

Youth Engagement Paramount in Enhancing Climate Adaptation Projects, Adaptation Fund Study Finds

Washington, D.C. (August 11, 2022)-- A new study by the Adaptation Fund (AF) shows that the Fund has supported projects that significantly benefit youth throughout its history, and that further increasing youth engagement and participation in climate change adaptation activities enhances efficacy, acceptability and appropriateness of projects.

The comprehensive [study](#), titled *“Youth Engagement in Climate Change Adaptation: Lessons from the Adaptation Fund Portfolio of Projects and Programmes”*, includes case studies of seven AF-funded projects. It highlights benefits of youth participation on the ground, indicating that many AF projects have invested in building youth capacity through resilience training and raising community awareness of climate change impacts, while also often involving youth in the implementation of adaptation projects themselves.

The study also noted that the Fund has established several institutional bedrocks that consider the vulnerability of young people and foster youth engagement, including its Gender, Environmental and Social policies, Medium-Term Strategy and core performance indicators, among others. Further, its [Innovation Facility](#), which was established over the last four years, has made it easier for young entrepreneurs to access targeted climate funding for innovative adaptation solutions.

The Fund routinely consults with international youth representatives about their experiences and expectations regarding climate change adaptation, participates in outreach activities involving youth, and even received a portion of proceeds from an award [donated](#) by Greta Thunberg a few years back.

Among the AF projects highlighted in the study that illustrate effective and innovative youth engagement in the field were those in the **Seychelles, Dominican Republic, Chile, Armenia, Cook Islands, Cuba, and Morocco**.

For instance, youth involvement in the Cuba [project](#), which is aimed at adapting to sea level rise, empowered them as leaders in their communities while raising awareness of climate change and harnessing their potential through acquiring practical skills that innovated how mangroves are effectively planted and grown along the coast to protect against sea surges.

“You already see more coastal species, fish, quantity of fish, birds making nests in the mangroves and even the mangrove canary – which you didn’t see much in years past,” said **Leandro Lázaro**, 15, as he planted and monitored mangroves during the project a few years ago. *“The flora and*

fauna have recovered, and that means that the mangrove has recovered.”

“Working together we can successfully achieve raising the consciousness as part of our ‘life homework’. Thanks to the mangrove, we do not have big coastal floods, and salinity intrusions affect us even less,” said **Zaray Rodriguez**, 22, at the time while caring for mangroves in Batabanó, Cuba.

The study produced several key findings and recommendations.

Among these were that while projects overall have not had a strategic approach to involving youth as leaders who formulate and decide on adaptation pathways, this has been increasingly changing with the most recently approved AF projects (2019-2022) paying special attention to youth and conceiving them as enablers of adaptation.

“Climate change impacts are felt hardest in developing countries, and there, youth will experience even more drastic changes than their parents’ generation. The Adaptation Fund has always been a nimble and innovative Fund that fosters and benefits from youth engagement in its projects, programmes and policies,” said **Mikko Ollikainen**, Head of the Adaptation Fund. *“However, as the urgency of adaptation has increased on a global level, it has required an even more targeted and systematic involvement of youth to foster further positive change, and this is what we are trying to do through some of the Fund’s newer offerings with its [innovation grants](#), for example, and across its project portfolio and results-based management framework.”*

The study reported that the main drivers of youth engagement in climate adaptation tend to be youth’s own experiences with extreme weather events, perceived vulnerability of young people, and activities to increase climate change awareness and concerns, as well as strong leadership and open-mindedness. Project participation has been driven by youth trainings, potential for tangible results, family involvement, community support, dedicated youth engagement strategies and implementing entities’ experiences working with youth. For example, giving youth a safe space to communicate ideas such as in community planning sessions, incentivizing their long-term participation, and localizing climate risks to inspire youth to act and put knowledge into practical action are pivotal. Empowering youth with a sense of freedom to express or propose ideas and participate in new adaptation approaches also are factors, the study reported.

Barriers to youth participation often related to specific technical and resource project needs, design, and implementation processes, as well as social, economic, or political contexts at the local or national level.

“Youth participation in adaptation projects is enormously beneficial and is evident in the Adaptation Fund portfolio on several levels,” said **Cristina Dengel**, AF’s Knowledge Management Officer, who coordinated the study. *“At the individual level, the participation of youth in adaptation interventions enhances personal development and working skills, it improves their employment opportunities and income and empowers them within their communities thus helping them work*

towards the resiliency of their communities. Their involvement at the project level, through consultations and implementation, increased the acceptability, suitability and efficacy of interventions as youth tend to promote culturally sensitive actions and innovative solutions.”

The study provided several recommendations to engage youth in multilevel adaptation and ensure meaningful participation, such as encouraging youth representation in local committees, developing and strengthening youth partnerships with governments, providing coach programmes in leadership and project management skills for youth, fostering youth networks, encouraging social entrepreneurship and innovation, and capturing and sharing lessons on youth participation in adaptation. It also recommended encouraging systematic engagement of youth in stakeholder discussions and project activities, enabling youth to discuss community views with older adults, and empowering youth to be part of local and national decisionmaking processes, among others.