implementation. Basic ingredients for scalability. The role of local players in impact and sustainability</p>

1.3. Objective 3: Inputs to be considered for the overall evaluation

Looking ahead to the next overall evaluation, a series of lessons emerged from the rapid evaluation process that could be considered as inputs for determining the scope and format of the comprehensive future exercise. These inputs include the following:

Input 1: Increase the evaluation evidence pool by conducting (through a prioritization process) evaluations and research/knowledge products, particularly in distinct evaluation criteria.

Input 2: Country and IEs' perspectives are largely lacking in the existing evidence, particularly in relation to Fund's strategies and modalities. Consequently, more efforts are needed to involve country representatives in the evaluation process.

Input 3: The overall evaluation should include a study involving major climate finance players collaborating with the AF and partnering in its innovation portfolio.

Input 4: Evaluating the quality of the FEs proved complex due to recent ambitious benchmarks and varied quality of evidence. This could be continued as part of the 2024 synthesis report of FEs.

Input 5: Understanding the interlinkages between evaluation criteria and cross-cutting themes is essential to the Fund's objectives, particularly concerning vulnerable people, and should thus be reflected in the framework of the overall evaluation.

Input 6: To enhance clarity and effectiveness, a conventional evaluation design based on predefined criteria is recommended for the overall evaluation, as opposed to the rapid evaluation's focus on issues only.

2. Objectives

In line with the ToR, this rapid evaluation pursues the following main objectives:

1. “Develop a framework to organize existing evidence around the Fund’s mandate, priorities, core indicators and the Fund’s Evaluation Policy.
2. Synthesize evidence, lessons and experiences to identify trends and identify potential knowledge gaps, in relation to the results (including impact), operations and comparative advantage of the Fund.
3. Provide inputs to the overall evaluation of the Fund which, per Decision B.29/7, will conclude in 2026.”

During the synthesis and drafting stages, it became evident that the rapid evaluation offers additional opportunities to add value to various Fund-related processes. For example, it might inform ongoing AF-TERG work on the upcoming synthesis report on Fes. It could also contribute to the development of the AF-TERG work program, including the future mid-term review of MTS-II. In addition, it could support the Fund's participation in global dialogues on the evaluation of climate adaptation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sequence of methodological steps taken

The rapid evaluation took the following sequence of steps:

Figure 2: Timeline of the rapid evaluation (all dates referring to calendar year 2023)

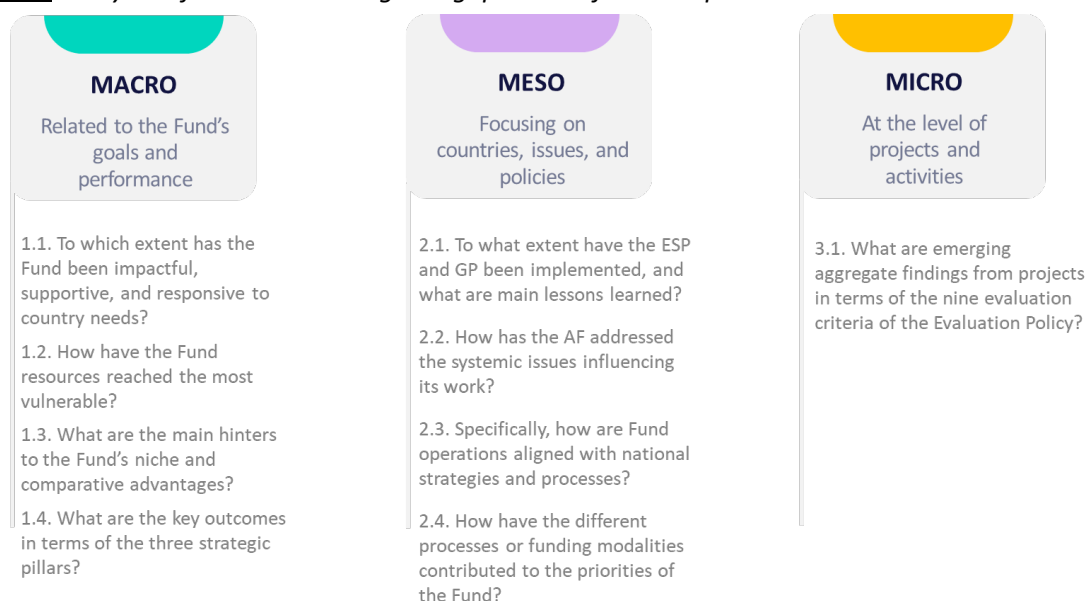


1) Preparation for the rapid evaluation (October 2022 – March 2023). The rapid evaluation was requested by the Board’s EFC which also reviewed the ToR based for selecting a consultant. Following the AF-TERG model of implementing evaluations, a team was established. It comprised an AF-TERG member as a focal point (Claudio Volonte), a lead consultant (Nils-Sjard Schulz) and a data analyst (Aneesh Kotru).

2) Identification of the evidence base (February 2023): In coordination with the secretariat, the team identified 28 FEs of Fund-supported projects along with five AF-TERG evaluations and studies, and 14 knowledge products and eight portfolio monitoring missions (PPM) conducted by the secretariat. A series of operational documentation was included such as the MTS-I and II (for a full list of literature, see annex 3). It considered only documents available up to the end of June 2023, given the timeline of the rapid evaluation, and was thus not able to include evaluative efforts and other analytical work which was ongoing at the time of writing (which include a series of pending knowledge products of the secretariat and two thematic evaluations being conducted by the AF-TERG)

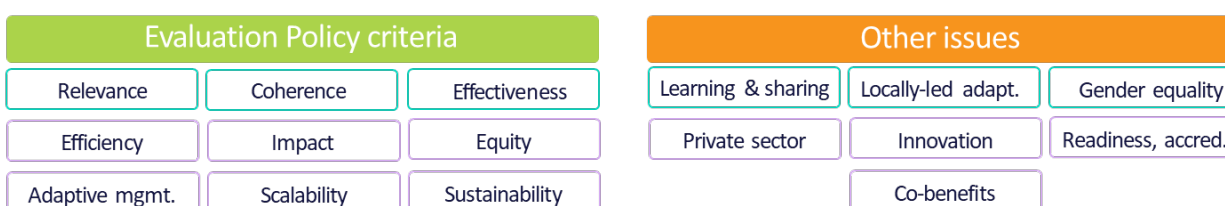
3) Design of the analytical framework (February – March 2023): Based on the eight initial topics outlined in the ToR, the analytical framework was structured around three main levels of analysis: macro, meso, and micro. These levels are congruent with the core strategic and operational dimensions of the Fund and its Evaluation Policy. The initial topics were formulated as guiding questions and grouped in the three levels of analysis, which was then discussed at the EFC meeting in March 2023. EFC comments were incorporated in the following framework and key questions (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Analytical framework with guiding questions for the rapid evaluation



Furthermore, during this step, criteria were carefully chosen and defined for the assessment process. These criteria included the nine proposed by the Fund's Evaluation Policy and seven additional issues emerging from the cross-cutting themes identified in the MTS-II (see Figure 4). To ensure clarity, a glossary of criteria was provided for this rapid evaluation (see annex 1):

Figure 4: Evaluation criteria and key issues used to synthesize existing evidence



4) Design and implementation of an evidence gap mapping (March – May 2023): One innovative feature of this rapid evaluation is an evidence gap mapping (EGM) matrix (see annex 2). This matrix was developed and used to assess the quantity of data available in the 28 FEs based on the 16 outlined criteria. The EGM allows readers to quickly identify the availability of FE evidence for the criteria in different sectors. For instance, there is ample evidence on criteria like relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability in sectors such as agriculture, rural development, and water management. However, evidence is more limited for topics like equity, scalability, or the role of the private sector in disaster risk reduction, ecosystem-based adaptation, and forest sectors. The EGM did not evaluate the quality of evidence due to resource and time constraints; it focused solely on the extent to which FE addressed the mentioned criteria in distinct sectors. Additionally, the evidence may reflect the types of projects (e.g. sectors) approved by the Fund a decade ago. It may not include evidence that was not covered in the reviewed FE.

5) Analysis and synthesis of evidence (April – June 2023): This step included an in-depth desk review of the strategic and aggregated Fund documentation (such as the AF-TERG and Board publications) and the project-specific FEs. Despite covering a relatively limited set of documents, the analysis enabled triangularization of key content related to the guiding questions from different angles. For instance, innovation was addressed in thematic evaluations, in the mid-term review of the Fund's first strategy, and in the secretariat's knowledge products (KP). The Fund's commitment to gender and vulnerable groups could be reviewed in FEs, PMM reports, and KP.

6) Report writing (May – Aug 2023): Evidence synthesized in the previous step was used to answer the guiding questions at each of the three levels of the analytical framework. In addressing each guiding question, a restricted subset of elements was chosen from the 16 criteria of the analytical framework outlined above. These selected elements formed the basis for presenting the relevant content. To ensure transparency, the report clearly identifies the respective sources behind each of the key findings.

7) Consultations with the AF-TERG and secretariat (June – August 2023): Different drafts of this rapid evaluation were discussed and reviewed within the AF-TERG and with the secretariat. This enabled further exchanges and learning, while assuring quality of the report by incorporating respective comments in the final report.

8) Validation and presentation to EFC/Board (August – October 2023):³ The final report was sent to the Board, according to the Board decision, for its consideration. At the same time, the secretariat received the final report and began preparing a management response. The secretariat consulted with the AF-TERG team in finalizing the management response. The rapid evaluation and the management response were uploaded to the EFC and Board October 2023 meetings. They will be discussed during these meetings. The secretariat will incorporate comments to the final management response from the EFC meeting.

3.2. Methodological challenges of the rapid evaluation

The rapid evaluation encountered the following main methodological challenges:

- **Complexity of topics:** The report addresses multiple facets and dimensions of a highly dynamic, ambitious Fund. This entails – in line with the objectives of this exercise – a high density and complexity of content reflected in the report. The team thus tried to offer readers a short but sufficiently substantial executive summary and provide summary answers to each of the guiding questions. The findings are framed within the agreed questions and topics.
- **Quantity-based mapping of final evaluations:** The initial plan to appraise the quality of FEs proved highly complex, particularly in defining varying levels of quality and given limited time and resources. For example, the constraints did not allow setting up peer review processes, which are considered good practice. This report thus opts for a quantity-based mapping approach and assessment of the quality of individual evidence. It does not judge the entire FEs, which was

³ Ongoing at the time of writing.

beyond the rapid evaluation's ToR. Furthermore, it touches upon quality aspects of FEs by incorporating quotations that analyse how Fund projects align with criteria used for this exercise.

- **First generation projects:** The review of FEs appraised projects that began between 2011 and 2016. These projects therefore predate the current strategic approaches (both MTSS) and operational benchmarks most of which emerged after 2018, except for the 2016 ESP. The implementation of these projects was required to follow the original 2012 Evaluation Framework. However, it did not have to follow key aspects highlighted by more recent normative guidance, such as the current Evaluation Policy, or the strategic framework outlined in the current MTS-II. That said, the rapid evaluation captured evidence and lessons relevant to the current frameworks and approaches followed at the Fund.
- **Synthesis only:** The rapid evaluation was not mandated to produce new evidence or to include external sources. This approach limits certain areas of analysis, such as in relation to external and country or IE perspectives on the Fund's performance. The report's focus is to inform the overall evaluation rather than to serve as a foundation for in-depth learning or accountability. The report thus abstains from drawing specific conclusions or recommendations for the Fund and concentrates on lessons learned for the overall evaluation.

4. Macro: Findings related to the Fund's goals and performance

4.1. To what extent has the Fund been impactful, supportive, and responsive to country needs?

4.1.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

The Fund is responsive to country needs by supporting and accrediting national institutions through increasingly dynamic processes, aligning to national and local policies, involving local players, and ensuring coherence with other funds. At the same time, the proportion of funding approved through NIEs – a key measurement of responsiveness to country needs, country drivenness, and ownership – remains limited compared to funding through Multilateral Implementing Entities (MIEs). In addition, the approach to locally led adaptation seems to be effective in operational practice but also faces challenges in light of weak capacities of local players. Furthermore, the results of readiness work are not sufficiently systematized to support this capacity.

4.1.2. Why are we asking this question?

At the macro level, the main context of this question is the key Fund's mission "to assist developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change." The lens on country needs and the Fund's responsiveness to these is enshrined in all higher-level goals of the Fund. It is also reflected at all relevant levels, from the composition of its Board to the opportunities for national entities to directly access adaptation finance and operational provisions to ensure country ownership. Against this background, the rapid evaluation intends to shed further light on existing evidence and lessons learned in the practice of the Fund and the projects it finances.

4.1.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

The next pages will explore the extent to which the Fund has been impactful, supportive, and responsive according to the Fund's relevance. It will examine these issues in several ways. First, it will look in terms of direct access, which is reflected in the degree to which the Fund facilitates direct access NIEs. Second, it will look at alignment of the operational portfolio to national policies, coherence (degree to which Fund projects are – or are expected to be – coordinated with other efforts); locally led adaptation (degree to which local actors are empowered through Fund projects); and readiness and accreditation (degree to which NIE capacities are supported to ensure responsiveness and access).

In addition, broader aspects relate to the overall approach and operationalization of country ownership as an overarching principle for effective climate action.

4.1.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Relevance in terms of direct access: Direct access and the role of NIEs are relatively well documented. This is especially the case for the knowledge products related to readiness and re-accreditation that stress

the pivotal role of the Fund in enabling access of climate finance to national entities. At the operational level, initial practical experiences are available of how direct access supports country-driven processes while addressing the needs of the most vulnerable communities at the local level (AF-KP, 2019b).

The Fund has further innovated direct access modalities and funding windows with a focus on vulnerable communities (AF-TERG, 2021a), through, for instance, the streamlined accreditation process for smaller NIEs (SNIEs), launched in 2014. Thanks to coordination with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), this streamlined path has enabled accredited SNIEs to access additional sources of climate finance (AF-KP, 2022c).

In 2019, the Board also approved a funding window for Enhanced Direct Access (EDA). The EDA delegates to NIEs the processing and approval of loans and grants for subprojects executed by smaller, often local organizations (AF-KP, 2020b). Further dimensions of direct access are reflected in the more recent innovation windows. These include the Innovation Aggregator programme implemented in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which facilitate direct access to local communities and vulnerable groups, among others (AF-KP, 2020b; AF-TERG, 2022b).

While benefits of these direct access modalities are stressed throughout, only a few eligible countries have an accredited NIE at the Fund (AF-KP, 2020a). Indeed, only 34 of 141 eligible countries (less than 25 per cent) have an accredited entity at the Fund. In addition, the accreditation of an NIE does not necessarily translate into actually accessing the Fund. NIEs constitute 60 per cent of all accredited IEs (34 of 57 total). However, according to recent Fund data, NIEs only managed or are managing implementation of 29 per cent of the 132 Fund projects approved by June 2022. Meanwhile, MIEs constitute 25 per cent of all IEs and manage 60 per cent of the projects. Regional Implementing Entities (RIEs) implement the rest (UNFCCC, 2022; AF, 2023).

Relevance in terms of the operational portfolio: The alignment of Fund projects to national priorities and policies has not yet been systematically assessed in Fund-level studies and analyses. The proposal review process requires that problems and solutions to be supported by the Fund's grants are aligned with national policies and priorities. The review of proposals focuses on influencing national policies and programmes by, for instance, strengthening local players (AF-KP, 2020b), specifically youth (AF-KP, 2022d); ensuring the role of women is enhanced in the national climate agenda (AF-KP, 2020c); or contributing to a better national enabling environment for innovation (AF-TERG, 2022b).

Project-level practice from the FEs shows that several interventions are closely embedded in national and often subnational policies and institutional priorities for both climate action and sustainable development (FE11, 2020; FE13, 2018; FE18, 2018; FE19, 2017). This includes the National Adaptation Programme of Action in Eritrea (FE26, 2019), the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in Ghana (FE2, 2021), National Strategy for Climate Change in Argentina (FE7, 2019), and local Green Development Plans in Mongolia (FE21, 2017). On the other hand, the direct access modalities are inherently using national systems (i.e. institutional systems of NIEs) that are revised and, where appropriate, strengthened within accreditation and re-accreditation processes (AF-KP, 2019a; AF-KP, 2019b; AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2022g).

Coherence: Complementarity, coherence, and coordination with other climate funds ("climate finance delivery channels") is one of the cross-cutting themes of Fund work (AF, 2022b). Examples include collaboration between the Fund and the GCF in the areas of readiness (shared workshops; AF-KP, 2020a),

re-accreditation (fast-track process shared with GCF (AF-KP, 2022g) and scaling-up (shared AF-GCF approach; AF-KP 2022b), as well as joint dialogues with other climate funds (AF-TERG, 2021a; AF, 2022d).

Benefits of Fund-GCF collaboration are tangible particularly for NIE access to additional climate finance sources (AF-KP, 2022c) and to scale up projects through other entities and funds (AF-KP, 2022b states 18 projects). In transboundary adaptation projects, coordination among international climate funds and multilateral donors has been identified as a possible response to increased complexity of interventions, as well as opportunities for greater impact (AF-KP, 2022f). In practice, as per FEs, several Fund projects have collaborated with entities such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) (FE3, 2019), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) (FE12, 2020), World Bank (FE13, 2018), German Agency for Development Cooperation (GIZ) (FE16, 2017) and UNDP/SREP (FE22, 2016), among others. This has led to in-field complementarity, replication, scale-up, and good practices.

Locally led adaptation: The role of local players is an essential part of Fund studies and reflections, particularly at the crossroads of local adaptation and empowerment of vulnerable groups (for vulnerability, see more details in section 4.2). Indeed, LLA has become a strong piece of the learning and sharing work of the Fund (AF-TERG, 2021a; see synthesis in section 4.4), as one of the cross-cutting issues emphasized in the MTS-II (AF, 2022b). Specifically, the LLA study (AF-KP, 2020b) provides a detailed overview of the effective ways LLA has been integrated into Fund policies (AF, 2016a; AF, 2021a), strategies (MTS-I, MTS-II), access modalities (EDA, innovation aggregators).

The study concludes that the Fund has substantially advanced in “prioritize[ing] local voices and deliver[ing] local-level benefits”. At the same time, it has stressed the need to strengthen local capacities for planning, implementing, and accounting for adaptation finance, while building adaptive capacity and resilience. Fund KP on youth (AF-KP, 2022d), gender (AF-KP, 2020c), and SNIEs (AF-KP, 2022c) highlight the considerable potential of LLA in empowering vulnerable groups to become active players in adaptation efforts. However, they also delve into the capacity gaps that continue to hinder LLA's full potential and invite the Fund to address these capacity gaps in a more systematic manner.

FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation identify a series of options to tackle capacity gaps. These include ensuring detailed knowledge of the project's objectives and activities among local organizations and communities (FE1, 2020; FE9, 2019; FE28, 2015); fostering contribution of local players' knowledge to the project's success (FE6, 2019; FE23, 2015, FE26, 2019); empowering local groups as adaptation players and contributing to the consolidation of local social capital (FE16, 2017; FE18, 2018; FE23, 2015; FE25, 2016; FE26, 2019); ensuring tactical interlinkages between local and national decision makers (FE19, 2017) and their responsibilities in longer-term sustainability (FE2, 2021; FE10, 2019; FE12, 2020; FE21, 2017), some of which have also been explored by AF-KP (2019b).

According to some FEs, projects have met substantial limitations to LLA due to lack of local governments and organizations or their weak capacities (FE15, 2019); lack of interest in coordinating and mistrust among local players and central government institutions (FE7, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE20, 2016); and lack of willingness and capacity to ensure continuity and sustainability of projects' results (FE13, 2018). Practical experience from Fund projects thus shows that capacity building and governance aspects are key to effective and sustainable LLA. However, key gaps and pathways to address these have not yet been systematically analysed.

Readiness & accreditation: Support to NIE capacities is well documented and described in respective KP (AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2020c; AF-KP, 2022c; AF-KP, 2022g). These look into the Readiness Programme launched in 2014 and institutionalized in 2016 which offers grant and non-grant programmes and components. In practice, support takes place with relatively minor grants (less than USD 50k), with total amounts and total number of grants decreasing in past years (AF-KP, 2020a).

Readiness involves capacities to meet environmental and social safeguards and gender considerations as per respective policies, action plans, and guidance documents (AF-KP, 2020c). The close relationship between candidate and accredited NIE and the secretariat is described as a success factor for increasing capacities (AF-KP, 2020a). However, challenges remain in relation to insufficient human resource capacity at the secretariat to manage partnerships with NIEs on a daily basis, the limited engagement of the Fund in fragile contexts (AF-KP, 2020a) and weak capacities of NIEs to leverage LLA in a systematic way (AF-KP, 2020b).

South-South cooperation grants for readiness (now replaced by scale-up grants, as per AF-TERG [2021a]), enjoy a high demand. However, actual exchanges are limited due to few available NIEs able and willing to share experience (AF-KP, 2020a). Mutual learning among NIEs is also supported through the Community of Practice for Direct Access Entities, which gathers accredited NIEs of the Fund and accredited Direct Access Entities of the GCF (UNFCCC, 2022).

Streamlined accreditation led to improved institutional capacities of the SNIEs during and after the accreditation process (AF-KP, 2022c). Re-accreditation is seen as an opportunity to deepen NIE institutional capacities, upgrade systems, and identify further gaps as part of a “continuous improvement model”, particularly in relation to the implementation of the ESP (ESP; AF, 2016a) and GP (GP; AF, 2021a). That said, only 27 per cent of IEs indicated the re-accreditation process contributed somewhat highly or highly to an increase in institutional capacity, given that most of these are already well advanced in their capacities and systems (AF-KP, 2022g). Project-level evidence on readiness of NIEs specifically is limited as only four of the 28 FE assessed NIE-led projects (FE5, 2018; FE6, 2019; FE14, 2021; FE28, 2015).⁴

4.1.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Relevance:

- review of whether and how country ownership is being ensured in non-NIE projects and the experiences learned so far in the ways that MIEs and RIEs “compensate” for the country not using direct access
- mapping of Fund experiences in using respective safeguards for country ownership in MIE and RIE projects, progress made, and limitations
- analysis of conceptual clarity on country ownership and its different layers (national versus local, etc.), criteria being used to clarify aspects of country ownership that are relevant to the Fund
- assessment of how Fund projects align and support national and local policies and agendas for adaptation and broader sustainable development
- examination of interlinkages, mutual strengthening, and possible tensions between national and local policies

⁴ In Rwanda, Argentina, Uruguay, and Senegal.

Coherence:

- review of synergies created by Fund projects to support climate and development policies in an integrated manner
- review of experiences, benefits/results and specific ways forward in coordination with other funds, particularly GCF, potentially Global Environment Facility (GEF), particularly from country perspective (e.g. coordinated support to country ownership, etc.)

Locally led adaptation:

- review of experiences of how to address capacity gaps for local players for climate finance, particularly those players/organizations working closest with vulnerable groups
- systematic review of how funding windows and other support options have been adjusted to local needs
- examination of conceptual clarity and experience in how LLA and vulnerability intersect with each other, and how this can be addressed effectively through Fund projects
- mapping of experience and mechanisms to foster collaboration and address tensions between NIE and local players

Accreditation & readiness:

- review of country perspectives and experiences with accreditation (readiness)
- review of areas of readiness that might require further attention, for instance in terms of LLA and vulnerability (readiness)
- consistent, data-based, i.e. structured assessment of progress and lessons learned with the Readiness Programme, in line with results framework (readiness)

4.2. Have the Fund resources reached the needs of the most vulnerable faster and more impactfully? How have the Fund governance, policies, strategies, and processes contributed to this?

4.2.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

The most vulnerable are systematically addressed and included in Fund policies (2016 ESP, as well as GP 2021). This, in turn, has enabled a higher quality of project proposals. In recent years, the Fund has increased its ambition in engaging vulnerable people with an increased focus on empowerment and attention to intersectional vulnerabilities, particularly around gender equality. The Fund has yet to ensure an intersectional approach to vulnerability as such and to different vulnerable groups with distinct characteristics. The specific needs of fragile and conflict-affected countries and areas as hosts of the most vulnerable people are not yet systematically and strategically addressed.

4.2.2. Why are we asking this question?

Addressing vulnerability is at the heart of the Fund, which is mandated “to assist developing country Parties that are particularly *vulnerable* to the adverse impacts of climate change.” Vulnerable countries, which are represented in the Fund’s governance (its Board), benefit from support to institutional strengthening for accreditation, and are eligible for direct access to the Fund through increasingly flexible paths (streamlined accreditation). In addition, the consideration of vulnerable communities and groups is mandatory for Fund operations through two policies (ESP and GP). This is further backed by respective safeguards in the project cycle, including related criteria for the eligibility and approval of proposals. Based on progress in response to the most vulnerable, the Fund can further learn from existing lessons of its work with vulnerable countries, communities, and groups.

4.2.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

We examine the extent to which the Fund and its projects are supporting and having a positive impact on the most vulnerable groups. These relate to criteria such as equity (reflected in the degree to which, and ways in which, vulnerable groups are supported), human and ecological sustainability and security (degree to which the Fund supports adaptation in fragile and conflicted-affected contexts), as well as gender equality (degree to which the needs and opportunities of women and girls are addressed).

More broadly, this also refers to the overall approach and operationalization of vulnerability as a key element of the objectives of the Fund.

4.2.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Equity: Overall, the Fund’s governance, particularly its Board, is structured in ways that respond to different types of countries and their degree of vulnerability. This includes Board members specifically representing Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). At the operational level, according to available Fund documentation, sufficiently solid mechanisms are in place

to ensure that the voices of vulnerable groups are included in the project design and implementation. This is especially the case through operationalization of the ESP and GP during accreditation and readiness efforts (AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2022g).

Equity is also a key criterion for project approval. ESP and GP compliance are the most recurrent area of improvement stressed for fully developed proposals not being approved by the Board, affecting 81 per cent and 39 per cent of rejected proposals between 2018 and 2020 (AF-TERG, 2021a). The aim to empower vulnerable communities and social groups was one of the cross-cutting measures of both MTS, with an inclusion of the concept of “agents of change” in the MTS-II (AF, 2022b).

There is emerging evidence that Fund projects indeed empower vulnerable groups specifically (AF-KP, 2019b). There is a close interaction between empowering vulnerable groups and LLA where local governments, community-based organizations, and others particularly exposed to climate risks, are enabled to “better identify, prioritize, implement, and monitor adaptation solutions” (AF-KP, 2020b). In practice, empowering vulnerable people contributes to the success of Fund projects. Young people, for instance, can become community guardians and change makers, among others, for adaptation efforts (AF-KP, 2022d). The 2022 Annual Performance Report (APR) outlines several experiences of how youth adaptation capacities have been supported in Armenia, the Dominican Republic, and the Seychelles, among others (AF, 2023a).

Concerning building capacity of other groups, PMM stress exploring the role of elderly people as a vulnerable group as a key to transmit knowledge (AF, 2019d; AF, 2019c; AF, 2021b), while the APR reports engagement with Afro and Indigenous Peoples in Colombia-Ecuador border area (AF, 2023a). At the same time, the Fund still needs to deepen its intersectional understanding of vulnerability (AF-KP, 2020c), assess systemic barriers and root causes (AF-KP, 2022e), and address specific vulnerable groups through, for instance, dedicated engagement strategies (AF-KP, 2022d).

Human and ecological sustainability and security: Thus far, the Fund has provided limited support to adaptation in fragile and conflict-affected countries and communities, an area which the MTS-II includes as part of “novel adaptation challenges” where “compounded resilience” needs to be built to address “complex risks” (AF, 2022b). Out of 24 total countries benefiting from Fund projects with an FE, six (25 per cent) are classified by the World Bank as fragile and conflict-affected (Djibouti, Eritrea, Madagascar, Mali, Myanmar, Solomon Islands).⁵ The Fund has not yet systemized practical experiences with adaptation in the context of fragility and conflict. Fund-supported projects in this group of countries are channeled through MIEs, mostly UNDP. There are initial reflections on how to tailor readiness support to the challenges of fragile states’ institutions, considering the Fund’s “flexibility and relationship with countries allows for some tailoring to fragile states” and that “a more intentional programmatic approach to fragile states may well be worth developing” (AF-KP, 2020a).

⁵ <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/9b8fbd62f7183cef819729cc9073671-0090082022/original/FCSList-FY06toFY22.pdf> – Countries listed here were classified as fragile and conflict-affected all or most years during the duration of the respective Fund project/s. Disclaimer: The World Bank classification is used for analytical purposes strictly in the context of this rapid evaluation, that is, to identify a group of countries which is commonly recognized as suffering a significant degree of fragility and/or conflict. The use of this classification does not imply relevance of any kind for the strategic or operational performance of the Fund. Alternative classifications of fragility can be found in the multidimensional framework developed by the States of Fragility reports of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, among others.

Gender equality: Thanks to the increasing ambition with gender equality and women’s rights, the Fund has advanced substantially in understanding and operationalizing the mutually reinforcing linkage between gender and adaptation goals (AF-KP, 2020c). This includes as part of accreditation and readiness processes and respective safeguards and support modalities (AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2020b; AF-KP, 2022c; AF-KP, 2022g).

The GP and GAP (AF, 2021a) were updated to raise the bar for gender-transformative adaptation and to address the intersectionality of gender (AF-KP, 2022e). This intersectionality was also reflected as a cross-cutting measure throughout both MTS cycles, with the current strategy committing to “better understanding and addressing the complexity and particularity of inequalities in the lives of women, girls, men and boys and non-binary people” (AF, 2022b).

Overall, jointly with the ESP, the operationalization of, and ultimately the compliance of IEs with the GP has contributed to a higher quality of Fund projects (AF-TERG, 2021a). In practice, Fund projects have shown best results where gender has been integrated as a cross-cutting result and is mainstreamed at all levels, from IEs to local organizations and beneficiaries (AF-KP, 2019b).

4.2.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Equity:

- assessment of the Fund’s overall conceptual and operational approach to vulnerability and if/how it has informed operations/projects
- review of targeted response to, and impact on, specific vulnerable groups in a structured manner, in line with international standards for leaving no one behind (LNOB), etc.
- review of experiences with intersectional approaches to vulnerability, particularly at the local level.

Human and ecological sustainability and security:

- assessment of Fund performance and experience specifically with or in fragile and conflict-affected countries
- review of collaboration with MIEs in these contexts, including to inform strategic approaches to working in fragile and conflict-affected settings
- mapping of experiences in ensuring adaptation effectiveness at the intersection of vulnerability and fragility

Gender equality:

- assessment of gender-related results and lessons learned specifically in Fund project portfolio, specifically on gender-transformative adaptation efforts
- review of (early) operational experiences with the process of upgrading approaches to intersectionality
- review of the experiences and actual adequacy of approaches and tools of operationalizing the GP and GAP from a perspective of gender-transformative adaptation

4.3. What are the current niche and comparative advantages of the Fund, compared to those of the MTS-II and guidance from the COP?

4.3.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

The strategic framework outlined in the current MTS-II clearly establishes the Fund's niche, adapting to its evolving strengths and opportunities, and offering valuable guidance to ensure its effective positioning. The Fund still faces challenges in fully leveraging its defined niche due to several factors. First, there is a need for a more consolidated approach to clearly define impacts at all levels and establish strong links between project-level impacts and the Fund's overarching goals and mission. Second, progress in the innovation and learning portfolios, which are crucial for the Fund's comparative advantages, has been slow. Third, the Fund has primarily focused its portfolio within MIEs.

Additionally, the limited experiences and various constraints in scaling-up and replicability of adaptation efforts have posed obstacles. Lastly, the Fund's engagement with the private sector remains at an early stage, and persistent barriers hinder the effective mobilization of private resources for both the Fund itself and its operations. While Fund documentation focuses on the role of other international partners in scaling up Fund projects, the reviewed FEs indicate that Fund projects are primarily scaled up through existing government programmes.

4.3.2. Why are we asking this question?

Since its launch, the Fund has contributed specific comparative strengths to the climate finance landscape. It is recognized as one of the pioneers of direct access of vulnerable countries to adaptation finance and of a dedicated comprehensive commitment to the most vulnerable. The MTS-II identifies the Fund's niche explicitly "as a Fund that provides quick and direct financing, creates new solutions built on what works, supports innovative solutions with higher risk, complements others through catalytic financing, and brings needed new players into the climate change adaptation space."

4.3.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

The current niche and comparative advantages of the Fund can be reviewed by looking into several evaluation criteria. These include impact (degree to which the Fund intends to make, and has made, a specific impact on the countries' adaptation efforts), innovation (extent to which innovation is promoted as part of the Fund's portfolio) and learning and sharing (degree to which adaptation lessons are learned and knowledge shared among the Fund's stakeholders and the broader audience). They also relate to impact, as well as scalability and replicability (extent to which adaptation financed by the Fund can be scaled up and replicated), as well as to the specific role of the private sector in climate adaptation (degree to which private sector players are part of the Fund's work). The relevant issue of coherence is discussed above (see section 4.1).

4.3.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Impact: According to its results framework reviewed in 2019, the Fund pursues the “increased resiliency at the community, national, and regional levels to climate variability and change” as the main impact of its work. This impact has been further operationalized through two “impact-level results”⁶ to be measured through five core indicators.⁷ Changes in the methodologies for the latter indicator are significant drivers for the Fund’s aggregate reporting. They also incentivize improved quality of proposals and overall increased sensitiveness particularly of IEs, for instance in terms of gender and age disaggregation (AF-KP, 2020c; AF-KP, 2022d).

For 2022, the secretariat aggregated three main areas of impact from a review of 132 projects. It summarized these as (a) reduced vulnerability and increased adaptive capacity of communities; (b) strengthened policies integrating climate resilience into local and national plans; and (c) increased climate resilience of ecosystems (AF, 2023a).

Projects are not expected to plan and account for Fund-level impacts, but they did so on at least one of the eight outcomes of the Fund results framework, while also reporting on core indicators. In consequence, most FEs do not find solid evidence on higher-level impact, with only six of 28 evaluations⁸ showcasing actual, tangible impact in terms of improved national legislation and policies (FE12, 2020; FE19, 2017; FE25, 2016), improved adaptive capacity of communities (FE12, 2020; FE23, 2015; FE25, 2016; FE28, 2015), and increased resilience of ecosystems (FE24, 2015).

Several FEs state factors limiting the capacity of Fund-financed activities to achieve and sustain impact. On the one hand, there is the short duration of projects and lack of adequate project provisions for impact (FE3, 2019; FE9, 2019; FE14, 2021, FE17, 2019; FE26, 2019). On the other, policy and regulatory frameworks are inadequate and government commitment is weak (FE8, 2017; FE15, 2019; FE22 2016).

The Fund has committed to maximizing impact through principle-led adaptation finance. This could take place through, for instance, improved quality, country ownership, and local empowerment. It could also include Fund-level aspects such as further decentralization to the local level, better access of vulnerable countries and groups to the Fund, investment in compounded resilience, increased support to innovation, wider-spread learning, and more partnerships with other adaptation funders, as per AF (2022b). Other elements to consider for impact are consistent gender mainstreaming and responsiveness (AF-KP, 2020c), empowerment of young people (AF-KP, 2022d), and a larger scale and increased complexity of projects (AF-KP, 2022f). Overall, both FE and Fund documentation use impact in a relatively loosely defined manner.

Innovation: Since the inclusion of innovation as a dedicated pillar of MTS-I (AF, 2022b), the Fund has expanded its innovation portfolio. To that end, it has set up new funding windows, including small and large innovation grants, as well as innovation aggregators with UNDP and UNEP, while the Board agreed on a vision and definition for innovation in 2021 (decision B.36/39). The current Innovation pillar

⁶ “Increased adaptive capacity of communities to respond to the impacts of climate change”; and “Increased ecosystem resilience in response to climate change-induced stresses”.

⁷ For community resilience: “Number of beneficiaries (direct and indirect)”; “Number of early warning systems”; “Assets produced, developed, improved, or strengthened”; “Increased income, or avoided decrease in income”; and for ecosystem resilience: “Natural habitats protected or rehabilitated”.

⁸ These six FEs refer to projects primarily implemented by UNDP (four projects) and UNEP (one project), as well as one project led by an NIE (Senegal).

consolidates innovation not only as an effective way to foster adaptation, but as an opportunity for the Fund to engage with vulnerable groups, access for non-accredited entities and organizations, and interaction with non-traditional partners, particularly private sector and academia (AF, 2022b; AF, 2022g).

According to the thematic evaluation, the grant-based component of innovation has expanded slowly at best, with no innovation project having achieved maturity and only six small grants approved as of April 2022. However, this might be related to the inherently short period since the launch of these funding windows in 2021 rather than to shortcomings of the emerging innovation portfolio itself (AF, 2022g; AF, 2023c). By June 2022, two small grants were being implemented by respective NIEs in Bhutan and Uganda, while large innovations grants had not yet been approved (AF, 2023a). Beyond the grant portfolio managed by the Fund, the innovation aggregators with UNDP and UNEP have shown significant progress. This progress has been achieved both in terms of approval rates (22 and 11 grants, respectively) and in terms of early learning on capacities, support, and timelines needed for local organizations to design and submit innovation proposals (AF, 2023c).

Relevant issues with dedicated innovation funding are related to the innovation capacities of accredited NIEs; the linkages of innovation, accreditation, readiness, and knowledge management; as well as the ways to harness the early fruits of a rapidly changing innovation portfolio (AF, 2023c). Innovation already plays a multifaceted role for the Fund's objectives and priorities. For instance, it motivates youth as agents and drivers of change in their communities, including with new technologies for adaptation (AF-KP, 2022d). Innovation is also a key element for scaling-up and replicating best practices of climate adaptation (AF-KP, 2022b), particularly in transboundary initiatives (AF-KP, 2022f).

Indeed, project FEs show significant contributions to innovative approaches, particularly in the areas of participatory community management and local leadership, including by women (FE2, 2021; FE9, 2019; FE14, 2021; FE16, 2017; FE19, 2017; FE23, 2015) and climate adaptation communication particularly at the local level (FE13, 2018; FE17, 2019). Other aspects include innovative technologies, tools, and solutions for soil and water conservation and water irrigation systems (FE4, 2021), weather systems (FE3, 2019; FE6, 2019; FE21, 2017) and insurance policies (FE6, 2019). A common thread of reviewed FEs lies with opportunities to scale up innovations within specific regions and replicate these regionally (among others, FE18, 2018; FE21, 2017; FE23, 2015; FE27, 2018).

Learning & Sharing: Since the launch of the Fund, knowledge and lessons learned have been a significant element of portfolio management and specific projects, fully reflected in the Strategic Priorities, Policies and Guidelines (SPPG) criteria (AF, 2022a). Learning and sharing is specifically integrated into the Readiness Programme, including through the Community of Practice for Direct Access Entities (CPDAE) mentioned above and South-South knowledge-sharing activities (AF-KP, 2020a). Capacity-building for accreditation and readiness is inherently linked to NIEs' learning processes supported by financial and non-financial means, including capacities related to ESP and GP operationalization (see above for more details on readiness grants). In 2020, the Fund started offering dedicated learning grants to NIEs for Fund projects beyond the midpoint in project execution.⁹ The aim is to strengthen capacities of NIEs to learn and share project-level practice and lessons learned (AF, 2022b; AF, 2022g).

⁹ "NIEs must have an Adaptation Fund funded project that has reached the mid-point in implementation or where a Mid-term report (MTR) / Mid-term evaluation (MTE) has been submitted/completed." (from Fund website)

By June 2022, four learning grants were approved, with one already executed with a Senegalese NIE (AF-KP, 2021a; Fund website), another being implemented by an NIE in Costa Rica (AF, 2023a) and two not yet implemented in Kenya and Peru, respectively (Fund website).¹⁰ Capacity constraints and lack of clarity over the eligibility of learning proposals seem to limit the range of proposals submitted to respective calls (AF-TERG, 2021a).

Beyond these grants, the Fund's learning agenda is primarily focused on KP drafted by the secretariat covering a wide range of thematic issues (for full list of KP, see annex 3). In addition, the Fund focuses on e-learning courses in three languages to enable French and Spanish speakers' involvement in these learning opportunities (AF-TERG, 2021a).

At the project level, according to reviewed FEs, learning was deeply embedded in many Fund-financed initiatives. They focused on systematizing traditional, local, and indigenous knowledge being fostered for autonomous climate adaptation, occasionally using small grants for local knowledge generation (FE2, 2021; FE6, 2019; FE9, 2019; FE16, 2017; FE18, 2018; FE21, 2017; FE24, 2015; FE26, 2019; FE27, 2018). Fund projects also proactively captured and disseminated good practice and lessons learned from the project and its stakeholders (FE4, 2021; FE12, 2020; FE23, 2015; FE28, 2015), as well as identified solutions that could be shared internationally (FE9, 2019; FE23, 2015; FE28, 2015). At the same time, other projects struggled to go beyond the mere capturing of local knowledge and project lessons for communication purposes. Thus, they failed to capitalize on knowledge for evidence-based learning, local capacity building, and ultimately project sustainability (FE2, 2021; FE3, 2019; FE5, 2018; FE13, 2018; FE15, 2019; FE17, 2019; FE19, 2017; FE22, 2016; FE26, 2019).

Beyond the FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation, knowledge and learning emerging from individual projects are being integrated into individual KP (e.g. case studies in AF-KP, 2020b; AF-KP, 2022d; AF-KP, 2022a; AF-KP, 2020c) and monitoring reports, including synthesis reports on lessons learned with implementation (AF-KP, 2019b). This ensures "bottom-up" learning from the project to the Fund level.

Scalability and replicability: As part of its mandate, the Fund intends to finance smaller-scale ("starter") projects/programmes "that can be scaled up and replicated, including through complementarity and synergies with other climate funders" (AF, 2022b), for which a pilot shared scaling-up approach with the GCF is already under way (AF-TERG, 2021a; AF, 2022d). As part of readiness finance, the Fund has also offered scale-up grants to NIEs since 2018, of which so far only one has been approved (UNFCCC, 2022; AF-TERG, 2022b; AF-TERG, 2021a).

At the portfolio level, scalability and replicability are inherently linked to "knowledge and proof of concept" (AF-KP, 2022b) and to the overall innovation cycle (AF-TERG, 2022b). By 2022, 18 Fund projects had been scaled up by other funds and entities, particularly in sectors such as climate-resilient water management and multi-hazard early warning systems (AF-KP, 2022b).

While Fund documentation stresses the role of other international partners in scaling up Fund projects, the reviewed FEs stress that Fund projects are primarily scaled up through existing government programmes (FE2, 2021; FE3, 2019; FE4, 2021; FE9, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE19, 2017; FE20, 2016; FE21, 2017) rather than other climate funders. Significant replicability constraints outlined by FEs relate to the lack of adequate national policy frameworks (FE15, 2019), weak local capacities needed to scale up and replicate

¹⁰ <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/knowledge-learning/learning-grants/grants-to-date/>.

effectively (FE13, 2018; FE14, 2021) or the lack of a solid scalability approach in the project design itself (FE8, 2017; FE15, 2019; FE20, 2016), among other aspects. So far, these constraints to replicability and scalability are expected to be addressed mainly as part of the Fund-GCF scaling-up approach (AF-KP, 2022b; AF, 2022d) and potentially the upcoming innovation strategy.

Role of private sector: According to the current MTS-II (AF, 2022b), private sector can be considered part of vulnerable and local groups (i.e. “local private sector”), partners for innovation and scale-up, as well as a significant potential for the Fund’s resource mobilization opportunities. Existing Fund documentation provides limited insights into the local private sector as a potentially vulnerable group; the innovation aggregators are possibly the only concrete option and experience (AF, 2023c).¹¹ It stresses the need and opportunity to engage private sector in innovation and scaling-up (AF-KP, 2020b; AF-KP, 2022b; AF, 2023a). However, actual experiences to involve private sector as “potential innovators, scaling partners or investors” remain scarce as “barriers to engagement remain,” possibly requiring closer collaboration “with other funders that typically provide funding to private sector entities in co-financing arrangements” (AF-TERG, 2022b).

Private sector contributions are being explored to help further diversify the Fund’s financing sources (AF, 2022e). The Fund is the only multilateral climate fund that can effectively receive private sector donations (AF, 2022b). Initial institutional donations originated in VISA’s interactive social giving kiosk at COP 24, as well as in a donation from the Greta Thunberg Foundation. Meanwhile, the online “donate bottom” mobilized 70,000 up to 2022, potentially requiring further mapping of “out of the box” opportunities for private sector financing, including through crowdfunding (AF, 2022e).

That said, the Fund’s Resource Mobilization strategy 2022-2025 (AF, 2022e) also states that private sector contributions to the Fund itself face challenges due to the complex trustee verification process at the World Bank Group. At the project level, the private sector occasionally played a role in broader networks needed to sustain results (FE6, 2019; FE14, 2021; FE21, 2017), contributing specific technical expertise (FE3, 2019; FE12, 2020; FE14, 2021) and operating projects’ components in local areas requiring specific capacities, that is, being drivers of LLA (FE1, 2020; FE16, 2017). However, caveats remain as adaptation efforts can also negatively affect private sector interest in tourism, for instance (FE13, 2018).¹² On some occasions, although mechanisms were in place, private sector engagement remained below initial expectations (FE17, 2019; FE25, 2016).

4.3.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Impact:

¹¹ Private sector receives limited attention in key Fund documentation. For instance, the 2021 MTR of the MTS-I (AF-TERG, 2021a) mentions private sector only once, and the 2022 APR twice (AF, 2023a). Among the recent eight PMM reviewed for this rapid evaluation, three do not refer to private sector at all. The remaining six mention it between one and three times without providing practical insights of how private sector interacts with more recent Fund projects.

¹² Quotes from FE13 (2018): “Key private sector stakeholders included the Samoa Tourism Authority and Samoa Hotel Association as potential partners for activities potentially impacting the tourism sector,” and “Seawall construction is having mixed results on tourism: from one side, it allows the protection of touristic infrastructures but the seawalls also contribute to sandy beach destruction, reducing the tourism appeal of the Samoan coast.”

- analysis of the Fund's definitions of impact and whether impact measurement is known to IEs and NIEs
- experiences and lessons learned with adapting core indicator methodologies to improve quality of project design and implementation, particularly to increase the project's probability of impact
- review of factors enabling or hindering the impact of the Fund itself and the Fund projects
- review of how these factors are reflected in operational procedures, if any

Innovation:

- review of the interlinkages between vulnerability and innovation, with a particular focus on women and youth's role in innovative adaptation
- analysis of experiences and potential of local innovation, i.e. innovative adaptation solutions driven by local communities and other local players, including local private sector
- assessment of experiences and lessons learned with the innovation aggregators and how these lessons (might) feedback to the Fund portfolio as such (for instance for the innovation windows and innovation components of AF projects)
- review of the experience in collaborating with the private sector in innovative adaptation solutions and technologies as part of AF projects

Learning & Sharing:

- quantitative assessment of the use of e-learning courses (number of participants, feedback) and KP (downloads, references) and how these interrelate with the overall AF portfolio
- analysis of factors limiting the allocation of learning grants
- overall assessment of internal coherence and consistency of the Learning & Sharing pillar, particularly from a "bottom-up" perspective (how the Fund could better learn from experiences and solutions of Fund projects and local stakeholders, through different available channels)

Scalability and replicability:

- assessment of experiences and opportunities for replicating locally led solutions, including through mutual support among local governments and communities
- review of experiences and opportunities to enable and foster replication of solutions driven by vulnerable groups and their networks, including women and youth
- analysis of the synergies between innovation, learning, and scaling-up
- review of pathways to addressing internal and external constraints to replicability and scalability

Role of the private sector:

- review of the approach to local private sector as part of the broader work with vulnerable groups
- assessment of the role of the private sector in specialization and sustainability, particularly at the local level
- analysis of factors limiting the involvement of the private sector in concrete Fund projects

4.4. What are the key outcomes in terms of the three strategic pillars of the Fund's Medium-Term Strategy?

4.4.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

MTS-I and II enable the Fund's portfolio to evolve around three clearly defined strategic pillars with a clear results focus. Meanwhile, the transition from the first to the second MTS cycle reflects the dynamic, adaptive management of the Fund. That said, the existing evidence – some of which predates the MTS cycle – shows that key outcomes are heavily concentrated on *Action* (Strategic Pillar 1, or SP1, includes project finance, scaling-up, readiness and accreditation). Progress in *Innovation* (SP2) and *Learning & Sharing* (SP3) is still incipient with challenges to be addressed as part of the current MTS-II period.

4.4.2. Why are we asking this question?

Since the first MTS (2018-2022; AF, 2018), the Fund has identified three strategic pillars to guide its work, labelled in the current MTS-II (2023-2027; AF, 2022b) as (1) action ("high quality, local level and scalable adaptation projects and programmes"), (2) innovation ("innovative adaptation practices, tools, and technologies"), and (3) learning & sharing ("knowledge and evidence on effective and innovative adaptation action and finance"). These three pillars are operationalized in up to four expected results each and flanked by complementarities across these pillars, as well as cross-cutting themes some of which are used as evaluation criteria for this exercise. So far, progress made in MTS-I and its three pillars has not yet been systematically assessed from the perspective of project-level evidence due to the fact that available Fes only address first generation projects (see section 3.2 above). This rapid evaluation and question specifically aim to bridge this gap with initial insights.

4.4.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

The main purpose is to identify progress in the Fund's strategic pillars. This is guided by the evaluation criteria of effectiveness (degree to which expected results have been or are being achieved) and adaptive management (degree to which the Fund learned lessons from MTS implementation and used these to adapt its strategic planning). Given limited data and evidence, efficiency – usually a critical criterion for assessing macro-level results – cannot be reviewed as part of this exercise.

4.4.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Effectiveness: Overall, through the strategic pillars and respective expected results, the MTS helped structure the work of the Fund in a more results-driven manner. It provided incentives for the Fund and particularly the Board to adjust funding opportunities (for instance, through new windows for innovation) and invest resources in previously less proactive dimensions. Learning, for example, has seen a rapid growth of KP since the launch of the MTS-I in 2018. That said, the available evidence does not systematically link results from MTS implementation (which are primarily in the realm of outputs and process-related lessons learned) to the overall goal and mission of the Fund. In more detail, the next

paragraphs review available evidence and information on the extent to which expected results of the strategic pillars were met during the implementation of the first MTS (2018-2022; AF, 2018).

- **Effectiveness in the Action pillar:** In MTS-I, the expected results of this pillar were related to reduced vulnerability and resilience (ER1), strengthened institutional capacity of national and regional institutions (ER2), and effective action scaled up (ER3). According to the available documentation (AF-TERG, 2021a; AF-TERG, 2022b; AF-KP, 2022d; AF-KP, 2020c; AF-KP, 2022e), this pillar has been the most dynamic arena. This is due both to resources spent and expertise dedicated to it, and to tangible results such as resilience strengthening through projects (ER1). Significant progress was made in accreditation, readiness, capacities, and access of an increasing set of partners, including non-accredited players, propelled among others by the opening of seven new funding windows (ER2). Moreover, scaling-up was pursued both through new funding windows and in partnership with other climate players. In particular, the Fund and the GCF prepared a shared scaling-up approach during implementation of the first MTS (ER3). For this period, gaps remained in terms of LLA, weak capacities at local levels in terms of CCA expertise, and project formulation (e.g. for small grants), as well as a relatively small range of partners for scaling-up, particularly with the private sector.
- **Effectiveness in the Innovation pillar:** For 2018-2022, the expected results refer to rolling out successful innovations (ER1), scaling up of viable innovations (ER2), encouragement and acceleration of new innovations (ER3), and the generation of an evidence base of adaptation practices with a view to scaling up (ER4). According to the 2022 innovation evaluation, while new funding windows were set up to support innovation, NIE demand has lagged. ER3 was the only area with tangible progress, largely due to the innovation aggregators administered by UNDP and UNEP, rather than organically facilitated by the Fund. Challenges range from conceptual clarity on innovations to weak operational approaches, as well as weak incentives and capacities of IE and non-accredited partners to innovate, lack of engagement strategies for youth as a main driver of innovations, and overall corporate risk adversity (AF-TERG, 2022b).
- **Effectiveness in the Learning & Sharing pillar:** In 2018-2022, this pillar was expected to contribute to the capturing and sharing of practical lessons learned (ER1), development of knowledge and guidance (ER2), and strengthening of analytical capacities of developing countries' partners (ER3). The Fund created a series of KP on key dimensions of its work and the adaptation agenda in general, totalling 15 documents as of June 2023 (ER1). Operational guidance has been updated for IEs regarding the compliance with the Fund's GP (AF, 2021a) and implementation of the Evaluation Policy (AF-TERG, 2023a). Other themes initially identified, such as integration of traditional, indigenous, or local knowledge, still need to be addressed in more detail (ER2). No evidence has been found in terms of support to and development of in-country analytical capacities (ER3). So far, this pillar has been primarily focused on KP, training events, and e-modules, developed and disseminated by the secretariat. According to available documentation (including AF, 2022g), there is limited progress in the other aspects. One implicit element of this pillar relates to mutual learning and knowledge-sharing among developing countries' institutions and particularly among NIEs for improving readiness and accreditation across the Global South. This is in high demand but is limited since few NIEs have been providing their experiences to South-South learning (AF-KP, 2020a).

- **Effectiveness across pillars:** The effectiveness of the overall strategic and operational portfolio of the Fund partly depends on the complementarity among its three pillars. The 2021 Medium-Term Review (MTR) of the MTS (AF-TERG, 2021a) found “a siloed approach to implementation of the three MTS pillars [which] does not optimize potential synergies”. This was confirmed by the 2022 innovation evaluation, specifically for the weak cross-linkages between innovation and learning. The 2018-2022 period had only limited cross-fertilization, but the MTS-II (AF, 2022b) establishes clearer provisions for more complementarity across pillars (see below). Progress has been made in cross-pillar effectiveness, particularly through better reporting (AF, 2022g).

Adaptive management: The MTS-I constituted a comprehensive framework for the Fund at a critical juncture, specifically when the Fund started to serve the Paris Agreement in January 2019 and needed to step up efforts facing the mounting climate urgency. As such, it also provided an opportunity for learning-based adaptive management of the Fund itself. It created important reference points for the Fund to become even more effective and generate more impact, particularly for the most vulnerable. In this line, the 2021 MTR (AF-TERG, 2021a) found the first “MTS is a good, fit-for-purpose strategy” which has also enabled an adequate operational response to the COVID-19 pandemic, among others.

That said, according to the 2021 MTR, while the strategy “has been used effectively to guide governance, management, and other funding decisions that lever impact for the Fund, it could be used more effectively to optimize the Fund’s impact”. For instance, it could help define its niche, clarify key concepts underlying its work, and contribute to global discussions on adaptation effectiveness, among others. These recommendations have been integrated into the MTS-II (AF, 2022b), which consider the findings and recommendations of the MTR. Thus, they reflect an intentional learning process to adjust and improve the Fund’s evolving strategic framework based on evidence, analysis, and data gathered in the context of the MTR and wider stakeholder consultations in the strategy formulation process (AF, 2022b). The following paragraphs summarize the key adjustments in each pillar based on the MTS-I experience and included the MTS-II.

- **Adaptive management in the Action pillar:** In a context of a growing portfolio of concrete projects supported by the Fund, the 2023-2027 strategy puts more emphasis on LLA; the empowerment of vulnerable communities as agents of change; more investments in gender-responsive adaptation finance; support to holistic, long-term capacities for accessing and managing climate finance; further scaling and replication of effective adaptation actions; and expanded synergies and coordination with other adaptation funders, including the private sector. These elements are congruent with findings of the 2021 MTR (AF-TERG, 2021a) and contents of several KP (AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2020c; AF-KP, 2022b).
- **Adaptive management in the Innovation pillar:** In 2023-2027, the Fund attempts to fully deploy the potential of the “innovation facility” (small and large grants, in addition to the innovation aggregators administered by UNDP and UNEP) set up during 2018-2022 and operationalize the vision and definition of innovation endorsed by the Board. Key adjustments in this pillar include a commitment to support innovative solutions with higher risk; more focus on multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly with vulnerable groups; larger access to innovation grants and increased support to capacity building and readiness for innovation; and new partnerships for innovation in adaptation. These strengthened foci relate back to findings of the 2021 MTR (AF-TERG, 2021a) and

are largely in line with the findings and recommendations of the 2022 innovation evaluation (AF-TERG, 2022b, produced after the finalization of the MTS-II).

- **Adaptive management in the Learning & Sharing pillar:** According to the MTS-II (AF, 2022b), this pillar intends to consolidate and systematize learning across the Fund's processes and operations. The focus for this period is, among others, to further facilitate South-South learning; support local knowledge and solutions; enhance capacities for project-level learning; increase the production and dissemination of Fund and IE KP on adaptation finance; enable strategic partnerships with academia and knowledge networks; and increase support to and engagement in thematic communities of practice. These adjustments rely on findings from the 2018-2022 MTS, while also reflecting findings of different KP (AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2020b).
- **Adaptive management across pillars:** To respond to one of the key findings of the 2021 MTR (AF-TERG, 2021a; see above), the MTS-II (AF, 2022b) features a more dedicated approach to cross-pillar synergies. This includes a specific expected result in the respective implementation plan ("linkages and synergies between support for adaptation action, innovation, and learning and sharing are enhanced"; AF, 2023b). Beyond the 2021 MTR, this adaptive element is also related to contents from virtually all KP. It stresses the opportunity to ensure further effectiveness and efficiency through advancing and accelerating cross-fertilization between action, innovation, and learning around adaptation finance.

4.4.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Effectiveness:

- structured review of progress in expected results of the full cycle of MTS 2018-2022 and gaps/voids in these results
- analysis/dashboard-type of review of where current ERs stand in terms of baseline (2022) and early results (2023)
- assessment of how project-level evidence and data could/should be included in MTS-level monitoring and reporting

Adaptive management:

- analysis of the extent to which gaps in expected results in 2018-2022 (see effectiveness, above) are being addressed in the MTS-II (implementation plan)
- review of operational mechanisms to ensure cross-pillar complementarity in the current MTS cycle, particularly with regard to secretariat/staff capacity and the role of distinct funding windows (with a view to project-level complementarity across pillars)
- analysis of current procedures to ensure adaptive management of the MTS-II beyond the planned MTR (2025), particularly in annual interaction on the MTS with the Board and continued consultations with the Fund's stakeholders at national and local levels

4.5. Macro-level topics with insufficient evidence from reviewed documents

4.5.1. In relation to criteria of the Fund's Evaluation Policy

Relevance: Country ownership might merit further analysis, particularly in relation to projects that are not implemented by NIEs.

Coherence: Synergies and coordination with other funds might need deeper insights at both the global, and specifically, the country level.

Effectiveness: A structured review could help identify quantitative data on progress in 2018-2022 towards expected results; establish baselines and early progress in the 2023-2027 expected results.

Efficiency: Assessment of the cost effectiveness and timeliness of the Fund, its portfolio, and modalities, and the adequacy in the use of scarce financial resources and expertise is needed.

Impact: Factors enabling or hindering the Fund's and its projects' impact, as well as existing limitations to impact measurement, might require a dedicated review from a bottom-up perspective (primarily from NIEs and projects).

Equity: The approach to vulnerability and its relevance to projects and specific vulnerable groups could be assessed in a more structured manner and in line with international standards.

Adaptive management: This could be better understood through analysis of how the MTS-II is addressing gaps remaining from the 2018-2022 MTS cycle, particularly its implementation plan.

Scalability and replicability: Constraints to replicability and scalability, including in LLA solutions, could be explored in more detail.

Human and ecological sustainability and security: Experiences and progress in supporting fragile and conflict-affected countries might be reviewed to better understand interrelations between fragility and climate vulnerability.

4.5.2. In relation to cross-cutting themes

Learning and sharing: Results and coherence of the Learning & Sharing pillar, particularly from the "bottom-up" (including projects and local players) might be best understood through a dedicated review.

Locally led adaptation: The capacities of local players (community organizations, private sector, etc.) could be further explored, particularly with a view to their role in supporting the most vulnerable groups.

Gender equality: Gender-transformative results and lessons learned could be reviewed to ensure a stronger evidence-based perspective on gender commitments of the Fund and to inform the (future) work on intersectionality.

Private sector: The potential and actual role of the private sector, including local private sector, might be analysed with a clear perspective to motivating its involvement in Fund projects and clarifying the benefits for Fund stakeholders, for instance in terms of innovation, scale up, and sustainability.

Innovation: Linkages between innovation, vulnerability, and the private sector could be further assessed for Fund projects and innovation grants, while considering lessons learned by the innovation aggregators.

Accreditation and readiness: Country perspectives and new areas of readiness might be analysed as part of an overall assessment of the experiences with the Readiness Programme.

5. Meso: Findings related to countries, sectors, issues, and policies

5.1. To what extent have the ESP and GP been implemented, and what lessons have been learned?

5.1.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

The Fund has advanced substantially in the operationalization of its approved policies under implementation. The ESP has been highly consolidated during accreditation and as part of the project cycle and contributes to the coherence, consistency, and quality of the Fund's financing. The GP has enabled a dynamic process of updating and maturing the Fund's strategic and operational approach to gender equality and women's empowerment. Gaps remain for the Fund to comprehensively address equity and gender considerations in its results framework and monitoring tools, while ensuring deeper learning around the policies and their implementation. The approved Evaluation Policy will be effective from October 2023, and its impact is yet to be fully appreciated.

5.1.2. Why are we asking this question?

The ESP, adopted in 2013 and revised in 2016, and the GP (GP; AF, 2021a), adopted in 2016 and updated in 2021, are the main strategic frameworks operationalized throughout the Fund's portfolio, specifically through the Operational Policies and Guidelines (OPG; AF, 2022i). Both policies are expected to enable the Fund to achieve its mandate, particularly to support the most vulnerable people while also meeting other safeguards. According to the MTS-II (AF, 2022b), compliance with the ESP and GP is a key driver of the quality of projects approved in past years and therefore highly relevant to principle 1 of the current strategy ("quality matters") and the Fund's advantage 2 ("relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness"). While both policies are considered relatively mature, the next paragraphs aim to provide insights into the learning from implementation that might also help identify options for further policy development in the future.

5.1.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

The progress of and the learning around implementing the ESP and the GP can be revised by reviewing evaluation criteria such as equity (degree to which the ESP has been operationalized with a view to the most vulnerable), gender equality (degree to which the gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are reflected in the Fund's operational procedures), as well as learning and sharing (degree to which KP have addressed the experiences in implementing these policies).

Other important criteria for this question are related to efficiency (e.g. whether policies have helped streamline the proposal review and process) and effectiveness (e.g. extent to which the policies have ensured that the Fund meets its goal more effectively, particularly with a view to supporting the most vulnerable). These criteria cannot be addressed adequately based on the available evidence and might require baselines comparisons between pre- and post-policy project quality, among others.

5.1.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Equity (ESP policy): The ESP intends to “ensure that in furthering the Fund’s mission of addressing the adverse impacts of and risks posed by climate change, projects and programmes supported by the Fund do not result in unnecessary environmental and social harms” (AF 2016a). It is primarily concerned about vulnerable communities and ecosystems (AF-TERG, 2021a) which are “particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change” (MTS-1; AF, 2018).

While the ESP does not have a proper action or implementation plan, it has been integrated into the OPG aiming to ensure policy operationalization at two levels: during accreditation and as part of the project cycle. For accreditation, developing country Parties and their entities wishing to access resources from the Fund need to “demonstrate commitment and ability to comply, as a minimum, with the environmental and social policy and the gender policy approved by the Board” (para. 29/31 of the 2022 OPG; AF, 2022i). This is reviewed as part of the accreditation process for NIEs and MIEs (para. 37b), particularly by assessing IEs’ environmental and social management system (AF, 2016b). Non-compliance can lead to suspension or cancellation of the accreditation (para. 42 of the 2022 OPG; AF, 2022i).

For accredited NIEs, grants are available for implementing both policies, in particular the Technical Assistance Grant for the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy and as part of the Readiness Package Grant (AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2022g). While most conventional IEs already have strong policies in place, the Fund policy-related grants have a significant influence in smaller NIEs that undergo streamlined accreditation and can build respective policy implementation capacities (AF-KP, 2022c). At the level of the project cycle, the ESP “shall be applied throughout all the project/programme implementation phases, including design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation” (para. 35 of the 2022 OPG; AF, 2022i).

Specifically, during the project approval phase, three criteria are being applied: “1) the IE has the capacity and the commitment to comply with the ESP; 2) the IE has identified the environmental and social risks associated with the project/programme; and 3) the IE has, at least, initiated the process of managing these risks in a collaborative way, where possible, and has a clear prospect of success within a reasonable timeframe” (AF 2016b).

Ahead of submitting proposals to the Board, IEs are expected to conduct a self-screening and self-assessment process based on their respective Environmental and Social Management Systems, risk screening, and impact assessment in line with the 15 principles of the ESP (AF, 2016b). The Fund’s project proposal template requires an IE certification “commit[ting] to implementing the project/programme in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy and the Gender Policy of the Adaptation Fund” and requires the review of benefits, risks, mitigation of negative impacts, and overall compliance with both policies in both the justification and implementation-related parts, including monitoring & evaluation arrangements, and results frameworks (2017 project proposal template).

During the project approval process, the Board decides based on a series of technical criteria that include “economic, social, and environmental benefits from the projects and adaptation impact” (para. 17 of 2022 SPPG; AF, 2022h). In 2019, the Project Performance Report (PPR) template was updated to include a default reporting requirement on compliance with the ESP at all project stages (AF-KP 2020c). According to available documentation, insufficient compliance with the ESP is indeed the main reason for non-approval of projects, at 74 per cent of all 99 non-approved projects in 2018-2021; this has ensured a higher

quality of projects being approved by the Board in recent years in the context of a growing overall portfolio (Figure 19 of AF-TERG, 2021a). Indeed, KP concerned with specific vulnerable groups highlight the contribution of the ESP to implementing international standards and allowing for codification as part of Fund projects (AF-KP, 2020c; AF-KP, 2022d; AF-KP, 2022e).

The FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation cover a limited sample of four projects approved after the endorsement of the ESP (FE1, 2020; FE2, 2021; FE7, 2019; FE18, 2018). This, however, did not seem to reflect a significant change in quality of how equity and vulnerability were addressed compared to the rest of projects approved ahead of the first version of the ESP. Overall, most FEs outline contributions to equity with emphasis on youth and women (FE1, 2020; FE9, 2019; FE14, 2021; FE24, 2015; FE26, 2019 covering both groups). Other vulnerable groups such as small farmers (FE1, 2020), Indigenous Peoples (FE6, 2019), displaced populations (FE1, 2020), people with disabilities (FE14, 2021), and elderly people (FE26, 2019), among others, have been addressed less systematically.

A series of interventions also achieved only partial progress or even failed to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups (FE5, 2018; FE12, 2020). One intervention potentially contributed to deepening inequities (FE8, 2017: “the outright distribution of outputs to approximately 20 per cent of the population raises an arguable issue”). The available evidence does not provide further details on vulnerable ecosystems, but exclusively focuses on vulnerable people and communities.

Gender equality (GP policy): The GP and its Gender Action Plan (GAP), both available in AF (2021a), largely originated in the original ESP (AF, 2016a). This recognized gender equality and empowerment of women and girls as one of its 15 principles. Since the first GP and GAP in 2016, there has been a dynamic evolution with significant conceptual maturation and operational adjustments (AF-KP, 2020c; AF-KP, 2022e). Policy implementation is currently framed by the GAP 2021-2023, which establishes seven priority areas with respective actions, indicators, responsibilities, and timelines. The Board is expected to review the policy through “regular monitoring reports prepared by the secretariat,” as the Board is “accountable for results of the implementation of the gender policy.” Since 2021, no monitoring report has been submitted to the Board. That said, other documentation reflects broader progress in policy implementation at the conceptual and operational levels.

Conceptually, the original GP has led to a codification of human rights-based, gender-responsive, and gender-transformative approaches (GAP in AF 2021a; AF-KP 2020b). Its update emphasizes the commitment to intersectionality of gender (AF, 2021a; AF-KP, 2022e). It also clarifies the mutually reinforcing dynamic where “addressing gender issues and promoting gender equality in an integral way throughout the Fund’s work also contributes to and strengthens the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability” (GAP in AF, 2021a).

Operationally, the 2016 GP supposed a major milestone fully reflected in the OPG. This enables developing country Parties and their entities to access resources from the Fund, stating that the “gender policy shall be applied throughout all the project/programme implementation phases, including design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation” (para. 36 of the 2022 OPG; AF, 2022i). This is particularly relevant as the GP upgraded the range of gender considerations in project proposals to include mandatory mainstreaming and data disaggregation (AF-KP, 2020c), which today includes requirements for Integrating Gender into the Adaptation Fund Project/Programme Cycle.

These considerations range from proposal-stage gender assessments and meaningful, comprehensive gender-responsive stakeholder consultation, to the implementation of a project/programme-specific gender action plan and gender-responsive results framework, among others (2021 GP; AF, 2022c). Indeed, the 2017 project proposal template requests submitting entities to assess GP compliance as part of justification and implementation arrangements and to sign a certification of commitment to the GP, which is congruent with the requirements for ESP (see previous paragraph).

Once submitted, the Board reviews the eligibility of specific proposals by reviewing, among other criteria, if they contribute to “advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” (para. 17 of 2022 SPPG; AF, 2022h). According to available documentation, insufficient compliance with the GP is the second most important factor (34 per cent of all 99 unsuccessful proposals between 2018 and 2021) for non-approval of fully formulated projects. This is interpreted as a driver for higher quality projects approved by the Board in recent years (Figure 19 of AF-TERG, 2021a).

Beyond proposals, the GP has also induced updates in the PPR in 2019. The template now includes a default reporting requirement on compliance with the Fund’s GP at all project stages (AF-KP, 2020c). Overall, the original and updated GP seem to have had a substantial influence on the Fund’s capacity to report on disaggregated data as requested by the methodologies. The first core impact indicator (“number of beneficiaries”) “is expressed in absolute numbers of beneficiaries disaggregated by category of reporting (direct/indirect) and gender reported at the project level” (AF, 2014).

That said, the 2019 results framework indicators (AF, 2019a) are largely gender-blind. There is only one gender-disaggregated indicator and no gender lens on the outcome covering support to vulnerable people.¹³ Moreover, the 2022 APR (AF, 2023a), does not provide gender-specific data for total numbers of direct and indirect beneficiaries of the Fund’s historic and current portfolio.

Apart from data, the GP has also induced an evolving ambition in terms of gender-transformative adaptation from an increasingly complex understanding, including intersectionality of gender and gender-related differences in vulnerability (AF, 2021a; AF-KP, 2022e). This is expected to be further operationalized in updated operational templates and reviewed guidance notes (GAP in AF, 2021a; guidance note available in AF, 2022c).

As the revised FEs cover projects approved prior to the original GP launch in 2016, the gender-related findings are mixed at best. Some projects have achieved significant progress in empowering women and their organizations (such as associations and cooperatives) at all levels (FE2, 2021; FE9, 2019; FE10, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE26, 2019, among others). They have validated the mutually reinforcing dynamics of gender equality and adaptation, for instance by stating that “groups with more women and women groups were more efficient in implementation and functioning and able to generate expected results” (FE21, 2017). At the same time, others lacked minimal gender-responsive traction due to weak planning (FE7, 2019; FE15, 2019; FE17, 2019; FE19, 2017). Some even led to the “participation of women in a secondary role, both in the development of productive activities and in decision-making” (FE7, 2019).

Although a requirement since 2011, gender-disaggregated data are not available systematically in all FEs. Only 17 (around 60 per cent) of FEs provide some disaggregated data and the remaining 11 (around 40

¹³ Outcome 6: “Diversified and strengthened livelihoods and sources of income for vulnerable people in targeted areas” (2019 Strategic Results Framework, AF 2019a).

per cent) show a lack thereof. At the level of monitoring, based on available documentation, fully operationalization of the GP and GAP face similar challenges. While the PMM summary report (AF-KP, 2019b) dedicates one of its eight themes to “gender-responsive interventions,” the remaining themes lack any references to the role of women and girls.

Most recent PMM reports address gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in a superficial manner at best, except for missions in Chile (AF, 2019d) and Rwanda (AF, 2019e). For instance, the reports for Cook Islands (AF, 2019c), Samoa (AF, 2019b), Seychelles (AF, 2021b) and West Africa Volta Basin (AF, 2022f) only review gender-related aspects in a fragmented manner, while the report for Costa Rica (AF, 2020) lacks any meaningful reference. This seems to be congruent with the guide for PMM that reports only includes two gender-related questions of 21 questions accompanying the mission’s learning objectives.¹⁴

Learning & sharing (both policies): The ESP and GP have been implemented in the context of two MTS focusing on learning and sharing as a strategic pillar of the Fund’s work. However, only the GP entails a specific commitment to learning and knowledge generation as a priority area of the current GAP workplan 2021-2023. Meanwhile, the ESP lacks provisions in terms of learning and sharing (AF, 2016a). Progress in GP implementation, including the learning area, has not yet been monitored systematically (see above). As outlined above (section 4.4), the overall learning and sharing portfolio at the Fund has been primarily focused on KP and training modules in past years, which included two specific studies on gender equality. A 2020 study (AF-KP, 2020c) summarizes experiences with gender mainstreaming in five Fund projects (three of which have also been evaluated: FE5, 2018; FE21, 2017; FE27, 2018). It finds that “integrating gender elements (into) project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation has had multifaceted benefits.”

A series of factors for successful gender mainstreaming is being identified. These factors include use of gender assessments, collaboration of gender focal points, involvement of local women’s groups, and adequate reporting, among others. In 2022, a prospective study based on case studies from other organizations (AF-KP, 2022e) concluded that the Fund could benefit from “document [project-level] lessons learned and best practices on how to apply intersectional approaches throughout the project/programme cycle.”

Although there are no specific KP on the ESP, different thematic KP address distinct elements of the ESP and the GP. One is related to their relevance in ensuring that local inclusion and consultation is effective throughout the project cycle (AF-KP, 2020b) and that youth becomes a strong adaptation player (AF-KP, 2022d). For its part, in its summary of PMM reports, AF-KP (2019b) is relatively silent on ESP-related contents. However, it addresses GP-relevant aspects in a dedicated chapter that describes lessons learned and success factors congruent with ones outlined by the 2020 study mentioned above. In addition to the KP, the Fund also offers an e-learning course for NIEs to better address environmental and social and gender considerations in project design and implementation (AF, 2023a)¹⁵ and the technical assistance grants for NIEs requiring capacity support to implement both policies (AF-KP, 2020a; AF-KP, 2022g), already mentioned above.

¹⁴ Reviewed in annexes of reports in 2019 Samoa (AF, 2019b) and Cook Islands (AF, 2019c).

¹⁵ According to <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document-type/e-courses/> as well as <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/knowledge-learning/knowledge-themes/gender/>.

5.1.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Equity (ESP)

- review of readiness offerings from a perspective of ESP policy implementation
- analysis of lessons learned with ESP compliance within project monitoring (including mid-term reports)
- comparative analysis of projects approved pre- and post-ESP with a view to how equity considerations are reflected in mid-term reports and, ideally, FEs

Gender equality (GP)

- comparative analysis of projects approved pre- and post-GP with a view to how gender considerations are reflected in mid-term reports and, ideally, FEs
- analysis of GAP 2021-2023 implementation and monitoring
- review of GP compliance at the macro and meso level of the Fund, particularly with a focus on results frameworks, core indicators, etc.

Learning and sharing (both policies)

- structured review of the learning agenda of the existing policy framework at the Fund and which quality aspects might be relevant for new and/or updated Fund policies in the future
- assessment of the experience, if any, in South-South learning and sharing around ESP and GP compliance

5.2. How has the Fund addressed the systemic issues influencing its work?

5.2.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

In recent years, the Fund has improved its understanding of systemic challenges influencing its overall performance. The MTS-II, for example, lists a series of issues, primarily within the context in which the Fund operates. At the same time, the Fund has yet to develop a more comprehensive, risk-sensitive approach to ownership of its operations. Nor has it gone beyond process-related dimensions elements of effectiveness by ensuring that key elements of adaptation effectiveness are achieved. It also lacks nuance in its ambitious approach to engaging local players and supporting their capacities, particularly to maintain results from Fund-supported projects.

5.2.2. Why are we asking this question?

The success of the Fund largely depends on its capacity to fully understand and address the systemic issues affecting its overall performance and the ultimate impact of the projects financed. These are largely embedded in overall barriers to effective climate finance. However, for the Fund, they specifically relate to actual and potential external limitations to supporting and empowering vulnerable groups and ecosystems. The MTS-II reviews these factors as part of the demanding external context. This includes risks of maladaptation and lack of actual results; donor-driven agendas not aligned to national priorities; and top-down approaches with little respect to local players, which the Fund commits to addressing through three “principles for impact and effectiveness”, namely quality, ownership, and local participation.

5.2.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

To assess the extent to which the Fund has addressed key systemic issues identified in the MTS-II, the following pages will review relevance (degree to which country ownership is supported to avoid donor-driven approaches), effectiveness (degree to which the Fund focuses on adaptation effectiveness), and LLA (degree to which local empowerment is supported by the Fund and its projects). These criteria will be assessed with a particular perspective on overcoming the identified systemic issues mentioned above as per available documentation. The contents complement the summaries of these criteria in sections 4.1 (for relevance and LLA) and 4.4 (for effectiveness).

5.2.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Relevance: The MTS-II stresses that “ownership matters” and can be ensured through alignment with national strategies and climate-related instruments. These include the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Adaptation Communications; accreditation of national entities as core implementing partners of the Fund portfolio; and the use of national systems, including through direct access modalities (AF, 2022b). As outlined in section 5.1., available documentation shows that direct access constitutes a strong driver behind the Fund’s respect of country ownership and alignment. This modality is being continuously upgraded to enable access not only to accredited NIEs but

also to local and vulnerable groups. That said, challenges remain as few eligible countries (around one out of five) have accredited NIEs at the Fund and those accredited do not always gain access to actual funding. At the operational level, country ownership and alignment to national priorities are not systematically assessed yet in available studies. However, FEs indicate that most interventions are aligned to national and often subnational policies and institutional priorities (see below).

Given the relatively limited evidence and data on the different facets and implications of country ownership, gaps in the assessment of related risks and threats are not surprising. In Fund-level decisions for example, these gaps include in-depth reviews of how project proposals align with which priorities and who owns them; whether there are possible frictions between national and local priorities; or how these policies being supported by the Fund relate to ESP and GP provisions. There are also gaps in assessing related risks and threats at the level of project implementation. For example, they need to systematically analyse national and local stakeholders and their priorities throughout the project cycle; critically review possible over-reliance on existing contacts and networks that might be detrimental to the interests of the targeted vulnerable groups; or identify lessons learned with country ownership and alignment as part of reporting and evaluation, which can ultimately feed into broader KP.

Effectiveness: According to the MTS-II (AF, 2022b), the success of climate finance is contingent on the quality of adaptation initiatives being funded and their respective results. Fund-level documentation provides ample insights into its approaches to adaptation effectiveness, which cascades from its goal and vision to its mission to “accelerat[e] effective adaptation action and efficient access to finance (...) by supporting country-driven adaptation projects and programmes, innovation, and learning with concrete results at the local level that can be scaled up.” The operationalization in the three strategic pillars (see section 4.4) is congruent with the ambition to enable effective and high quality adaptation efforts, particularly at the local level and in benefit of the most vulnerable groups. The latter aspects of effective adaptation are reviewed in detail by Fund studies covering gender equality (AF-KP, 2020b; AF-KP, 2022e), youth empowerment (AF-KP, 2022d), and LLA (AF-KP, 2020b), among others, showcasing relevant elements to consider building adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability.

The PMM summary report (AF-KP, 2019b) outlines similar process-oriented aspects of adaptation effectiveness from stakeholder engagement to gender responsiveness and inter-institutional collaboration. That said, while the Fund has been reviewed in its role as an effective adaptation finance provider (for instance through the 2021 MTR; AF-TERG, 2021a), there is only incipient data and analysis of how the operational portfolio is contributing to adaptation effectiveness.

While the secretariat is in the process of revising the Fund’s Strategic Results Framework and related core indicators to address methodological challenges, the 2022 APR (AF, 2023a) offers a few aggregated preliminary results¹⁶ for the Fund’s current core impact indicators. It states that 10.65 million people directly benefited from reduced vulnerability of their communities and an increased adaptive capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change, on occasions further supported by a total of 516 early warning systems (impact 1). Moreover, 99 policies were introduced or adjusted to address climate change risks at the local, regional, or national level (impact 2), while ecosystem resilience was increased through the creation, protection, or rehabilitation of 575,699 ha of natural habitats, and the protection of 162,275 m

¹⁶ These “preliminary results” are based on the planned results included in the approved project documents and thus prospective future results, according to the 2022 APR (AF, 2023a).

of coastline (impact 3). So far, the degree of adaptation effectiveness based on these, or other indicators, have not been assessed systematically. Possible risks related to systemic issues have not yet been identified or described either at the aggregate or at the project levels.

The FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation show a mixed picture for both impacts and outcomes achieved, with impacts being identified in an uneven manner, and outcomes appearing to be highly context-specific and dependent on local conditions. FEs document good progress in outcomes, particularly for farmers and agricultural resilience (FE4, 2021; FE11, 2020; FE12, 2020; FE16, 2017; FE19, 2017; FE26, 2019) and early warning systems (FE3, 2019; FE7, 2019), among others. At the same time, findings also refer to significant shortcomings in ensuring adaptation effectiveness, specifically due to weak planning and lack of monitoring capacities (FE2, 2021; FE10, 2019; FE13, 2018; FE14, 2021; FE22, 2016; FE28, 2015), political decisions and weak governance (FE14, 2021; FE20, 2016) or even negative environmental impacts (FE3, 2019). According to the documentation reviewed, these risk factors – potentially harming the quality and effectiveness of adaptation efforts supported by the Fund – are not yet fully integrated into the Fund’s policies and procedures. Nor have they been systematized in ways that enable a better understanding of these risks and how to mitigate them in benefit of adaptation effectiveness.

Locally led adaptation: To avoid the “top-down approach” of early adaptation initiatives and address related risks for maladaptation potentially harming local communities and vulnerable groups,¹⁷ the MTS-II (AF, 2022b) outlines the vital need for local participation and empowerment. It refers specifically to the eight principles for Locally Led Adaptation Action proposed by the Global Commission on Adaptation in 2021. LLA is well documented by the Fund throughout almost all KP and as a cross-cutting issue of the MTS. It is also extensively covered by the 2019 PMM report (AF-KP, 2019b), the 2021 MTR (AF-TERG, 2021a), and the 2022 APR (AF, 2023a), among others (see for more detail section 4.1).

The MTS-II (AF, 2022b) states that “all of the Fund’s activities are designed to promote locally based or locally led action” which is also consistently reflected in the respective policies (ESP and GP). It is, however, less specifically anchored in project approval procedures: none of the eligibility criteria of the SPPG (AF, 2022h) refer to local dimensions.

Beyond progress made in LLA, available studies and analysis also identify risks and shortcomings to be considered. This is especially the case for local capacity to access and manage adaptation finance and maintain local results, which might be a substantial roadblock for local empowerment (AF-KP, 2020c; AF-KP, 2022c; AF-KP, 2022d). The FEs document this concern in more detail than this rapid evaluation (see section 4.1). So far, these risks and their impact have not been comprehensively explored. According to available documentation, there is a lack of specific strategies to address them. Overall, the risks of weak local capacity for project effectiveness and sustainability, among others, are not yet reflected in existing evidence and analysis.

¹⁷ The MTS-II risk assessment (AF, 2022b) states the risk that “adaptation finance might not sufficiently reach the local level and engage local actors and the most vulnerable communities and social groups, thereby hindering the impact and sustainability of funded activities.”

5.2.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Relevance

- review of ownership-related risks at the Fund level and for the operational portfolio, and how these are (not) being addressed
- analysis of experiences addressing these risks with targeted mitigation actions

Effectiveness

- systematic review of contributions of the operational portfolio (actual projects at least at midpoint) to adaptation effectiveness
- analysis of recurrent gaps and shortcomings for projects to contribute to effective adaptation risks, and related medium- and long-term risks for the Fund's work

Locally led adaptation

- review of LLA considerations in project approval processes beyond the ESP/safeguards perspective
- assessment of risks of weak local capacity for project effectiveness and sustainability, and implications for Fund-level impacts and outcomes

5.3. Specifically, how are Fund operations aligned (or not) with national adaptation strategies and processes?

5.3.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

Through direct access to climate finance, alignment to national strategies and processes constitutes an inherent dimension of the Fund's work with a notably increased capacity to support adaptation through local policies and plans. However, the alignment of different funding windows to national priorities, demands, and opportunities is not fully explored in available evidence. Gaps remain in reviewing country ownership as part of the Fund's strategic focus and operational portfolio.

5.3.2. Why are we asking this question?

Beyond direct access to adaptation finance through accreditation, a key ingredient to ensuring country ownership is grounded in the alignment of the Fund's operations with national adaptation strategies and processes, as outlined in the Action pillar of the current MTS-II.¹⁸ Fund operations entail primarily funded projects but also existing funding windows, readiness support, and analytical work geared towards enabling effective national and local adaptation efforts. So far, a comprehensive overview of the Fund's role in supporting and coordinating with national strategies and processes – and more broadly, in terms of supporting country ownership – has not yet been done. Thus, the next paragraphs will explore in more detail the existing evidence and analysis in this matter as an initial assessment.

¹⁸ Full description of this strategic pillar (*emphasis added*): "Developing countries are supported in undertaking and accelerating high quality, local level, and scalable adaptation projects and programmes *that are aligned with their national adaptation strategies and processes.*"

5.3.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

The alignment of the Fund’s operations to national strategies and processes is inherently linked to relevance as the main criterion (degree to which national strategies and processes are considered for the Fund’s operations).

5.3.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Relevance: In principle, alignment to national strategies and policies is pursued in the strategic pillar “Action” of the current MTS-II. However, in practice, alignment to national policies, frameworks, and processes only finds limited reflections in core documentation such as the MTS-II (mentioned three times; AF, 2022b), the 2021 MTR (twice; AF-TERG, 2021a), and the 2022 APR (twice; AF, 2023a). As outlined in section 5.1, the Fund can rely on a “built-in” alignment to national strategies and processes by accrediting and providing direct access to up to two NIEs in each country. These are selected by national governments and usually operate at the heart of the national adaptation agenda. Several NIEs are lead entities for national planning and financing of climate-resilient development. These include government entities of planning and international cooperation (Cook Islands, Chile, Jamaica, Jordan), environment (Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Bhutan, Kenya, Micronesia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe) and financing (Ethiopia, India, Tuvalu), all of which are inherently involved in national policies and processes.

The Fund has advanced substantially in expanding country-driven and direct access. This has occurred through the conventional pathway of accreditation (allowing two NIEs instead of the previous single-NIE approach). However, it has also expanded via more flexible direct access formats, including through streamlined accreditation of smaller NIEs; EDA benefiting smaller, local entities; as well as through enabling climate finance access by non-accredited entities and sub-national actors through the innovation aggregators (see section 4.1). However, given that less than a third of the 132 Fund projects approved by June 2022 were led by NIEs, in practice, most Fund-level projects are implemented by MIEs and increasingly RIEs. In this context, alignment is not automatically given, at least in comparison with direct access. However, available evidence and documentation remains largely silent on relevance in terms of the operational portfolio.

Evidence from the FEs shows that national policies and processes are often directly supported although not necessarily considered systematically in all projects concluded in recent years. The evidence also hints at a need for a deeper understanding of what national strategies and processes entail, including in capacity and institutional terms (FE1, 2020; FE14, 2021; FE15, 2019; FE20, 2016; FE21, 2017). They also point to the need to understand how they relate to local and territorial plans, processes, and capacities (FE7, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE12, 2020; FE18, 2018; FE21, 2017). This is especially the case in light of the Fund’s push for local leadership in adaptation efforts where capacities appear to be a significant issue for project effectiveness and sustainability (see section 4.2 above).

Beyond the direct access and project-level dimensions, the analysis of the Fund’s alignment to national priorities and processes is incipient at best. This affects funding windows, readiness support, and analytical

work alike. For instance, the range of available funding windows has increased substantially¹⁹ and high early response rates seem to reflect consistent government interest (AF-TERG, 2021a). However, available analysis focuses mainly on the implementation challenges such as slow set-up and long approval processes (AF-TERG, 2021a; AF-TERG, 2022b, among others). It stresses that one “key constraint has been a lack of clarity on the concepts and intended purpose underpinning the new windows”. At the same time, it calls for “guidelines, examples, and capacity building [to] support eligible Parties to design and implement high-quality adaptation projects and programmes, based upon country-driven priorities” (AF-TERG, 2021a). At this stage, existing documentation does not explore the extent to which the design and implementation of distinct funding windows specifically respond to these country-driven priorities.

For its part, addressing NIEs, the Fund Readiness Programme features the “built-in” alignment to national strategies and processes, as mentioned above. While the programme is heavily focused on project cycle management, it also provides learning and sharing opportunities to build capacities for national and local climate action, thus contributing to country ownership in line with national processes (AF-KP, 2020a).

Finally, the Fund’s research and analytical work does not necessarily emerge from a consistent consideration of developing countries’ learning or capacity priorities. It occasionally refers to national strategies and processes in dedicated case studies on youth (AF-KP, 2022d), gender (AF-KP, 2020c), and LLA (AF-KP, 2020b). The 2019 PMM report (AF-KP, 2019b) reflects on key elements for country ownership and implicitly relates to alignment to national and local processes and capacities, thus offering deeper insights into the alignment of Fund projects under implementation. Overall, provisions for and experiences with aligning the Fund’s overall operations to national priorities and processes are emerging, but not sufficiently assessed in available documentation.

5.3.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Relevance

- detailed and nuanced assessment of alignment of the Fund operational portfolio to national strategies and processes, including distinctions between direct access and non-direct access modalities
- review of relevance of funding windows from the perspective of country priorities and possible impact of identified “lack of clarity” on effective alignment to national and local strategies and processes
- analysis of the current suite of KP and how topics are being selected against relevance to, and alignment to, developing countries’ priorities and key interests in learning

5.4. How have the different processes (accreditation, etc.) or funding modalities (such as readiness, facilities, or funding windows) contributed to the priorities of the Fund?

¹⁹ Between 2018 and 2021 alone, the Fund added seven new windows: innovation large grants, innovation small grants, the AFCIA, the Enhanced Direct Access window, the learning small grants, readiness package grants, and the scale-up grants.

5.4.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

In the context of the two MTS cycles, the Fund has clarified its priorities packaged in three strategic pillars, which still seem to showcase uneven progress (see section 4.4). The Fund's underlying logic is not fully articulated. The theory of change proposed by MTS-II does not clarify how different processes and modalities, including funding windows, contribute to the strategic pillars and how these pillars contribute to the overall goal, going beyond providing funding (as inputs). Alternative scenarios are not systematically explored, leading, among other elements, to a limited understanding of cost effectiveness and timeliness of both conventional and newer modalities the Fund deploys to achieve its priorities.

5.4.2. Why are we asking this question?

In past years, the Fund has dedicated significant resources to improving its processes and modalities. This has aimed to successfully accomplish its mission and implement the three strategic pillars that underpin this mission effectively, as outlined in the first and second MTS and respective implementation plans. Do these investments contribute to the Fund's priorities? This question is key to identifying lessons learned in terms of institutional performance, and more so in a moment of continued growth of the relevance, scope, and impact of the Fund.

5.4.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

This question will explore findings of available documentation in terms of effectiveness (extent to which processes and modalities have contributed to the Fund's three strategic pillars in a tangible way) and efficiency (degree to which investments made in processes and modalities have accelerated achievements in the three strategic pillars in a cost-effective manner).

5.4.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Effectiveness: Overall, available evidence and analysis reflect uneven progress in the strategic pillars. The Action pillar (concrete projects) is the most advanced, the Innovation pillar still largely incipient, and the Learning & Sharing pillar fragmented in its advances (based on the 2021 MTR and subsequently addressed by AF, 2022g; for more details on progress in the strategic pillars, see section 4.4).

So far, there is no systematic assessment of how different conventional and newer processes and modalities have contributed to achieving expected results in the strategic pillars. The underlying logic of the Fund work, outlined in the MTS-II (AF, 2022b) as part of the theory of change, is primarily looking into upstream assumptions by linking the strategic pillars to fulfilment of the Fund's missions.²⁰ Downstream assumptions have not yet been developed, resulting in limited clarity of which elements might enable the Fund to achieve the strategic pillars effectively.

²⁰ See for instance assumption 3 of the MTS-II: "Dedicated support for enhanced adaptation action, innovation, and learning provided to developing countries through inclusive, transparent, and efficient processes is a key enabler for accelerated and effective adaptation for the most vulnerable countries and communities" (AF, 2022b).

In the context of the recently finalized thematic evaluation on innovation, this gap in assessment has become evident. One of the most critical findings of this evaluation related to the effectiveness of chosen modalities in the Innovation pillar (“the progress in terms of numbers of projects and amounts disbursed by Fund administered funding windows [is] not promising [...] and must be seen as an early indication of their effectiveness, five years after the Innovation pillar was established and over three years since the Innovation Facility launched its first funding window”). This was candidly contested by the management response: “the absence of mature projects at this time is not in any way surprising, and indeed, it would not be realistic to expect mature projects, particularly of the larger size, in this timeframe relatively soon after the launch of the modalities themselves” (AF, 2023c).

According to available data, other modalities face similar challenges to meet funding targets. Only four grants for learning have been approved since 2020 (see section 4.3) and only one scaling-up grant has been approved (in Rwanda), according to AF (2022a) and AF (2023a). At this stage, lessons learned and comprehensive data on the performance of specific funding windows are not fully available. Their individual and combined contribution to the strategic pillars and expected results have not been analysed in available documentation.

Efficiency: For this rapid evaluation, cost effectiveness and timeliness in the use of Fund resources primarily relate to the accreditation process and the funding modalities. The available documentation broadly suggests that the accreditation process increases efficiency of the Fund’s work, particularly in the proposal approval process as per respective KP, AF-TERG (2021a), among others.

That said, there is only incipient reflection on the cost of accreditation and re-accreditation.²¹ This is true not only for the Fund (through the Readiness Programme and related technical assistance, plus secretariat costs to coordinate with and support prospective and actual NIE), but for IEs themselves. Consideration of cost effectiveness needs to include the country cap (currently at USD 20 million); the temporary nature of accreditation (set to five years, more details in AF-KP, 2022g); and the risk of losing accreditation, for instance due to government restructuring of NIEs (documented in the cases of Argentina -FE6 2019- and Rwanda -FE5 2018-).

Beyond strategic and political considerations of direct access as a country-driven modality, available evidence and analysis do not offer insights on whether these accreditation costs are below the probable additional costs of non-accreditation scenario. Data show that most Fund projects and resources are not allocated to NIEs but to MIEs and RIEs. Most of these might already have sufficiently solid fiduciary standards and safeguards pre-accreditation (see, for instance, results from survey for AF-KP, 2022g).²²

Current funding modalities have not yet been assessed against their cost effectiveness and timeliness in delivering the strategic pillars of the Fund. Evidence from the 2021 MTR (AF-TERG, 2021a) stresses the pace of setting up and implementing funding windows is below expectations. The review finds that “the project pipeline and approval under the new funding windows have been slower than foreseen in the IP”

²¹ A thematic evaluation on accreditation is being conducted by the AF-TERG at the time of writing, but findings were not yet available to be used in this rapid evaluation.

²² According to AF-KP, 2022g, 72 per cent of survey respondents (from 22 total re-accredited IEs, which included nine NIEs, 10 MIEs, and three RIEs) indicated the re-accreditation process was neutral or had a somewhat low or low contribution to increasing institutional capacity. This indicated that advanced institutional capacity, and particularly safeguards, were already in place.

and that “operationalizing the two largest new windows — the innovation large grants and the EDA window — took the first half of the strategic period rather than the one year envisioned in the IP [implementation plan].” A slow path in delivering funding is also being discussed in the thematic evaluation on innovation and the respective management response (AF, 2023c).

Moreover, there is no evidence or analysis so far on the financial and human resource effort invested by the secretariat in designing, setting up, and managing the new funding windows, let alone a comparative review of cost effectiveness across distinct windows and other possible funding mechanisms. Both the respective thematic evaluation, and to a lesser extent, AF-KP (2020b) (LLA) and AF-KP (2022d) (youth), offer basic comparison of remarkably distinct funding mechanisms under the “innovation facility”. However, they do not explore efficiency and resource use considerations in relation to the innovation aggregators with UNDP and UNEP, among others.

5.4.5. What is missing in the available evidence and analysis?

Effectiveness

- review of expected and actual contributions of the funding windows to the achievement of the three strategic pillars
- comparative analysis of lessons learned with the funding windows
- explorative analysis of possible complementary modalities supporting the achievement of the strategic pillars

Efficiency

- assessment and quantification of the total cost of successful accreditation processes, including costs for developing countries’ institutions and the secretariat
- assessment and quantification of the accumulative cost of the funding windows in terms of design, set-up, roll out, and implementation, particularly for the most recent windows created for innovation, project scale-up, learning, and EDA, respectively, and as part of a comparative analysis of different funding mechanisms under the “innovation facility”

5.5. Meso-level topics with insufficient evidence from reviewed documents

5.5.1. In relation to criteria of the Fund's Evaluation Policy

Relevance: The actual alignment of the Fund's operational portfolio requires deeper analysis, while the role of country ownership as a key consideration for funding windows and analytical work might be further explored to generate overall Fund-level consistency.

Effectiveness: The contribution of the actual operational portfolio to adaptation effectiveness might be systematically reviewed to address recurrent, often systemic, project-level gaps and shortcomings. The expected and actual contributions of the funding windows to the strategic pillars might be assessed based on quantitative data and lessons learned, and with an open eye to alternative, complementary modalities.

Efficiency: The actual costs of accreditation processes and of funding windows should be assessed and quantified to generate fundamental metrics for reviewing Fund-level efficiency.

Equity (ESP): A deeper comparative analysis of how ESP compliance influences project quality could link the policy with actual influence on progress in equity at the operational level.

5.5.2. In relation to cross-cutting themes

Learning and sharing (on policies): The learning dimension of the existing and possible future policies could be strengthened with a view to improve policy quality and effectiveness.

Locally led adaptation: A better understanding of local capacity – as a systemic issue – needed for projects' effectiveness and sustainability could help identify respective opportunities and risks more explicitly.

Gender equality: A review of experiences with GP compliance at the project level could be complemented by monitoring GAP implementation and a review of GP compliance of the Fund itself.

6. Micro: Findings related to projects and activities financed by the Fund

6.1. In summary, what are emerging key messages from projects and activities in terms of the nine evaluation criteria outlined in the Fund's new Evaluation Policy?

6.1.1. In a nutshell, what are the main findings?

The FEs and ex-post evaluations examined in this rapid evaluation provide valuable insights into the performance of the initial projects financed by the Fund. The findings suggest these projects demonstrated a strong degree of relevance and coherence with national and, in some cases, local policies, as well as coherence with activities of other international adaptation players. However, their effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and adaptive management showed varying levels of success. The concrete benefits in terms of equity, scalability, and sustainability, on the other hand, remain largely uncertain and rarely discussed in the FEs.

The rapid evaluation decided to measure the historic projects against the ambitious criteria outlined in the recent Evaluation Policy, primarily with the aim of evidence mapping and identifying a first set of lessons learned. Certain strengths are evident, but there are also notable gaps in the evidence concerning effectiveness (a component of the old evaluation framework) and in equity considerations (a new criterion). These gaps undermine the overall quality of impact and sustainability assessments presented in the available FEs.

Based on the specific evaluation criteria, the main messages and findings can be summarized as follows:

The **relevance** of adaptation projects financed by the Fund can be considered high according to the reviewed FEs. Interventions show strong alignment to national and local strategies and programmes, even though the analysis of policy and institutional environment tends to be broad and tensions between government levels are mostly overlooked.

Project-level **coherence** is advanced among projects with dynamic in-field complementarity, replication, scale-up, and good practices. It often relies on the Fund's role as a solutions initiator and contributor to inter-agency knowledge. However, there are also signs of the burden of coordination with influence on the speed of delivery.

The **effectiveness** of Fund-financed projects remains difficult to assess as reviewed FEs use effectiveness-related terms in inconsistent ways and come to mixed conclusions. Among other aspects, they state that almost a third of projects have only achieved part of the planned results and almost 15 per cent failed to make a tangible contribution to climate adaptation, primarily due to poor planning.

Efficiency can be considered uncertain based on the FEs reviewed, which primarily focus on basic elements of cost effectiveness without considering other efficiency criteria. FEs identified a series of caveats, particularly in terms of inadequate planning, operational failures, and excessive management costs.

Impact has been uneven overall, but it is consistently mapped for around half of Fund-financed projects. This is especially the case in relation to increased resilience of communities, but also in prevention of loss of human lives. That said, many FEs use the term "impact" in a lax manner. On some occasions, impact

documented seems to hint to purely developmental achievements rather than progress in climate adaptation per se.

Equity is among the criteria less systematically addressed by the evaluative evidence. Only half of the FEs provide insights into the tangible reduction of inequalities and support to vulnerable groups. Intersectional analysis remains an exception and equity considerations are not part of the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions financed by the Fund.

Adaptive management is documented particularly for projects needing adjustments in implementation arrangements, selection of beneficiaries, use of technical solutions, and partnerships and financing opportunities. There are positive experiences in the reliance on mid-term evaluations to inform project management and the role of steering groups. In most cases, however, project management has been reactive rather than proactively pursuing opportunities.

Scalability is only documented in a handful of concrete experiences of scaling-up and replication. It is often driven by the desire to secure funding from other sources or ensure continuity through government programmes. The evaluative evidence hints to numerous field-level barriers to scalability. However, it also stresses the lack of adequate knowledge management and overall lax approaches to learning thus hindering scalability and replicability at the root.

Human and ecological sustainability and security remain difficult to review in the evaluative evidence. Effectiveness and impact are not systematically assessed, and the commitment of evaluated projects to vulnerable people and systems is uneven. Overall, FEs took a casual approach to sustainability, primarily reviewing social dimensions, occasionally addressing financial sustainability, and rarely paying attention to ecological sustainability.

6.1.2. Why are we asking this question?

To date, the Fund has received 28 FEs reporting on and assessing the achievements and lessons of the first generation of Fund projects initiated between 2011 and 2016. Even though these projects were approved, implemented, and completed ahead of the recent endorsement of the Fund's Evaluation Policy and the MTS-I, their FEs provide extensive information and lessons learned. This chapter will use the criteria of the EP and synthesize the extent to which these criteria have been met in Fund projects.

6.1.3. What elements do we look at to answer this question?

This question refers to contents and messages from FEs related to the nine criteria outlined in the Fund's 2023 Evaluation Policy and the new evaluation guidelines. For this chapter, specific definitions have been summarized for ease of reference and to ensure a consistent focus, complementing other angles already explored at the macro and meso level in the past two chapters. Criteria used for this question are hence defined as follows:

- **Relevance:** degree to which projects responded to national and subnational policies and programmes, as well as to beneficiaries' specific needs

- **Coherence:** extent to which projects were compatible with other interventions in the respective country, sector, or institution
- **Effectiveness:** extent to which projects achieved their planned outcomes
- **Efficiency:** degree to which projects have been cost effective and timely, showing value for money
- **Impact:** extent to which projects have generated higher-level effects in line with Fund objectives
- **Equity:** degree to which project implementation reduced or perpetuated inequalities, including degree to which benefits were accrued to vulnerable groups in an equitable manner
- **Adaptative management:** extent to which projects adapted to lessons learned and new information during implementation
- **Scalability:** degree to which projects have led to replication of adaptation action at a broader scale and/or in other contexts
- **Human and ecological sustainability and security:** extent to which projects have generated continued impacts (i.e. beyond the project cycle) for communities and/or ecosystems

6.1.4. What is the evidence telling us to answer this question?

Relevance: The FEs analysed for this exercise show ample consistency in responding to national policies and programmes for both climate action and sustainable development (FE11, 2020; FE13, 2018; FE18, 2018; FE19, 2017; FE25, 2016). These include the National Adaptation Programme of Action in Eritrea (FE26, 2019), the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in Ghana (FE2, 2021), National Strategy for Climate Change in Argentina (FE7, 2019), and local Green Development Plans in Mongolia (FE21, 2017), as well as plans in sectors such as agriculture (FE7, 2019) and food security (FE8, 2017).

In some cases, projects are aligned with subnational and local plans and projects (FE18, 2018; FE22, 2016). There are several experiences of multilevel relevance (from national to subnational and community levels). However, subnational, and local priorities and plans – as a vital ingredient to the Fund’s commitment to LLA and to empowering vulnerable groups at the local level – are not systematically reflected. References in the FEs to policy and institutional alignment, and impact thereof, are often made in broad terms. However, they do not connect with an analysis of sustainability, equity, and scalability, all of which depend to a certain degree on relevance as an enabler (for these criteria specifically, see below).

There are also reflections of tensions and mistrust between different levels of adaptation governance, highlighted among others in relation to LLA (see section 5.2, this refers among others to experience documented in FE7, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE20, 2016).

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE8, 2017] The Project is in line with supporting development priorities at all levels of the GoPNG’s efforts to lead planning, coordination, and on-the-ground implementation of measures to facilitate adaptation at all administrative levels.

[FE18, 2018] All actions have been aligned with the national, subnational policies, and priorities and international agreements of which the country is a signatory. It also has been executed in agreement with the governing entity on the subject and/or with the local authorities and community partners.

[FE21, 2017] The major outcomes of the project are generation of awareness or change in thinking (transformation) from local to the national level regarding issues climate change and seriousness of the impact and various solutions to address them, mainstreamed EbA in development planning through developing provincial-level Green Development plans, created a knowledge base, and facilitated access to it for promoting evidence-based planning and development of policy framework to support EbA.

Coherence: FEs reflect an advanced dynamism of country-level coordination and complementarity with other agencies such as the GEF (FE2, 2021), the Clean Development Mechanism -CDM- (FE3, 2019), the Japan International Cooperation Agency -JICA- (FE12, 2020), World Bank (FE13 2018), German Agency for International Cooperation -GIZ- (FE16, 2017), UNDP (FE22, 2016) and the wider United Nations country frameworks (FE8, 2017).

Complementarity with the GCF – which started operations in 2015 – does not seem to have happened in a tangible manner, with one FE indicating GCF financing as a potential “alternative” for sustainability (FE11, 2020). In-field complementarity, replication, scale-up, and good practices often relied on the Fund’s role as an initiator of high-value solutions, for instance in resilient agroforestry (FE16, 2017), watershed management (FE18, 2018), modern irrigation methods (FE19, 2017) and ecosystem-based adaptation (FE21, 2017).

Coherence is also analysed as a driver for knowledge-sharing across projects (FE22, 2016) and wider transformations among stakeholders (FE21, 2017), thus adding value (FE2, 2021) and contributing to public goods stemming from individual adaptation projects. That said, the interlinkages between the Fund’s niche as an innovative adaptation funder, on the one hand, and complementarity with other players, is not straightforward. For instance, in Mauritius, the FE found that “in the face of limited experience internationally, with coastal adaptation measures, and as a new, innovative approach in Mauritius, it is perhaps understandable that the project did not draw in a more direct way on other relevant projects” (FE17, 2019), leading thus to rather isolated interventions and solutions.

In addition, complementarity can come at a cost as seen in the close coordination with a “sister project” of the World Bank. “(A)t project start-up, this project twinning approach was viewed as efficient and effective; however, as implementation advanced, this approach became an impediment to swift project delivery” (FE13, 2018). Overall, while coherence seems to be a key strength of the Fund projects evaluated in past years, there is room to further understand the challenges, including possible implications for efficiency and scalability.

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE16, 2017] The scope and extent to which it could generate concrete results and trigger many spin-offs makes it an extremely valuable model, parts of which are already being emulated in other projects or

interventions that are using this project's good practice approach (including in NEA and in UNDP). This includes the implementation scheme of the agroforestry component used by Elkana (30,000 trees planted in 10 ha in this project, later replicated in an ongoing GIZ project), indicating that the good practices are not limited to the concrete adaptation measures.

[FE17, 2019] In the face of limited experience internationally, with coastal adaptation measures, and as a new, innovative approach in Mauritius, it is perhaps understandable that the project did not draw in a more direct way on other relevant projects.

[FE22, 2016] The project management unit identified and facilitated synergies with other ongoing projects, coordinating field visits and sharing results, such as the aforementioned cooperation with the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change Project, the Pacific Agriculture Policy Project, and the project Coping with Climate Change in the Pacific Region: Securing the Future of Lauru Now in the province of Choiseul.

Effectiveness: Overall, FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation reflect an inconsistent use of effectiveness-related terms, often interchangeably referring to goals, objectives, outcomes, results, and outputs. They thereby provide an uneven terrain to rigorously identify the degree of effectiveness from a comparative perspective.²³ Moreover, several FEs do not adequately recognize the time-bound nature of outcomes (i.e. as a direct achievement of project implementation). These mention results that are “not available yet” (FE14, 2021), “initial” (FE26, 2019), “likely” to be achieved (FE15, 2019) or “have not yet reached all the communities” (FE11, 2020).

That said, across terminal evaluations and ex-post evaluations, the assessment of effectiveness comes to mixed conclusions.

There are favourable outcomes in terms of increased agricultural, food, and livestock productivity (FE2, 2021; FE12, 2020; FE16, 2017; FE22, 2016; FE26, 2019), more ecological practices in agriculture (FE4, 2021; FE11, 2020; FE24, 2015; FE27, 2018), improved community-level decision-making based on tools, apps, and ESW (FE7, 2019; FE14, 2021), more resilient infrastructure and systems (FE15, 2019; FE19, 2017; FE22, 2016; FE27, 2018; AF, 2022c; AF, 2022d), and policies and plans (FE21, 2017).

In eight cases, or almost a third of all FEs (29 per cent), projects only achieved part of their planned results (FE2, 2021; FE12, 2020; FE13, 2018; FE14, 2021; FE20, 2016; FE22, 2016; FE26, 2019; FE28, 2015). Another four projects (14 per cent) failed to make a tangible contribution to climate adaptation at all, according to the respective FEs (FE3, 2019; FE8, 2017; FE10, 2019; FE17, 2019).

The main barriers to effectiveness tend to relate primarily to poor quality (“overambitious”) project identification and design (FE2, 2021; FE10, 2019; FE13, 2018; FE14, 2021; FE17, 2019; FE20, 2016; FE22, 2016; FE26, 2019) and excessively short timeframes and implementation backlogs (FE12, 2020; FE17, 2019; FE22, 2016). In addition, poor monitoring provisions (FE28, 2015), as well as structural and

²³ Accordingly, some contents used in effectiveness-related analysis of the final evaluations has been included in the review of the impact criterion.

governance problems (FE14, 2021), also seem to play a role in projects only partially – or not at all – achieving the intended results.

The FEs reviewed lack systematic insights or reflections on lessons learned. They also usually miss the opportunity to provide explanations for the underlying causes of these failures. Thus, they fail to provide proposals for the Fund to work towards a more consistent effectiveness throughout its operational portfolio.

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE10, 2019] Challenges, such as water security, agricultural development, establishment of agricultural cooperatives and microfinance products, addressed in a single project makes the project too ambitious, and one of the main causes of the budget fluctuations and targets too difficult to achieve.

[FE7, 2019] The creation of an Early Warning and Information System contributed not only to generate information and knowledge, but also to provide key tools for decision-making both at the level of the provincial and municipal governments (for the generation of public policies and for producers in order to anticipate and respond to the climate variability and extreme events.

[FE17, 2019] Interviews and site visits revealed that the planting zones chosen were inappropriate, and that those mangroves planted farther into the tidal zone had not survived, due to a combination of rough seas, cyclonic weather and currents causing uprooting of the young mangrove before the root systems were developed and the mangrove was more firmly established.

[FE26, 2019] Climate-resilient agricultural technologies, methods and trainings were provided to farmers (...) to improve climate adaptive capacities and resilience of many vulnerable farming households through diverse livelihood options and opportunities. The initial results are appreciated by many of the farmers. Their adaptive capacity and that of their production systems are increasing as they experience increasing crop and livestock productivity and sales.

Efficiency: So far, there is no overarching approach or specific metrics to measure the efficiency and “value for money” of concrete projects financed by the Fund. The FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation often state as main metrics a high degree of efficiency in projects that were not overspent and met the planned timelines (FE9, 2019; FE10, 2019; FE18, 2018; FE24, 2015). Others state high value for money due to overachievements (FE23, 2015), as well as high-quality procurement and subcontracting (FE3, 2019; FE4 2021).

Apart from one FE referring to efficiency rooted in adaptive management (FE10, 2019), assessments of efficiency remain mostly related to cost effectiveness (resources invested versus outputs in most cases), with some insights into time management and resource use. None of the FEs conducted a deeper review of cost effectiveness in terms of outcomes, comparisons with other projects or scenarios, or assessments of stakeholder satisfaction as part of the efficiency equation.

Even within this relatively restricted approach to efficiency, most FEs identified significant and occasionally concerning caveats to the efficiency of projects. Recurrent failures such as delays in disbursements, procurement, contracting, and other significant administrative hurdles (documented in FE1, 2020; FE2, 2021; FE5, 2018; FE6, 2019; FE12, 2020; FE15, 2019; FE27, 2018) seem to hint at structural challenges of Fund projects to achieve acceptable levels of efficiency.

Other FEs stress issues related to time management, including inappropriate technical coordination, led to significant delays (FE14, 2021; FE22, 2016) and inadequate initial budgeting and planning leading to complex and time-consuming adjustments (FE13, 2018; FE17, 2019; FE20, 2016; FE22, 2016). Importantly, excessive management costs and overspending on international consultants (FE17, 2019; FE19, 2017; FE21, 2017; FE28, 2015) are identified as additional key barriers to value for money.

While these findings are reason for concern, FEs do not explore the root causes of these challenges in a detailed way. This limits a deeper analysis of recurring issues, particularly related to low-quality project cycle management. Overall, there is a lack of analysis of efficiency in relation to adaptation finance. Moreover, efficiency is not assessed in light of other criteria, such as effectiveness and impact, or existing FE evidence. Thus, analysis of efficiency remains relatively superficial. Furthermore, there is no analysis or mention of efficiency issues (both positive and negative) that are specific to the nature of CCA projects. Rather, analysis focuses on efficiency issues mostly related to “normal” issues found in development projects.

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE1, 2020] Factors adversely affected the efficiency of the programme: the lack of contribution of the beneficiaries to the implementation of the works/investments, the low financial contribution of the Government (0.3 per cent implementation of the planned in-kind co-financing) and the lack of co-financing (in kind) from the sectoral ministries and their branches, and the delay in the actual launching of activities in the field and the extension of the programme duration by 18 months, which resulted in additional costs.

[FE10, 2019] The project used the resources in an optimal manner. This was noted in the various corrective measures and adjustments made by the Steering Committee, which allowed achieving the objectives and implementing all planned activities at the lowest cost using the minimum of resources.

[FE22, 2016] The diversity of location and topics made the strategy very vulnerable to delays and administrative backlogs, compounded by several assumptions on financial and human resources capacities of implementing partners that were not adequately evaluated.

[FE23, 2015] Project was able to achieve all expected outputs with additional achievement, and cost-effectiveness has been a priority of the implementing agency throughout, amongst their priorities. This, combined with significant levels of additional co-financing leveraged by the Project's activities, means the overall cost-effectiveness of the Project has been extremely high.

Impact: FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation only offer fragmented and uneven insights into impacts achieved by Fund-financed projects in terms of adaptive capacity and resilience of ecosystems and communities.

Several FEs report improved resilience of farmers due to better capacities and resilient systems (FE14, 2021; FE26, 2019) and of vulnerable communities because of resilient infrastructure (FE10, 2019; FE13, 2018; FE15, 2019; FE16, 2017), as well as the prevention of loss and damage, both material and human, thanks to early warning systems and active protection measures (FE3, 2019; FE16, 2017; FE23, 2015; FE28, 2015).

At least five FEs report relevant impacts as part of the project's effectiveness (i.e. as outcomes and outputs, see above) instead of including these in a specific section such as in relation to higher-level results like resilient and climate-smart agriculture (FE4, 2021; FE7, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE22, 2016; FE24 2015). That said, impact is often stated in general terms and not addressed systematically throughout the evaluative evidence, such as through project-level ToC or reconstructions thereof.

Only three FEs (FE2, 2021; FE4, 2021; FE5, 2018) show a consistent use of ToC, and four others (FE1, 2020; FE3, 2019; FE6, 2019; FE25, 2016) refer to ToC in a more superficial manner. As a result, more than two-thirds of FEs use ToC minimally or not at all. In consequence, the term "impact" is used in a relatively lax manner. These FEs report lower-level results that would fit better in the categories of outcomes or outputs. Examples of outcomes related to policies occur in FE4 (2021), FE16 (2017), and FE25 (2016), and associations and councils operational as in FE7 (2019) and FE12 (2020), etc. Examples of outputs related to policies occur in FE11 (2020), FE22 (2016), and FE27 (2018), an app downloaded as in FE12 (2020), groups created as in FE19 (2017), etc.

Where impact is assessed more rigorously, it occasionally addresses purely developmental achievements rather than higher-level results of CCA. This is particularly visible in several evaluations reporting impacts in terms of fighting rural poverty, improving farmers' incomes, or increasing food security (FE1, 2020; FE2, 2021; FE9, 2019; FE10, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE14, 2021; FE21, 2017).

Several FEs report that impacts have not been achieved as planned (FE17, 2019), with projects making only limited contributions to higher-level results (FE9, 2019; FE22, 2016). Others stress that impact was not yet palpable but only likely or expected to happen (FE2, 2021; FE5, 2018; FE13, 2018; FE15, 2019).

In sum, impact remains largely uneven across projects evaluated with only roughly half of evaluations reporting impacts specifically in line with the Fund's objectives. The lack of conceptual rigour across evaluation reports generates confusion in relation to the level of results being achieved. This possibly reflects a void of evaluation guidance being available and integrated into quality assurance of FEs conducted and submitted to the Fund.

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE16, 2017] The structural measures have played a key role in protecting the population and preserving lives in the high-risk areas through the active protection measures implemented.

[FE17, 2019] It is difficult to show any verifiable impact of project interventions given the delivery timeline of project outputs (at the very end of the project) and major gaps in the long-term monitoring.

[FE22, 2016] Although in a narrow sense the project's policy target [has] been at least partially achieved in that two national policies have been crafted or reviewed and that the project has decisively supported setting up four instruments of the national climate change policy (Provincial Climate Change Steering

Committees), the policy instruments reviewed or supported by the project remain a statement of intentions rather than an actual government plan.

[FE28, 2015] The intervention measures implemented have prevented major damage, which was anticipated from the recent storms – particularly the centenary swell, which occurred in 2014.

Equity: This criterion is among the aspects less systematically addressed by the evaluative evidence. Only half of available FEs offer concrete insights into the reduction of inequalities and the support to vulnerable groups. Ex-post evaluations offer similarly mixed results, such as reflecting marginal participation of young people and women (AF, 2022e).

A few projects dedicated specific efforts to empowering vulnerable groups such as women (FE5, 2018, FE9, 2019; FE14, 2021; FE18, 2018; FE23, 2015; FE24, 2015; FE26, 2019), young people (FE9, 2019; FE14, 2021; FE24, 2015; FE26, 2019), the elderly (FE26, 2019), people with disabilities (FE23, 2015), and Indigenous Peoples (FE6, 2019) as agents of change. This occurred mainly through capacity building, awareness-raising and lead involvement in local organizations. Only one intervention seems to have deployed an intersectoral approach by providing training to groups facing multiple vulnerabilities such as small farmers, youth, women, and displaced populations (FE1, 2020). Another pursued overall social cohesion as a key ingredient for successful adaptation (FE9, 2019).

Overall, there is limited data on the interrelation between equity and empowerment of vulnerable groups, on the one hand, and the effectiveness and sustainability of adaptation efforts, on the other. Lessons learned with the Fund's ESP and its influence on projects reducing inequities are not being captured. In some cases, the evidence even alerts that projects are aggravating social inequalities (FE8, 2017) and states that Fund-supported projects were not specifically addressing vulnerable groups (FE12, 2020).

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE5, 2018] The project specifically targeted the most vulnerable groups who have fewer resources to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This includes: the poorest groups of society (Ubudehe categories 1-3) and women headed households (who tend to be poor and are particularly vulnerable to climate change).

[FE8, 2017] The outright distribution of outputs to approximately 20 per cent of the population raises an arguable issue. It is likely that among the remaining 80 per cent of the population there are equally deserving beneficiaries. This conclusion is intuitive and can lead to conflict among the members of villages.

[FE9, 2019] All these technical achievements in direct connection with concrete measures of adaptation have created a real local dynamic with a strong social cohesion. Their impact is significant and visible on the increase of income and the food security of the poorest households.

[FE12, 2020] It seems that women or other vulnerable groups are not particularly at risk from the problems tackled by the project, and that project interventions do not have specific effects on these groups.

Adaptive management: The FEs reviewed for this rapid evaluation demonstrate that most projects faced “new information” in the form of operational challenges and opportunities to which project management responded in varying degrees, i.e. reactively. No FE has explored adaptive management based on new data on climate patterns or impacts, as most relate exclusively to conventional operational aspects. Experience in adaptive management is primarily related to adjustments in implementation arrangements, selection of beneficiary groups and technical solutions, and opportunities for partnerships and co-financing.

Most adaptive management measures were taken in view of delays, poor team performance, and low-quality project design. FEs report specific adaptive management actions as changing project leads and advisers (FE4, 2021; FE12, 2020; FE22, 2016; FE25, 2016), adjusting activities, targets, and technical solutions (FE10, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE16, 2017; FE18, 2018; FE24, 2015; FE28, 2015) and implementing changes in procurement and contracting (FE9, 2019; FE15, 2019; FE27, 2018).

Mid-term evaluations (FE3, 2019; FE8, 2017; FE9, 2019; FE12, 2020; FE17, 2019; FE18, 2018; FE22, 2016; FE23, 2015; FE26, 2019) and inputs from steering groups (FE1, 2020; FE4, 2021) played essential roles in informing and guiding adaptive management. Often, they provided clear-cut proposals on how to improve the effectiveness of the project. Based on FEs reviewed, there is limited evidence of other possible groundwork for adaptive management, although lessons learned and knowledge management were identified as a gap in FE2 (2021), FE20 (2016) and FE26 (2019). Nor is there evidence of improved risk management/risk monitoring; security concerns led to project disruptions in FE1 (2020). Finally, feedback loops with beneficiaries and stakeholders were lacking; FE2 (2021) reported that women beneficiaries’ feedback was not considered for adaptive management.

Several FEs explore the interrelation between adaptive management and efficiency. They report that adaptive management also comes at a cost, particularly where initial lower-cost investments in human and technical resources needed to be replaced by better quality ones at a higher cost (e.g. FE17, 2019 and FE19, 2017). There are only limited reflections on synergies with other criteria, particularly innovation, learning, and sustainability. Overall, adaptive management in concrete Fund projects tends to be primarily *reactive* to challenges rather than *proactively* pursuing opportunities and adding value during the implementation phase.

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE2, 2021] Some women benefiting from dry season gardening complained about the difficulties they face in the first years of income generating activities. There is no evidence of actions to mitigate this issue.

[FE9, 2019] Bringing on board partner NGOs in the regions has accelerated implementation and relieved the project team of facilitation actions to allow them to focus on management, timely implementation and strategic monitoring.

[FE11, 2020] The original design addressed only the flooding scenarios, however, throughout project implementation, the approach included the drought scenarios as well. As a result, the project changed in a very adaptive and flexible way its approach to interventions according to the climatic and hydrological dynamics of the region.

[FE26, 2019] Even though the midterm review (MTR) recommended the preparation of some documents on lessons learned, no deliberate action was taken to this effect by the programme implementers.

Scalability: In most FEs, scalability and replicability are recurrent themes; they also refer to pioneering approaches. However, experiences in using projects' approaches and solutions in other contexts or at a broader scale are generally undocumented. That said, around 40 per cent of FEs reviewed reported scaling-up by securing funding from other climate funds such as the GCF and the World Bank (FE6, 2019; FE9, 2019; FE13, 2018), integrating project-driven solutions and innovations into national government programmes (FE2, 2021; FE3, 2019; FE4, 2021; FE11, 2020; FE27, 2018), conducting inter-agency learning around lessons learned (FE23, 2015) and replicating solutions in similar ongoing projects and investments (FE6, 2019; FE18, 2018; FE20, 2016).

One project developed a dedicated replication and upscaling strategy for a strengthened rice cultivation model supported by technical guidelines and training material (FE12, 2020). Other FEs refer to scalability as a still distant, often rather vague potential for solutions than "can be extended" (FE16, 2017) through "future replication" (FE21, 2017) within "some confidence" (FE19, 2017) that "this approach might be replicated" (FE24, 2015). Others even state that "it would be premature" to replicate the project's experience (FE8, 2017) with projects lacking sufficient impact assessment as a proof of concept (FE17, 2019). Importantly, absent knowledge management and weak commitment to documenting best practices are hindering replication and scalability (FE22, 2016; FE26, 2019; FE28, 2015). Meanwhile, missing planning and policy frameworks (FE15, 2019) and lack of investments in beneficiaries becoming replicators (FE3, 2019; FE7, 2019) do not create sufficient enabling environments for these to happen.

Overall, FEs explore scalability and replicability in a rather superficial manner. They lack solidity in terms of basic elements such as proof of concept, capacities to package and share, empowerment of solutions "owners" (including producers, community leaders, etc.), adaptability of respective solutions, and relevance to other contexts and interest from institutions interested in replicating a specific solution, among others.

Moreover, reflections on scalability are largely detached from other relevant dimensions such as impact, innovation, learning, adaptive management, and sustainability. This might be a critical area to explore as the Fund approved several evaluated projects as pilots to demonstrate approaches without translating in scalability and replicability in the operational practice.

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE3, 2019] From those becoming aware of new techniques, only 17 per cent were able to disseminate such knowledge, which indicates a replication approach and delivery mechanism that is partly missing something.

[FE11, 2020] IDEAM, the leading state agency in environmental studies, in parallel to the implementation of the project, has carried out other hydrodynamic modelling in other areas of the country, replicating what has been learned through the project in its institutional work practice.

[FE20, 2016] *The AF project paved the way for a combined rainwater and desalination system, which was replicated in many other similar investments since then, indicating a mind-shift to previous water planning on the islands.*

[FE26, 2019] *Knowledge management activities were very negligible with a few studies and a video in the making and total absence of lessons learned documents, policy and information briefs for policy advocacy. Without lessons learned documents, it is not easy to successfully upscale similar programme activities in different locations.*

Human and ecological sustainability and security: While evaluating the social, financial, and ecological sustainability of outcomes and impact is a significant aspect of the evaluation process, many FEs adopt a casual approach towards it. This laxity is compounded by the inconsistent clarity of effectiveness and impact, i.e. the “what” of sustainability and of equity, i.e. the “who” (see respective sections above). Given relatively uneven commitment of evaluated projects with vulnerable groups, FEs lack data and insights on sustainability of the empowerment of vulnerable groups as the core target of the Fund.

That said, there are positive outlooks in terms of *social sustainability* in conventional developmental terms. This is especially the case through community-level organizations committing to financing the maintenance of resilient infrastructures (FE10, 2019; FE28, 2015) or equipment needed (FE1, 2020). There is also continuity of protection actions (FE3, 2019), sometimes in formal collaboration with municipal governments (FE28, 2015) and other national entities operating in their respective areas (FE23, 2015; FE24, 2015; FE27, 2018).

However, some FEs also caution against excessive optimism on the role of community organizations. These groups might require further support to consolidate (FE9, 2019), be exposed to lack of services needed for continuity (FE22, 2016), suffer impact of local government change (FE2, 2021; FE11, 2020; FE15, 2019) or face tensions with national and local governments in relation to adequate financing strategies (FE13, 2018). Financially, community organizations are pioneering strategies ranging from voluntary contributions and taxes (FE1, 2020) to agricultural cooperatives’ budgets (FE10, 2019) and revolving funds (FE14, 2021). Agricultural producers are benefiting from increased income that can be invested in consolidating climate-smart agriculture (FE12, 2020; FE22, 2016; FE26, 2019).

It remains unclear whether there are specific challenges to *financial sustainability* among the most vulnerable groups with limited capacities to start paying for services or equipment needed. The sustainability of several projects seems to be based on uncertain variables. This refers particularly to the extent to which government contributions materialize. These contributions are often announced in a casual manner (FE2, 2021; FE8, 2017; FE13, 2018; FE15, 2019; FE28, 2015). Adaptation might also not be government’s highest priority (FE16, 2017). These findings seem to be congruent to the criticisms of several FEs highlighting the absence of exit strategies (FE3, 2019; FE10, 2019; FE11, 2020; FE17, 2019; FE18, 2018; FE20, 2016; FE22, 2016; FE25, 2016), which is an implicit challenge in most other FEs.

Importantly, reviewed FEs are not assessing *ecological sustainability* in detail. When addressed, the outlook does not seem to be favourable. Examples include the continued impact of cotton production on the ecosystem on which supported smallholder farmers depend (FE4; 2021), the persistent threat of floods

on the livelihood projects supported by the AF (FE2; 2021), or, in the case of the ex-post evaluation in Samoa, sand erosion originating in wave breakers created to protect in-land communities (AF-TERG, 2022d).

In general, the reviewed FEs lack comprehensive approaches to address sustainability. This makes it difficult to extract profound insights with relevance to the specific environments in which the Fund operates. This is evident in the limited connections between the evidence and other important criteria such as effectiveness, impact, equity, and vulnerability.

Quotes from final evaluations:

[FE1, 2020] The local management committees function as well as they can and have shown real capacity for anticipation and a sufficient level of organization and functionality that suggests that they will be able to continue to take charge of the management of the operation of the works and materials/equipment (voluntary contributions from women producers or payment of an annual tax on the plots to finance the maintenance and renewal of materials/equipment received from the programme, the construction of market-gardening wells or the purchase of seeds).

[FE10, 2019] It is vital to keep in mind that the project is contingent on the development of an exit strategy that identifies the relevant governmental institutions to which the interventions (achievements) of the project will be transferred in order to ensure its sustainability. However, the project did not foresee the development of such an exit strategy that guarantees the governance of the project's sustainability.

[FE20, 2016] The design of the system lacked a business model, and the result is that the entire operation is unlikely to be financially sustainable, without designing and applying a business plan which engages island communities to generate the buy-in.

[FE27, 2018] FORECCSA's management model, the degree of interinstitutional coordination attained, especially in the Jubones Basin with autonomous parish governments, the Ministry of the Environment and of Agriculture and Livestock, the WFP and organizations, mainly of water users, are all positive factors that guarantee permanence of the Project's results.

6.2. Micro-level topics with insufficient evidence from reviewed documents

6.2.1. In relation to criteria of the Fund's Evaluation Policy

Relevance

- systematic review of alignment to subnational and local priorities and processes
- assessment of synergies and possible tensions between national and local policies and processes
- review of relevance as an enabler for equity, effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability

Coherence

- assessment of success factors (including resources, capacities needed) for in-country coherence
- structured review of costs related to coherence and complementarity with a view to cost effectiveness
- review of interlinkages between complementarity and scaling-up

Effectiveness

- assessment of project-related barriers to effectiveness
- review of root causes for existing barriers and solutions to address them upstream (design phase)

Efficiency

- analysis of feasible efficiency metrics for the project level
- review of root causes limiting efficiency and solutions to address them upstream (design phase)
- review of interlinkages between efficiency, effectiveness, and impact

Impact

- analysis of feasible impact metrics for the project level (drawing on Fund level)
- review of options to ensure more conceptual clarity on impact as part of project design and approval

Equity

- review of opportunities to strengthen intersectional approaches to equity and vulnerability
- review of interlinkages between equity, on the hand, and effectiveness and sustainability, on the other

Adaptative management

- assessment of good practice in proactive adaptive management, particularly the role of steering groups and influence of mid-term evaluations
- review of interlinkages between efficiency and adaptive management

Scalability

- deepened analysis of interrelation between scalability and knowledge management/learning, identifying basic ingredients for scalability to be enabled as part of project design and implementation
- review of interlinkages between scalability and other criteria such as impact, innovation, learning, adaptive management, and sustainability

Human and ecological sustainability and security

- systematic review of different dimensions of sustainability with a specific emphasis on ecological sustainability
- review of interlinkages between sustainability, on the one hand, and effectiveness and impact (“what”) and equity (“who” of sustainability)
- in-depth analysis of the role of local players, including community organizations, in sustainability (specifically in relation to exit strategies) and support they might require
- review of interlinkages between sustainability, on the one hand, and effectiveness, impact, equity and vulnerability, respectively, on the other

7. Inputs from the rapid evaluation with relevance to the future overall evaluation of the Adaptation Fund

The rapid evaluation was conducted as a fast-moving, open-minded process during which a series of valuable lessons were captured. As requested by this exercise's objectives, these lessons should be considered as inputs to the Overall Evaluation of the Fund that is programmed in the future, not only in terms of identified evidence and data gaps, but also in relation to strategic and methodological challenges and how to overcome these in the next phase of the Fund evaluation.

In this line, the preparation and implementation of future overall evaluations might consider the following inputs:

Input 1: The available evidence and data show essential gaps both in quantity and quality at almost all levels and in relation to all questions used for this rapid evaluation. Some of the gaps are deep, particularly at the level of distinct evaluation criteria in the Evaluation Policy and cross-cutting themes of the MTS-II.

- The overall evaluation would benefit from including sufficient time and resources to cover the gaps identified in the rapid evaluation, while explicitly prioritizing gaps that are of most urgent relevance to the Fund. Time and resources would determine the extent of the overall evaluation since all gaps identified (as well as others identified by the Fund stakeholders) will most likely not be covered.

Input 2: There is a sensitive void of country and IE perspectives in the evidence. More broadly, country- and IE-level evidence are not yet systematically used to inform Fund-level approaches, analyses, and decisions. This creates friction between strategic and operational dimensions.

- Substantial time and resources should be invested in gathering country and IE perspectives and involving country and entity representatives in the overall evaluation process.

Input 3: The evidence base used for the rapid evaluation was restricted to Fund documentation exclusively. This limited the options to learn from other sources and particularly from evaluative efforts of other climate funds.

- The overall evaluation should include a study covering evaluative evidence at the very least from the main climate funds that already collaborate with the Fund (GCF, GEF, CIF), and UN and multilateral financial institutions that have implemented a large portion of the Fund portfolio to date.

Input 4: The assessment of the quality of evidence from FEs was more ambitious and complex than anticipated. This was essentially because evaluated projects were not necessarily designed to meet most of today's criteria and benchmarks. At the same time, the quality and relevance of evaluative evidence across FEs is highly varied.

- The ongoing work on the next synthesis report of FE should retake the quality assessment of these reports whose results could feed into the overall evaluation.

Input 5: Evidence and analysis of the interlinkages between criteria (for instance between impact, equity, and sustainability) remain an exception, with relatively limited insights into synergies and trade-offs. However, these appear to be key to the Fund's mandate and objectives, particularly with a view to the nexus of vulnerable people and ecosystems.

- The framework of the overall evaluation needs to adequately reflect these critical linkages, which might also be considered in light of the most vital aspects of the Fund's niche and comparative advantages (see above).

Input 6: The three-level approach used in the rapid evaluation proved useful and productive, as well as easy to communicate. It corresponds to the three levels also considered in the Evaluation Policy. This framework suffered from the excessive focus of the ToR on issues and questions without clarifying criteria to be used.

- The overall evaluation should have a discussion at its inception phase around the framework (or combination of) it will use. Its design might benefit from a more conventional approach by which questions and indicators are derived from criteria rather than the opposite.

Acronyms

AF	Adaptation Fund (“the Fund”)
AF-TERG	Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund
AFB	Adaptation Fund Board (“the Board”)
APR	Annual Performance Report
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CPDAE	Community of Practice for Direct Access Entities
EDA	Enhanced Direct Access
EFC	Ethics and Finance Committee
EGM	Evidence Gap Mapping
ER	Expected Results (MTS)
ESP	Environmental and Social Policy
ESW	Early Warning Systems
FE	Final Evaluation
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GP	Gender Policy
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KP	Knowledge Product
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LLA	Locally Led Adaptation
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
MIE	Multilateral Implementing Entity
MTR	Medium-Term Review
MTS-I	First Medium-Term Strategy (2018-2022)
MTS-II	Second Medium-Term Strategy (2023-2027)
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NIE	National Implementing Entity
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
OPG	Operational Policies and Guidelines
PPM	Portfolio Monitoring Missions
PPR	Project Performance Report
RIE	Regional Implementing Entity
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SNIE	Smaller National Implementing Entity
SP	Strategic Pillar (MTS)
SPPG	Strategic Priorities, Policies, and Guidelines
SSC	South-South cooperation
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollars

Annexes

Annex 1: Glossary for the rapid evaluation (criteria)

Evaluation policy criteria

This glossary relies primarily on the definitions of the Fund's new Evaluation Policy, which are complemented with definitions of the draft Guidance Note for Evaluation Criteria. For further reference, the updated definitions of OECD evaluation criteria are stated as well.

Relevance – the extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, and global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. Relevance also refers to the intervention's consistency with country-driven priorities.

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: The relevance criterion is used to determine if the intervention is doing the right things based on the needs and priorities of stakeholders. Depending on the intervention, relevance can include local, regional, national, and global stakeholder needs and priorities. For beneficiaries, relevance can extend beyond those receiving direct services, but can also include indirect beneficiaries at a more distant point in the results (value) chain. Relevance is not limited only to stakeholder *needs*, but also includes relevance to their *interests, resources, capacities, policies and strategies, current and future programmes, and other factors*. The relevance criterion applies across the entire intervention cycle, from its design to implementation and reporting; this means that relevance should be assessed in terms of both what an intervention *is doing*, as well as what it was *designed to do*.

(OECD definition: The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.)

Coherence – the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution.

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: This criterion is focused on the extent to which an intervention complements or undermines other interventions and priorities in a country, sector, or institution. It is helpful for identifying where implementation synergies can improve performance and, conversely, where there are overlaps or conflicting tensions. This criterion is particularly important for interventions in areas and sectors serviced by multiple organizations with similar or overlapping mandates (e.g. donors, financial institutions, government, or civil society), in which there is a potential danger of duplicating or competing efforts. In terms of analysis, the criterion is both inward- and outward-looking.

Internal coherence refers to synergies and complementarity between other interventions of the Fund and IE. External coherence refers to complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with other organizations working in the same context towards similar goals.

(OECD definition: The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution.)

Effectiveness – the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups (considering the extent to which the evaluand has accomplished targets of the Strategic Results Framework indicators).

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: The effectiveness criterion assesses how successful an intervention is in achieving or progressing towards its desired results. When results have not been met, for whatever reason, analysis turns to examine the extent to which results have been achieved and if the intervention is on track to achieve them at a later date. Given the focus on intended results, a critical aspect of analysis relates to what is identified in the intervention’s design relative to what has been achieved, and *why* intended results were or were not achieved. The effectiveness criterion is of particular interest to managers who are responsible for the delivery of identified results. It is worth noting that the effectiveness criterion is distinguished from the impact criterion, which looks at longer-term, secondary effects.

(OECD definition: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.)

Efficiency – the extent that the intervention is cost effective and timely and does not consume unnecessary time and resources. This includes value for money, which encompasses spending wisely, spending less, spending well, and spending fairly.

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: This criterion is concerned with whether the intervention pursues intended results in an economic and timely manner. Analysis of this criterion focuses not only on cost efficiency and timeliness, but also resource utilization (including both human and material resources). It can include comparative analysis of different implementation modalities when appropriate.

(OECD definition: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.)

Impact – the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, higher-level effects.

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: The impact criterion assesses any positive and negative changes from an intervention, whether they are direct or indirect changes, or intended or unintended. Whereas effectiveness focuses on whether immediate results have been achieved according to the intervention design, the assessment of impact expands the focus to the longer-term and wider-reaching consequences of the intervention. This includes longer-term social, environmental, and economic effects, and is therefore related to the evaluation criteria for human and ecological sustainability and security. Impact is an especially important criterion for CCA work given that the most severe consequences of climate change impacts, and thus the need for proactive adaptation, will occur in the next decades rather than the timeframe of the intervention. Therefore, assessment of this criterion should consider the degree any current achievements will be relevant, necessary, or sufficient for future impact.

(OECD definition: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.)

Equity – consistent with the Fund’s ESP and GP, the extent to which the design and implementation includes input of the designated authority and vulnerable groups such as women, youth, people with disability, Indigenous Peoples, minorities, and other potentially marginalized groups or locations. It also encompasses the degree to which the intervention reduced or perpetuated inequalities, and how equitably benefits were accrued to vulnerable groups.

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: The equity criterion should be contextualized with reference to the Fund’s ESP and GP. The criterion is cross-cutting and requires that equity considerations be made explicit in all evaluation criteria. For example, the impact criteria should include questions related to differential impacts on vulnerable groups, including gender. Significantly, the equity criterion applies to groups of people, as well as resources and their allocation or availability to population groups. Analysis should focus on both substantive (content and goal-oriented) and administrative and management (process) aspects of the intervention, with the goal of identifying *what works, for whom, and why*.

Adaptive management – the extent to which the intervention adapted during implementation in response to lessons and reflections during implementation; and the extent to which the intervention supports the use, development, or diffusion of innovative practices, tools, or technologies to improve or accelerate CCA.

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: Adaptive management is an “intentional approach to making decisions and adjustments in response to new information and changes in context.” It focuses on the capacity and extent to which the intervention responds to new information, emergent learning, and contextual changes. These are essential qualities in CCA interventions that must remain flexible and responsive to the complex contexts, as well as to new knowledge and evaluative evidence made available in which they are delivered. Assessment of the criterion includes the capacity of the intervention to

accelerate CCA through innovation, which can include new practices, tools, and technology. This criterion includes how CCA may be accelerated through alternative modalities and approaches.

Scalability – the extent to which the intervention demonstrates that CCA can be increased or replicated at a broader scale, as well as in other contexts.

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: The Fund is committed to providing CCA solutions that can be replicated or increased at a broader scale to have greater impact. “Scaling” is used broadly to include spatial, temporal, knowledge, economic, and social scales. Analysis of the scalability criterion focuses on whether the object of scaling can, either by simple replication, adaptation, and expansion, increase positive impact. Three dimensions of scalability are useful to assess scalability are vertical, horizontal, and functional scalability.

Human and ecological sustainability and security – the extent to which the intervention is likely to generate continued positive or negative, intended, and unintended impacts beyond its lifetime, taking into consideration, social, institutional, economic, and environmental systems. Is the intervention sensitive to conflict and fragility, i.e. to what extent does it consider the political context and the sharing of natural resources? Is it contributing towards targeted communities’ livelihoods and to the health or well-being of the ecosystems on which they depend?

Additional explanation from draft guidance note: Human and ecological sustainability and security refers to the ability of human and natural systems to support the equitable life of all species on the planet. This criterion encompasses the degree to which the evaluated intervention has prevented, reversed, or contributed to harmful impacts such as over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. Human security is tightly coupled with ecological sustainability, stressing human protection, food security, and resilience in the context of ecosystem shocks, such as severe weather events and extreme heat that accompany global warming.

This criterion reflects the underlying commitment in the Fund’s ESP to ensure its CCA work does not unnecessarily harm the environment, public health, or vulnerable communities. Given the human dimension of the criterion, it also encompasses the underlying commitment of the Fund’s GP to uphold women’s rights and contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

(OECD definition for sustainability: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.)

Cross-cutting and other issues (from MTS-II)

Adaptive capacity and resilience (result 1 of Action pillar) (p25 of MTS-II) – the extent to which the “project beneficiaries’ vulnerability to climate variability and change reduced, their resilience strengthened, and adaptive capacity is enhanced through inclusive processes that empower local and vulnerable communities as agents of change to respond to the impacts of climate change, including variability, through inclusive and transparent processes.”

Learning and sharing incl South-South cooperation (SSC) (results 1-3 of the Learning & Sharing pillar) (p6) – the extent to which “Knowledge and evidence on high quality, innovative and local-level adaptation action and efficient adaptation finance processes, including local, indigenous and traditional knowledge where relevant, [are] generated and disseminated with a wide range of actors” (result 1 of the Learning & Sharing pillar), “Developing countries’ and implementing entities’ capacities to capture and disseminate project-level learning [were] strengthened to help inform national and subnational adaptation strategies and planning processes” (result 2 of the Learning & Sharing pillar), and “New knowledge partnerships created to expand knowledge generation and outreach and visibility of Fund’s knowledge products increased” (result 3 of the Learning & Sharing pillar).

Locally led adaptation (p6) (LLA) – the extent to which “the Fund has further enhanced its support for locally based and locally led adaptation across pillars, based on its experience with the direct access and EDA modalities. The Fund has helped to develop and since then endorsed the principles for LLA, which call for devolving access and decision-making on adaptation finance to national, subnational, and local levels. In addition, all of the Fund’s activities regardless of access modality are ‘locally based’, as they reach and deliver direct benefits for the local level.”

Gender equality (specifically) (p32) – the extent to which the Fund has “advanced gender equality and promoted the empowerment of women and girls through gender-responsive adaptation finance. Acknowledging that men and boys, women and girls have differing adaptation needs, priorities, and capabilities and by responding to those in a gender-differentiated and intersectional way, the Fund aims to provide targeted support to women and girls as positive change agents with deep knowledge of adaptation-relevant systems, such as those related to food, water or energy, at the forefront of climate change and by actively addressing their disproportionately higher vulnerability.”

Role of private sector (multiple pgs) – the extent to which the Fund has “engaged local private sector in the project cycle (readiness support for implementing ESP and GP, including consultations), for example by introducing new project review criteria for community engagement and empowerment, or enabling peer-to-peer support for executing entities. Support innovation projects and programmes. Enhanced complementarity, coherence, and coordination with other climate funds through private sector engagement. Receiving donations.”

Innovation (results 1-4 of the Innovation pillar) – the extent to which “new innovations and risk-taking encouraged and accelerated, development of innovative adaptation practices, tools, and technologies encouraged and accelerated, including solutions with high impact potential even if it comes with a higher risk of failure” (Innovation result 1), and “successful innovations replicated and scaled up innovative adaptation practices, tools, and technologies that have demonstrated success in one country spread to new countries/regions or are scaled up from smaller to larger scales” (Innovation result 2), “Access and capacities enhanced, knowledge generated, and awareness raised, for implementing entities and non-

accredited actors to design and implement innovative adaptation solutions” (Innovation result 3), and “Evidence on the conditions that lead to successful innovation generated and shared, and partnerships, iteration, learning, and adaptive management encouraged. Evidence of effective, efficient adaptation practices, products, and technologies generated as a basis for implementing entities and other funds to assess scaling-up” (Innovation result 4).

Readiness & accreditation and role of IEs (results 2 and 3 of Action pillar) - “Long-term capacity of national and regional institutions to access finance and implement high quality and local-level adaptation, including by involving and enhancing the capacity of subnational and local institutions, strengthened through efficient processes and targeted support, including accreditation, Readiness Programme, and adaptive management” (result 2) and “Developing countries readied to generate results and evidence from early and high-impact adaptation interventions in relevant sectors and themes for scaling-up with support from other climate funds and actors” (result 3).

Annex 2: Evidence gap mapping matrix for final evaluations

AF SECTORS	Relevance	Coherence	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Equity	Adaptive Management	Scalability & Replicability	Human & ecological sustainability and security	Learning & sharing incl SSC	Locally-led adaptation	Gender equality (specifically)	Role of Private Sector	Innovation	Readiness & accreditation and role of IE	Co-benefits
Agriculture	6	5	12	9	6	4	4	5	8	4	8	8	3	3	7	3
Coastal Zone Management	4	5	5	6	6		5	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	7	2
Disaster Risk Reduction	2	1	2	2	5	1	2	2	3	1	1	2		1	2	1
Disaster risk reduction and early warning systems	4		8	5	7		4	3	6	2	4	2	1	3	4	2
Ecosystem based Adaptation	1	1	8		1			1	1	2	3				1	2
Food Security	6	6	8	7	7	3	5	5	6	4	5	4	1	3	7	4
Forests					1				1							
Multisector Projects	3		1	1	6	1	2		2	4	1	1		1	1	
Rural Development	6	4	9	6	10	5	6	7	8	5	6	8	1	3	7	3
Urban Development	1	1	1	1	2				1		1	1				
Water Management	6	5	10	8	9	3	10	7	8	6	8	6	4	3	10	1
			8 and above evidence			4 to 7 evidence				1 - 3 evidence					Zero evidence cells	

Annex 3: List of literature

Adaptation Fund documentation

Adaptation Fund (2014). Methodologies for Reporting Adaptation Fund Core Impact Indicators.

_____ (2016a). Environmental and Social Policy.

_____ (2016b). Guidance document for Implementing Entities on compliance with the Adaptation Fund Environmental and Social Policy.

_____ (2018). Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2022 (MTS-I).

_____ (2019a). Strategic Results Framework.

_____ (2019b). Report of the Portfolio Monitoring Mission in Samoa, AFB/B.34/18 (PMM).

_____ (2019c). Report of the Portfolio Monitoring Mission in Cook Islands, AFB/B.34/17 (PMM).

_____ (2019d). Report of the Portfolio Monitoring Mission in Chile, AFB/B.34/16 (PMM).

_____ (2019e). Report of the Portfolio Monitoring Mission in Rwanda, AFB/B.34/15 (PMM).

_____ (2019f). Report of the Portfolio Monitoring Mission in South Africa, AFB/B.34/14 (PMM).

_____ (2020). Adaptation Fund Virtual Portfolio Monitoring Mission in Costa Rica (PMM).

_____ (2021a). Gender Policy and Action Plan of the Adaptation Fund.

_____ (2021b). Adaptation Fund Virtual Portfolio Monitoring Mission in Seychelles (PMM).

_____ (2022a). Annual Performance Report for the Fiscal Year 2021.

_____ (2022b). Medium-Term Strategy 2023–2027 (MTS-II).

_____ (2022c). Gender Guidance Document for Implementing Entities on Compliance with the Adaptation Fund Gender Policy.

_____ (2022d). Update on Strategic Discussion on Objectives and Further Steps of the Fund: Potential Linkages between the Fund and the Green Climate Fund, AFB/B.38/7.

_____ (2022e). Resource Mobilization Strategy 2022-2025, AFB/B.39/6/Add.1/Rev.2.

_____ (2022f). Adaptation Fund Portfolio Monitoring Mission in the West Africa Volta Basin – Benin, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana (PMM).

_____ (2022g). Progress Report on the Management Response and Action Plan – Mid-Term Review of the Medium-Term Strategy, AFB/EFC.30/6.

_____ (2022h). Strategic Priorities, Policies, and Guidelines of the Adaptation Fund (SPPG).

_____ (2022i). Operational Policies and Guidelines for Parties to Access Resources from the Adaptation Fund (OPG).

_____ (2023a). Annual Performance Report for the Fiscal Year 2022.

_____ (2023b). Implementation Plan for the Medium-Term Strategy of the Fund for the Period 2023 to 2027, AFB/B.40/5/Rev.1.

_____ (2023c). Updated Management Response and Action Plan – Thematic Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund’s Experience with Innovation conducted by the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund, AFB/EFC.31/6.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 2022: Fourth review of the Adaptation Fund. Technical paper by the secretariat, FCCC/TP/2022/1EPS.

Documentation of the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG)

AF-TERG (2021a). Mid-Term Review of the Medium-Term Strategy of the Adaptation Fund, AFB/EFC.28/7.

_____ (2021b). Synthesis of Adaptation Fund Final Evaluations, AFB/EFC.27/8.

_____ (2022a). Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund, AFB/Evaluation Policy.

_____ (2022b). Thematic Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund’s Experience with Innovation, AFB/EFC.30/10.

_____ (2022c). Ex-Post Evaluation – Ecuador Enhancing Resilience of Communities to the Diverse Effects of Climate Change on Food Security in the Pichincha Province and the Jubones River Basin of Ecuador.

_____ (2022d). Ex-Post Evaluation – Enhancing Resilience of Samoa’s Coastal Communities to Climate Change, AFB/EFC.30/Inf.3.

Knowledge products produced by the Adaptation Fund secretariat

Adaptation Fund Knowledge Product (2019a). Bridging the Gaps in Accreditation (study).

_____ (2019b). Lessons Learned and Successful Approaches captured from Portfolio Monitoring Missions (study).

_____ (2020a). Study on Readiness and Capacity Building for Direct Access to Adaptation Finance (study).

_____ (2020b). Local Leadership in Adaptation Finance.

_____ (2020c). Assessing Progress: Integrating Gender in Adaptation Fund Projects and Programmes (study).

_____ (2021a). Lessons learned from the Senegal country exchange.

_____ (2022a). Lessons learned from the Adaptation Fund Experience in Strengthening Long-term Resilience Through Food Security (study).

_____ (2022b). Scaling up adaptation finance: Experiences and lessons learned from the Adaptation Fund Portfolio of Projects and Programmes (study).

_____ (2022c). Lessons learned: Adaptation Fund's Streamlined Accreditation Process (study).

_____ (2022d). Youth Engagement in Climate Change Adaptation: Lessons from the Adaptation Fund Portfolio of Projects and Programmes (study).

_____ (2022e). Study on intersectional approaches to gender mainstreaming in adaptation-relevant interventions (study).

_____ (2022f). Transboundary Approaches to Climate Adaptation: Lessons Learned from the Adaptation Fund's Regional Projects and Programmes (study).

_____ (2022g). Lessons Learned from the continuous process of capacity strengthening of Implementing Entities through re-accreditation to the Adaptation Fund (study).

Annex 4: List of final evaluations

Code	Country	Year of publication	Project title	AF sector/s	Duration	Name of IE	Type of IE	Amount funded by AF
FE1 2020	Mali	2020	Programme Support for Climate Change Adaptation in the vulnerable regions of Mopti and Timbuktu	Food Security	2016-2020	UNDP	MIE	\$7,864,837
FE2 2021	Ghana	2021	Increased Resilience to Climate Change in Northern Ghana through the Management of Water Resources and Diversification of Livelihoods	Water Management	2016-2020	UNDP	MIE	\$8,293,972
FE3 2019	Myanmar	2019	Addressing Climate Change Risks on Water Resources & Food Security in the Dry Zone of Myanmar	Water Management / Food Security / Rural Development	2014-2019	UNDP	MIE	\$7,289,425
FE4 2021	Uzbekistan	2021	Developing climate resilience of farming communities in the drought-prone parts of Uzbekistan	Agriculture	2014-2021	UNDP	MIE	\$5,415,103
FE5 2018	Rwanda	2018	Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change in Northwestern Rwanda through Community Based Adaptation	Rural Development / Water Management	2014-2018	Ministry of Environment	NIE	\$10,000,000
FE6 2019	Argentina	2019	Family Agriculture Adaptation and Resilience Project in Northeast Argentina	Agriculture	2013-2018	DIPROSE	NIE	\$5,640,000

Code	Country	Year of publication	Project title	AF sector/s	Duration	Name of IE	Type of IE	Amount funded by AF
			(NEA) to climate change and variability impacts					
FE7 2019	Argentina	2019	Increasing Climate Resilience and Improving Management Sustainable Land in the Southwest of the Province of Buenos Aires	Rural Development / Agriculture	2015-2019	SAyDS	NIE	\$3,960,000
FE8 2017	Papua New Guinea	2017	Enhancing adaptive capacity of communities to climate change-related floods in the North Coast and Islands Region of Papua New Guinea	Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning System	2012-2017	UNDP	MIE	\$6,018,777
FE9 2019	Mauritania	2019	Improving the resilience of communities and their food security in the face of the harmful effects of climate change in Mauritania	Food Security	2014-2019	WFP	MIE	\$7,803,605
FE10 2019	Djibouti	2019	Development of agropastoral perimeters as an adaptation strategy to climate change for poor rural communities in Djibouti	Rural Development / Disaster Risk Reduction	2012-2018	UNDP	MIE	\$4,658,556
FE11 2020	Colombia	2020	Risk and vulnerability reduction towards climate change in the Momposina Depression region in Colombia	Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning System	2012-2020	UNDP	MIE	\$8,500,000
FE12 2020	Madagascar	2020	Promoting Climate Resilience in the Rice Sector through Pilot Investments in Alaotra-Mangoro Region	Agriculture	2012-2019	UNEP	MIE	\$4,705,000

Code	Country	Year of publication	Project title	AF sector/s	Duration	Name of IE	Type of IE	Amount funded by AF
FE13 2018	Samoa	2018	Enhancing resilience of coastal communities of Samoa to Climate Change	Coastal Zone Management	2012-2018	UNDP	MIE	\$8,048,250
FE14 2021	Uruguay	2021	Building resilience to climate change and variability in vulnerable smallholders	Agriculture	2012-2020	National Agency for Research and Innovation (ANII)	NIE	\$9,638,694
FE15 2019	Tanzania	2019	Implementation of Concrete Adaptation Measures to Reduce Vulnerability of Livelihoods and Economy of Coastal Communities of Tanzania	Coastal Zone Management	2012-2019	UNEP	MIE	\$4,616,188
FE16 2017	Georgia	2017	Developing Climate-Resilient Flood and Flash Flood Management Practices to Protect Vulnerable Communities of Georgia	Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning System	2012-2017	UNDP	MIE	\$4,900,000
FE17 2019	Mauritius	2019	Climate Change Adaptation Programme in the Coastal Zone of Mauritius	Coastal Zone Management	2012-2019	UNDP	MIE	\$9,119,240
FE18 2018	Guatemala	2018	Productive Landscapes Resilient to Climate Change and Socio-Economic Networks Strengthened in Guatemala	Rural Development	2015-2018	UNDP	MIE	\$5,000,000
FE19 2017	Turkmenistan	2017	Addressing climate change risks to farming systems in Turkmenistan at national & community level	Water Management / Agriculture	2011-2017	UNDP	MIE	\$2,700,000

Code	Country	Year of publication	Project title	AF sector/s	Duration	Name of IE	Type of IE	Amount funded by AF
FE20 2016	Maldives	2016	Increasing Climate Resilience through an Integrated Water Resources Management Programme	Water Management	2012-2015	UNDP	MIE	\$8,285,000
FE21 2017	Mongolia	2017	Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Approach to Maintaining Water Security in Critical Water Catchment in Mongolia	Water Management	2011-2017	UNDP	MIE	\$5,069,124
FE22 2016	Solomon Islands	2016	Resilience in Agriculture and Food Security in the Solomon Islands	Food Security / Agriculture	2011-2016	UNDP	MIE	\$5,100,000
FE23 2015	Pakistan	2015	Reducing Risks and Vulnerabilities from Glacial Lake Outburst Floods in Northern Pakistan	Disaster Risk Reduction and Early Warning System	2011-2015	UNDP	MIE	\$3,600,000
FE24 2015	Nicaragua	2015	Programme of reduction of risks and vulnerability to floods and droughts in the Estero Real river basin	Water Management	2011-2015	UNDP	MIE	\$5,070,000
FE25 2016	Honduras	2016	Addressing Climate Change Risks on Water Resources in Honduras: Increased Systemic Resilience and Reduced Vulnerability of the Urban Poor	Water Management / Urban Development	2011-2016	UNDP	MIE	\$5,620,300
FE26 2019	Eritrea	2019	Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Water and Agriculture in Anseba Region	Food Security (Water + Agriculture)	2013-2018	UNDP	MIE	\$6,010,000

Code	Country	Year of publication	Project title	AF sector/s	Duration	Name of IE	Type of IE	Amount funded by AF
FE27 2018	Ecuador	2018	Enhancing Resilience of Communities to the Adverse Effects of Climate Change on Food Security in Pichincha Province and the Jubones River Basin and Pichincha Province	Food Security	2011-2018	WFP	MIE	\$6,962,120
FE28 2015	Senegal	2015	Adaptation to coastal erosion in vulnerable areas	Coastal Zone Management	2011-2015	Centre for Ecological Monitoring	NIE	\$8,619,000

Request for Expressions of Interest

Adaptation Fund's Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG) Secretariat

Short Term Consultant (STC) Position

- December 9, 2022 -



Rapid Evaluation / Synthesis STC position

The purpose of this request for expressions of interest is to provide the background, required qualifications as well as scope of work for the STC position to provide support to the AF-TERG as rapid evaluation STC.

1. Scope of work

[The AF-TERG](#) is an independent evaluation advisory group, accountable to the Board, established to ensure the independent implementation of the Fund's evaluation framework. Specifically, the AF-TERG will provide a) evaluation function, b) advisory function, and c) oversight function. The AF-TERG is comprised of an independent group of experts in evaluation who are all functionally independent of the Adaptation Fund Board, Board committees, and the secretariat.

A small AF-TERG Secretariat composed of a full-time dedicated staff position – the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator – supported by administrative staff as needed will provide support to the AF-TERG, in particular with regard to the arrangements for the implementation of the evaluation work programme.

At its 39th meeting, the Board requested (see Box 1) the AF-TERG to prepare a “rapid evaluation”¹ in line with Option 1 presented in document [AFB/EFC.30/11](#) which outlined an evaluation synthesis methodological approach to highlight issues identified across different evaluations and learning products.²

¹ The “rapid evaluation”, as requested by the EFC, is understood to be undertaken as a synthesis of existing evaluative evidence and knowledge. This remains consistent with Option 1 as presented in document AFB/EFC.30/11, “Synthesis of experiences and emerging lessons from AF-TERG evaluations”

² AF-TERG, 2022. [Options for the overall evaluation of the Fund](#). Document no. AFB/EFC.30/11. AF-TERG, Washington, DC.

Box 1 Board Decision B.39/57

Having considered the recommendation of the Ethics and Finance Committee, the Board decided:

To take note of the report and the options presented in document AFB/EFC.30/11;

To adopt a phased approach to the overall evaluation, proceeding urgently with a rapid evaluation and undertaking a comprehensive evaluation at a later stage, with a view to contributing to the development of the Adaptation Fund's medium-term strategy for 2028–2032;

With respect to the rapid evaluation

To request the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG):

To prepare terms of reference for the rapid evaluation in line with option 1, for the consideration of the Ethics and Finance Committee during the intersessional period between its thirtieth and thirty-first meetings and, if needed, to present the detailed financial implications of the rapid evaluation for the consideration of the EFC at its thirty-first meeting;

To prepare the rapid evaluation, in line with option 1 and on the basis of the terms of reference referred to in paragraph (c) (i) above, and to submit it for the consideration of the Board, no later than 60 days before the forty-first meeting of the Board;

To request the secretariat to prepare a draft management response to the rapid evaluation for consideration by the Board at its forty-first meeting;

With respect to the comprehensive evaluation

To request the AF-TERG:

(i) To prepare terms of reference for the comprehensive evaluation in line with option 3 and detailed financial implications of the comprehensive evaluation for the consideration of the Ethics and Finance Committee at its thirty-fourth meeting

(ii) To prepare the comprehensive evaluation in line with option 3 and on the basis of the terms of reference referred to in paragraph (e) (i) above and to submit it for the consideration of the Board, no later than 60 days before the forty-seventh meeting of the Board;

To request the secretariat to prepare a draft management response to the comprehensive evaluation for consideration by the Board at its forty-seventh meeting.

(Decision B.39/57)

Start of the position is envisaged to start as soon as possible.

2. Qualifications

Essential competencies include:

- A minimum of 12 years of experience in evaluation syntheses, evidence gap maps, consultations, and international environmental and climate-related agreements;
- Synthesis: developing, implementing, and managing evaluation syntheses with a focus on informing strategic decisions at governance, management and operations levels;
- Gap maps: technical competence in conducting positioning analysis (eg, scanning, landscape analysis) and developing evidence gap maps;
- Strong and proven skills and track record in facilitating and managing participatory and multi-stakeholder consultations and practices in different cultural contexts;
- Evaluation: (1) conducting strategic evaluations for purposes of management and governance decision making; (2) technical competence in the area of monitoring, evaluation and learning (theory and practice), including knowledge in a diversity of methodological approaches; and (3) recent experience in MEL reviews of strategies, policies or institutions;
- International environmental and climate-related agreements and international institutional operations and their financial institutions. In particular, the consultant should have sound knowledge and experience on climate change adaptation. Knowledge of and experience with the Adaptation Fund are an advantage.

Desirable competences include

- Development experience at field level and international level, preferably in least developed countries and working with those most vulnerable to climate change impacts and with topics of environment, gender and equity policies;
- Familiarity with key actors in the climate change adaptation space.
- Creatively and successfully adapting evaluative inquiry;
- Being able to bring together data and information from different types of Adaptation Fund stakeholders such as Board members, senior level government officials and representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector organizations (PSOs) and experts from different fields such as strategy, adaptation and evaluation;
- Information and communications technology (ICT) for outreach and consultation;
- Project management experience and capacity;
- Knowledge of and/or experience with the use of online meeting tools (like Webex) and survey tools (like Zoho Survey);
- Additional language skills next to English, ie. Arabic, Chinese, French or Spanish.

3. Submission requirements

Interested candidates are hereby invited to send their expression of interest – expressing how their background fits the required qualifications – together with an up-to-date curriculum vitae to af-terg-sec@adaptation-fund.org with “**AF-TERG Rapid Evaluation / Synthesis STC EoI**” in the subject line.

The application deadline is Sunday December 25, 2022 (Washington DC time). Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for a follow-up online or telephone interview.

For any clarification concerning this communication, please contact the above email address. The AF-TERG Secretariat is happy to provide clarification on the terms of reference if needed.

Terms of Reference

Adaptation Fund's Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG) Secretariat



Rapid Evaluation / Synthesis STC position

Date:

From: Dennis Bours, AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator / Task Team Leader (TTL), UPI 473525

Email: Dbours@adaptation-fund.org

Phone:

To:

Email:

1. Background

The Adaptation Fund was established through decisions by the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. At the Katowice Climate Conference in December 2018, the Parties to the Paris Agreement decided that the Adaptation Fund shall also serve the Paris Agreement.

The Fund supports country-driven projects and programmes, innovation and global learning for effective adaptation.³ All of the Fund's activities are designed to build national and local adaptive capacities while reaching and engaging the most vulnerable groups, and to integrate gender consideration to provide equal opportunity to access and benefit from the Fund's resources. They are also aimed at enhancing synergies with other sources of climate finance, while creating models that can be replicated or scaled up. www.adaptation-fund.org

³ AF. 2018. Medium-Term Strategy 2018-2022. March 2018. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/medium-term-strategy-2018-2022/>

2. Adaptation Fund governance

The Fund provides climate finance to developing countries who are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

The Fund is supervised and managed by the Adaptation Fund Board (the Board), which is accountable to CMP [and CMA].⁴ The majority of Board members are from developing countries. The Board has two committees, namely, the Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC), and the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC). The EFC is responsible for advising the Board on issues of conflict of interest, ethics, finance, fund and portfolio monitoring, evaluation and audit.⁵ The PPRC is responsible for assisting the Board with assessing project and programme proposals submitted to the Board and review project and programme performance reports.⁶ An Accreditation Panel (AP) has been established to ensure that organizations receiving Fund money meet the fiduciary standards. The AP provides recommendations to the Board regarding the accreditation of new IEs and the suspension, cancellation or re-accreditation of entities already accredited.⁷

The World Bank serves as an interim trustee of the Fund.⁸ The Global Environment Facility (GEF), through a team of dedicated officials, provides secretariat services to the Board. The Board Secretariat manages the day-to-day operations of the Adaptation Fund such as research, advisory and administrative services.

3. Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaption Fund (AF-TERG)

The AF-TERG is an independent evaluation advisory group accountable to the Board, established in 2018 to ensure the independent implementation of the Fund's evaluation framework.⁹ From October 2023 onwards, the AF-TERG will be responsible for the implementation of the new Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund.¹⁰ The AF-TERG, which is headed by a chair, provides an evaluative advisory role through performing evaluative, advisory and oversight functions. The group is comprised of independent experts

⁴ CMP; Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. See: <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-serving-as-the-meeting-of-the-parties-to-the-kyoto-protocol-cmp>

CMA; Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement. See: <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-serving-as-the-meeting-of-the-parties-to-the-paris-agreement-cma>

⁵ AF. 2015. [Ethics and Finance Committee Terms of Reference](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-EFC-amended-in-Mar2018.pdf). Amended March 2018. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-EFC-amended-in-Mar2018.pdf>

⁶ AF. 2015. [Project and Programme Review Committee Terms of Reference](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-PPRC-amended-in-Oct2015.pdf). Amended October 2015. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/TOR-of-PPRC-amended-in-Oct2015.pdf>

⁷ AF. 2012. [Terms of Reference for the Establishment of the Adaptation Fund Board Accreditation Panel](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Accreditation-Panel-TORs_0.pdf). Available at: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Accreditation-Panel-TORs_0.pdf

⁸ AF. 2019. Amended and restated terms and conditions of services to be provided by the international bank for reconstruction and development as trustee for the Adaptation Fund (2017-2020). Available at: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AFB.B.33.b.Inf_2_Amended_and_Restated_Terms_and_Conditions.pdf

⁹ AF. 2018. [Report of the thirty-first meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board](https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/report-thirty-first-meeting-afb-20-23-march-2018/). March 2018. AFB/B.31/8, Annex III, Terms of Reference of the Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG). Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/report-thirty-first-meeting-afb-20-23-march-2018/>

¹⁰ AF-TERG.2022. Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/evaluation-policy-of-the-adaptation-fund-graphically-edited/>

in evaluation, called the AF-TERG members. A small secretariat provides support for the implementation of evaluative and advisory activities as part of the work programme.

The AF-TERG has been operational since 1st July 2019 and is comprised of an independent group of experts, with strategic leadership provided by a Chair, and support by a small secretariat (the AF-TERG secretariat). The Board approved the AF-TERG's three-year work programme in June 2020,¹¹ and in March 2022 it approved an update to the work programme covering fiscal years 2023 (FY23) and 2024 (FY24).¹²

While independent of the operations of the Adaptation Fund, the aim of the AF-TERG is to add value to the Fund's work through independent monitoring, evaluation and learning. www.adaptation-fund.org/about/evaluation/

4. AF-TERG Working Modalities

The AF-TERG will have at least one in-person member meeting annually and bi-weekly or monthly virtual AF-TERG member meetings to keep one another informed; the frequency of meetings depends on work priorities and needs. Meetings will be scheduled at a time convenient to most of the members. Additional in-person or hybrid meetings may be scheduled if the need arises, as requested by the AF-TERG Chair. To facilitate the exchange of views among AF-TERG members between in-person meetings, other means of communication will be maintained, including electronic discussion groups, conference calls or video conferencing.

The Chair of the AF-TERG shall also attend the bi-annual meetings of the Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC) of the Board as ex-officio member. The Chair of the AF-TERG shall report to the Board and/or the EFC as frequently as deemed appropriate and will present results of evaluations and other work conducted by the AF-TERG. Recommendations from the AF-TERG – including an annual budget - are expected to be considered by the EFC, as per the EFC's terms of reference, which would in turn forward them to the Board, together with any recommended decisions. The Board, drawing from inputs from its committees or the Accreditation Panel, may, as appropriate, request the AF-TERG to include in its work programme specific evaluation tasks relevant to its work.

The Board, through the EFC, will oversee the performance of the AF-TERG, in a manner that does not infringe on the independence of the AF-TERG in terms of content and conclusions of evaluations. The Board may also commission independent evaluations on the AF-TERG, in order to capture lessons learned and amend the arrangement as needed.

5. Background and context to the rapid evaluation

As part of the AF-TERG's work programme, an "Overall Evaluation of the Fund" is to be conducted by the AF-TERG. The overall evaluation's intended purpose is to provide accountability and learning for the Fund by offering a comprehensive assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the Fund. The Overall Evaluation fits into AF-TERG Workstream 1: Conducting Strategy and

¹¹ AF-TERG, 2020. [Strategy and Work Programme of the AF-TERG](#). Document no. AFB/EFC.26.a-26.b/3. AF-TERG, Washington, DC.

¹² AF-TERG, 2022. [Fiscal Years 2023 – 2024 Update to the Work Programme of the AF-TERG](#). Document no. AFB/EFC.29/7. AF-TERG, Washington, DC.

Project/Programme Evaluations.¹ According to the AF-TERG Work Programme, the Overall Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund should be informed by studies and thematic evaluations conducted by the Adaptation Fund. The Board, at its 39th meeting in October 2022 (see Box 1), decided that a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted through a phased approach: a rapid evaluation to be presented to the Board for its consideration at its forty-first meeting (October 2023) and a comprehensive evaluation to be presented for Board consideration at its forty-seventh meeting (October 2026). The terminology of a “rapid evaluation” approach is understood in the context of the Option 1 as presented in document AFB/EFC.30/11, “Synthesis of experiences and emerging lessons from AF-TERG evaluations”.

Under the auspices of learning and accountability, the overall evaluation will offer insight into two key questions:

- (a) How can the Fund be more impactful, more supportive of, and responsive to country needs in the current climate crisis?
- (b) How can Fund resources reach the needs of the most vulnerable faster and more impactfully?

At the 39th Board meeting, the Board decided to adopt a phased approach to this overall evaluation and to start the process with a **rapid evaluation to synthesize existing evaluative evidence, experiences, emerging lessons** and knowledge on climate change adaptation generated internally within the Fund.

6. Aims and objectives of the rapid evaluation

The aim of the rapid evaluation is to use existing Fund evaluative evidence to (i) develop a framework for assessing the AF's delivery on its mandate, in line with relevant COP/CMP/CMA decisions, the Fund's MTS, and the Evaluation Policy, (ii) Identify areas where evidence is not yet available to assess the AF's performance, and (iii) assess the Adaptation Fund's performance where evidence is available. The rapid evaluation is therefore intended to provide timely assessment of the Adaptation Fund's performance, results and comparative advantage, drawing on existing Adaptation Fund evaluations and knowledge products (see Annex 1) for the Board consideration. This study is also intended to support learning and reflection within the Fund, with a view of further improving its performance, and accountability.

The main objectives of the rapid evaluation are to:

- Develop a framework to organize existing evidence around the Fund's mandate, priorities, core indicators and the Fund's Evaluation Policy.
- Synthesize evidence, lessons and experiences to identify trends and identify potential knowledge gaps, in relation to the results (including impact), operations and comparative advantage of the Fund.
- Provide inputs to the Overall Evaluation of the Fund which, per Decision B.29/57, will conclude in 2026.

7. Scope of the rapid evaluation

To be able to support the overall aim and the objectives, the synthesis exercise will highlight issues identified across different evaluations and knowledge products. The evaluation synthesis would draw on all AF-TERG issued evaluations to date as well as knowledge products from the AFB Sec.

The documents to be considered in the Rapid Evaluation, as identified in AFB/EFC.30/11, are included in Annex 1.

The following topics are initial suggestions to be used in the framework (to be developed) to organize the existing evaluative evidence and knowledge synthesis:

- (a) how the Fund could be more impactful, supportive, and responsive to country needs regarding climate change adaptation;
- (b) how could Fund resources reach the needs of the most vulnerable faster and more impactfully
- (c) the governance, operations, processes, Fund core indicators and procedures of the Fund;
- (d) implementation of the Fund's key policies and strategies, particularly the Environmental and Social Policy, the Gender Policy and Evaluation Policy;
- (e) issues supporting and/or constraining implementation and performance, as well as risks and opportunities, of Fund projects;
- (f) the sectors supported by Fund project;
- (g) the comparative advantage and additionality of the Fund resources and projects;
- (h) the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, equity, adaptive management, scalability and human and ecological sustainability and security of the Fund's supported activities (e.g., Fund's evaluation criteria)

As indicated above, all these topics will be considered in the context and as they are relevant and appropriate to the Fund's mandate and operations. The list of final topics will be developed during the first phase of the assignment through consultations with the AFB secretariat, Board members and AF-TERG members.

8. Methodology

The synthesis will be a desk-based exercise, with selected interviews, consisting of the following steps and tasks:

I. Identification and quality appraisal of Evidence Base

- Identification of the evaluations and learning studies to be included in the synthesis (an initial list is provided in Annex 1). The AF-TERG and the AFB secretariat will support the synthesis process by suggesting documentary sources.
- Development of a quality appraisal framework to determine the evidence that should be included in the synthesis. The quality appraisal framework should provide a basis for excluding evidence that is of insufficient quality, depth or is not relevant to the subject of the synthesis.¹³

¹³ For example, the consultants may want to explore the tools and approaches of the [Campbell Collaboration as well as 3ie](#)

II. Development of analytical framework

- An analytical framework will be developed that contains evaluation questions and topics for which evidence and knowledge the Fund would like to seek (see above for examples of these questions or topics). The framework should be developed through a consultative process with key Fund stakeholders such as Board members, AFB secretariat and AF-TERG staff. Furthermore, the framework should include the evaluation principles established in the Fund's Evaluation Policy (e.g., relevance, and utility, credibility and robustness, transparency, impartiality and objectivity, equitable and gender-sensitive inclusivity, complementarity and complexity).

III. Data extraction and analysis of evidence

- Analysis of evaluations and knowledge products against the analytical framework using qualitative assessment software or through a manual approach to data extraction

IV. Synthesis of evidence

- Synthesis of emerging findings and findings drawn from the data collected from evaluations and studies.
- The Consultant may want to develop an evidence and gap map (EGMs)¹⁴ to visualize and present the availability of rigorous evidence for a particular topic. A typical EGM is a matrix, for example, of types of interventions categories (rows) and outcome domain (column). EGMs show what evidence there is and not what evidence says.

V. Testing and validation of findings

- Interviews with Fund staff and stakeholders will be conducted to test emerging findings and offers the opportunity to strengthen and clarify the messages emerging from the data.
- Supplementary data gathering from external evaluation sources

VI. Reporting

- A final synthesis report will be drafted with supporting annexes providing an evidence trail for the findings.

9. AF-TERG work principles

Based on the AF-TERG's mandate, and in the spirit of guiding its work for the benefit of the Fund, the AF-TERG has developed a set of ten work principles to guide the work of the AF-TERG, including the work that it commissions. The consultant will ensure that these principles are followed in the processes and products.

¹⁴ For example, White, H, Albers, B, Gaarder, M, et al. [Guidance for producing a Campbell evidence and gap map](#). Campbell Systematic Reviews. 2020; 16:e1125; Snilstveit, B, Bhatia, R, Rankin, K and Leach, B, 2017. [3ie evidence gap maps: a starting point for strategic evidence production and use](#). 3ie Working Paper 28

1. **Be relevant and responsive to the Fund priorities and operating contexts:** Stay tuned and responsive to the Fund’s operational strategic and governance priorities; Fund partners’ priorities; and relevant developments in the broader field of CCA and operating contexts.
2. **Make contributions that benefit Fund’s stakeholders - people, livelihoods and ecosystems:** Observe equity, transparency and impartiality in our work designs, processes and products to serve the interests of Fund stakeholders.
3. **Produce MEL products that add value to the Fund:** Ensure the production of useful, credible, actionable, innovative, independent and timely monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) products that contribute to the performance and impact of the Fund at all levels.
4. **Support the development of MEL capacity of the Fund’s key stakeholders:** develop the MEL capacity of the Fund’s key stakeholders through engaging them in all our work, nurturing relationships of trust, co-learning and co-creation, and cultivating a sense of collective ownership of the MEL tools.
5. **Contribute to the development of the CCA monitoring, learning and evaluation (MEL) field:** Seek opportunities for sharing the Fund’s MEL experience with the CCA and evaluation communities and to contribute to the discussion and development of the MEL in CCA and related fields.
6. **Draw on good and innovative MEL practice:** Identify, utilize and build on good, new, ethical MEL approaches and practice in the CCA and related fields.
7. **Respect and utilise different knowledges:** Seek, respect, value and work with traditional and local knowledge alongside other forms of knowledge and apply appropriate standards of quality to all types of knowledge.
8. **Work synergistically to produce optimal results:** Work collaboratively together, equitably share responsibilities, give our best, engage in constructive dialogue, exercise mutual respect, assume good intent and be open to surprise towards getting the most from the Fund’s investment in MEL.
9. **Conduct collective, reflexive learning that improves practice:** Undertake purposive, collective, continuous and critical learning to improve our evaluative, oversight and advisory practice and the value it creates for the Fund over time.
10. **Ensure cost-effective utilization of the Fund’s resources:** Utilize our time and budget in the most cost-effective ways while ensuring the production of fit-for-purpose MEL products.

In addition to be guided by the AF-TERG working principles the STC will also follow the [UNEG ethical guidelines](#) for evaluations.¹⁵

¹⁵ UNEG, 2020. [Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#). UNEG, New York, NY.

10. Indicative Schedule of Deliverables / Key Milestones

- a. Mid-January 2023: identification of potential sources of evidence and the quality appraisal framework.
- b. Mid-February 2023: Draft EFC meeting document to be submitted to the Manager of the Fund containing: Draft Analytical framework with key evaluation questions and topics to be considered.
- c. End February 2023: EFC meeting document (as described in (b) to be uploaded to 31st EFC meeting (March 2023) for information and update.
- d. March 21-24, 2023: 31st meeting of the Ethics and Finance Committee and 40th meeting of the Board. Detailed financial implications of the rapid evaluation presented, if necessary, to the EFC for consideration;
- e. May 26, 2023: draft synthesis of evidence and EGM ready for consultation with key stakeholders;
- f. July 20, 2023: Final synthesis report for EFC / Board consideration to be submitted to the Manager of the Fund;
- g. August 10, 2023: Final synthesis report to be uploaded for EFC / Board consideration;
- h. October 10-13, 2023: 32nd meeting of the Ethics and Finance Committee and forty-first meeting of the Board;

11. Duration, compensation and other arrangements

Location. The consultancy will take place at the consultant's own place of work, while working EST time zone office hours as needed.

Travel. Any travel undertaken during this consultancy will be done following World Bank rules and procedures. All travel requires approval of the TTL prior to the trip and will require a specific and separate terms of reference. All travel expenses will be paid and/or reimbursed separately.

Support. The AF-TERG Secretariat will provide the consultant with all necessary documentation needed in support of the above scope of work via access to a cloud-based background documentation repository or will provide access in another way to any documentation.

Arrangements. The position is for a maximum of 50 days under fiscal year 2023 (FY23), for an agreed net / gross daily rate of US\$ XXX. All contracts with the Adaptation Fund / AF-TERG are World Bank contracts and follow the relevant rules and regulations of the Bank.

The total cost of this contract is US\$ XXXXXX. Any need for additional days and compensation will need to be determined in consultation with the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator (TTL), the AF-TERG Chair and the AFB Secretariat Manager and need to be approved prior to the beginning of extra work.

Payments for deliverables will be processed upon approval by the TTL.

Annex 1. Type and sources of documents to be considered in the synthesis

(a) Adaptation Fund

- Adaptation Fund Knowledge Products: Lessons learned studies 2017-2022; Portfolio Monitoring Mission (PMM) Reports; Lessons learned from PMM reports
- Project level reports: Annual Performance Reports; mid-term and final evaluation Reports, etc.
- Implementing Entities Knowledge Products: Country specific studies, technical reports, publications, case studies, etc.
- Management responses to AF-TERG evaluations

(b) AF-TERG Evaluation Products

- Evaluability Assessment
- Study on Approaches to Ex Post Evaluation of Climate Change Adaptation
- Adaptation Fund Innovative Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)
- Evaluating Adaptation: Common Challenges Identified Across Three Studies
- Enabling Systems Innovation in Climate Change Adaptation: Exploring the Role for MEL
- Assessing the Evaluability of Adaptation-Focused Interventions: Lessons from the Adaptation Fund
- MTR of the MTS
- Thematic Evaluations on innovation, accreditation and scalability
- Synthesis of final evaluations
- Ex post evaluations
- Evaluation Policy outputs