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Adaptation Fund Projects Build Climate Resilience While Promoting Sustainable Development

Washington, D.C. (May 29, 2020) – Adaptation Fund (AF) projects are helping the most vulnerable communities in developing countries across the globe adapt and build resilience to climate change.

Often their inherent adaptation measures also help build broader resilience at the same time, such as to environmental, health and economic risks, while fostering sustainable development. This is proving beneficial during climate disasters as well as crises such as the novel COVID-19 pandemic.

In some cases, AF projects have adapted directly to help communities build further resilience in the face of the pandemic.

For example, through an AF-funded [Direct Access](#) project implemented by the Fund's national implementing entity NABARD [in India](#), women's self-help groups (SHGs) that had been empowered as part of the project have been stitching thousands of protective masks to meet emergent needs of isolated Himalayan communities in the State of Uttarakhand during the COVID-19 crisis. Along with climate resilient farming, the SHGs had been promoted in the project to strengthen local livelihoods to help meet development challenges related to harsh climates, fragile ecosystems, geographical isolation and dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods.

Several women in one of the SHGs took the initiative to stitch needed masks for their village and adjacent areas that were shut off from supplies. They have been making high quality triple-layered reusable cotton masks that are accessible and affordable, while earning a modest income that had been halted due to the pandemic.

“The normal livelihood activities got disrupted due to the COVID 19 pandemic and consequent lockdown situation. Many daily wage earners and farmers had to stay at home without any work and income,” said Mr. **B. Suri Babu**, NABARD's General Manager. *“There was a shortage in availability of masks due to the sudden spurt in demand and transport lockdown. What started as a small activity initially to meet local requirements has expanded into production of over 7,300 masks catering to the requirements of adjoining villages. With several agencies and government institutions placing more orders for masks, the women's group is continuing the production of masks.”*

Meanwhile, [in Sri Lanka](#), local seamstresses working for garment factories established through an AF-funded project implemented by UNDP helped hospitals in the country facing shortages of medical supplies by producing 500 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), 250 patient safety kits and 1,400 masks for frontline healthcare workers while providing local women with alternative



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livelihoods. Project farmers also made fresh produce available to healthcare workers. UNDP teamed up with Green Co-op, a collective of medical doctors and professionals from indigenous, health, agriculture and journalism sectors, to approach the factory managers in the project areas for a solution to address the PPE shortage by exploring methods of local production.

“The project funded by the Adaptation Fund focused on building community enterprises and introducing alternate sources of livelihood/income for communities in the Polonnaruwa and Walapane areas,” said UNDP Resident Representative in Sri Lanka, **Mr. Robert Juhkam**. *“These are communities who had previously relied on mostly farming, which is increasingly being hampered due to the erratic change in weather patterns. So, the project introduced new skills to these communities and accordingly one intervention was to set up garment factories which employ many women in these areas. These empowered women now take up different orders from schools and offices in the area to sustain the operations of the factory, which is great for sustainability even after the project ends. In the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic, they were approached to do PPE kits which they obliged and started working on immediately, responding to the need of the hour.”*

Many AF-funded projects build resilience by diversifying livelihoods, enhancing water and food security and resilient infrastructure, as well as through ecosystem-based adaptation that [fosters biodiversity](#), sustainable land and water management and climate-resilient practices. Projects further foster environmental, social and gender equality principles that promote a safe, clean, healthy environment and sustainable development while empowering the most vulnerable groups.

“We have been inspired to see some Adaptation Fund projects adapt to help directly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Adaptation Fund Board Chair Mr. **Ibila Djibril**, of Benin. *“Many AF projects have inherent adaptation components such as fostering water and food security, reducing disaster risks, supporting alternative sustainable livelihoods, and climate-resilient basic infrastructure services and hygiene that have helped make communities stronger and better able to withstand the crisis.”*

For instance, an AF-funded project [in Lao PDR](#) implemented by UN-Habitat has made clean water conveniently available on-site to many low-income vulnerable communities that previously had to walk between 200 meters to over 1-2 kilometers to gather water. *“The project has so far built climate-resilient public water infrastructure in 42 villages, benefitting 38,007 people, including 18,243 women. This access to safe water helps to clean on-site sanitation facilities besides hand-washing, which is essential to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in poor and vulnerable settlements,”* said **Mr. Buahom Sengkhayong**, Chief Technical Advisor of UN-Habitat Lao PDR. *“Moreover, the vulnerability assessment tool, developed and used in the Adaptation Fund project to conduct vulnerability assessments, has been inspirational to develop a COVID-19 Vulnerability Assessment Model, which will help to prioritize and strategize COVID-19 response.”*

Localized, Tailored Approaches Key to Sustainability

The Fund’s pioneering [Direct Access](#) modality further fosters country ownership in adaptation.



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In addition to the India project, another AF-funded [Direct Access project](#) in Costa Rica promotes food security by empowering vulnerable farmers to diversify production for their own supplies and to sell in local markets. Orchards and controlled environments have been generated that can be adapted to weather conditions. The project supports value chains, placing special emphasis on connecting local producers with local buyers to foster community development. Beneficiary access to potential buyers is strengthened as buyers are responsible for packaging and product delivery. The project has an initiative called “Tu-Modelo”, which brings the sector closer to local producers.

“At this time of COVID-19, the initiative is also a way for the sector to support and differentiate itself and work in local supply. The project has been implementing specific adaptation measures that allow communities to better respond to climate disasters and problems such as COVID-19,” said Ms. **Carolina Reyes**, project manager at *Fundecooperación para el Desarrollo Sostenible*, the Fund’s accredited NIE in Costa Rica that implements the project. *“The adaptation measures implemented on the farms allow the beneficiaries to be resistant to climate disasters and be able to constantly deliver their products, reducing costs and improving productivity. By improving local aqueducts, communities have also been able to access water and improve the management of this resource. This is important in the case of the pandemic due to the need to access water.”*

In addition to making water available for production and human consumption, other key adaptation measures of the Costa Rica project include supporting food for animals to allow continuity of production; family food security by increasing production areas for self-consumption; protection and sustainable management of coral reefs and other ecosystems that reduce impacts of climate disasters; and creating capacity and public policies that empower local and national decisions.

Building self-sustainment through the Fund’s country-led climate adaptation projects can be pivotal.

In five northern districts of Karakalpakstan [in Uzbekistan](#), vulnerable communities have been able to secure agricultural products from self-sustaining greenhouses that have been built under the AF-funded [project there](#) while they are quarantined at home due to COVID-19. More than 1,000 families in the pilot project districts were able to build their own greenhouses, providing a total of 5,000 family members with income, without leaving the home. Over 2,000 people have been trained in greenhouse methods of growing planting stock, vegetable and melon crops. The project is not only helping people stay resilient during the quarantine, but other districts of Karakalpakstan have learned from the project and are starting to build their own greenhouses.

While observing lockdown in cities to stop spread of COVID-19, farmers [in Northern Ghana](#) continue to work tirelessly to provide food to the community and contribute to food security through an AF-funded [project](#) implemented by UNDP.

An AF-funded project in [Colombia](#) implemented by UNDP piloted successful climate-smart agriculture and early warning techniques, as well as [gender- and ecosystem-based](#) wetlands restoration approaches led by the community, and is being scaled up with other funding.



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Some projects have also adapted by expanding online offerings. In Karakalpakstan, for example, the greenhouse [training is being offered online](#) to farmers with an overwhelming number of registrations under quarantine. Fundecooperación in Costa Rica launched a [series](#) of virtual webinars to share results and lessons from its multi-sector adaptation [project](#), as part of adapting to the changed dynamics of the COVID-19 situation. The Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat is engaging in more knowledge [webinars](#) and online [meetings](#) on timely [themes](#).

“We are facing one of the largest challenges in generations with the COVID-19 pandemic. We see Adaptation Fund projects adapting directly to help with the crisis, and inherent adaptation measures in projects helping vulnerable communities build resilience to climate change, as well as environmental, health and economic challenges. COVID-19 has served a new blow that is affecting the same societies that already had underlying vulnerabilities,” said AF manager Mr. **Mikko Ollikainen**. *“It is great to see the Fund continue to adapt and deliver to the most vulnerable, while furthering knowledge during the crisis. It will be imperative to look at recovery in the context of climate change resilience and sustainable development.”*

Examples of other AF-funded projects building resilience to climate change, and related underlying environmental, health and economic challenges include:

- Vulnerable communities are building resilience against floods in **Mongolia** through community-driven basic-services interventions. The project supports access to better sanitation and flood-proof sanitation systems while reducing waterborne disease. Awareness of health and environmental issues is increasing community adoption of hygienic and safe behaviors, while project management training is leading to community environmental and social resilience.
- The ‘PEARL’ Direct Access project implemented by MFEM in the **Cook Islands** is improving health and promoting healthy lifestyles by enhancing water safety and food security measures. Robust water monitoring, reporting and assessment systems have been established. The project developed health and wellbeing curricula through school gardens, while vector-borne disease control techniques are integrated with enhanced prevention and response.
- A project implemented by the Department of Environment in **Antigua and Barbuda** is restoring natural drainage systems to prevent flooding from sea rise and stagnation of water that breeds mosquitoes and vector-borne illnesses, in the poorest communities of the region. It also is flood-proofing vulnerable homes and community centers.
- Projects in **Cambodia** and **Honduras** promote forest reforestation and water collection, building resilience of natural systems against climate change and related challenges. The Cambodia project uses local traditions to foster natural resource conservation and eco-agriculture approaches, and school activities encourage youth involvement in natural resources management. The Honduras project is also supporting the fight against forest fires. Another project in **Cuba** is restoring mangroves and coastal forests to protect communities and water supplies against sea surges.



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ABOUT the ADAPTATION FUND

Since 2010, the Adaptation Fund has committed about US\$ 720 million for climate change adaptation and resilience projects and programmes, including 100 concrete localized adaptation projects in the most vulnerable communities of developing countries around the world with more than 8 million direct beneficiaries. It also pioneered Direct Access, empowering countries to access funding and develop projects directly through accredited national implementing entities.

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