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Transboundary Adaptation Actions Promote Efficiency of Resource Use and Opportunities for Learning, Adaptation Fund Study Finds

(Washington D.C. May 26, 2022) - A recently published Adaptation Fund (AF) study reveals the value of transboundary and regional approaches in tackling climate vulnerability in the most vulnerable communities.

The Adaptation Fund study, "Transboundary Approaches to Climate Adaptation: Lessons Learned from the Adaptation Fund's Regional Projects and Programmes", shows transboundary adaptation actions that involve multiple countries can successfully manage climate risk and achieve positive results with effective project coordination and arrangements that help to save costs. These interventions also provide opportunities for cross-border learning and knowledge sharing.

These findings are based on case studies of five AF-funded regional projects, which are located in Latin America (Chile-Ecuador), the Greater Horn of Africa (Ethiopia-Kenya-Uganda), the Lake Victoria Basin (Burundi-Kenya-Rwanda-Tanzania-Uganda), the Western Balkans (Albania-the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-Montenegro), and the Volta Basin (Benin-Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana-Mali-Togo). The study included in-depth interviews with implementing entities of these projects, and is produced within the Learning and Sharing pillar of the Fund's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2018-2022, which focuses on the Fund's multi-level global learning and sharing to enhance effective adaptation in the field.

"This value-added study of the Adaptation Fund's transboundary approaches comes at the right moment when demand and importance of transboundary regional initiatives is increasing, as we see the rise of needs in addressing common climatic challenges across borders," said Adaptation Fund Board Chair **Mr. Albara Tawfiq**. *"The key findings offer important lessons on implementing transboundary and regional adaptation interventions in different sectors, which will help to ensure greater impact in delivering adaptation benefits to communities at all scales. The projects can improve efficiency and effectiveness for countries facing similar climate impacts, particularly in the midst of limited adaptation finance."*

The Adaptation Fund Board approved the first pilot program for regional projects and programs in 2015, which was later converted into a permanent Funding Window for Regional Projects. With a growing portfolio of multi-country initiatives, the Fund has approved over US\$ 219 million in regional project grant funding for 19 transboundary projects and programmes in 35 countries under various sectors, including Disaster Risk Reduction, Food Security, and Transboundary Water Management, among others.

"The Adaptation Fund has taken proactive actions to promote transboundary approaches to address cross border climate risks from early on by offering a funding window for multi-country adaptation projects and programmes that has been available since 2015," said **Mr.**



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Mikko Ollikainen, Head of the Adaptation Fund. *“We work with countries and implementing entities to ensure that efforts at the transboundary level are complemented by efficient regional solutions to respond to significant cross border challenges in the most vulnerable countries around the world.”*

One of the key benefits of building integrated resilience highlighted in the study is cost-effectiveness attained by reducing duplication and enhancing coordination with the participating countries. For example, in the case of the Lake Victoria Basin project the implementing entity, the UN Environment Programme, operates a central coordination center for the project and works through country focal points in each partner country, while those countries provide in-kind contributions of time and resources to support execution across the project territories. Gaining the support of the national governments has made project coordination and monitoring more cost effective than it would have been if entirely new support teams had to be established in each country.

Meanwhile, the flood management project in the Volta Basin carried out by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is another example proving that joined-up transboundary approaches help to avoid negative costly outcomes. Through workshops that WMO organized at the national level, the entity was able to efficiently gather information on the challenges that the region is facing, saving costs and effort in the meantime. WMO also used its subregional offices in the region to become an important link between the national project teams and WMO Secretariat to coordinate project implementation in an efficient manner.

Transboundary approaches sometimes bring cost savings through economies of scale, as well. For example, in the Chile and Ecuador project, training courses were developed in a way that could be used by other regions, which contributes to saved costs.

The study also found that transboundary projects open up new opportunities for cross-country learning and knowledge sharing from the local to transboundary scale about what works, where, and why. In the case of the Chile and Ecuador project, the COVID-19 pandemic along with social and political unrest caused rapid institutional changes in project management. This experience has provided learning opportunities on how to adapt to external shocks to manage projects, as well as the importance of risk assessment in the design of projects.

“Transboundary approaches are especially beneficial for countries that are vulnerable to climate change impacts but lack knowledge or experience to address the challenges,” said **Ms. Cristina Dengel**, AF’s Knowledge Management Officer. *“Together with implementing entities and country partners, the AF will seek to build up cross border collaborations to enhance learning and knowledge sharing to increase capacity and resilience within and across country borders.”*

The study also revealed other conditions that contribute to the successful delivery of transboundary projects. This added value is found in the context where countries in a region face similar climate risks and share common languages across borders. In order to achieve successful results in regional interventions, it is also essential that implementing entities have a comprehensive understanding of the institutional landscape across the region as well as the



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expected capacity of national-level agencies. The gathering and understanding of high quality and up-to-date information is an important condition to effective project delivery, the study added.

ABOUT THE ADAPTATION FUND

Since 2010, the Adaptation Fund has committed nearly US\$ 912 million for climate change adaptation and resilience projects and programmes, including over 130 concrete, localized projects in the most vulnerable communities of developing countries around the world with over 33 million total beneficiaries. It also pioneered Direct Access and Enhanced Direct Access, empowering countries to access funding and develop local projects directly through accredited national implementing entities.

Communications: Matthew Pueschel, mpueschel@adaptation-fund.org or +1-202-473-6743