



ADAPTATION FUND

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30 September 2021

Adaptation Fund Board
Ethics and Finance Committee
Twenty-eighth Meeting
Bonn, Germany (Virtually held), 14-15 October 2021

Agenda Item: 5

PROGRESS UPDATE ON EX POST EVALUATIONS

TECHNICAL EVALUATION REFERENCE GROUP OF THE ADAPTATION FUND (AF-TERG)

Background

1. At the twenty-eighth meeting (October 2016), the Adaptation Fund Board (the Board) decided to request the secretariat to:

[...]

Propose, at the twentieth meeting of the PPRC, options for how post-implementation learning and impact evaluation could be arranged for Adaptation Fund projects and programmes, taking into account ongoing discussions on the evaluation function of the Adaptation Fund, as well as Phase II of the evaluation.

(Decision B.28/32, October 2016)

2. Pursuant to the Board Decision B.28/32, the secretariat developed a document (AFB/PPRC.20/30), which presented three options for how ex post evaluations of Adaptation Fund projects and programmes could be arranged. The three options presented in the document were as follows:

I. The Evaluation Function of the Adaptation Fund would conduct the ex post assessments.

II. The ex post evaluation would be conducted by independent evaluators but selected by the Implementing Entity (IE).

III. An external third party selected by the Adaptation Fund could perform the ex post evaluation.

3. With consideration to the Adaptation Fund Board decision to approve the option of re-establishing a long-term evaluation function for the Adaptation Fund through a Technical Evaluation Reference Group (Decision B.30/38), and to the comments and recommendations of the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC), the Board decided:

a) To convey the assessment of the two options to the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG), once it is operational, which will subsequently report to the Board on its preferred option; and

b) To request the AF-TERG to take into account the above discussion in the PPRC.

(Decision B.31/24, March 2018)

4. The Adaptation Fund Board approved the Strategy and Work Programme document (AFB/EFC.26.a-26.b/3) of the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) between the first and second parts of the thirty-fifth meeting (Decision B.35.a-35.b/29), which includes the conduction of ex post evaluations during the indicative three-year evaluation work programme¹.

¹ The original Terms of Reference (ToR) for ex post evaluations provides more details on the background for the ex post work and can be found in the Phase one report for ex post project sustainability evaluation. This report is available

Introduction

5. The purpose of this document is to update the Board on progress for the ex post evaluation work implemented by the AF-TERG.

6. Following the establishment of the AF-TERG, the manager reported at the thirty-fourth Board meeting (October 2019) that preliminary work had taken place on the AF-TERG work programme, with a focus on evaluative components and products. Two specific studies were carried out by the AF-TERG during fiscal year 2020 (FY20) to inform the development of the AF-TERG strategy and work programme, and were foundational to future AF-TERG work on ex post evaluations:

- a study on approaches to ex post performance evaluations, to review ex post evaluation of climate change adaptation (CCA) in the context of development cooperation, and to discuss key messages and conclusions that lend themselves to developing guidance on ex post evaluation for projects in the Fund's portfolio.
- a study on evaluability of Fund-supported projects, to explore the extent to which the Fund's projects have structures, processes, and resources that can support credible and useful monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL).

7. Following the approval of the work programme by the Board in June 2020 (Decision B.35.a-35.b/29), and taking into account previous studies conducted, the AF-TERG decided to continue the work on ex post in three phases, given the newly developed methodology needs testing in a staggered, iterative process:

- Phase one, to develop a framework to conduct ex post evaluations and a shortlist of up to five completed projects as pilots for ex post evaluation.
- Phase two, to test methods in at least two pilots.
- Phase three, to continue ex post evaluations over time, and related capacity building of evaluators, feeding into ex post evaluation informed adjustments within the Fund's MEL processes.

8. The AF-TERG committed to develop ex post evaluation guidance in fiscal year 2021 (FY21), to be piloted and revised as needed in fiscal year 2022 (FY22). The guide will be revised as needed and used for two evaluations per year from FY22 onwards. In its work programme, the AF-TERG planned to commission one or two ex post evaluations of strategically selected projects that have been completed three to five years before. Such evaluations aim to provide learning on climate change actions and accountability of results financed by the Fund.

on the AF-TERG website at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/about/evaluation/publications/evaluations-and-studies/ex-post-evaluations/>.

Phase 1: development of ex post evaluation guidance and country selection for piloting

9. In February 2021, the AF-TERG hired two consultants to carry out the work on ex post evaluation and develop the guidance for field testing of methods: Ms. Jindra Cekan, specialist on ex post evaluations, and Ms. Meg Spearman, specialist on questions of climate change resilience and author of the previous AF-TERG study on ex post methods. The decision reflected the aim of the AF-TERG to evaluate both the sustainability of project and the ultimate aim of resilience.

10. Based on a review of the portfolio of completed Adaptation Fund projects, the AF-TERG identified a subset of five completed projects as potential candidates for the pilots for ex post evaluation:

- Enhancing the Adaptive Capacity and Increasing Resilience of Small-size Agriculture Producers of the Northeast of Argentina (Argentina, UCAR)
- Addressing Climate Change Risks on Water Resources and Food Security in the Dry Zone of Myanmar (Myanmar, UNDP)
- Enhancing Resilience of Communities to the Adverse Effects of Climate Change on Food Security in Mauritania (Mauritania, WFP)
- Enhancing resilience of communities to the adverse effects of climate change on food security in Pichincha Province and the Jubones River basin (Ecuador, WFP)
- Enhancing Resilience of Samoa's Coastal Communities to Climate Change (Samoa, UNDP)

11. The shortlisting was based on criteria related to the evaluability of projects, such as timing or data quality, and was also heavily influenced by the possibility to carry out field evaluations at national level given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic².

12. A second step focused on developing methods for Phase two taking into account the data reviewed in the final evaluations and project performance reports (PPRs) of the shortlisted projects. The methods to be piloted will be further adjusted based on data availability to assess sustainability and apply new definitions and evaluative processes to resilience.

13. Phase one was concluded in July 2021 with the production of a preliminary field guide on methods for evaluators and a report on ex post project sustainability evaluation, whose main points are summarized in annex 1 and full content was published on the AF-TERG website in September 2021.

Phase 2: update on piloting methods developed

14. The AF-TERG recently started Phase two which will see the piloting and the fieldwork of two selected projects. Phase two aims to achieve the following:

² For further details, see Annex 1.

- Verify that expected results, particularly long-term sustainability of outcomes and resilience, have been achieved or are moving towards achievement.
- Further understand the concept of the Fund's contribution to these results.
- See what "emerged" ex post, including local adaptations to funding, design, implementation that make activities locally and regionally sustainable, as well as unexpected outcomes and even impacts (where they are documented).
- Look at the contextual factors that can contribute to sustainability and resilience.

15. Following the shortlisting of five countries in Phase one, the two following projects were selected for piloting:

- Enhancing Resilience of Samoa's Coastal Communities to Climate Change (Samoa, UNDP)
- Enhancing resilience of communities to the adverse effects of climate change on food security, in Pichincha Province and the Jubones River basin (Ecuador, WFP)

The AF-TERG contacted the Implementing Entities (IEs) previously in charge of the projects to invite them to participate in the ex post evaluation pilots, as an opportunity for general learning. Final selection was based on countries availability and willingness to participate in ex post evaluations.

16. The AF-TERG is currently in the process of recruiting national evaluators to conduct the evaluation pilots, based on recommendations provided by the contacted IEs. The pilots will be carried out with remote support of the AF-TERG.

17. The AF-TERG envisions the ex post work to be a collaborative process. It is expected that learning will be co-created with national partners during Phase two. Discussions will be carried out and training will be provided on methods to both the evaluator and IEs to ensure that all views are taken into account and results are beneficial to all partners.

18. The next stage of the work aims to pilot and apply methods in the field. Timing of the pilot ex post evaluations will be determined by length of recruitment, local availabilities, and COVID-19 related restrictions on field travel.

19. With the work on ex post evaluation, the AF-TERG developed innovative methods for a field that is still in development. Ex-post evaluations will contribute to learning on climate change actions and, more generally, to the field of evaluation. The pilots will also provide strong arguments for the implementation or revision of AF-TERG methods for ex post in climate change adaptation. Finally, the work on ex post evaluation will be critical for the Fund and will provide lessons for its processes as it will dovetail with other activities such as the on-going revision of the Evaluation Framework into the new Evaluation policy.

References

AF-TERG, 2021. Ex Post Project Sustainability Evaluation - Phase One Report. August 2021. Adaptation Fund Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG), Washington, DC.

AF-TERG, 2021. Evaluating Projects Ex Post and Emerging Sustainability and Resilience, Training Material for Ex Post Pilots. Presentation materials. September 2021. Adaptation Fund Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG), Washington, DC.

AF-TERG, 2021. Evaluating Projects Ex Post and Emerging Sustainability and Resilience, Training Material for Ex Post Pilots. Training Guide and Supporting Documentation. September 2021. Adaptation Fund Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG), Washington, DC.

Annex 1



**EX POST PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION:
SUMMARY OF PHASE ONE**

Aim of AF-TERG ex post evaluations

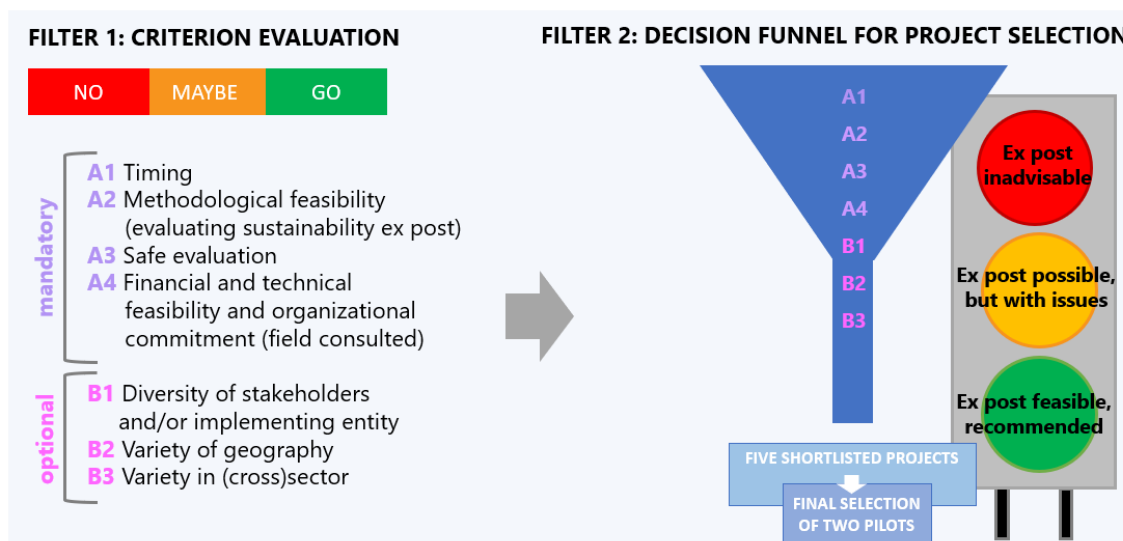
1. The work on ex post evaluations follows the request of the Adaptation Fund Board to develop post-implementation learning and impact evaluation for Fund projects and programmes. Ultimately, these evaluations seek to provide learning on climate change actions and accountability of results financed by the Fund.
2. The Fund wants to know whether its desired impact has been (or is expected to be) achieved. It understands that adaptation takes time to resolve and often will only be visible years after projects were completed. To that end, it asks questions such as the following:

Has adaptive capacity been enhanced, resilience strengthened, and the vulnerability of people, livelihoods and ecosystems to climate change reduced after the projects were completed? Are longer-term impacts sustainable? What has remained, and what has perhaps disappeared, and can drivers and barriers of sustainability be identified?
3. The framework in Phase one presents what and how to evaluate ex post, given the relative novelty of climate change adaptation (CCA) portfolios and the limited body of work on ex post evaluation for adaptation. Phase one also defines resilience and how it may be evaluated ex post for decreased vulnerability as per the Fund's mission.
4. The AF-TERG ex post evaluations aim to examine both the sustainability of project and the ultimate aim of resilience. The two main research questions for these evaluations are:
 - How sustainable are the project outcomes over time since project completion?
 - How resilient are the sustained project outcomes?
5. The Fund plans to evaluate high-level, Fund-expected impacts, e.g. reduced vulnerability and increased resilience of humans in their natural systems and trace the Fund's contribution to responses to shocks and stresses they are facing. In terms of resilience, it will analyze the types of resilience embodied in outcomes achieved. It will also explore to what extent the project's actions and results are designed for maintaining or altering the structures and functions in both human and natural systems (and the nexus between them).

Scoping and developing ex post evaluations piloting

6. For the purposes of piloting the framework, Phase one selected completed and evaluable projects for testing. This process for ex post pilot selection included setting criteria for winnowing down the 17 administratively completed projects with a final evaluation based on evaluability at ex post.
7. The project selection or screening process for ex post evaluability had a two-layered structure with two types of criteria: mandatory (project evaluability) and optional (purposive portfolio sampling). Projects were rated first by mandatory type A criteria then by optional type B criteria with the idea of a screening funnel. Each criterion was assessed against a "stoplight scale" to rank projects (Green: ex post feasible; Orange: ex post possible but with issues; Red: ex post inadvisable). The figure below describes the decision funnel for the screening process.

Figure 1. Screening process for project selection



8. Five projects were shortlisted, taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and their potential to yield robust ex post sustainability results. Those projects were selected based on the assumptions that the most evaluable projects will help establish proof of concept and ensure the Fund has the most significant opportunity for immediate and impactful learning. The following projects were selected:

- **Argentina** (UCAR), Enhancing the Adaptive Capacity and Increasing Resilience of Small-size Agriculture Producers of the Northeast of Argentina
 - implemented from 10.2013 to 12.2018
 - with the highest rankings across all M&E evaluability criteria
 - COVID-19 criterion (CDC Travel Health Notice Level 4)³
- **Myanmar** (UNDP), Addressing Climate Change Risks on Water Resources and Food Security in the Dry Zone of Myanmar
 - implemented from 09.2015 to 06.2019
 - with very good M&E evaluability,
 - concerns on safety (COVID-19 Travel Health Notice Level 4, and political unrest)
- **Mauritania** (WFP), Enhancing Resilience of Communities to the Adverse Effects of Climate Change on Food Security in Mauritania
 - implemented from 08.2014 to 09.2019
 - with good M&E evaluability, and early indications of sustainability,
 - COVID-19 criterion (CDC Travel Health Notice Level 3)

³ All COVID-19 levels as they were noted in the CDC Traveler's Health website in June 2021

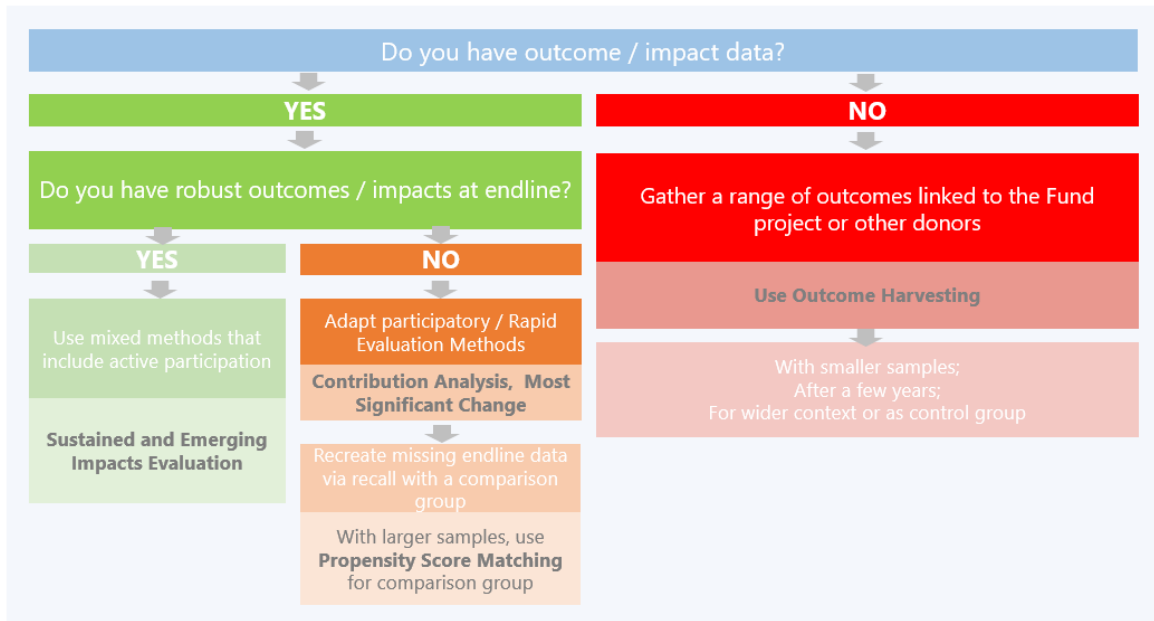
- **Ecuador** (WFP), Enhancing resilience of communities to the adverse effects of climate change on food security in Pichincha Province and the Jubones River basin
 - implemented from 11.2011 to 06.2018
 - with moderate M&E evaluability, but with the most robust grassroots design and implementation,
 - COVID-19 criterion (CDC Travel Health Notice Level 4)
 - **Samoa** (UNDP), Enhancing Resilience of Samoa's Coastal Communities to Climate Change
 - implemented from 01.2013 to 06.2018
 - with moderate M&E evaluability
 - COVID-19 criterion (Safe)
9. Considering the timing, methodological feasibility, and evaluation feasibility, Mauritania and Argentina were initially regarded as the strongest candidates of the five selected projects. During Phase two, this list was reviewed and narrowed down to two candidates for the pilot, taking into account the COVID-19 situation and the stakeholders' readiness to participate in the evaluation. Samoa and Ecuador were selected as the final candidates for the pilot.

Methodological considerations for evaluating sustainability and resilience at ex post

10. Phase one reviewed data in the final evaluations and project performance reports (PPRs) of the shortlisted projects. It suggested different evaluation methods for evaluating the sustainability of outcomes (and impacts where available), based on the scoping review and previous analyses. It also included suggestions on evaluating resilience to climate change taking into account research in the resilience and vulnerability literature.
11. The review revealed that completed projects varied greatly in data quality and evaluability. As a consequence of the varying M&E strengths of the portfolio, different methods could be used for evaluation depending on the requirements needed for the analysis to be robust. A decision tree and a guidance report were developed during Phase one and recommended the following methods as a point of departure for the evaluator to assess the sustainability of outcomes and impacts:
- Mixed-method Sustained and Emerging Impacts Evaluation (where there are robust outcomes data)
 - Contribution Analysis or Most Significant Change (where there is an unclear Theory of Change and weak outcomes or only outputs)
 - Recall methods randomized with Propensity Score Matching (where there is no outcome data)
 - Outcome Harvesting (where contribution could not be traced to the Fund or after the first year(s) of ex post sustainability evaluation)

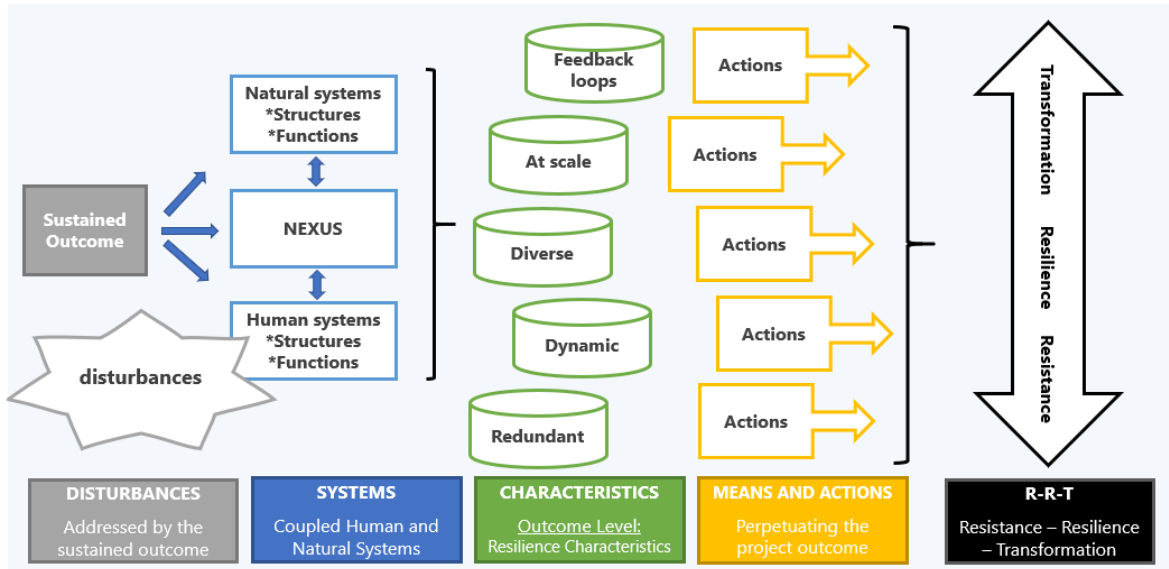
- Shortened versions of the above via Rapid Evaluation adaptations (where safety is an issue for data collection).

Figure 2. Understanding ex post sustainability: methods decision tree based on data availability and quality



12. Phase one also developed an innovative framework to assess climate resilience. This area is pivotal to climate change adaptation yet has rarely been measured. A step-by-step approach was provided to identify elements of resilience in sustained project outcomes.
13. The resilience analysis framework covers five resilience analysis components:
 - (i) The climate disturbances
 - (ii) The human and natural systems (and their nexus) affected by and affecting project outcomes
 - (iii) The characteristics of resilience in the outcomes
 - (iv) The means and actions supporting outcomes (exemplifying characteristics of resilience), and
 - (v) A typology of resistance-resilience-transformation (RRT) into which the overall project can be mapped based on how actions are designed to maintain or change existing structures and functions.

Figure 3. Understanding ex post resilience: framing for resilience analysis



14. The methods developed in Phase one are not final. During Phase two, they will be revisited and shaped with national partners, in line with the co-creation principle of the AF-TERG. This will allow evaluators to adapt them to assess sustainability and resilience of project outcomes in the field.
15. Methods chosen will depend on the skillsets of national evaluators, access to sampling data, aims of stakeholders, timeline and availability of project respondents and funding. As for methods with all other components of the ex post process, and especially since the resilience framework is new, resilience measurement will also require adjustment over time.
16. Methods could also be amended based on the learning from the first pilots in Phase two i.e. what is missing and needs to be re-created, the interest of the stakeholders in a more robust study with a comparison group, etc. Similarly, other evaluation methods could be seen as relevant following the initial piloting in Phase two. Additional methods could also confirm the extent of impact or enable focus on other aspects to be investigated by the Fund in later stages.