

Adaptation Fund Board
Ethics and Finance Committee
Thirty-sixth meeting
Bonn, Germany

Thematic Evaluation of the Readiness Programme of the Adaptation Fund

Strategic Issues

- The Adaptation Fund established the Readiness Programme in 2013 to respond to capacity-related barriers that many developing countries face in accessing climate finance, particularly through the Fund's pioneering direct access modality. The programme is also a core delivery arm of the Fund's Second Medium-Term Strategy (2023-2027).
- This is the first time an evaluation of the Readiness Programme is conducted. The evaluation was conducted with extensive support from the AFB Secretariat and employed a mixed-method approach anchored in a jointly developed theory of change.
- The evaluation generated findings across five evaluation criteria, namely relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and impact.
- The evaluation found that the readiness programme remains relevant to the UNFCCC goals of supporting countries in accessing climate finance, while identifying areas where the programme can further strengthen its efficiency, effectiveness, coherence with other readiness channels, and impact.

Purpose

1. This report presents the findings of the thematic evaluation of the readiness programme of the Adaptation Fund and a set of proposed recommendations for enhancement of the programme.

Recommended Decision

2. The Ethics and Finance Committee, having considered the information contained in document AFB/EFC.36/7 and its Annexes, recommends that the Adaptation Fund Board decide:
 - a. To take note of the key findings and recommendations of the draft thematic evaluation of the readiness programme of the Adaptation Fund contained in document AFB/EFC.36/7;
 - b. To request the AF-TERG to finalize the thematic evaluation of the Readiness Programme of the Adaptation Fund;
 - c. To take note of the draft management response to the findings and recommendations of the thematic evaluation of the Readiness Programme of the Adaptation Fund contained in document AFB/EFC.36/7; and
 - d. To request the Secretariat to finalize its management response to that evaluation.

Background

3. The Adaptation Fund established the Readiness Programme in 2013 to respond to capacity-related barriers that many developing countries face in accessing climate finance, particularly through the Fund’s pioneering direct access modality. Initially focused on awareness raising and workshops, the Programme has since become a permanent feature of the Fund’s operations, supporting accreditation, project development, project scale-up, and institutional learning. Over time, its grant portfolio expanded to include Readiness Package Grants (RPGs), Technical Assistance Grants for Environmental and Social Policy and Gender, Project Formulation Grants, and Project Scale-Up Grants, as well as a wide range of non-financial support such as seminars, toolkits, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.
4. Now more than a decade into implementation, the Programme is recognised as a core delivery arm of the Fund’s Second Medium-Term Strategy (MTS II, 2023–2027), which places enhancing access to climate finance and strengthening institutional capacity at the centre of adaptation efforts. The Programme is also seen as critical to supporting Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which often face the steepest institutional challenges. Against this backdrop, the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) commissioned this thematic evaluation as part of its Second Multi-year Work Programme.
5. Attached to this document is the draft management response prepared by the Secretariat as Annex A and the evaluation report as Annex B.

Evaluation Purpose and Scope

6. The purpose of this evaluation was to generate credible, evidence-based insights into the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and likely impact of the Readiness Programme since its operationalisation in 2014. Its scope covered three of the four Programme components in detail: (i) support to accredited Implementing Entities (IEs)- Component 1, (ii) partnerships with climate finance readiness providers (component 2), and (iii) support to NIEs seeking accreditation (component 4). It also included a light -touch assessment of the contribution of the other components to knowledge management (Component 4) since this is already addressed within the broader AF Strategic Results Framework. The evaluation also reviewed the Programme’s role in promoting complementarity within the wider climate finance architecture, notably the Green Climate Fund (GCF), GEF, and bilateral providers, and explored how its evolution aligns with country needs and the Fund’s strategic priorities.
7. The evaluation timeframe spanned 2014 to 2025. Its intended users include the Adaptation Fund Board, the Secretariat, implementing entities, Designated Authorities, and other readiness providers. Importantly, the evaluation’s findings and recommendations are designed to directly inform the “enhanced readiness programme” now under preparation, ensuring that lessons from the past decade guide future strategic and operational choices.

Methodology

8. The evaluation used a mixed-methods, theory-based design, anchored in a jointly developed Theory of Change (ToC) by the AF-TERG and the Secretariat. The ToC served as a shared framework to clarify the Programme’s objectives, identify barriers it aims to address, and map the pathways through which readiness support is expected to build institutional capacity and increase access to climate finance. It also guided the evaluation questions and ensured that findings were linked to the Fund’s broader strategic goals.
9. Evidence was gathered from a review of key documents, 38 interviews, an online survey of IEs and DAs, four in-depth case studies, and a landscape analysis. Evidence from these sources were triangulated to develop findings and lessons learned, allowing findings to be cross-checked and strengthened. This

approach enabled the evaluation to capture both the technical results of the Programme and the contextual factors that influence its effectiveness.

Findings

10. The following key findings have emerged from the evaluation.

Relevance: Strong Relevance but limited critical pathway for Accreditation

11. The Readiness Programme is highly relevant to, and well aligned with, UNFCCC goals and national priorities. It effectively supports countries in building national institutional capacity and designing climate adaptation projects tailored to their needs. Successful examples from the Adaptation Fund demonstrate that well-timed support aligned with country readiness can accelerate NIE preparedness. These successes can be attributed to factors such as the establishment of dedicated task forces, strong stakeholder ownership, and the selection of institutions with relevant pre-existing technical expertise.
12. Stakeholders find the Readiness Programme more accessible and user-friendly (compared to similar support from other channels). However, it is not a critical pathway for accreditation — most countries accredited since 2014, did so without relying on Readiness support, thereby limiting its strategic leverage. This is partly due to lack of awareness, capacity constraints for meeting procedural requirements, competing priorities, and limited ability to achieve accreditation or access funding without an accredited NIE.

Effectiveness – Capacity building is valued, but success is mixed in terms of facilitating access to climate finance.

13. Capacities: The programme has successfully built institutional capacities, particularly in SIDS and LDCs, which have received half of the programme's grants to date. These capacities relate to environmental, social, and gender mainstreaming, and policy integration.. However, outcomes vary significantly across countries and often do not translate into project funding or accreditation.
14. Accreditation: Overall success in converting readiness support to accreditation is modest. The success of readiness grants in supporting accreditation depends on the extent of tailored support, strong country ownership, and relevant expertise.
15. Funding proposals: TA grants have helped newly accredited entities to develop and submit funding proposals effectively. Of the 41 countries receiving Readiness Programme grants, around a third went on to access Adaptation Fund project funding, and approximately 44 per cent accessed GCF project funding. Countries with stronger institutions tend to access funding for larger projects, while others use Readiness support as a stepping stone—typically starting with smaller, simpler projects to enter the climate finance landscape. African countries show the strongest success with 59% converting readiness support into adaptation fund projects – thus also potentially offering best practices for replication.

Efficiency: - Grant approval is efficient, but implementation is often delayed and operational costs are high.

16. The grant approval process is efficient. Reforms like streamlined accreditation and rolling application windows have improved accessibility. Yet, 76% of grants are completed late — nearly double the planned timeline — highlighting persistent implementation challenges.
17. The operational budget is high relative to approved grant amounts, and a low volume of applications may contribute to this inefficiency.

Complementarity and coherence remain limited and undermine strategic alignment at country-level

18. Internal coherence within the Readiness Programme is limited, as few countries utilize multiple components of the programme.

19. In terms of external coherence with other climate funds, while there is some alignment with other readiness providers, this is not systematically coordinated. Opportunities for synergies at the country level are underutilized, potentially reducing overall effectiveness. While countries value knowledge exchanges and informal links with other institutions (e.g., GCF, GEF), the absence of formal partnership mechanisms could potentially be viewed as limiting alignment and broader impact.

Impact: There is little evidence of downstream impact on climate resilience.

20. While the programme strengthens NIE capacities (systems and processes), securing adaptation funding remains uneven, and there is little evidence of increased resilience at the community level. Technical capacity gaps and staff turnover continue to constrain the translation of support into tangible projects.

Recommendations

21. Based on the findings of the evaluation across relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact, the following recommendations for further enhancement of the programme are made:

- a. **Recommendation 1.** The Readiness Programme should further **sharpen its value added**, particularly regarding the ways in which its various components are designed to support countries as well as in relation to other readiness providers. This value added should be outlined in the new Readiness Programme strategy and communicated clearly and widely, ensuring that relevant stakeholders are aware of, know and understand how to access Adaptation Fund readiness support. Such a value added could be based on the accessibility of the programme for countries with limited experience or capacities, positioning it as a stepping stone. This would necessitate further tailoring of support to ensure its effectiveness, particularly regarding accreditation support.
- b. **Recommendation 2.** In developing its new strategy, the Readiness Programme should clearly **outline in its theory of change** (in development) the specific value added of the programme, intended causal pathways for its use, and associated ways to track implementation, outcomes, and feedback from stakeholders. The AF-TERG could support this process. This would ensure that any gaps are identified early and that adaptations can be made to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and likely impact of the programme.
- c. **Recommendation 3.** The Readiness Programme should **strengthen its coordination** with countries (and their institutions) as well as with other climate finance institutions. This could be achieved by aligning support more closely with national climate priorities and that capitalise on the unique value adds of different institutions. Improved communication and information dissemination would ensure that key in-country stakeholders are aware of the support that is available and being provided and that synergies are amplified and any overlap between climate readiness providers is addressed.
- d. **Recommendation 4.** The Readiness Programme should consider ways in which to provide more **tailored support** to countries seeking NIE accreditation and/or climate adaptation financing. This would help ensure that readiness support translates into actual accreditation and secured funding in a timely manner. Such support could also clarify the complementary roles of different climate finance institutions, thereby maximizing resource efficiency and improving the relevance of support provided.
- e. **Recommendation 5.** The Secretariat, with support from the AF-TERG, should consider embedding mechanisms to **systematically track efficiency** in the enhanced Readiness Strategy that is currently being developed. This would enable the Readiness Programme to monitor how different types of support are being converted into results, identify what works best, and refine its approach over time.

Annex A: Draft Management Response to the Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

Introduction

1. During the period between the forty-third and forty-fourth meetings of the Adaptation Fund Board (hereafter referred to as the Board), the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat (hereafter referred to as "the Secretariat") received the final report on the thematic evaluation of the Fund's readiness process conducted by the Oxford Policy Management, commissioned by the Adaptation Fund Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG). The evaluation covered a period of 11 years from 2014 when the Readiness programme became operational until July 2025.

2. At the forty-first meeting, the Board discussed the lack of applications for TA grants and through decision B.41/15, had requested the Secretariat to prepare an analysis on the possibility of broadening the scope, eligibility criteria and type of technical assistance grants available to national and regional implementing entities, and to present the report at the forty-second meeting of the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC). Decision B.41/15 is in line with the Fund's Medium-Term Strategy 2023-2027 (MTS II) implementation plan that includes steps to expand the Fund's readiness programme by increasing the size of TA grants as well as broadening their accessibility and scope. In response to decision B.41/15 the Secretariat is undertaking an assessment of the Fund's TA grants and the work is on-going.

3. At the forty-second meeting, the Secretariat presented document AFB/PPRC.33/47 to the Board. The document outlined the comprehensive process the Secretariat was implementing to review the activities under the readiness programme, including exploring the broadening of technical assistance grants under the programme. The document also highlighted the parallel thematic evaluation of the readiness programme that the AF TERG was undertaking. Through decision B.42/43, the Board requested the Secretariat, to take note of the complementary processes underway by the Secretariat and the AF TERG to undertake a comprehensive review of the readiness programme, and, to consolidate the results from both processes and submit a paper to the PPRC at its thirty-fifth meeting outlining an enhanced readiness programme. The enhanced readiness programme should, among other things, focus on demand-driven support; expand in scope and in recipients; deliver tailored support; and strengthen readiness partnerships and collaboration. The paper should also include an analysis on the possibility of broadening the scope, eligibility criteria and type of technical assistance grants and their availability to national and regional implementing entities

4. At the thirty-fifth meeting of the Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC), AF-TERG provided an oral update on the evaluation on the Adaptation Fund readiness process, describing the evaluation rationale and scope; the key evaluation questions, which related to the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the readiness programme; and the evaluation approach, which comprised case studies, a landscape analysis, key informant interviews, a literature review and online surveys. The EFC took note of the information provided.

5. This document provides a summary of the Secretariat's response to the methodology adopted by AF-TERG and the Oxford Policy Management for the evaluation and the resulting findings. For each of the recommendations presented in document AFB/EFC.X/X, the Secretariat has also provided responses, highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement.

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6. The Secretariat has shared its associated actions and responses related to all recommendations in this evaluation and will provide future responses to the new Management Action Tracker to the high-level recommendations (5).

Summary response to evaluation methodology and findings

7. The Secretariat acknowledges the completeness of the thematic evaluation and the accompanying report, which captures a significant amount of information provided by the respondents interviewed by AF-TERG, including the Secretariat. **It is noteworthy that AF-TERG recognizes the continued relevance of the readiness programme to the Fund's strategic priorities, particularly in meeting the adaptation finance needs of eligible developing country parties through the direct access modality.**

8. However, the Secretariat is of the view that the methodological approach adopted for the evaluation lacks some essential considerations, as outlined below in paragraphs 9-11.

9. **While the thematic evaluation covers a commendable 11-year timeframe from 2014 to 2025, the Secretariat believes that this timeframe is excessively long.** Significant changes have occurred in the Readiness process in recent years. For a more strategic and relevant evaluation, the analysis could have been segmented into distinct time periods to account for the impact of key Board decisions and important changes in the readiness grants criteria/requirements, such as:

- i. The Secretariat's adoption of the Readiness Package Grant in 2021 that provides more tailored and flexible support for addressing NIE accreditation gaps, subsequently phasing out the long-standing South-South Cooperation Grants; and
- ii. The Board's decision to increase the amount of the Readiness package Grant to USD \$150,000 through decision B.36/25 from USD \$100,000 in the pilot phase.
- iii. The Board's expansion of Expanded RPG intermediary eligibility to all accredited IEs to provide accreditation support in 2023 through decision B.40/60, thereby enabling a wider pool of partners (NIEs, RIEs, MIEs) to act as intermediaries, and leveraging expertise.
- iv. The Boards's tasking the Secretariat to expand the eligibility of TA grant types in 2023 through decision B.41/15, in preparation of the enhanced readiness programme and responding to country feedback to increase modality flexibility and responsiveness.
- v. The Board finalizing the vision for enhanced Readiness Programme in 2024 through decision B.42/43 with emphasis on demand driven, broadened in scope, and responsive

to the specific needs of countries at different stages of readiness.

10. **The triangulation of data and information based on which results were formulated could have benefited from a more nuanced approach.** While stakeholder interviews provided valuable insights, the Secretariat notes that these inputs primarily reflect perceptions and experiences, which may not fully capture objective measures of process effectiveness. It is also important to note that the focus group selected was very small. These methodological choices appear to have influenced the report's conclusions.

11. The Secretariat also observes that the evaluation's methodology combines considerations of efficiency and effectiveness, which does not fully capture the Readiness Programme's operational model. A potential limitation of this methodology is that it can, at times, lead to the validation of certain stakeholder responses without a separate evidence-based assessment. The underlying factors constraining progress often stem from systemic challenges faced by national and subnational institutions, such as limited internal technical capacity, change in socio-political systems or, in some cases, insufficient awareness of the programme and its modalities of support. The evaluation recognizes that this is an important constraint in fully realizing the benefits of the readiness program. However, by not sufficiently differentiating between programme-level design and external institutional or contextual constraints, the evaluation risks overstating the role of readiness support in shaping outcomes while underestimating the broader enabling environment required for successful accreditation and project pipeline development. A more balanced analysis would have examined the extent to which the readiness support is an enabler, while recognizing that its effectiveness is closely interlinked with the institutional maturity, absorptive capacity, and broader climate finance ecosystems within which it is deployed.

Responses to evaluation recommendations

12. The TERG report on the evaluation of the AF readiness programme presents five high-level recommendations, each with detailed sub-recommendations addressing specific focus areas. While the Secretariat agrees with certain recommendations, it also holds different perspectives on others. In Annex I that follows, the Secretariat provides a detailed response to the recommendations with a rationale as necessary.

ANNEX I: Management response to AF TERG recommendations from the evaluation of the AF readiness programme

Recommendation 1

Recommendation	Management Response/Action Plan
<p>Recommendation 1. The Readiness Programme should further sharpen its value added, particularly regarding the ways in which its various components are designed to support countries as well as in relation to other readiness providers. This value added should be outlined in the new Readiness Programme strategy and communicated clearly and widely, ensuring that relevant stakeholders are aware of, know and understand how to access Adaptation Fund readiness support. Such a value added could be based on the accessibility of the programme for countries with limited experience or capacities, positioning it as a stepping stone. This would necessitate further tailoring of support to ensure its effectiveness, particularly regarding accreditation support. <i>(strategic)</i></p> <p>To address this recommendation, the Readiness Programme team may consider optimizing support across countries and contexts, strengthening communication on its unique value proposition, and broadening the readiness criteria to include DAs and other stakeholders. <i>(high priority)</i></p>	<p>Partially Agree.</p> <p>At the high level, the Secretariat agrees with this recommendation for clearer articulation, communication, and tailoring of the programme’s value added in the new Readiness Programme Strategy. Positioning the readiness programme as a stepping-stone for countries with limited capacity is realistic and it builds on its current function. The main challenge is ensuring effective tailored accreditation support, which the Secretariat will consider as part of the new strategy.</p> <p>The Secretariat also concurs with the recommendation for improved engagements with eligible developing country parties or Designated Authorities (DAs) in the early stages of the accreditation process. Supporting these actors would enhance coherence, ensure more effective use of resources, and contribute to the sustainability of adaptation actions.</p> <p>However, the Secretariat disagrees with a shift towards a region-specific strategy as this would not be consistent with the mandate of the Fund. The Fund was established to provide equitable access and to prioritize the most vulnerable communities across all developing countries. Regionalizing readiness support risks creating inequities, fragmenting delivery, and weakening country ownership. It would also make monitoring and accountability more complex, while diverting attention from the Fund’s core function of linking readiness directly to accreditation and programming. The Secretariat is committed to strengthening regional presence within the current global framework. Regional workshops, knowledge exchanges, and cooperation with regional institutions could improve responsiveness while safeguarding equity of access.</p>

Recommendation 2

Recommendation	Management Response/Action Plan
<p>Recommendation 2. In developing its new strategy, the Readiness Programme should clearly outline in its theory of change (in development) the specific value added of the programme, intended causal pathways for its use, and associated ways to track implementation, outcomes, and feedback from stakeholders. The AF-TERG could support this process. This would ensure that any gaps are identified early and that adaptations can be made to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and likely impact of the programme. <i>(strategic)</i></p> <p>To address this recommendation, the Readiness Programme team may consider strengthening collaboration with AF-TERG to improve monitoring of the readiness's influence on accreditation, enhancing transparency of accreditation data, and scaling up peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing. <i>(medium priority)</i></p>	<p>Partially Agree</p> <p>The Secretariat welcomes the recommendation to outline the theory of change for the new Readiness Programme strategy which is in line with Recommendation 1 to clearly articulate its value-add. It also agrees that it has been challenging to track how the readiness support has influenced accreditation process and project development and is committed to taking steps to improve monitoring of this under the new readiness strategy.</p> <p>However, the Secretariat believes the development of the theory of change and monitoring processes should remain with the Secretariat, informed by the Fund's strategic priorities and country-needs, gaps within implementing entities and consideration of complementarity and coherence endeavors within the multilateral climate funds architecture and readiness support delivered by other stakeholders. Hence, while the AF-TERG can be engaged in providing recommendations, such as through this evaluation, they may not directly be involved in the process of creation of the theory of change or monitoring.</p> <p>Further details on monitoring: Currently, grant recipients are required to submit regular progress, completion, and monitoring reports, detailing how readiness activities have contributed to strengthening institutional capacity, advancing accreditation pathways, and supporting the design of project proposals. These reports also capture lessons on how readiness interventions have enabled entities to access not only the Adaptation Fund but also other sources of climate finance, thereby demonstrating the catalytic role of readiness support. However, entities face challenges in submitting monitoring or completion reports due to limited data retention systems and inadequate transfer of knowledge and capacity during staff turnover or organizational restructuring.</p> <p>The Secretariat is committed to addressing these systemic constraints through improved knowledge management, simplified reporting processes, and stronger institutional handover practices. At the same time, the</p>

Secretariat notes that there is a risk of adding reporting burdens on institutions with limited capacity, which may inadvertently reduce their ability to focus on core readiness and accreditation activities. To mitigate this, monitoring efforts will be streamlined, proportional, and aligned with existing Fund systems.

Knowledge and Dashboards: The Secretariat welcomes the recommendation of enhancing knowledge management and peer learning platforms that would strengthen the Readiness Programme's role in facilitating institutional capacity. The Secretariat notes that it has online knowledge and data-sharing platforms, which serve as a central hub for awareness-raising, learning, and stakeholder engagement for the readiness programme. These platforms include:

- The Knowledge Repository on the Fund website, which provides access to guidance documents, toolkits, webinars, and case studies that showcase lessons learned from readiness grants and capacity-building activities.
- Publicly available information on all readiness grants with clear eligibility criteria and application materials.
- A dedicated webpage for events and webinars, offering recordings and resources from regional workshops and the Fund's capacity building activities, thus supporting peer-to-peer learning across countries and institutions.
- Regular publications and newsletters, which highlight progress, share success stories, and raise awareness of how supporting readiness strengthens national institutions in accessing and managing climate finance.

In line with the low priority assigned to creating dashboards in the recommendations, the Secretariat agrees that this is not an urgent priority.

Recommendation 3

Recommendation	Management Response/Action Plan
<p>Recommendation 3. The Readiness Programme should strengthen its coordination with countries (and their institutions) as well as with other climate finance institutions. This could be achieved by aligning support more closely with national climate priorities and that capitalise on the unique value adds of different institutions. Improved communication and information dissemination would ensure that key in-country stakeholders are aware of the support that is available and being provided and that synergies are amplified and any overlap between climate readiness providers is addressed. <i>(operational)</i></p> <p>To address this recommendation, the Readiness Programme team may consider enhancing stakeholder engagement and dialogue, bettering the understanding of the in-country institutional arrangements, power dynamics, and challenges and strengthening of partnerships and coordination mechanisms with other Multilateral Climate Funds to reduce duplication and enhance complementary. <i>(medium priority)</i></p>	<p>Partially Agree.</p> <p>The Secretariat is committed to supporting coordination within countries and improving coordination with other climate finance.</p> <p>However, grounding coordination in country-specific strategies carries risks of stretching the programme beyond its mandate, increasing transaction costs, and duplicating efforts already led by other institutions. To remain fully aligned with the Fund’s mandate, coordination should therefore be pursued through flexible and pragmatic approaches that enhance awareness of available support, foster synergies, and ensure that readiness continues to serve as an enabling mechanism directly linked to financing concrete adaptation actions for the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Considering this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Secretariat agrees with the recommendation to engage additional stakeholders within countries in its existing and new activities. - The Secretariat will further examine the need for regional focal points as while it could enhance the Programme’s ability to provide timely, locally relevant support and improve awareness of available resources, it would entail increased operational costs and potential duplication with existing structures by other climate funds. A more efficient route might be enhanced coordination with other climate funds’ readiness programs. - The Secretariat takes note of the recommendation to establishing more formal partnerships with other climate finance providers for joint planning, coordinated training, fund-to-fund dialogues, and harmonized support packages aligned with country-specific strategies. This will need to be balanced with the administrative complexities that may require alignment of differing institutional priorities and may create potential dependencies or delays if decision-making processes are not clearly defined. There is also a risk of diluting the Fund’s unique

value proposition if joint activities are not carefully scoped to preserve its direct access model and focus on the most vulnerable countries.

Partnerships and coordination experience to note

Between 2018 and 2021 the Fund through its Readiness Programme team championed the establishment of a global network of providers of readiness and capacity building support. The network, which was a voluntary platform consisting of multilateral climate funds, UN agencies and other international organizations, sought to facilitate a coordinated approach to readiness and capacity building, promote collaboration, partnerships and complementarity between multilateral climate funds and other providers of readiness support, and to increase accessibility of information on available support through a bulletin.

The network resulted in four issues of the bulletin being launched and successful joint events and activities held at the UNFCCC COP25 and the 2019 subsidiary body meetings. Due to the success of the initiative, in 2020 the PCCB merged the global network of providers of readiness and capacity building support into the PCCB Network and established the Capacity Building Portal. The PCCB Network remains a voluntary association of stakeholders engaged in climate-related readiness and capacity-building which fosters global collaboration, shares good practices, and enhances coherence and coordination in capacity-building efforts. The Capacity Building Portal is an online platform that showcases a range of tools, projects, courses, and other resources to enhance the capacity of developing countries to respond to climate change. In a bid to avoid duplication and enhance global cooperation, the AF has continued to engage and contribute information, products and content to both platforms via the PCCB.

Similarly, the Countries and Partnerships Unit (CPU) of the Secretariat, which includes the Readiness Programme team, has been and continues to work with individual countries, addressing specific readiness and capacity needs related to accessing the Fund's resources via UN4NAPs. UN4NAPs is a UN-wide rapid technical backstopping initiative launched by the UNFCCC secretariat to respond to technical requests identified by any

	country that is working in NAP development and/or implementation. UN4NAPs coordinates requests for readiness and capacity building from developing countries to AF and facilitates one on one engagement between the country and AF CPU.
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Recommendation 4

Recommendation	Management Response/Action Plan
<p>Recommendation 4. The Readiness Programme should consider ways in which to provide more tailored support to countries seeking NIE accreditation and/or climate adaptation financing. This would help ensure that readiness support translates into actual accreditation and secured funding in a timely manner. Such support could also clarify the complementary roles of different climate finance institutions, thereby maximizing resource efficiency and improving the relevance of support provided. <i>(operational)</i></p> <p>To address this recommendation, the Readiness team may consider enhancing alignment between readiness activities and national climate priorities and in-country stakeholder needs, strengthening capacity building and mentorship for enhanced effectiveness of readiness funding and improved learning over time, and better integration of gender and social inclusion through context-specific support. <i>(medium priority)</i></p>	<p>Partially Agree</p> <p>As described under the response to Recommendations 3, the development of country-specific strategic and bespoke support to countries under the Readiness Programme carries risks of stretching the programme beyond its mandate, significantly increasing transaction costs, and duplicating efforts already led by other institutions. To remain fully aligned with the Fund’s mandate, coordination should therefore be pursued through flexible and pragmatic approaches that enhance awareness of available support, foster synergies, and ensure that readiness continues to serve as an enabling mechanism directly linked to financing concrete adaptation actions for the most vulnerable. Further, the Fund doesn’t only support priority countries but rather supports all developing country parties to the Kyoto Protocol.</p> <p>Considering this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Secretariat agrees that integrating sustained capacity building and follow-up mentorship into the Readiness Programme could significantly improve the conversion of support into successful accreditation and project financing, particularly for LDCs and SIDS. Ongoing mentorship would allow training to be tailored to country-specific bottlenecks, reinforce learning overtime, and help mitigate the effects of staff turnover on institutional capacity. A careful design would be needed to ensure scalability and manage resource demands for such an approach which will be considered under the new Readiness Strategy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Secretariat continues to work closely with countries to help them build and enhance their capacity so that they can submit bankable adaptation projects. The Secretariat continuously seeks and creates opportunities to meet with and engage implementing entities, particularly NIEs, at international forums such as the COP and more recently, at joint workshops with UNFCCC and other climate Funds. - The Readiness Programme has increasingly integrated gender and social inclusion considerations into its support, consistent with the Adaptation Fund's mandate to prioritize the most vulnerable.
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Recommendation 5

Recommendation	Management Response/Action Plan
<p>Recommendation 5. The Secretariat, with support from the AF-TERG, should consider embedding mechanisms to systematically track efficiency in the enhanced Readiness Strategy that is currently being developed. This would enable the Readiness Programme to monitor how different types of support are being converted into results, identify what works best, and refine its approach over time. (<i>operational and high priority</i>)</p>	<p>Partially Agree.</p> <p>The Secretariat believes that further assessment of the Readiness Programme needs to be balanced with the need to determine a new Readiness Strategy and that this evaluation has already had a comprehensive look at the challenges and constraints of the current Programme. Weighing the need for further analytical work with the need to finalize a strategy and start implementing it, the Secretariat believes that the latter should be emphasized.</p> <p>The Secretariat anticipates the new readiness strategy to include the use of data and analytics to inform strategy development and implementation. The Secretariat therefore suggests that any further analytical work be part of the process to develop a new strategy and be undertaken by the Secretariat.</p>



Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

Draft Final Report

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Commissioned by the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund



About the Adaptation Fund

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. All 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

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) is an independent evaluation advisory group, established in 2018 and accountable to the Fund Board. Its mandate is to ensure the independent implementation of the Fund's Evaluation Policy, strengthening accountability, learning, adaptive management, and evaluation related capacity development. Led by a chair and composed of independent evaluation experts (collectively known as the AF-TERG members), the group provides evaluative, advisory, and oversight functions to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the Fund's work. It generates evaluations, promotes their use, and builds evaluation capacity. A full-time Secretariat supports the implementation of evaluative and advisory activities under the work programme. While independent of the Fund's operations, the AF-TERG's work helps the Fund, and its partners, enhance the impact of climate change initiatives on people, livelihoods, and ecosystems. It also guides responsible investment by the Fund, an essential element in maintaining political and public support. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/about/evaluation/about-us/>

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Preface and acknowledgements

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) commissioned the evaluation of the Readiness Programme. It involves a comprehensive assessment of the programme since its inception and provides recommendations for further improvement.

The team for this evaluation consists of Sithabiso Gandure (AF-TERG member and technical focal point for this evaluation), Vladislav Arnaoudov (AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator & Senior Evaluation Officer), and Aneesh Kotru (Evaluation Analyst). This assessment has been contracted to Oxford Policy Management (OPM) and is being led by Amanda Woomer and Katherine Cooke, with support from a technical team comprising Sanya Prakash (Project Manager), Kritika Singh, Adiba Khaled, Benedict Wambua, Sierra Ison, and Rachel Chowings.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFB	Adaptation Fund Board
AfDB	African Development Bank
AF-TERG	Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund
CBIT	Capacity Building for Transparency
CNDD	National Commission on Sustainable Development
CPDAE	Community of Practice for Direct access Entities
CSE	Centre de Suivi Écologique
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DA	Designated Authority
DAE	Direct access Entity
DEEC	Directorate of Environmental Classified Establishments
DNA	Designated National Authority
EMA	Environmental Management Agency
EPIU	Environmental Project Implementation Unit
ESM	Environmental and Social Management
ESP	Environmental and Social Policy
FY	Fiscal Year
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IE	Implementing Entity
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency

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KII	Key Informant Interview
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MEET	Malawi Environment Endowment Trust
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRV	Measurement, Reporting, and Verification
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDA	National Designated Authority
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NIE	National Implementing Entity
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PCCB	Paris Committee on Capacity-Building
PFA	Project Formulation Assistance
PPRC	Project and Programme Review Committee
OSE	Plan for Emerging Senegal
RIE	Regional Implementing Entity
RPSP	Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSC	South—South Cooperation
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

WRI World Resources Institute

Background

The Adaptation Fund was established in 2001 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol to finance concrete adaptation activities in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. As one of the pioneers of the Direct Access modality, the Fund has played a central role in empowering developing countries to identify, develop, and implement their own adaptation solutions. Recognising that many countries face capacity-related barriers to accessing climate finance and meeting accreditation requirements, the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB) launched the Readiness Programme for Climate Finance in 2013. The programme was designed to provide systematic readiness support for direct access to climate finance, responding to capacity constraints to ensure effective planning and implementation of adaptation action.

Now over a decade into its implementation, the Readiness Programme has undergone significant evolution, transitioning from an awareness-raising initiative to a permanent feature of the Fund's operations. It has supported the accreditation and project development efforts of numerous National Implementing Entities (NIEs). At the onset, the programme included small grants to support accreditation of NIEs to the Adaptation Fund. More recently, it has expanded its scope to include project scale-up grants, technical assistance (TA) grants, country exchanges, and institutional learning. In 2022, the Second Medium-Term Strategy (MTS II) for 2023–2027 further elevated the Readiness Programme's role as a cross-cutting pillar for enhancing access to climate finance and building long-term institutional capacity.

In this context, the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG), an independent evaluation body accountable to the AFB, has commissioned a thematic evaluation of the Readiness Programme. The evaluation is aligned with Workstream 1 of the AF-TERG Strategy and Second Multi-year Work Programme, which focuses on assessing the performance, relevance, and effectiveness of key strategic features. The objective of the evaluation is to generate credible, evidence-based insights into how the Readiness Programme has contributed to the Fund's mission of accelerating locally led adaptation and direct access, and how it can be enhanced considering future demand and evolving institutional needs.

This evaluation assesses the Readiness Programme since it became operational in May 2014 through to July 2025. The objective is to review progress to date and generate lessons and recommendations to inform the development of the enhanced Readiness Programme strategy currently being prepared by the Adaptation Fund Secretariat. It relies on primary and secondary information, responds to key evaluation criteria and is guided by a Theory of Change (ToC) developed in partnership with the AF-TERG specifically for this evaluation.

The report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the **Readiness Programme's evolution**, structure, grant instruments, and the ToC created.

Chapter 3 presents the **evaluation purpose, criteria, and approach**

Chapter 4 presents the **methodology**, including data methods, evaluation analysis, and limitations.

Chapter 5 presents the **evaluation findings** across key criteria.

Chapter 6 synthesises the **conclusions and recommendations** to feed into the enhanced future strategy.

Overview of the Readiness Programme

The Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme was established to enhance access to climate finance for developing countries, particularly through the Direct Access modality. It provides targeted support to address common challenges in accessing and programming adaptation finance from the Adaptation Fund, particularly those related to limited institutional capacities. This includes helping organisations become accredited as NIEs and strengthening their ability to design and implement effective adaptation projects.

Evolution of the Readiness Programme

In the early years, the Adaptation Fund's support for readiness and capacity building was largely ad hoc. Initially, the AFB Secretariat was allocated a modest budget to organise workshops and seminars, primarily aimed at guiding applicants through the accreditation and proposal submission processes. These early efforts were often conducted in conjunction with UNFCCC events. The AFB also actively encouraged bilateral and multilateral agencies to assist developing countries in strengthening their NIEs. While valuable, these initial efforts were irregular and lacked the structure to fully address the institutional and technical challenges many countries faced in accessing climate finance.

Recognising that simply opening a funding window was not sufficient to ensure equitable access in response to the strong demand for readiness support, the AFB acknowledged the urgent need for targeted, sustained support to help developing countries navigate the intricate processes involved in accreditation and project development. In response, the AFB adopted Decision B.21/28¹ at its 21st meeting in 2013, laying the groundwork for a more structured and strategic readiness programme.

“Having considered the comments and recommendations of the Accreditation Panel and the Project and Programme Review Committee and recognizing the need for a programme to support readiness for direct access to climate finance for national and regional implementing entities, the Adaptation Fund Board decided to request the secretariat to prepare a document containing options for such a programme for the twenty-second meeting. This document should include options for increasing

(i) the preparedness of applicant national implementing entities seeking accreditation by the Adaptation Fund and

(ii) the number of high-quality project/programme proposals submitted to the Board within a reasonable time period after accreditation”.

The formal establishment of the Readiness Programme was solidified through Decision B.22/24² at the AFB's 22nd meeting in 2013. This decision adopted document AFB/B.22/6, which outlines options for the programme and includes a framework for its two-year evaluation. Subsequently, the programme's execution arrangements were approved in March 2014, leading to its official launch in May 2014 at a workshop held at the AFB

¹ Adaptation Fund (2013). Report of the twenty-first meeting of the Adaptation Fund board AFB/B.21/8/Rev.1. Bonn, Germany, 3-4 July 2013

² Adaptation Fund Board (2013). Options for a Climate Finance Readiness Programme for NIEs and RIEs (AFB/B.22/6), presented at the Twenty-Second Meeting, Bonn, Germany, 31 October–1 November 2013.

Secretariat's office in Washington, DC, marking its transition from a concept to an operational reality.

An independent evaluation³ published in 2015 assessed the Adaptation Fund as a whole and recognised that the Readiness Programme (one year after implementation) had already provided crucial support, both directly and indirectly. The evaluation found that the programme played a vital role in helping entities understand, become comfortable with, and successfully embark upon the accreditation process, thereby enabling vulnerable countries to effectively receive and manage adaptation finance. Building on these early successes, which were presented to the AFB at its 25th meeting, the AFB approved Phase II of the Readiness Programme in April 2015 through Decision B.25/27⁴. This phase broadened the scope and resources of the Readiness Programme, reinforcing its strategic relevance and deepening its potential for impact.

A defining milestone for the Readiness Programme occurred at the AFB's 27th meeting in 2016. Through Decision B.27/38⁵, the Board explicitly decided to '*institutionalize the Readiness Programme and make it a more permanent feature of the Fund*'. This integration into the Fund's core operations, workplan, and budget reflected the Programme's critical role in supporting access and institutional development. As implementation progressed, the Fund made further operational improvements to enhance responsiveness and efficiency. At its 28th meeting, the AFB approved the introduction of intersessional review cycles and delegated grant proposal reviews (including those under the Readiness Programme) to the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC) and the Secretariat (Decision B.28/30⁶). Prior to this decision, grant proposals could only be reviewed twice a year, at each in person AFB meeting, which meant entities had to wait for the next review cycle. These procedural changes allowed for continued review and approval of readiness grant proposals intersessionally⁷ each year, which helped improve the timelines of the grant approval process. The AFB further strengthened this commitment in May 2017 through Decision B.29/42⁸, which embedded the programme within the Fund's strategic and budgetary frameworks.

As the Adaptation Fund matured, the Readiness Programme also evolved. Its scope broadened significantly, and the types of financial and non-financial support offered diversified to address a wider array of capacity needs. For example, following the AFB approval of the Fund's environmental and gender policies, the Readiness Programme introduced Technical Assistance Grants for Environmental and Social Policy (TA-ESGP) and Technical Assistance Grants for Gender Policy (TA-GP) in 2016 (Decision B.27/38⁹). Project Formulation Assistance (PFA) grants were also introduced to support project design

³ TANGO International and Overseas Development Institute (2015) 'First Phase Independent Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund'. Washington, DC: World Bank. [Microsoft Word - TANGO-ODI.2015.AF_final report. Oct27](#)

⁴ Adaptation Fund Board (2015). Report of the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.25/8), Bonn, Germany, 9–10 April 2015.

⁵ Adaptation Fund Board (2016). Report of the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.27/9/Rev.1), Bonn, Germany, 17–18 March 2016

⁶ Adaptation Fund Board (2016). Report of the Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.28/9), Bonn, Germany, 6–7 October 2016

⁷ Intersessional project/programme review cycle takes place during an intersessional period of 24 weeks or more between two consecutive regular Board meetings.

⁸ Adaptation Fund Board (2017). Report of the Twenty-Ninth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.29/9), Bonn, Germany, 16–17 March 2017

⁹ Adaptation Fund Board (2016). Report of the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.27/9/Rev.1), Bonn, Germany, 17–18 March 2016

(Decision B.29/288), although these were later integrated into the broader Project Formulation Grants (PFGs).

A significant decision also occurred with the introduction of the Readiness Support Package (the name of which was later changed to Readiness Package Grant (RPG). Piloted in May 2017 (Decision B.29/42⁸), this comprehensive grant was designed to provide enhanced, holistic support for countries lacking an NIE with the Fund, specifically addressing complex accreditation gaps through an enhanced suite of integrated tools. Following the success of the pilot, the RPG was institutionalised as a standing Readiness Grant in 2021 (Decision B.36/9), effectively replacing the earlier South–South Cooperation (SSC) grants. The transition reflected lessons learned from SSC grants, which, while valuable for peer-to-peer learning, often proved too narrow in scope to address the complex and systemic barriers entities faced in achieving accreditation, particularly in areas such as fiduciary standards, governance frameworks, and environmental and social safeguards. The RPG was therefore designed to provide tailored institutional support, combining peer exchanges with TA, policy guidance, and direct capacity-building measures. The AFB further expanded delivery modalities by allowing all accredited Implementing Entities (IEs) such as NIEs, Regional IEs (RIEs), and Multilateral IEs (MIEs), meeting specific eligibility criteria to serve as intermediaries for delivering RPG support (Decision B.40/60¹⁰). This expansion is designed to enhance geographic coverage, leverage a broader pool of experienced technical experts, and improve the responsiveness of support for NIE accreditation.

In recent years, the AFB has continued to refine the programme’s structure in response to country feedback and emerging needs. For instance, in 2023, the AFB requested the Secretariat to explore options for expanding eligibility criteria and TA grants for both NIEs and RIEs (Decision B.41/15¹¹). These insights are intended to inform the development of an ‘enhanced readiness programme’ as signalled in Decision B.42/43¹² (July 2024). The enhanced version is envisioned to be more demand driven, broadened in scope, and responsive to the specific needs of countries at different stages of readiness. This evolution is summarized in Table 1, which details key decisions, milestones, and the rationale for each phase.

Table 1: Evolution of the Readiness Programme

Year / Meeting	Key Decision / Action	Grant/Programme Milestone	Rationale
2013 - B.21/28	Board adoption of Readiness Programme concept	Programme conceptualized	Recognized need for structured, sustained support to help countries access direct finance through NIE accreditation
2014 - B.22/24	Formal establishment and launch of Readiness Programme	Phase I launched, SSC and Technical Assistance grants introduced	Launched official readiness support with capacity-building focus; offered initial grants and workshops

¹⁰ Adaptation Fund Board (2023). Report of the Fortieth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.40/13/Rev.1), Bonn, Germany, 23–24 March 2023

¹¹ Adaptation Fund Board (2023). Report of the Forty-First Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.41/10), Bonn, Germany, 12–13 October 2023

¹² Adaptation Fund Board (2024). Report of the Forty-First Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.42/16/Rev.1), Bonn, Germany, 16–19 April 2024

Year / Meeting	Key Decision / Action	Grant/Programme Milestone	Rationale
2015 - B.25/27	Approval of Phase II and programme expansion	Expanded scope and grant modalities	Broadened Programme with increased budget and operational support to more effectively build NIE capacities
2016 - B.27/38	Institutionalization of Readiness Programme	Programme integrated into Fund workplan and budget	Made readiness a permanent Fund feature; introduced Technical Assistance Grants for Environmental and Social Policy (TA-ESGP) and Gender Policy (TA-GP)
2016 - B.28/30	Delegation of grant reviews to PPRC and Secretariat	Introduction of intersessional and rolling review cycles	Streamlined approval, accelerating grant access
2017 - B.29/42	Pilot RPG launch	RPG pilot introduced replacing and expanding on SSC	Provided more holistic, flexible support for NIE accreditation gaps; replaced narrower SSC grants
2021 - B.36/9	RPG formalized as standing grant	SSC grants officially phased out	Reflected lessons that SSC grants limited scope; RPG combines peer support with technical assistance and larger grant ceiling
2023 - B.40/60	Expanded RPG eligibility to all accredited IEs as intermediaries	Broadened entities delivering readiness support	Enabled wider pool of partners (NIEs, RIEs, MIEs) to act as intermediaries, reflecting diversity and leveraging expertise
2023 - B.41/15	Secretariat tasked to expand eligibility and TA types	Preparation for enhanced readiness programme	Responded to country feedback to increase modality flexibility and responsiveness
2024 - B.42/43	Vision for enhanced Readiness Programme finalized	Emphasis on demand driven, broadened in scope, and responsive to the specific needs of countries at different stages of readiness	Formalizing an expanded programme with broader scope, innovation, learning, and project scale-up within readiness architecture

Components of the Readiness Programme

To achieve the abovementioned objectives, the Readiness Programme in its current form consists of four components:¹³

Support to accredited IEs: Providing capacity-building assistance to newly accredited IEs and those that are seeking re-accreditation with the Fund¹⁴ to enhance their ability to design and implement adaptation projects effectively and to comply with the Fund’s ESP and gender policies and procedures. This includes

¹³ See www.adaptation-fund.org/readiness/

¹⁴ Originally focused on NIEs, now often extends (as appropriate) to RIEs and MIEs

hosting workshops, webinars, targeted TA support, networking events, and guidance on requirements for project design, monitoring, and reporting.

Cooperation/partnership with climate finance readiness providers:

Strengthening collaboration with other climate finance readiness providers and global adaptation finance initiatives to foster knowledge exchange. The purpose is to leverage synergies, avoid duplication, and benefit from the combined expertise/resources of other major actors in climate finance (e.g., Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Multilateral development banks (MDBs). Activities include co-hosting events, joint toolkits, cross-institution workshops, harmonization of accreditation guidance documents, an online platform for sharing knowledge (e.g., with Community of Practice for Direct Access Entities [CPDAE], GCF readiness).

Support to NIEs seeking accreditation: Assisting entities that aim to become accredited by strengthening their fiduciary, environmental, social, and gender policies to meet Adaptation Fund standards. This includes tailored technical support, diagnostics, peer mentoring (e.g., via RPG, SSC, workshops, accreditation toolkits, and capacity building efforts).

Knowledge management: Capturing and disseminating lessons learned through the Fund's Knowledge Management Strategy, ensuring that best practices and successful approaches are shared across IEs. This is being done via producing and disseminating toolkits, guidance notes, case studies, webinars, online platforms (like the Adaptation Fund Readiness microsite), as well as facilitating the CPDAE¹⁵ that plays a pivotal role in peer learning and collaboration among accredited entities. See Box 1 for more information on CPDAE's role.

Box 1: Purpose of CPDAE

CPDAE¹ is a dynamic, member-led capacity building network established in 2019 to foster collaboration, learning, and peer support among NIEs of the Adaptation Fund and Direct access Entities (DAEs) of the GCF. Launched to address shared challenges in accessing and programming climate finance, the CPDAE enables entities to enhance their capacities in project development, accreditation, and implementation through targeted workshops, peer exchanges, and an online resource hub. Over time, the CPDAE has evolved to advance complementarity between these parallel initiatives, merging into a single, inclusive platform open to all DAEs from both the Adaptation Fund and the GCF.

Governed by an elected committee and structured to represent different linguistic and regional groups, the CPDAE operates through annual meetings, working groups, and direct advocacy with the Adaptation Fund and GCF. By facilitating South-South cooperation, codifying lessons learned, and providing a platform for ongoing technical support, the CPDAE has become an essential pillar of the Adaptation Fund's readiness architecture — strengthening country ownership, improving project quality, and accelerating the flow of adaptation finance to vulnerable countries.

¹⁵ The idea for this community of practice originated from the Direct Access entities themselves and developed over several years, with support from the Adaptation Fund, the African Climate Change Fund (ACCF), and parallel initiatives by organisations such as the GCF and WRI.

Processes, Grants Approval, and Roles

The process for accessing the Fund’s readiness grants begins when an accredited IE¹⁶ (NIE/RIE/MIE) submits a tailored grant application to the Secretariat. While each readiness grant modality supports specific activities and may have distinct eligibility or reporting criteria (for example, TA grants focus on strengthening the capacity of NIEs in the areas of environmental and social risk management and addressing gender considerations, while RPGs support NIE applicants to navigate the accreditation process), the core procedural steps remain consistent across all grant types. As illustrated in the table below, all readiness grant applications follow a standardized sequence: Proposal submission and endorsement> Secretariat technical review > Committee assessment > and final approval by the AFB. Throughout each stage, clear roles and responsibilities for both the Secretariat and the AFB ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with Fund’s policies.

Table 2: Steps, processes and roles involved for the Readiness grants approval

Process Step	Description	Role of the Secretariat	Role of the AFB (and PPRC)
1. Application Submission 	Eligible IEs submit grant proposals endorsed by the country’s Designated Authority (DA) demonstrating national support and compliance with country priorities. The application is submitted using standardized templates specific to grant type.	Provides guidance, templates, clarifies requirements, and checks application completeness.	No direct involvement at this stage; processes are established through previous Board decisions.
2. Technical Review 	Once applications are received, the Secretariat posts all applications on the AF website for public comment and conducts a comprehensive technical and compliance review. Requests clarifications or revisions as needed.	Carries out detailed technical, policy, and eligibility review and communicates feedback and clarifications to applicants. Ensures that applications meet Board-mandated requirements specific to each grant type. Prepares an appraisal or technical report for committee review	Board policies define technical standards and grant ceilings influencing review scope.
3. Committee Review & Recommendation 	Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC) examines proposal based on Secretariat inputs and makes a recommendation to the full Board	Facilitates submission, advises on policy or process, Supports PPRC with technical clarifications.	PPRC reviews and recommends in alignment with Board policies (sometimes through intersessional

¹⁶ Accredited entities are those that are confirmed to follow fiduciary and safeguarding standards according to Adaptation Fund assessment. These standards are designed to reduce risks and prevent harm while improving the effectiveness and sustainability of results. Accreditation occurs when the Accreditation Panel conducts an assessment, provides advice for applicants to strengthen their standards, and then recommends accreditation to the AFB. Source: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/apply-funding/accreditation/>

Process Step	Description	Role of the Secretariat	Role of the AFB (and PPC)
			reviews that expedite the process)
4. Board Approval 	Board reviews PPRC recommendation and approves, rejects, or requests modifications.	Prepares documentation to support Board decision-making.	AFB makes final decision to approve the grant and authorizes funding allocation.
5. Grant Agreement & Disbursement 	Once a grant is approved, Secretariat drafts agreement with IE and coordinates with Trustee (World Bank) for release of funds upon Board instruction.	Manages grant agreement execution and Trustee communication.	AFB officially instructs the Trustee to disburse funds following its approval decision.
6. Implementation & Reporting 	IE implements project and submits notification of project start, monitoring and completion reports as per schedule.	Monitors grant progress, reviews reports, tracks compliance, compiles portfolio updates.	Receives portfolio and performance reports for oversight; provides strategic guidance.

Source: Amendment to the fund operational policies and guidelines (2017)

Types of financial and non-financial support

Financial readiness grants

The Readiness Programme has introduced various grants to assist NIEs in peer-to-peer support for accreditation and in building capacity for climate finance readiness activities. These grants include:

Table 3: Current and past grant structure of the Readiness Programme

Grant type	Purpose	Description
RPGs¹⁷	To facilitate enhanced, targeted, and tailored readiness support for accreditation to developing countries. These replaced the SSC grants.	Provided to countries seeking accreditation for an NIE with the Fund. While the NIE is not yet accredited when applying, the grant supports the necessary steps to meet the accreditation requirements. RIEs and MIEs are generally excluded as they tend to have well-established systems and greater inherent capacity to navigate the accreditation process. However, any accredited IE (NIEs,

¹⁷ Data source: [Readiness Package Grant – Adaptation Fund](#)

Grant type	Purpose	Description
		<p>RIEs, MIEs) that meets the eligibility requirements for providing support through the grant can act as an intermediary to deliver peer support in accreditation through this grant (Decision B.40/60).</p> <p>Status: Active. The RPG was piloted in March 2017 (Decision B.29/42). Its success led to its formal approval as a standing grant in 2021 (Decision B.36/9), effectively replacing the earlier SSC grants.</p> <p>Amount: Up to US\$ 150,000 per NIE.</p>
<p>SSC grants¹⁸</p>	<p>Provided peer-to-peer support through eligible accredited NIEs to entities seeking accreditation. These grants facilitated knowledge exchange and mentorship among developing countries.</p>	<p>These grants enabled already accredited and eligible NIEs to advance the Direct access modality of the Fund and support the accreditation process of candidate NIEs as well as countries in the process of identifying a suitable candidate NIE.</p> <p>Status: Discontinued. While SSC grants were valuable for peer-to-peer learning, their impact was limited because peer support was limited to providing guidance and could not engage technical experts e.g., for fiduciary policy development and updates. Additionally, only a handful of accredited entities were eligible to provide SSC support. As a result, the short-term mentorship and knowledge exchange of SSC grants was insufficient to address the systemic and technical capacity gaps that many countries, faced in achieving accreditation. Therefore, SSC grants were replaced by the RPGs in 2021 (Decision B.36/9), following the successful piloting and formalisation of the RPG as a standing window.</p> <p>Amount: Up to US\$ 50,000 per country.</p>
<p>PFA¹⁹</p>	<p>To build the capacity of all IEs for project design and preparation, specifically in the development of high-quality adaptation project and programme proposals.</p>	<p>These grants were introduced under the Readiness Programme to complement the PFGs and support the undertaking of specialist technical assessments during project preparation and design such as environmental impact assessments (EIAs), vulnerability assessments (VAs), gender studies, etc. Initially, these were made available only to NIEs (as PFA grants) but later merged with PFGs and expanded in scope.</p> <p>Status: Discontinued. These were merged into PFGs in 2021 as the Board recognized that, despite originally serving distinct</p>

¹⁸ Data source: [South-South Cooperation Grants – Adaptation Fund](#)

¹⁹ Data source: [Project Formulation Assistance Grants- Adaptation Fund](#)

Grant type	Purpose	Description
		<p>purposes, these grants were often used for overlapping activities related to project preparation and technical assessments between PFAs and PFGs (Decision B.37/1).</p> <p>Amount: PFA grants were originally capped at US\$ 20,000 but later merged with PFG grants.</p>
<p>Project Scale-Up grants²⁰</p>	<p>To provide readiness funding to NIEs to support planning, designing, enhancement, and overall capacity to develop scale-up pathways for Adaptation Fund-funded projects nearing completion or already completed.</p>	<p>These grants are specifically available to NIEs that have successfully implemented Adaptation Fund projects. Introduced as a new activity identified in the MTS Implementation Plan, these grants are designed to provide support to plan and build capacity for scaling-up existing projects.</p> <p>Status: Active</p> <p>Amount: Up to a maximum of US\$ 100,000 per project and programme.</p>
<p>TA grants for Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) and Gender Policy²¹</p>	<p>These are small grants to help strengthen the capacity of NIEs in the areas of environmental and social risk management and address gender-related issues as they design, develop, and implement concrete adaptation projects and programmes and at the institutional level in accordance with the Fund’s ESP and Gender Policy.</p>	<p>Through these grants, NIEs have the option to hire external expertise to help them strengthen capacity in the areas of environmental and social risk management and addressing gender related issues.</p> <p>Status: Active</p> <p>There are two types of TA grant:</p> <p>TA Grant for the ESP and Gender Policy (TA-ESGP): Aimed at strengthening the capacity of NIEs to identify, screen, address, and manage environmental and social risks as well as gender-related issues in their projects and programmes in line with the Fund’s ESP and Gender Policy.</p> <p>Amount: The grant is up to a maximum of US\$ 25,000 per NIE.</p> <p>TA-GP: Meant for NIEs to strengthen their capacity to address gender-related issues in projects and programmes and at the institutional level to comply with the Fund’s Gender Policy.</p> <p>Amount: The grant is up to a maximum of US\$ 10,000 per NIE.</p>

²⁰ Data source: [Project Scale-up Grants – Adaptation Fund](#)

²¹ Data source: [Technical Assistance Grants - Adaptation Fund](#)

Source: Adapted from various sources which includes AFB decisions, and Readiness grants information available on the AF website, and feedback from the AFB Secretariat

Readiness grants are designed with the expectation that IEs will use the funding to navigate the Fund’s accreditation process in the case of entities seeking accreditation, or (in the case of accredited entities) to establish or strengthen essential institutional frameworks such as policies, procedures, manuals, and systems for identifying, assessing, and managing environmental and social risks, with full integration of gender considerations. Upon their initial introduction, there was significant demand for readiness grants. In FY16 and FY17, 12 and 11 grants were approved, respectively. However, in recent years, the number of grants approved has declined significantly, with only two approved in FY23, one in FY2024, and three in FY25 (see Figure 1 below). The decline in demand for the readiness grants in recent years may be attributed to a combination of factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic disruption of business operations globally. Additionally, access of TA grants may be limited given NIEs are only allowed to access them once.²² Other possible reasons for the decline are the Readiness Programme’s relevance to country needs, the specific requirements for IEs to receive readiness, capacity constraints in some countries, and overlap with other climate finance readiness grants (such as that of the GCF). These issues are explored in the evaluation findings.

Figure 1: Number of readiness grants approved each year



Source: Evaluation team analysis conducted based on Readiness grants data 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness Programme team

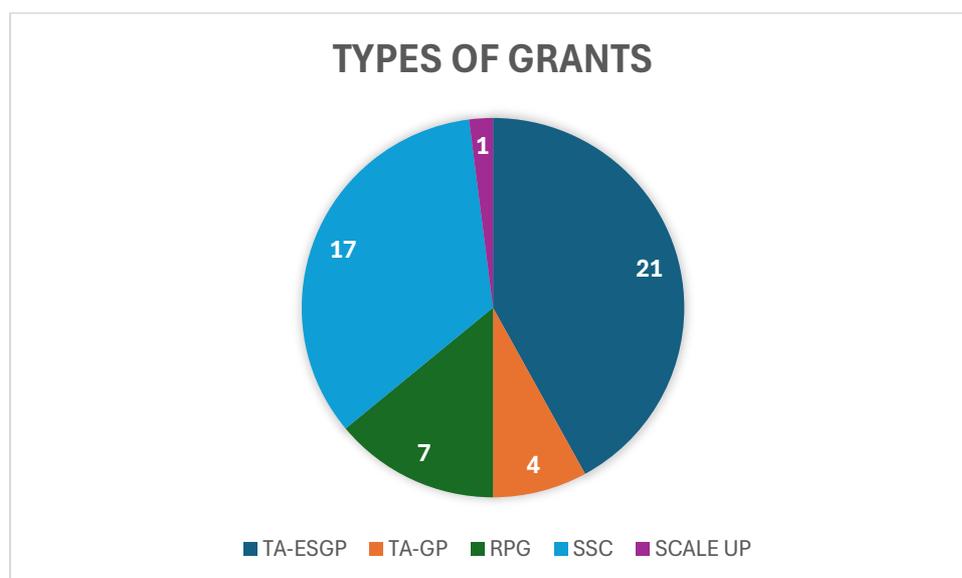
According to the grant information shared by the Readiness team, the Readiness Programme has awarded a total of **50 readiness grants** from 2014-2025 amounting to **US\$ 2,410,160** across **41 countries**.²³ The most popular among them was the SSC (n= 17; 34%), followed by the TA-ESGP²⁴ (n=21; 42%), the TA-GP grant (n=4; 8%), the RPG (n=7; 14%), and one Project Scale-Up grant.

²² 25 out of the 32 accredited NIEs have accessed a TA-related grant.

²³ Data source: Based on the AF readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness Programme team

²⁴ An important point to note is that TA-ESGP and TA-ESP refer to the same grant, with TA-ESP having been merged into TA-ESGP

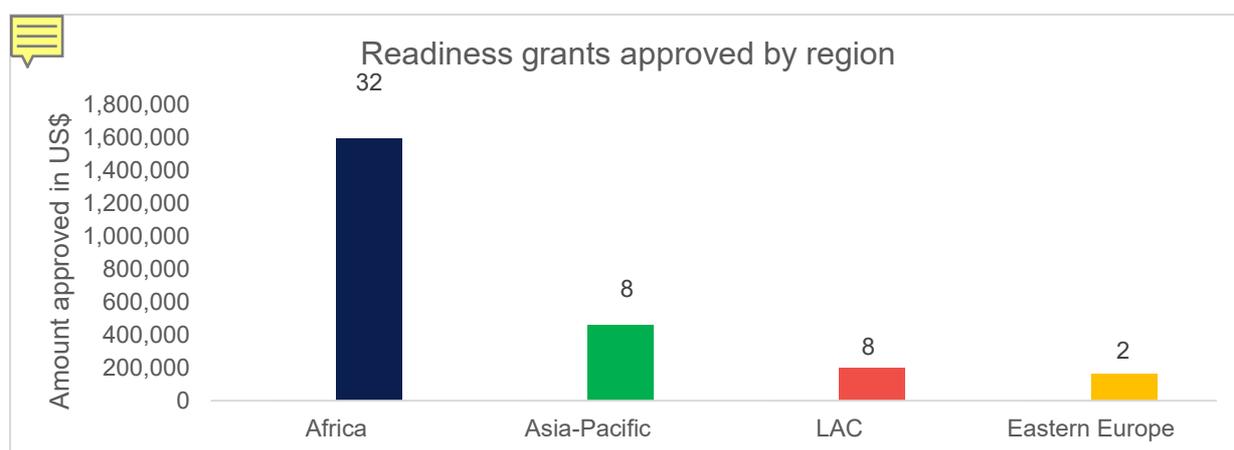
Figure 2: Distribution of readiness grant types (2014-2025)



Source: Evaluation team analysis conducted based on the Readiness grants data (2014-2025) provided by the Readiness Programme team

In terms of regional distribution, analysis of readiness grants from 2014-2025 indicate that the Africa region has received the largest share of readiness grant funding to date, both in terms of volume and number of recipients. NIEs from Africa make up the highest proportion of recipients, accounting for 32 projects and US\$ 1.59 million followed by the Asia and Asia-Pacific region (eight projects and US\$ 460,018 in funding), IEs from Latin America and Caribbean with (eight projects and US\$ 197,700 in funding), and two projects from Eastern Europe that account for US\$ 162,000

Figure 3: Readiness grants approved to date (by region)²⁵



Source: Evaluation team analysis conducted based on the Readiness grants data (2014-2025) provided by the Readiness team

²⁵ Source: Readiness grant data available on the AF website (<https://www.adaptation-fund.org/readiness/readiness-grants/approved-readiness-grants/>)

Non-financial readiness activities

The Fund’s multifaceted approach to deliver its readiness and capacity-building support includes a robust suite of non-financial tools such as seminars, webinars, workshops, an accreditation toolkit, and various guidance documents on Adaptation Fund policies, processes, and procedures. These non-financial interventions are largely demand driven, directly responding to the expressed needs of IEs and aspiring entities in surveys used to gather information on accredited IEs’ interests and help shape workshop agendas. Topics covered are diverse and practical, encompassing critical areas such as:

Seminars on familiarizing accredited NIEs with the Fund policies and procedures and training them on preparing quality projects and programmes for adaptation;

Webinars focusing on providing guidance on the evaluation of Adaptation Fund projects, with a specific focus on mid-term and final evaluations in accordance with the Adaptation Fund Evaluation Policy;

Workshops for accredited entities on addressing and managing environmental and social risks within their projects/programmes, in accordance with the Fund’s environmental and social policy, and implementation of the Results-Based Management approach.

Effective application of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in adaptation initiatives; and

Broader adaptation issues, including the linkages between National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the development of adaptation projects to support these national frameworks.

Table 4: Overview of non-financial activities

Support type	Progress
Climate Finance Readiness Workshop	26 regional workshops held in different regions covering Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean
Annual Climate Finance Readiness Seminar	12 annual climate finance readiness seminars for NIEs held
Accreditation and Readiness Support Package Workshop	1 workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya, co-hosted by the Kenyan National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), the one-year pilot ‘Readiness Package’ was launched. Following this, the programme has facilitated numerous webinars and regional workshops for DAs to provide capacity building in accreditation support
Climate Finance Readiness Webinar	31 webinars held on different topics
CPDAE established and operational with own committee	Provided ongoing support to the CPDAE in partnership with the (GCF) for implementation of the readiness proposal for funding submitted to the GCF under its Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme. The Adaptation Fund hosted the third annual meeting of the CPDAE in Yerevan, Armenia.

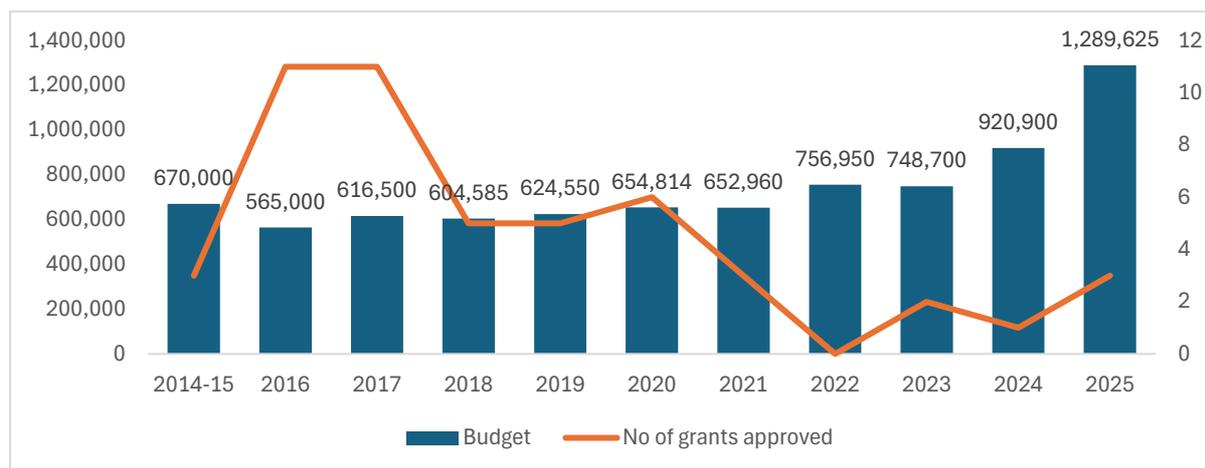
Source: Compiled from various sources, which includes Annual Performance Report 2024 and Study on Readiness and Capacity building for Direct access to Adaptation Finance (2020); numbers were updated directly by the Readiness Programme team

Budget of the Readiness Programme

The Readiness Programme financial support through grants is approved by the AFB on a case-by-case basis, with funding coming directly from the Adaptation Fund Trust Fund.

administrative funding is included in the programme’s operational budget. The annual operational budget for the programme has risen on average over the years alongside the evolution in its capacity-building initiatives. From an approved budget total of US\$ 670,000 in FY14/15 (two years), the budget reached US\$ 920,900 in FY24, with the latest proposed budget for FY25 being approximately US\$ 1,290,000 (see Figure 5). The increase in the programme’s budget over time is in line with the Adaptation Fund’s desire to expand access to readiness support as well as the goal to triple adaptation financing by 2030 under the NCQG as adopted at COP29.²⁶

Figure 4: Readiness Programme yearly operational budget and approved grants



Source: AFB decisions

Linkages between the Readiness Programme and the MTS II (2023–2027)

The evolution of the Readiness Programme as outlined above has mirrored the strategic shifts of the Fund, from the introduction of the MTS I (2018–2022) to the adoption of MTS II (2023–2027). Under MTS I, the Fund introduced a clear vision to scale its impact through three interconnected pillars – Action, Innovation, and Learning and Sharing – supported by cross-cutting priorities such as advancing gender equality, empowering vulnerable communities, strengthening institutional capacity, and ensuring complementarity with other climate finance mechanisms. The Mid-Term Review (MTR)²⁷ of MTS I identified the Readiness Programme as a core vehicle for delivering on these priorities. This is specifically related to the programme’s critical role in building the capacity of national entities to access and manage Fund’s resources, as well as to facilitate the accreditation process and strengthen institutional systems. During this period, the programme expanded its scope through new grants like RPG and Project Scale-Up grants while integrating gender responsiveness, environmental and social safeguards, and peer-to-peer learning into its operations. These efforts not only strengthened institutional capacity and improved project quality but also enhanced country ownership, directly contributing to the Fund’s strategic objectives under MTS I.

²⁶ See <https://unfccc.int/news/cop29-un-climate-conference-agrees-to-triple-finance-to-developing-countries-protecting-lives-and>

²⁷ AF-TERG, 2021. Mid-Term Review of the Medium-Term Strategy of the Adaptation Fund. (AFB/EFC.28/7) Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Mid-term-Review-of-the-Medium-Term-Strategy-of-the-Adaptation-Fund-final-edited.pdf>

Building on the groundwork laid by MTS I and drawing on the lessons from its MTR, MTS II (2023–2027) was adopted by the AFB in October 2022 and operationalized with the Implementation Plan in March 2023. It reaffirms the strategic focus areas of Action, Innovation, and Learning and Sharing while elevating the cross-cutting priority of **Enhancing access to climate finance and long-term institutional capacity**. The Readiness Programme is explicitly positioned as an essential delivery arm operationalizing MTS II objectives across all pillars and themes, and it contributes to several key expected results. For example, MTS II commits to expanding the programme’s scope and recipients beyond IEs to include DAs, Executing Entities, local communities, women’s organizations, youth, and indigenous peoples. Other relevant aspects of MTS II include:

Cross-cutting theme reinforcement: MTS II places ‘Enhancing access to climate finance and long-term institutional capacity’ at its core, mirroring the Readiness Programme’s mission to arm national entities with the skills and systems needed for direct access and sustainable climate finance engagement.

Expanded readiness in the MTS II Implementation Plan: The MTS II Implementation Plan (approved March 2023) explicitly foresees an expanded Readiness Programme, encompassing support for NIE accreditation, project development, innovation, learning, and locally led adaptation.

Alignment with strategic pillars and outcomes: Within MTS II, readiness is directly connected to Expected Result 2 (under Pillar 1): MTS II envisages broader eligibility scope, increased grant ceilings for technical assistance grants such as TA-ESGP and TA-GP, and inclusion of capacity building support for re-accreditation within the readiness architecture and ER3 (under Pillar 2), indicating that accreditation and capacity building are essential enablers of effective adaptation action. The Readiness Programme also promotes learning and sharing through its workshops, webinars, country exchanges, and the CPDAE.

Supporting locally led adaptation (LLA): LLA requires strong capacity and resources at the local level. The Fund plans to support LLA stakeholders during project design and implementation, including through the Readiness programme as well as additional guidance documents. The programme is seen as the delivery mechanism for developing local institutional competence, financing, and knowledge systems. This was evidenced by a recent writeshop²⁸ organised in May 2025, which enhanced the capacity of NIEs and RIEs to develop high-quality, fundable project and programme proposals for four funding windows, including LLA.

Coherence with global climate finance architecture: MTS II calls for enhanced complementarity with other funds (GCF, GEF etc.), including joint accreditation pathways and project-scale initiatives reinforcing the Readiness Programme’s role in promoting coherence in global climate finance.

Readiness Programme ToC

To effectively evaluate the Readiness Programme, the evaluation team worked closely with the AF-TERG to first develop a ToC for the programme to articulate how it intends to achieve its desired outcomes as well as to gain a comprehensive overview of the processes in place to do so. The process of developing the ToC began by identifying the core *problems* the programme aims to address, the proposed *solutions/activities* to address those problems, and finally linking these to the *objectives* it aims to achieve. The iterative process was carried out in collaboration with the Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Team, the rest of the AFB Secretariat, and the AF-TERG to ensure a shared and accurate understanding of the

²⁸ Source: Adaptation Fund Readiness Write-shop in Recife, Brazil: Survey Evaluation Report (2025)

programme's logic and intent. The resulting ToC uses arrows to link these elements in the form of causal pathways. It also specifies the assumptions about how change will happen. The subsections below narrate the ToC.

Problem

Those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are often low-income countries, specifically SIDS and LDCs, which are also struggling to access climate finance. The Adaptation Fund recognises that it is often the case that entities in these countries lack the capacity to access, manage, and comply with fiduciary and safeguard requirements (such as ESP and gender requirements) for climate financing, making the Adaptation Fund's Direct Access modality challenging to access for those countries with low capacity. Unfortunately, without access to such climate finance, this perpetuates their vulnerability and means that entities continue to lack the technical and institutional capacity to design, implement, and build resilience, as well as to enable country and community adaptation to counter changing climate conditions.

In the process of designing a solution to the above problem, the Adaptation Fund recognised that the following constraints seem to be preventing this problem from being adequately addressed: limited awareness of the grant application process and support; competing funding opportunities; varied institutional capacity for proposal development and scale-up of projects; political process of choosing NIEs; lack of expertise in ESP and gender policies; complex access modalities; and limited understanding of fiduciary standards. It was with these constraints in mind that the Adaptation Fund had launched the Readiness Programme to counter such obstacles, supporting NIEs to more easily access crucial climate finance.

Solution/activities

In Decision B.21/28, the Board recognised the need for a programme to support readiness for direct access to climate finance, to address challenges, listed under the 'Problem', such as the need for support to identify NIEs, strengthening appraisal, design, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation projects undertaken by NIEs, the need for capacity building of IEs to comply with the Board's fiduciary standards, the need to develop a portfolio of projects at country level, and the need to apply environmental and social safeguards.²⁹ This was to be supported through Grants for IEs (such as through SSC grants for capacity building and knowledge sharing for NIE identification and application submission, RPGs, and PFA grants), Adaptation financing workshops (such as through train the trainers, environmental and social safeguards workshop, webinars on project management lifecycle), various TA grants (TA-ESGPs, TA-gender) and knowledge management activities (such as conducting a Knowledge Fair during country exchanges discussing best-practice in adaptation projects, case studies, media outreach, and an online platform) to build the readiness of NIEs to access climate finance³⁰. The activities were implemented through four components which are listed below.

1. Support to accredited IEs

²⁹ Adaptation Fund (2013) 'Options for a programme to support readiness for direct access to climate finance for National and Regional Implementing Entities'.

³⁰ Adaptation Fund (2013) 'Options for a programme to support readiness for direct access to climate finance for national and regional implementing entities' (AFB/B.22/6). Bonn, Germany. [AFB.B.22.6 Options for a climate finance readiness programme for NIEs and RIEs.pdf](#)

The programme, under this component, hosts seminars, webinars, and workshops for already accredited IEs to provide support with the planning, design, development, and scale-up of successful adaptation projects (which is informed by independent final evaluations, monitoring reports, and performance assessments conducted by the Secretariat) as well as providing TA on aspects of environmental, social, and gender policy to comply with ESP and gender policies of the Adaptation Fund.

As noted above, TA can be delivered on-site through partnerships with bilateral and multilateral organizations already supporting NIE candidates or existing NIEs, or by contracting specialized services from consulting firms, individual experts, or NGOs to help fulfil the Fund's fiduciary standards and environmental and social safeguards. For example, through the TA-ESGP and TA-GP grant modalities, accredited entities can receive targeted assistance to develop or strengthen internal audit systems, gender policies, environmental and social management frameworks, risk management protocols, and to build internal staff capacity with the Fund's ESP principles².

2. Cooperation/partnership with climate finance readiness providers

This component focuses on forming partnerships with other multilateral climate funds, MDBs, UN agencies and others to provide readiness support for climate finance and adaptation. These partnerships are established based on institutional mandates, technical expertise, and complementary roles in advancing climate adaptation finance. The collaboration includes co-developing and disseminating outreach materials, co-hosting and facilitating webinars, workshops, and seminars, as well as sharing tools and guidance to improve access and capacity at the country level. Importantly, these partner institutions generally do not receive direct readiness grants; instead, they collaborate through formal agreements or MoU facilitated by the Secretariat to provide such support.

3. Support to NIEs seeking accreditation with the Adaptation Fund

A core pillar of the Readiness Programme is to provide tailored, context-specific support to entities aspiring to become accredited NIEs of the Adaptation Fund. This support is delivered through a combination of grants, knowledge products, workshops, guidance documents, and South-South knowledge sharing mechanisms that facilitate peer learning and capacity enhancement.

4. Knowledge management

Capturing and disseminating lessons learned through the Fund's Knowledge Management Strategy, ensuring that best practices and successful approaches are shared across all IEs. This is fostered through media outreach, case studies, webinars, various social media platforms, and web-based tools such as the Adaptation Fund Readiness website. The programme's knowledge sharing is further strengthened by the CPDAE, a peer-led network fostering continuous learning and technical exchange among AF and GCF direct access entities.

Outputs

An output can be described as the tangible deliverable or product produced or provided by a series of inputs and activities that an intervention supports. As such, an output is within the direct control of an intervention, is provided to the intervention's direct participants, and is expected to form the basis from which the desired change will occur.

The outputs in this case are that: the intended recipients (NIEs) actively participate in the seminars, webinars, and workshops; accredited NIEs receive funding to strengthen their capacities with regards to ESP and Gender policies, and project scale-up; those NIEs seeking accreditation receive readiness grants and peer-to-peer support; and accredited IEs access and contribute to knowledge-sharing platforms. These outputs assume that: IEs can attend training events, webinars, and workshops; they are aware about readiness grants; and they have the time, resources, and technical capacity to apply for the grants.

Outcomes

Outcomes refer to short- to medium-term changes or benefits related to knowledge, behaviour, attitudes, and (later) changes in actions or policies that occur because of the outputs. In the Readiness Programme ToC, outcomes are split into immediate outcomes and ultimate outcomes, with the former directly related to the programme's logical framework and the latter referring to the broader societal benefits of the programme.

The immediate outcomes assume that Fund activities are designed to meet the specific needs of NIEs. These outcomes include: the increased capacity of accredited national and regional entities to design and implement concrete adaptation projects; the increased capacity of NIEs to meet the Fund's fiduciary and accreditation standards (including gender, environment, and social risks, etc.); and improved capacity building and learning platforms, improving the Readiness Programme's ability to facilitate direct access to adaptation finance and the implementation of concrete adaptation projects.

Assuming IEs translate their improved capacities into funding applications and projects, the ultimate outcomes are an increased number of fully developed, good-quality adaptation projects and proposals prepared by NIEs and approved by the Board, as well as more developing countries with accredited NIEs and the capacity to directly access climate finance.

Impact

With the effective implementation of programme-supported outputs, the Readiness Programme's impact can be articulated as 'NIEs with increased capacity access new and additional climate financing.' In turn, the Readiness Programme's impact is expected to lead toward the Adaptation Fund's MTS II's goal, which is 'People, livelihoods and ecosystems are adequately protected from adverse impacts of climate change with their adaptive capacity enhanced, resilience strengthened, and vulnerability reduced in the context of climate-resilient and sustainable development.'³¹

The role of the ToC in the evaluation

Developing this ToC at the start of the evaluation supported the identification of key areas to explore through the evaluation questions and data collection and analysis, which is captured in the evaluation matrix. Based on feedback on the draft evaluation report, the ToC was also further refined, primarily to update the language around the impact for clarity.

³¹ Adaptation Fund. (n.d.) *Medium-Term Strategy (2023-2027)* [Medium-Term-Strategy-2023-2027.pdf](#)
Accessed on 28 July 2025

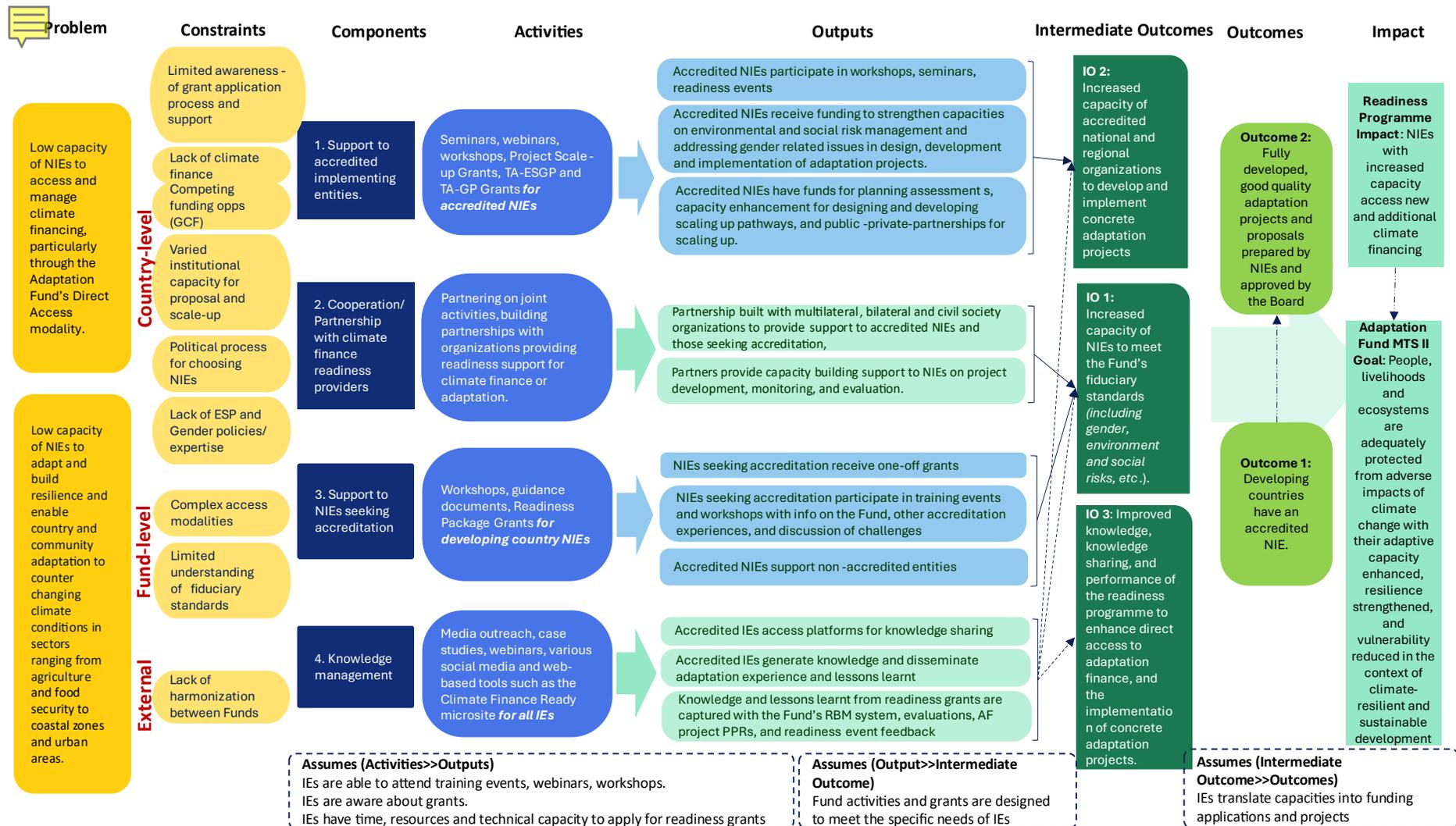
Assumptions

For the causal pathways outlined in the ToC to achieve impact, the following assumptions are made:

- a. From the *Activities to Outputs level*, it is assumed that IEs have awareness about the Readiness Programme. It is assumed that they can attend training events, webinars, and workshops organised under the Readiness Programme, and that they have the time, resources, and technical capacity to apply for readiness grants.
- b. From *Output to Intermediate outcome level*, it is assumed that Adaptation Fund activities and grants are designed to meet the specific needs of NIEs.
- c. From *Intermediate outcome to Outcome level*, it is assumed that IEs can translate capacities into funding applications and projects.

The evaluation intends to explore the extent to which these assumptions hold as the Readiness Programme aims to achieve impact.

Figure 5: Readiness Programme ToC prepared for the evaluation



Evaluation purpose and approach

Evaluation purpose and scope

The purpose of this evaluation is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Readiness Programme since its inception and provide lessons and recommendations to support the continued enhancement of the Readiness Programme and inform its future strategy.

The evaluation scope includes a **comprehensive assessment of Components 1 to 3 out of the four components of the Readiness Programme**. These are, namely:

Component 1: Support to accredited IEs

Component 2: Cooperation/partnership with climate finance readiness providers

Component 3: Support to NIEs seeking accreditation

It also includes a light-touch assessment of the contribution of the other components to Component 4 (Knowledge management). By looking at these three components, the evaluation seeks to understand their contribution toward achieving the impact of ‘Increased capacity among NIEs to access climate resilience funding’. These change pathways are illustrated in the ToC drafted by the evaluation team for this evaluation (see Figure 5). Based on consultations during the inception phase, this evaluation is focused on NIEs rather than RIEs, since RIEs do not receive financial grants under the Readiness Programme. Although, the evaluation captures the roles and perspectives of RIEs and other stakeholders.

Finally, the evaluation includes a Landscape Analysis of other climate finance institutions and their readiness interventions, including the GCF, UNFCCC, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), World Resources Institute (WRI), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).³² This analysis is important for assessing the Readiness Programme’s coherence with other climate finance readiness interventions, particularly with regard to the specific role or niche it has in providing support to countries to access funding to build resilience to climate change.

Evaluation principles and approach

The Adaptation Fund’s Evaluation Policy³⁵ introduces seven interrelated principles to guide evaluation practice. These principles were chosen to reflect the Fund’s unique focus on financing concrete adaptation and resilience projects in vulnerable communities. They also reinforce the Fund’s values, niche, and alignment with the Paris Agreement.³³

Table 5 provides a summary of the Adaptation Fund’s evaluation principles, as well as OPM’s response to those principles in the form of our approach. Specifically, our evaluation approach is **theory based**, takes a **learning orientation** to support decision making within the Adaptation Fund, and is **utilisation focused** to ensure evaluation findings are converted into actionable lessons and recommendations:

³² The reason for selecting these organisations is explained later in the document.

³³ Adaptation Fund (2022) ‘Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund’. See <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/New-Design-Evaluation-Policy.pdf>

Theory based: The evaluation is grounded in the ToC we collaboratively developed for the Readiness Programme with the AF-TERG and the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Team members. Developing this ToC allowed us to ensure a shared understanding of the causal pathways and related assumptions that make up the Readiness Programme and, as a result, to finalise the evaluation questions and sub-questions.

Learning orientation: Given the purpose of this evaluation, we explored how the Readiness Programme has incorporated learnings over time and used the evaluation findings to develop key insights that can inform future strategy and implementation. This orientation is also embodied in learning-focused questions as part of our evaluation matrix.

Utilisation focused: The evaluation team has sought to maximise the utilisation of findings by working closely with the AF-TERG and other stakeholders to discuss and sense check emerging findings, co-develop recommendations, and identify ways to increase the accessibility and usability of the evaluation outputs. This is also aligned with a **semi-independent evaluation**³⁴ approach and supports the learning orientation described above.

³⁴ As per the Fund's Evaluation Policy, semi-independent evaluations are conducted by an evaluation team comprised of a combination of independent evaluators and personnel within the management or operational structure of the entity being evaluated, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Table 5: AF-TERG evaluation principles mapped to OPM’s approach

Evaluation principles of AF-TERG	Definition of principles	OPM’s approach
1. Relevance and utility	Evaluations should be relevant, timely, practical, and integrated into operations to effectively serve users’ information needs. These users include, for example, IEs, DAs, AFB, the Secretariat, the AF-TERG, civil society organisations, and other partners. Utility also refers to generating knowledge for the wider climate change adaptation and sustainable development community.	OPM collaborated with AF-TERG and various stakeholders, including the Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Team as advised during kick-off, to ensure findings are relevant, accessible, and grounded in practical knowledge. This semi-independent approach helped facilitate faster integration of insights from the evaluation into the Readiness Programme.
2. Credibility and robustness	Evaluations should be conducted rigorously, using justifiable and contextually appropriate methods by competent evaluators, adhering to international standards.	The evaluation employed a theory-based approach, guided by a draft ToC developed collaboratively. Evidence gathered through various data collection methods provided multiple sources of information and perspectives for responding to each evaluation question, including in developing actionable steps for programme improvement. This has increased the credibility and robustness of both the findings and recommendations.
3. Transparency	Evaluations should be transparent throughout the entire process, with clear communication and stakeholder engagement, while maintaining data confidentiality and disclosing analysis methods.	Since inception, multiple meetings have been conducted with the Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Team and AF-TERG, during which we have taken a collaborative and transparent approach to decision making and addressing any emergent issues. We have also established bi-weekly meetings with the AF-TERG to share updates and any obstacles or challenges that may arise, as well as to collaboratively identify solutions and the way forward.
4. Impartiality and objectivity	Evaluations must be conducted impartially by independent and unbiased evaluators with full freedom from undue influence, utilising objective methods.	The evaluation team comprises multiple researchers involved in data collection and analysis, which will help establish a degree of objectivity and impartiality by allowing the team coming together to agree on findings, thus avoiding a single researcher’s bias. It is important to note that the evaluation is semi-independent, with inputs from the Readiness Team and AF-TERG as indicated in the ToR, to facilitate faster uptake of evaluative insights into the Readiness Programme.

Evaluation principles of AF-TERG	Definition of principles	OPM's approach
5. Equitable and gender-sensitive inclusivity	Evaluations must be inclusive and equitable, prioritising the perspectives of vulnerable groups to ensure a complete and relevant assessment, empowering stakeholders and building ownership.	The evaluation has engaged with a diverse range of stakeholders across various levels, including national and international organisations, IEs, similar organisations, and the private sector. To ensure geographical representation, case studies were conducted in carefully selected countries across multiple continents. To the extent possible, we have been mindful of gender in seeking out stakeholders to participate in data collection. Our evaluation team is also geographically and gender diverse, which increases the diversity of perspectives and experiences brought to the evaluation.
6. Complementarity	The Adaptation Fund promotes a whole-of-Fund approach to evaluation, emphasising complementarity, collective learning, and knowledge sharing within and beyond the Fund.	The evaluation assesses how the Readiness Programme has incorporated learnings over time and identified insights from its operations and the broader climate finance landscape. Additionally, the utilisation-focused approach aligns with a semi-independent evaluation model and reinforces the learning orientation. We have worked with the AF-TERG to identify ways in which we can support learning.
7. Complexity sensitive and adaptive	Evaluations should consider the complex and dynamic human and ecological systems within which interventions are implemented.	The evaluation employs a 'whole systems approach', as we have triangulated insights from different stakeholders to capture how different factors affect the implementation and outcomes of the Readiness Programme. For instance, we have interviewed a range of stakeholders such as IEs, government stakeholders, civil society, and any support partners, which allows us to understand the various factors that affect the uptake of the Readiness Programme.

Evaluation questions and criteria

This evaluation adheres to the Adaptation Fund’s Evaluation Policy criteria,³⁵ encompassing **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact**. These are presented in the evaluation matrix in Annex B. This matrix grounds the full evaluation process and forms the basis of our data collection tools (including case studies), analysis, and reporting. The evaluation questions and methods were finalised collaboratively with the AF-TERG, with specific attention to the ToC, and are presented in Table 6 below.

It is important to note that this evaluation does not focus on the Fund’s other criteria (namely Equity, Adaptive Management, Scalability, and Human and Ecological Security) as these apply to the implementation of climate adaptation projects and their subsequent outcomes.

Table 6: Key evaluation questions

Evaluation criteria	Definition ³⁶	Key evaluation question
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.	To what extent is the Readiness Programme strategically focused to address the needs and priorities of targeted stakeholders, including NIEs, and developing countries (including LDCs and SIDS)?
Coherence	The extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution.	To what extent is the Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Programme compatible with other similar programmes within 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.	To what extent has the Readiness Programme achieved its objectives of (a) an increase in the preparedness of applicant NIEs seeking accreditation by the Adaptation Fund and (b) increasing the number of high-quality project/programme proposals submitted to the AFB after accreditation?
Efficiency	The extent that the intervention is cost-effective and timely and does not consume unnecessary time and resources.	To what extent is the Readiness Programme cost-effective and timely without consuming unnecessary time and resources?
Impact	The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.	To what extent has the Readiness Programme generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, higher-level impact

³⁵ Adaptation Fund (2022) ‘Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund’. See <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/New-Design-Evaluation-Policy.pdf>

³⁶ The definitions of the evaluation criteria are taken from Adaptation Fund (2022) ‘Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund’. See <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/New-Design-Evaluation-Policy.pdf>

Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

Evaluation criteria	Definition ³⁶	Key evaluation question
		i.e. of NIEs has increased access to funding?

Methodology

Data collection methods

The evaluation employed a hybrid, mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative data) approach to data collection that included multiple methods and sources of data (including primary and secondary sources). These various sources, outlined in Table 7 below, were used to triangulate findings during the analysis to address the evaluation questions. The findings, which are grounded in this evidence, are presented in Chapter 5 of the report.

Table 7: Methods used in the evaluation

Sources of evidence	Description																								
Literature review of key documents	An in-depth desk review of relevant documents informed this evaluation. These documents included the Fund’s documents, annual performance reports, AFB documents and decisions, and readiness documents.																								
Key informant interviews (KIIs)	<p>KIIs were conducted both in-person and remotely with selected stakeholders depending on the specific context, logistical feasibility, and stakeholder availability. These are divided between case studies and general interviews. A purposive sampling approach was employed to select stakeholders for KIIs, ensuring diverse perspectives and representation from various organisations, sectors, geographies, levels of experience, etc.</p> <p>A total of 38 KIIs were conducted with 54 stakeholders. The list of the stakeholders interviewed is provided in Annex C. Below is a breakdown of interviews conducted across different stakeholder categories:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Stakeholder category</th> <th>Interviews</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Case study Interviews</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>DAs and Focal Points</td> <td rowspan="8">27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NIE Staff</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ministry Representatives (Environment, Finance, Planning)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Regional and Multilateral Implementing Entities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Private Sector</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Civil Society Organizations and Communities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Support Partners - Climate Finance Readiness Partners</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Support Partners - South-South Cooperation Participants</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adaptation Fund Level Interviews</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adaptation Fund Board and Secretariat</td> <td rowspan="2">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Landscape Analysis Interviews</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Representatives from GCF, GEF, GIZ, UNFCCC, WRI, GIZ</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>38</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Stakeholder category	Interviews	Case study Interviews		DAs and Focal Points	27	NIE Staff	Ministry Representatives (Environment, Finance, Planning)	Regional and Multilateral Implementing Entities	Private Sector	Civil Society Organizations and Communities	Support Partners - Climate Finance Readiness Partners	Support Partners - South-South Cooperation Participants	Adaptation Fund Level Interviews		Adaptation Fund Board and Secretariat	5	Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers	Landscape Analysis Interviews		Representatives from GCF, GEF, GIZ, UNFCCC, WRI, GIZ	6	Total	38
Stakeholder category	Interviews																								
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Landscape Analysis Interviews																									
Representatives from GCF, GEF, GIZ, UNFCCC, WRI, GIZ	6																								
Total	38																								
Online survey	An online survey was used to gather the perspectives of and feedback from a broad range of stakeholders (including DAs and NIEs) with experience of and perspectives on the Readiness Programme. It was designed with a mix of quantitative (e.g. multiple-choice, rating scales) and qualitative (e.g. open-ended) questions to gather precise information and detailed feedback. The survey used the SurveyMonkey platform and was sent by email to the Adaptation Fund DAs from 141 countries and NIEs from 34 countries whose																								

Sources of evidence	Description
	contact information was publicly available on the Fund’s website. ³⁷ It was open from 23 May to 03 June 2025, and a total of 18 responses were collected. This includes responses from NIEs (six), one MIE, DAs (10), and one other. The small response rate was despite follow-up by the AF-TERG, and it is considered a limitation of the evaluation (see Section 4.3 below). As such, survey findings have been used only to triangulate other findings in the evaluation.
Case studies	<p>The evaluation team conducted four remote and in-person case studies to gain a nuanced, in-depth understanding of the Readiness Programme’s engagement, exploring implementation, context, opportunities, and challenges across diverse countries. Collectively, this spectrum of case studies captured a wide range of experiences and holistically addressed the evaluation matrix. The countries selected for each case study are given below:</p> <p>Case Study 1: Grenada, Kiribati, and Trinidad and Tobago (remote) Case Study 2: Fiji, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia (remote) Case Study 4: Armenia (in-person) Case Study 5: Senegal (in-person) and Zimbabwe (light touch/remote)</p> <p>Each case study was selected in collaboration with the AF-TERG and based on an analysis of the portfolio. The rationale for each selection is outlined below. While Case Study 3 was envisioned to cover Antigua and Barbuda, the evaluation team was unable to secure enough interviews to produce a comprehensive analysis, and thus the case study was dropped.</p> <p>In addition to using the case study evidence for the main evaluation, there are also brief case study reports in the annex.</p>
Landscape Analysis	A Landscape Analysis was conducted to position the Adaptation Fund within the wider climate finance ecosystem and support the assessment of the Adaptation Fund’s position relative to other readiness mechanisms, acknowledging potential variations in readiness programme definitions across the field. This included a review of related climate finance readiness programmes and interviewing representatives, such as those from the GCF, GIZ, GEF, UNFCCC, WRI, and JICA.

As noted in the table above, the case studies were selected in collaboration with the AF-TERG and Readiness Programme team following multiple rounds of conversation and feedback. The sampling strategy for selecting these case studies considered the following:

1. **Spectrum of engagement with the Readiness Programme:** Our sampling approach was designed to capture a wide range of experiences across the spectrum of engagement with the Readiness Programme. This included countries with minimal or no engagement (case studies 1 and 2) as well as those with long-term or in-depth use of both Readiness Programme grants and other Adaptation Fund grants (case studies 4 and 5). To achieve this, we reviewed the list of all approved Readiness Programme and Adaptation Fund grants accessed to date using information on the Adaptation Fund’s website. In doing so, we ensured:
 - a. **a focus on different grants under the Readiness Programme**, including RPGs, SSC, Project Scale-Up, and TA-GP and TA-ESGP. A diverse focus helped us understand how these grants help to build capacity for undertaking various climate

³⁷ The survey was sent to a total of 369 email contacts, which included representatives from DAs across 141 countries and NIEs from 34 countries.

finance readiness activities and provide opportunities for NIEs to provide peer support to countries seeking accreditation with the Fund.

- b. **a diversity of levels of engagement for the proposed countries** with the Readiness Programme as well as the Adaptation Fund grants.

By exploring this spectrum, we aimed to uncover the unique circumstances and factors that shape countries' interactions with the programme, providing a foundation for actionable recommendations to enhance its accessibility and impact.

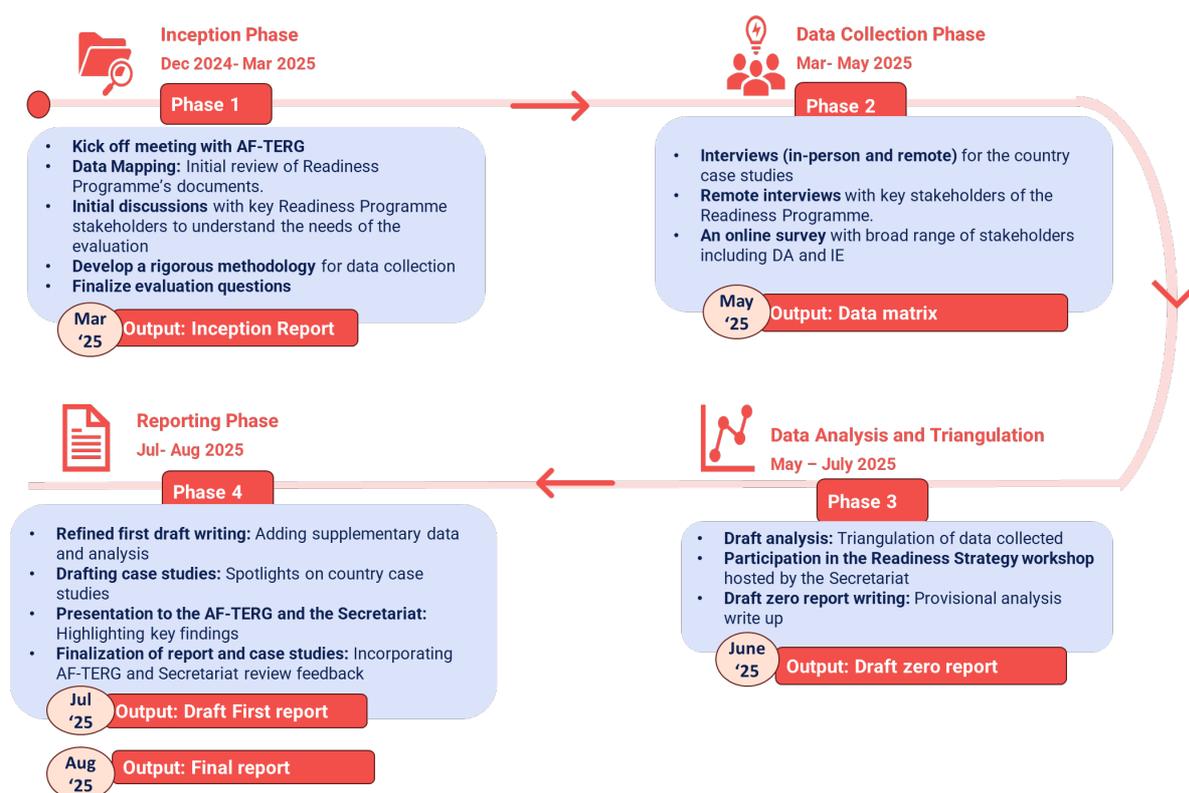
Geographic diversity: The countries were selected specifically from each of the four Adaptation Fund-defined regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean). This ensured geographic diversity and a corresponding diversity of perspectives.

Feasibility: The countries were also selected based on the feasibility of conducting the case studies. This included an assessment of the economic and political context, as well as logistical considerations.

Evaluation process and timeline

The evaluation took place between December 2024 and August 2025 and proceeded along the steps outlined below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Chronology of steps undertaken as part of the evaluation



Throughout the evaluation, the team met bi-weekly with the AF-TERG to report on the progress of the evaluation and discuss emerging challenges, data needs, etc. Since this evaluation is being conducted in a semi-independent manner, the team also engaged with Secretariat members of the Readiness Programme team on several occasions, who provided inputs into the evaluation process and outputs. These opportunities were fully coordinated by the AF-TERG.

Limitations to this evaluation

There are several important limitations to consider when reviewing the evaluation findings:

Limited primary data: The evaluation team experienced challenges in its primary data collection, both in relation to interviews and to the survey. In regard to case study countries, the evaluation team sometimes struggled to get a response from the contact provided by the Adaptation Fund. In other cases, the contact did not provide support in contacting additional stakeholders. The survey responses were also quite limited despite follow-up. As a result, our ability to generalise or disaggregate findings based on institutional types, regions, or levels of involvement with the Readiness Programme was limited. Challenges in reaching stakeholders may be indicative of the limited awareness of or connections with the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme, which is explored further in the evaluation findings below.

Limited secondary data: Data on the Readiness Programme itself was also limited and in some cases conflicting. For example, in one instance, the data available on readiness grants online conflicted with additional data shared with us by the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat. These concerns were clarified with the AF-TERG as being the result of a technical glitch affecting the Fund's website, and the evaluation findings are based on data sources confirmed by AFB Secretariat. Additionally, not all grants had project completion or other reports available, and the Results Framework in the Annual Report only presented data at Outcome level and not at lower levels. This led to challenges in fully developing a comprehensive picture of the Readiness Programme portfolio to date. Finally, there was no data available on the outcomes of non-financial support provided by the Readiness Programme (e.g., event surveys or reports). As such, there is limited analysis of the outcomes or likely outcomes of these activities.

Synergies with the process of developing the Readiness Strategy: At the time of the evaluation, the AFB Secretariat was simultaneously working to develop an enhanced Readiness Strategy. This process involved some of the same stakeholders and addressed similar questions to the evaluation which posed practical issues with conducting interviews on similar topics by different teams. Additionally, a review of evaluation findings by the Secretariat revealed different understandings and additional information that was integrated to the extent possible.

Findings

This chapter presents findings for each of the evaluation questions and sub-questions along the lines of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and (likely) impact.

Relevance

This section investigates the extent to which the Readiness Programme is strategically focused to address the needs and priorities of targeted stakeholders, including NIEs and developing countries (especially LDCs and SIDS). To answer this comprehensively, an initial consideration of the Readiness Programme's alignment with the UNFCCC priorities is considered to understand the relevance of the programme's support to the wider international community's climate collaboration, as well as countries' individual climate adaptation priorities (including their NDCs). Following this, the relevance of the programme to intended and existing recipients is assessed. This includes the extent to which it is a necessary prerequisite to wider Adaptation Fund funding. Next is an analysis of the experience of recipients of the Readiness Programme and how relevant the support has been in achieving direct access to further climate funding. The original design of the Readiness Programme, as well as consecutive adjustments, are examined to understand the extent to which they have been informed by credible evidence. There is also a consideration of how well the Readiness Programme responds to the evolving needs and priorities of NIEs and other intended stakeholders. Finally, the extent to which Readiness Programme projects include input from DAs and vulnerable groups is discussed. Overall, four findings are presented on the current relevance of the Readiness Programme.

Finding 1: The UNFCCC's goal of supporting countries to meet their NDCs is directly supported by the Readiness Programme given its flexibility allowing them to make it relevant to their specific needs, particularly regarding national capacity for climate adaptation targets as outlined in NDCs.

NDCs are '*at the heart of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of its long-term goals. NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change*'.³⁸ As stated on the UNFCCC website, countries' national responses to the climate crisis are fundamental to the Paris Agreement. One of the main goals of the UNFCCC through the Paris Agreement is to support countries to achieve their NDCs, which are submitted every five years (NDC 3.0 is due in 2025).³⁹ Because the proportionate responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions falls more on developed countries, NDCs for more vulnerable countries relate largely to '*adapting to the impacts of climate change*'.⁴⁰ The UNFCCC 2020 Biennial Assessment recognised that the role of national institutions in accessing adaptation finance, as opposed to other kinds of finance, is very high: '*For adaptation finance, the role of national plans, standards and institutions take on more importance in driving finance flows due to the importance of local, context specific conditions*'.⁴¹ Given its focus on building capacity for national institutions to achieve direct

³⁸ UNFCCC (2025) 'Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – The Paris Agreement and NDCs'. Available at: [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\) | UNFCCC](#)

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ UNFCCC (2020). Fourth Biennial Assessment and Overview of Climate Finance. Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/54307_1%20-%20UNFCCC%20BA%202020%20-%20Summary%20-%20WEB.pdf

access to climate finance, either through supporting accreditation of NIEs (objective 1) or increasing the number of high-quality project proposals (objective 2), the Readiness Programme is very relevant to achieving UNFCCC goals. Indeed, the Adaptation Fund specifically mentioned the importance of the Readiness Programme in supporting countries to meet their UNFCCC commitments in MTS II, where it recognised its responsibility as the only multilateral instrument under UNFCCC specifically established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing country Parties, and emphasised once again the role of *'direct access to respond to the urgent needs and priorities of developing countries'*.⁴²

Case study interviews confirmed that the flexibility of the Readiness Programme support means recipient countries can adapt the support to make it most relevant to their specific needs and build national capacity when it comes to climate adaptation. In particular, five interviews (including recipient NIEs as well as Landscape-level interviews) referenced that the Readiness Programme support was adaptable to individual country contexts, with one explaining that the programme allowed for *'the practice of adaptive management'*, meaning *'they allowed us to use the money for exactly what we needed'*. Similarly, another NIE stated that the programme *'provides flexibility during project implementation'*. The Adaptation Fund Secretariat confirmed that each activity (whether that is Project Scale-Up grants, TA grants, or RPGs) can be iteratively adapted and tailored to the context. More specifically, two interviewed NIEs referenced how Readiness Programme support gave them the capacity to design projects that aligned specifically with their NAPs and NDCs (although the Readiness Programme does not specifically provide support for these). For example, one NIE explained that through the Readiness Programme TA grants, they had been able to design strong proposals for projects that would support their NAP priorities including agriculture, weather, waste management, and biodiversity. Another NIE confirmed that the TA grants had allowed them to build expert capacity in the areas related to their adaptation targets captured in their NDCs, particularly for hurricane and drought preparedness. A stakeholder from a country that is yet to access the Readiness Programme expressed that one motivation for them to engage with the programme was because of the national capacity it would help them build in order to respond to their UNFCCC commitments: *'We're very focused on meeting the multilateral environmental agreements, so making sure that we have our current NDCs and also making sure that we meet all the obligations under the Paris Agreement, Kyoto Protocol and all of those environmentally related initiatives'*. This indicates that support with coordinating national responses to climate adaptation is a priority for developing countries, and the Readiness Programme is relevant to these needs.

Finding 2: For countries that have not yet accessed the Readiness Programme, stakeholder interviews suggest broad strategic alignment between their needs and the support offered by the programme. However, a lack of institutional capacity, competing priorities, and the ability to achieve accreditation or access funding without an accredited NIE reduce the perceived relevance and uptake of the Readiness Programme for some of the most vulnerable countries.

Only 12% (17 out of 146) of eligible countries had been accredited in 2014, and to address this gap the Readiness Programme targets national institutions seeking accreditation. In addition, the programme offers support to those that have achieved accreditation but still have capacity needs related to submitting successful proposals for project funding. These types of support were indicated by stakeholders as highly relevant, given that lack of

⁴² Adaptation Fund (2024). Medium-Term Strategy 2023–2027. Available at: [Medium-Term Strategy 2023–2027 - Adaptation Fund](#)

capacity was mentioned most frequently as the greatest barrier to climate finance across interviews (16) with NIEs, DAs, civil society organisations (CSOs), and Landscape-level stakeholders. Interview respondents from countries that have not yet engaged with the Readiness Programme explained that they faced capacity constraints related to human and financial resources as well as from competing priorities and would, therefore, appreciate support to be able to establish a dedicated team to focus on the application. As one stakeholder explained: *‘Access to resources is always a barrier, and capacity is a major barrier. The financial resources to prepare project proposals require capacity, and we need officers who can dedicate themselves to prepare for these proposals, which is a challenge’*. A stakeholder from a different country highlighted a similar issue: *‘Continuity and sustainability of technical skills in climate finance is a challenge’*. Another described how, to take the first step to accreditation, they need support in *‘even just understanding the application process’*, including what documents are needed.

These outlined needs are in alignment with the Readiness Programme’s support. In the proposed framework for the Readiness Programme, published in 2017, the Adaptation Fund laid out its objective to *‘strengthen the overall capacity of NIEs through a range of capacity enhancement measures’*. However, only 32% (13) of the 41 countries that have received any kind of Readiness Programme grants received those grants *before* Adaptation Fund project funding.⁴³ This means that the majority received capacity-building support after rather than before receiving project funding. Additionally, through Component 3, the Readiness Programme offers capacity-building support to those who are seeking accreditation. The TA grants are only available to those countries that have an accredited NIE, which is currently 34% (37) of eligible countries.⁴⁴ This means that accreditation support is particularly relevant for 66% (109) of countries who are eligible for Readiness Programme funding, as accreditation is a prerequisite to being able to access TA grants.

Although all developing countries (as recognised by UNFCCC) are eligible for the Readiness Programme, there is a particular focus on supporting the most vulnerable countries such as LDCs and SIDS. However, as is shown in Case Study 1, due to their multiple climate-related vulnerabilities, LDCs and SIDS often face competing priorities that limit their capacity to pursue accreditation while also being among those who countries could gain the most from adaptation finance. They are therefore an important target for the Readiness Programme. Despite 109 eligible countries not yet having an NIE, there have only been 24 applications for accreditation support since the beginning of the Readiness Programme in 2014.

We asked stakeholders from Case Study 1 countries (Grenada, Kiribati, and Trinidad and Tobago), which were included specifically because they have not yet engaged with the Readiness Programme, do not have an accredited NIE, and are considered part of the ‘most vulnerable’ countries due to their SIDS status, whether they believed the Readiness Programme was relevant to them. All of those interviewed expressed a belief that Readiness Programme support would be a valuable stepping stone to accessing Adaptation Fund project funding. All of those survey respondents who were considering an application for the Readiness Programme agreed it would be “extremely important” or “quite important” for accessing further Adaptation Fund support.

⁴³ Compiled from various sources which includes: Based on the AF readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness team; AND www.adaptation-fund.org/projects-programmes/project-information/projects-table-view/

⁴⁴ Data Source: Implementing Entities <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/apply-funding/implementing-entities/>

Considering the apparent desire to access the programme, we asked interviewees about the main barriers to access. They expressed that capacity constraints and competing priorities were the two main barriers (see Case Study 1 as an example). One NIE stakeholder that has engaged with the Readiness Programme explained that historically they had found the Adaptation Fund's accreditation process to be simpler than for GCF, **but** that *'the Adaptation Fund is slowly becoming more complicated, potentially diminishing its competitive edge'*. This complication is related to the perceived increasingly complex and bureaucratic application process. It was also found that all three case study countries that had not engaged with the Adaptation Fund *had* accessed the GCF's readiness programme, with two of them explaining that the GCF offered significantly more funding for a similar level of effort, and so they were less inclined to use their limited capacity to apply for the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme. Indeed, as discussed in the Coherence section, case study countries demonstrate higher rates of access of GCF readiness and for larger amounts of funding.

Another reason given for the relatively low engagement was that countries have the ability to receive climate adaptation project funding through an RIE or MIE and thus do not have to accredit an NIE in order to access climate finance. Interviews with Case Study 1 stakeholders evidenced that when these countries are already struggling with capacity and competing priorities, accrediting their own NIE is not as important as receiving climate finance. For example, one interviewee explained, *'We've generally bypassed the Readiness Programme, largely due to limited resources on the ground. When we do manage to mobilise resources, we prefer to focus them on substantial efforts—projects that allow us to implement real adaptation work, rather than just preparatory activities'*.

Additionally, the Adaptation Fund has increased the funding cap that countries can access through NIEs, MIEs or REIs to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes from US\$ 10 million to US\$ 20 million in 2021, doubling it again in 2025 to US\$ 40 million at the AFB's 44th meeting in Bonn⁴⁵. As a result, large amounts of money are available to countries without the need to accredit an NIE. As of 2025, 65% of wider Adaptation Fund projects have been channelled through MIEs or RIEs, demonstrating that many countries are choosing this option⁴⁶. This combination of the availability of climate financing through other pathways and the limited capacities of some stakeholders indicates limitations to the relevance of the Readiness Programme.

Finally, although case study interviewees expressed that they believed the Readiness Programme would be a valuable stepping stone to receiving wider funding from the Adaptation Fund, portfolio evidence shows that the Readiness Programme is not always a prerequisite for achieving accreditation, even for some of the most vulnerable countries. 16 of the 20 NIEs which have achieved accreditation since 2014 have done so independent of the support of the Readiness Programme. 10 of the 16 NIEs which achieved accreditation independent of the Readiness Programme were either from LDCs or SIDS, demonstrating that even some of the most vulnerable countries can successfully complete the accreditation process without the support of the programme. This would suggest that the support which the Readiness Programme is providing is not sufficiently tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable countries, as some of them are opting 'go it alone' through the accreditation process.

⁴⁵ Adaptation Fund (2025). Report of the Forty-Fourth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board. Available at: [FINAL-Report-of-the-44th-Meeting-of-the-AFB.pdf](#)

⁴⁶ Data Source: 'All Funded Projects' Available at: [Funded Projects & Programmes](#)

Overall, Finding 2 shows that despite the Readiness Programme appearing to reflect the needs of countries that have not yet engaged with it, there is limited uptake of the support on offer, suggesting it is not a practical priority for some of the most vulnerable countries, and in some cases not a necessary prerequisite.

Finding 3: Readiness recipients were overall positive about the relevance of the support, particularly technical assistance. However, the broader portfolio shows limited success in translating readiness support into accreditation which may indicate that this type of support is not fully relevant.

Table 8: Overview of Readiness Programme accreditation support (SSC & RPGs)⁴⁷

Overview of accreditation support	Number of countries	Percentage
Total grants approved (SSC & RPGs)	24	100%
Number of grants under implementation	6	25%
Number of grants completed	18	75%
Number of NIEs that have received support and subsequently reached accreditation	4	17% of total 22% of completed grants
Number of NIEs that have yet to achieve accreditation 3+ years following grant completion	14	54% of total 71% of completed grants completed 3+ years ago
Number of countries who received Adaptation Fund project funding through a RIE or MIE following grant completion		33% of total 58% of completed grants

Accreditation support: 14  of 18 countries (78%) which have completed their accreditation support grants have still not achieved accreditation, despite it being between 3 and 9 years since the completion. However, one stakeholder interviewed expressed that it was very helpful in allowing for them to be prepared for the accreditation process, which they achieved three years later. This stakeholder specifically mentioned the value of the peer support they had received, explaining this had been ‘*very critical*’ in enhancing their preparedness for the accreditation process, referring specifically to managing collaboration between different implementing stakeholders, as well as the need to mainstream adaptation nationally. This inconsistent evidence points to the fact that accreditation support is likely relevant to some stakeholder needs but may not be sufficient.

⁴⁷ Compiled from various sources which includes: Based on the AF readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness team; Implementing Entities: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/apply-funding/implementing-entities/>; Available at: All Funded Projects: [Funded Projects & Programmes](#)

This is in line with the Accreditation Evaluation, which pointed to a need to understand the country-specific needs of applicant IEs. That evaluation stated: “Obtaining early information in the accreditation process about an entity’s suitability for designing and implementing adaptation-related projects could significantly enhance the relevance of the accreditation process.”⁴⁸ In particular, the evaluation found that there should be assessment of applicants’ capabilities and experience related to climate change adaptation. This would suggest accreditation support may become more relevant if it takes into consideration the climate competence, experience and maturity of each applicant. Additionally, the Accreditation Evaluation also pointed to the importance of proposing an NIE that is aligned to country priorities, noting “It is essential to underscore that this process is inherently country-driven, emphasizing the autonomy and responsibility of each nation to align and harmonize their adaptation-related priorities with the entities they nominate for accreditation”⁴⁹. Therefore, the low accreditation success rate following Readiness Programme support could also be influenced by the relevance of the proposed NIE (as opposed to the relevance of the specific support offered by the Readiness Programme).

To understand the barriers to successful accreditation, we conducted an analysis of the different NIEs that have provided the peer-to-peer support through either SSC grants or RPGs to see if there was any gap in regional or vulnerability representation. It was found that these have been spread out globally, with one country from Eastern Europe, one from Asia, one from the Caribbean, and two from Africa, as well as one being a SIDS and one being an LDC.⁵⁰ This shows that there is a range of countries providing peer-to-peer support for accreditation, demonstrating a demand for readiness across regions, suggesting it is broadly geographically relevant. Additionally, the availability of peer support across different regions increases the likelihood of countries being able to request support from contextually relevant NIEs. Therefore, it is unlikely that a lack of relevant peer support is the barrier to accreditation.

When looking at the economic status of those that achieved accreditation versus those that have not done so yet, it would appear that economic vulnerability could be an influencing factor. 86% (n=12) of entities that have completed accreditation support grants are located in LDCs or SIDS, but entities from LDCs only account for 50% (n=2) of those that have since achieved accreditation (and none located in a SIDS). This suggests that there may be specific barriers for LDCs to translate accreditation support into NIE accreditation.

It should also be mentioned that there was a recognition that the accreditation criteria are strongly focused on fiduciary standards and project oversight (see, for example, the Fund’s 2024 Accreditation Evaluation⁵¹), and therefore the new RPGs that were brought in to replace the SSC grants in 2021 include greater technical support intended to address this barrier. Since at this time all six RPG grants are still under implementation, it will only be possible to analyse their success once completed.⁵²

⁴⁸ Adaptation Fund (2024). Thematic Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Accreditation Process. Available at: [Accreditation Evaluation.pdf](#)

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Compiled from various sources which includes: Readiness Grants Approved to Date. Available at: [Grants to Date - Adaptation Fund](#) ; Based on the AF readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness team

⁵¹ Adaptation Fund (2024). Thematic Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Accreditation Process. Available at: [Accreditation Evaluation.pdf](#)

⁵² Based on the AF readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness team

TA: Of those case study countries that have yet to access the Fund, many expressed their desire for technical support via mechanisms like building capacity, technical expertise, M&E and gender support. Interviews with the four case study country stakeholders who had received TA support through the Readiness Programme indicate that these needs were being addressed as all four subsequently received project funding from the Adaptation Fund. One NIE stakeholder highlighted the relevance of the TA grants following their accreditation, stating:

As a newly accredited NIE, it wasn't as easy to develop the project document to the level that the Adaptation Fund required. It took us a number of tries to submit and get review comments until it was approved after a number of years, but this (TA) process allowed us to engage stakeholders, consultants rather, who assisted us in developing a technically sound and comprehensive climate change adaptation proposal.

This demonstrates that capacity support is important not only for accreditation but also to successfully develop project proposals for Adaptation Fund project funding. This ties into Component 1 of the Readiness Programme, which is 'Support to accredited implementing entities', and which is provided in the form of TA-ESGP and TA-GP grants. These grants are designed to help countries meet certain fiduciary and safeguarding requirements for project funding, with a particular focus on environmental, social, and gender policies and considerations. The three other case study countries (Senegal, Armenia, and Antigua and Barbuda) that had engaged with the Readiness Programme also spoke positively about how the TA-focused grants helped to meet their needs with regards to technical capacity. One NIE stakeholder referred to the grants as '*very critical*' in enabling the development of higher standard proposals and ultimately for '*implementation to be done correctly*'. They went on to explain that '*we don't really have that many experts that... would do this work*', but that the Readiness Programme allowed them to hire external consultants. Another recipient country explained that the TA-ESGP grant had allowed them to hire a consultant to develop policies for ESG and build capacity in this technical area through the development of manuals as well as capacity-building webinars. The TA-ESGP's focus on the inclusion of vulnerable groups was also appreciated by another recipient who stated that '*their voices and concerns allowed us to improve our project design and formulation process*'. A stakeholder from the fourth recipient country emphasised the continued importance and potential necessary scale-up of technical readiness support, stating that '*the increasing procedural burden associated with evolving climate finance modalities poses a significant barrier. There is a strong need for training across technical, administrative, and financial domains*'.

 Our case study countries went on to receive further Adaptation Fund funding, demonstrating the relevance of TA grants. In looking at the broader portfolio of TA grants, 19 out of the 21 countries that have received such a grant went on to successfully access wider Adaptation Fund project funding, showing success.⁵³

Overall, with regards to the extent that the Readiness Programme is strategically focused to address the needs and priorities of targeted stakeholders, including NIEs and developing countries (including LDCs and SIDS), the different grants on offer show a recognition of the array of challenges that national institutions face when trying to access the Fund, and an alignment with the main challenges declared by the case study countries. Evidence from the survey also showed appreciation of the range of offerings, with three of the six respondents who had accessed the Readiness Programme stating that capacity building and training for

⁵³ Based on the AF readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness Programme team.

accreditation were the most relevant aspects of Readiness Programme support, and the other three stating that TA was the most relevant.

The alignment of the Readiness Programme with the needs expressed by Case Study 1 countries, and the TA grants meeting the needs of our case study countries given their subsequent success in accessing further funding, and the variable success when considering the overall portfolio would suggest that the Readiness Programme's TA is in many cases relevant to the needs of recipients.

Finding 4: While the Readiness Programme has evolved in response to structured stakeholder feedback - particularly from NIEs - there are still important gaps in inclusive and continuous engagement, especially with DAs and vulnerable groups.

The following decision (B.21/28)⁵⁴ to design a Readiness Programme was taken at the AFB's 22nd meeting:

Having considered the comments and recommendations of the Accreditation Panel and the Project and Programme Review Committee, and recognizing the need for a programme to support readiness for direct access to climate finance for national and regional implementing entities, the Board decided to request the secretariat to prepare a document containing options for such a programme for the twenty-second meeting. This document should include options for increasing (i) the preparedness of applicant national implementing entities seeking accreditation by the Adaptation Fund and (ii) the number of high quality project/programme proposals submitted to the Board within a reasonable time period after accreditation. (Decision B.21/28)

The proposal for the Readiness Programme described how the programme was informed by the Accreditation Panel and the PPRC. It also explained how specific components were informed.⁵⁵ For instance, regarding Component 1, the proposal explained that a public forum in 2013 that allowed for comments on the new ESP of the Fund found that '*one of the most commonly received comments referred to the need for capacity building*' if institutions were to meet the newly introduced ESP of the Adaptation Fund.⁵⁶ Similarly, Component 2 was informed by the coordination meeting at the launch seminar of the Readiness Programme: '*A diverse composition of stakeholders, including United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other organizations involved in climate finance and adaptation were invited to share their experiences on climate finance readiness and project support for adaptation. Participants held initial discussions on how to enable efforts to enhance coordination among existing Funds, and particularly with the Adaptation Fund*'.⁵⁷ This demonstrates that effort was made to facilitate partnership with other climate finance readiness providers as well as to allow it to inform the implementation of the programme from its inception. Additionally, the Readiness Programme was initially introduced on a '*performance-based funding approach, with additional funding depending on a successful*

⁵⁴ Adaptation Fund (2013). Report of the Twenty-Second Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.22/7). Available at: [Report of the Twenty-second Meeting of AFB \(29 Oct - 1 Nov, 2013\) - Adaptation Fund](#)

⁵⁵ Adaptation Fund (2013) Options for a programme to support readiness for direct access to climate finance for national and regional implementing entities (AFB/B.22/6). Available at: [AFB.B.22.6 Options for a climate finance readiness programme for NIEs and RIEs.pdf](#)

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Data source: Based on the Report on the Coordination Meeting of Institutional providers of climate finance readiness support for adaptation. shared by the Readiness Team.

implementation of Phase one of the programme'.⁵⁸ This demonstrates that the continuation of the Readiness Programme was dependent upon evidence of its effectiveness.

The early years of the Readiness Programme also saw recipient stakeholders' experiences inform subsequent changes. For instance, the Phase II Progress Report laid out the 'key lessons from FY16', as expressed by recipients, and the subsequent 'proposal for FY17' demonstrated how the Readiness Programme was responding to the experience of its grant holders (e.g. responding to time-zone hurdles).⁵⁹ Table 9 shows lessons learned, based on recipient feedback and the corresponding response between FY16 and FY17.

Table 9: Lessons learned and corresponding responses from FY16 to FY17

Lesson learned	Corresponding response
'It is a challenge for all implementing entities to participate at the same time in a webinar due to geographical time differences'	'Under Component 1b, the programme now schedules periodic webinars on critical topics—and plans to explore repeating sessions or clinic-style breakouts at UNFCCC events to ensure all regions can dial in.'
'More practical insights into project designing' and 'A field visit as part of the seminars would be useful'	'Component 1b explicitly adds peer-to-peer project visits, building on the Argentina–Uruguay pilot, so NIEs can learn on the ground.'
'The demand by implementing entities for these events greatly exceeds budget capabilities'	'FY17 ups the total readiness budget from US\$ 965,500 to US\$ 1,206,500 boosting Secretariat-managed funds from US\$ 565,000 to US\$ 616,500 and small grants pot from US\$ 400,000 to US\$ 590,000.'

Although there has not been a published Progress Report since 2017, the Secretariat confirmed that progress reports continue to be developed and are incorporated into their internal reports to the AFB on the workplan for the upcoming fiscal year.

One of the most recent adjustments to the Readiness Programme is the replacement of the SSC grants with the RPGs, as per Decision B.36/25.⁶⁰ Concerns from SSC providers as well as findings from the Accreditation Evaluation informed this decision. Some entities who were providing support reported that they were *'treated like consultants by recipient countries, which is not the spirit or intention of the grants'*. The Accreditation Evaluation also found that further TA is needed at the accreditation stage than was envisioned by the SSC grants as the AFB wishes to see an overview of proposed future projects, with technical inputs, during the accreditation application already. In response to this concern, the RPG increases the scope and flexibility for stakeholders to bring on consultants to address policy gaps and institutional structures.

Following its initial design, the Adaptation Fund Secretariat conducted a pilot study of RPGs in to ensure that the changes were tried and tested by grant recipients (Decision B.31-32/6).⁶¹ For the pilot programme, the intermediary providing peer support was the Centre de Suivi Ecologique (CSE) of Senegal, while the countries receiving the support were Mali and Burundi. Considering CSE was the intermediary that had supported the majority of SSC

⁵⁸ Adaptation Fund (2013). Report of the Twenty-Second Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.22/7). Available at: [Report of the Twenty-second Meeting of AFB \(29 Oct - 1 Nov, 2013\) - Adaptation Fund](#)

⁵⁹ Adaptation Fund (2016) 'Readiness Programme: Phase II Progress Report and Proposal for FY17 (AFB.B.27.7.Rev.1)'. Available at: Available at: [Readiness programme: phase II progress report and proposal for FY17 - Adaptation Fund](#)

⁶⁰ Data Source: Based on the AFB.B.36/25. shared by the Readiness team

⁶¹ Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Report on the Readiness Support Package Pilot'. Available at: [Report-On-Implementation-Of-The-Readiness-Support-Package-Pilot_final.pdf](#)

grant recipients throughout the Readiness Programme, its inclusion in the RPG pilot allowed it to provide comparative insights.⁶² The Secretariat surveyed the RPG pilot participants, and CSE positively reported that *'the package sped up the accreditation process and it strengthened and allowed continuity of the South–South cooperation'*, but that *'the funds made available through the readiness package support were not sufficient at all to deliver the support'*. The pilot recipients also provided overall positive feedback but highlighted that delays in implementation were caused by budget limitations. As a result of the survey, one of the key recommendations was that the funding available with the RPGs should be increased from US\$ 100,000 up to a maximum of US\$ 150,000. This recommendation was subsequently incorporated into the RPG, demonstrating that the findings from the pilot programme informed this subsequent change to the programme.⁶³

Aside from the Adaptation Fund taking steps to ensure that this new grant was credibly informed, our own analysis suggests that the changes to the grant are reflective of stakeholder needs. Considering that only four countries out of the 17 countries that received the SSC grant achieved accreditation, this would suggest that the support provided was not adequately meeting the needs of recipients. A demand for further TA at the accreditation stage was expressed in 10 interviews, including with NIEs, CSOs, ministries, Landscape interviews, and the Adaptation Fund Secretariat. For instance, one NIE seeking accreditation explained their need for support in developing sector-specific expertise and addressing technical capacity gaps as a prerequisite if they are to apply for accreditation. Another stakeholder highlighted that *'technical experts are limited and those who are available tend to be expensive'*, which also shows support for an increase in the funding available as part of the RPG. It should be noted that there was also positive feedback about the SSC grant from one NIE that had successfully achieved accreditation after receiving this grant, claiming it had been *'very critical'* and that these grants should stay. However, the new RPGs continue to be based on the idea of peer support, but with the added option of bringing in external expertise to fill technical gaps. Therefore, it would seem this change has been informed by evidence on the needs of those seeking to become NIEs.

The Readiness Programme is also responding to needs that are expressed through structured input on designated topics. Each year, the Adaptation Fund hosts two webinars and an Annual Climate Finance Readiness Seminar, prior to which NIEs are given the opportunity to contribute suggestions for the focus of the event. Surveys ask NIEs to indicate topics they would like covered at the events, as well as suggestions regarding logistics, attendance, webinar format, etc. and whether they would like to host the event. Alignment can be seen between the results of the surveys and the subsequent events, suggesting the Readiness Programme incorporates the evolving needs of the NIEs. For example, the 2023 survey to inform the webinars showed that the most requested topic was *'M&E of AF Projects'* (five out of 17 respondents), followed by *'Mainstreaming and Managing Environmental, Social and Gender Risks and issues in Adaptation Projects and Programmes'* (four out of 17 respondents) and *'Climate change adaptation reasoning to support project development and assessing broader vulnerabilities, Development of theory of change Elaboration of the logical framework'* (also four out of 17 respondents).⁶⁴ Subsequently, webinars were given in 2023 on both climate change adaptation reasoning to support project development and gender-responsive project/programme design.⁶⁵ M&E was not covered in 2023. The survey for 2024 showed six out of 24 respondents requesting M&E

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Data source: Readiness Package Grant. Available at: [Readiness Package Grant - Adaptation Fund](#)

⁶⁴ Data source: Based on 2023 NIE Webinars and Seminar Survey Evaluation Report. shared by the Readiness team

⁶⁵ Data source: 'Readiness News and Capacity Building Events. Available at: [Readiness News and Capacity Building Events – Adaptation Fund](#)

again,⁶⁶ demonstrating this need had not been adequately responded to in the previous year; subsequently, a 2024 webinar was given on evaluation, allowing for discussion on monitoring and reporting also. The most popular topic in the survey for 2024 events was 'AF Innovation Window' (seven out of 24 respondents), and although this was not covered by any webinar in 2024 a write-shop was held in May 2025 on facilitating access to four funding windows in which innovation windows featured significantly.⁶⁷ This demonstrates that although the Readiness Programme may not be incorporating directly and immediately the input of the NIEs into their webinars, the most popular topics suggested for 2023 and 2024 have been seen to be addressed in some capacity in the following two years. This is one way that the programme is responding to the evolving needs and priorities of NIEs.

Although the programme gives NIEs the opportunity to provide input in a structured manner for certain events, some case study stakeholders explained that there are limited channels for ongoing dialogue, meaning NIEs are unable to consistently share emerging priorities. Evidence from seven interviews indicated that communication channels between the Adaptation Fund and recipient countries are insufficient and there is a need for greater coordination. In particular, one NIE that has accessed the Readiness Programme mentioned there was a lack of clear support structures or communication channels between the countries and the programme. Another NIE stated there was a need for a '*proactive engagement approach*'.  DA of a recipient country also mentioned they had very little knowledge of ongoing projects because all communication happened between NIE and the Fund, and there were no open channels of communication to allow them to engage directly with the Fund. This indicates that there are barriers to recipient countries being able to communicate their evolving needs and priorities, which in turn limits the Adaptation Fund's ability to respond and ensure its relevance.

Several case study stakeholders noted that the GCF is a good example of stronger communication. In particular, stakeholders from two of the four NIE case studies which had accessed the Readiness Programme explained that the GCF has more frequent communication with in-country focal points. Additionally, two interviewees from countries yet to have accessed the Readiness Programme but that had accessed GCF readiness support explained how, from their position, the setup of the GCF provided a stronger and more structured relationship between the it and countries. One added that, '*If the Adaptation Fund were to establish a similar structure and process as the GCF, with clear focal points and a more defined system of engagement, I believe it would enhance the relationship between the Fund and countries, leading to more successful projects and smoother access to funding*'. A member of the Adaptation Fund Secretariat, referring to the comparison with the GCF, suggested that one reason for the GCF's stronger communication could be that it has a stronger regional presence. At the most recent GCF Board meeting in February (GCF B.41), the GCF laid out its intention to increase its regional presence further by deploying regional focus points.⁶⁸ In comparison, all Adaptation Fund staff are based in its headquarters in Washington, DC.⁶⁹ A recipient NIE also stated that '*Like GCF, they [the Adaptation Fund] should increase the frequency of regional exchanges and consultations with the NIE*'. Moreover, one country seeking accreditation spoke about how the lack of regional presence was impeding their communication with the Fund: '*When someone is sitting in one location, they may not be aware what's happening on the ground and then one*

⁶⁶ Data source: Based on 2024 NIE Webinars and Seminar Survey Evaluation Report. shared by the Readiness team

⁶⁷ Data source: 'Readiness News and Capacity Building Events. Available at: [Readiness News and Capacity Building Events – Adaptation Fund](#)

⁶⁸ Green Climate Fund (2025) 'Proposal for establishing GCF regional presence (GCF/B.41/14)'. Available at: [15-proposal-establishing-gcf-regional-presence-gcf-b41-14.pdf](#)

⁶⁹ Data Source: Based on organogram information shared by the Readiness team

is trying to give them information to make them understand so that becomes a challenge’. This lack of regional presence and communication may impede the Readiness Programme from being able to respond to the evolving needs and priorities of current recipient NIEs.

With regards to the inclusion of DAs, there is currently no structured avenue for them to contribute meaningfully to the design and implementation of Readiness Programme Grants. As outlined in the Accreditation Evaluation, DAs play a crucial role in selecting which entities should be put forward as NIEs for accreditation. They are also required to endorse all grant proposals within their jurisdiction before they are submitted to the Readiness Programme. However, when it comes to the implementation of grants, the responsibility lies with the NIE. As explained in the Accreditation Evaluation, *‘Through the mechanisms of direct access and enhanced direct access, NIEs gain the capacity to secure funding while assuming comprehensive responsibility for the entire life cycle of climate adaptation and resilience projects. This responsibility encompasses project design, execution, and the critical aspects of monitoring and evaluation*’.⁷⁰ Two DAs interviewed for this evaluation expressed a lack of awareness of the Readiness Programme’s engagement within their countries. One noted that as a ministry they have not engaged directly with the Readiness Programme, despite their NIE having engaged extensively. The other DA expressed feeling excluded from the implementation process and that they would like to have a more hands-on role. As mentioned above, there was also the complaint that they had little awareness of the ongoing Readiness Programme grants and that they had to go through the NIE for all updates.

One member of the AFB Secretariat expressed awareness of this issue and gave the opinion that this was sometimes a case of inter-country power dynamics and the gatekeeping practices of some national institutions. A ministry official from the case studies confirmed this experience, explaining that in the past there had been challenges due to political dynamics in the country. The report on the pilot study for the Readiness Programme grant also mentioned obstacles to DA engagement: *‘challenges included political issues related to two changes in the DA*’.⁷¹ Therefore, inter-country dynamics and politics can cause challenges to the inclusion of inputs from the DA in Readiness Programme projects. With regards to formally increasing the inclusion of DAs beyond the need to endorse project proposals, MTS II includes reference to expanding the Readiness Programme’s scope to include DAs: *‘To maximize impact, the Fund will also expand its existing Readiness Programme for Climate Finance towards a more comprehensive and iterative approach assessing needs and addressing gaps, including by expanding the scope of support and recipients to Designated Authorities, Executing Entities, local communities, women’s organizations, youth, indigenous people etc.’* However, as of 2025, Readiness Programme grants have still only been awarded to aspiring or accredited NIEs.⁷²

The inclusion of vulnerable groups as per the Adaptation Fund’s ESP and Gender Policy presents a more varied picture: while TA grants have often facilitated their inclusion, some challenges to full engagement persist. Stakeholders from all four case study recipients of the Readiness Programme expressed awareness of the importance of including vulnerable groups in the design of adaptation projects, which the Readiness Programme TA grants had supported, with one recipient NIE stating: *‘Equity should be embedded in project design, with strong assessments that are easy for communities to understand. Projects must be co-designed with local communities to reflect cultural dimensions and ensure inclusion—*

⁷⁰ Adaptation Fund (2024). Thematic Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Accreditation Process. Available at: [Accreditation Evaluation.pdf](#)

⁷¹ Adaptation Fund (2021) ‘Report on the Readiness Support Package Pilot’. Bonn, .Available at: [Report-On-Implementation-Of-The-Readiness-Support-Package-Pilot_final.pdf](#)

⁷² Based on the AF readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness team

especially of the most vulnerable groups'. Another interviewee said: *'Projects which include consultation with vulnerable groups are more likely to be sustainable going forward'*. Among the four recipient NIEs, there was consensus that the TA grants had enabled them to include more input from the most vulnerable groups than they would have been able to otherwise. One NIE mentioned that gender and social safeguards were embedded in the development of project proposals as a result of the increased capacity from the TA grant. Another explained that community profiling and assessments were conducted to ensure equity. More detail was given regarding how the grant enabled NIEs to design projects with greater inclusion from vulnerable groups:

So if we did not have this grant, these technical studies would have been done, but a bit in a more difficult manner. So this made our lives a bit easier and our project's design also a bit easier. And the baseline and vulnerability assessment then also informed us on where exactly to target our interventions for this project.

[The grant] improved the project design because, as you know, for us to come up with the bankable comprehensive project, we need to do taking care assessments like needs assessment, which is what we used this grant for. Including baseline and vulnerability assessment, gender mainstreaming, environment and social safeguards.

[The grant enabled us to] hear the voice from the community themselves, the targeted project beneficiaries, the vulnerable groups such as women and youth.

Project completion reports from NIEs other than those included in our case studies also demonstrate that vulnerable groups had the opportunity to provide inputs to the design and implementation of Readiness Programme projects, with the most recent project completion report from Côte d'Ivoire explaining that they were able to implement an accessible complaints mechanism regarding environmental or social harms related to gender inequalities caused by projects during their implementation.⁷³ Another project completion report from Tanzania explained that the grant had enabled them to train staff on gender issues, but that unfortunately due to budget constraints *'only managerial and Principal Officers were trained'*.⁷⁴

The surveys requesting input from NIEs for webinars in 2023 and 2024 showed a continued demand for information on gender and social environmental safeguards, with the 2025 write-shop also finding that *'the main challenge faced by respondents when developing LLA [locally led adaptation] proposals is incorporating the voices and participation of the local communities'*.⁷⁵ Within case study interviews, stakeholders were asked what the main barriers to inclusion of such groups were, and one NIE explained that *'A challenge is stakeholder fatigue of being over consulted with lots of development partners coming in and wanting to focus on the same locations because they are priorities'*. Another NIE stated: *'Being able to access the right communities can have logistical challenges and underestimating the cost to be able to do that is also a challenge'*. Some suggestions were made during interviews for how greater inclusion could be achieved:

⁷³ FIRCA (AF NIE) (2021) 'Project Completion Report'. Available at: [14524_FIRCA_Evaluation report TA-ESGP.pdf](#)

⁷⁴ Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Report on the Readiness Support Package Pilot'. Available at: [Report-On-Implementation-Of-The-Readiness-Support-Package-Pilot_final.pdf](#)

⁷⁵ Adaptation Fund (2025) '2025 AF Recife Write-shop Report'. Available at: [Report-Recife-writeshop-May-2025_Final-1.pdf](#)

CSOs can help, and they are essential for effective community engagement, particularly in understanding and representing the needs of vulnerable groups. As long as vulnerable communities are needed to be involved, grassroots organisations and CSOs are more effective in capturing and expressing the needs of the community as compared to reaching out to the individuals directly.

The influence of village chiefs must be considered to ensure effective outreach.

[There is a need for] *assessments that are easy for communities to understand.*

Overall, Finding 4 shows that the initial design of the Readiness Programme and subsequent iterations have included structured inputs from various stakeholders, including NIEs. There is, however, a gap in communication with regards to facilitating ongoing consultation or spontaneous feedback for NIEs, as well as DAs and vulnerable groups.

Coherence

In this section, the extent to which the Readiness Programme is compatible with other, similar programmes is assessed. This includes the extent to which the Programme is complementary to other, existing readiness programmes and has cooperated or coordinated with them, what the value add of the Readiness Programme is, and to what extent the three components of the Programme complement each other. The resulting assessment is used to identify synergies or partnerships that the Programme can amplify going forward to achieve its objectives and improve its value add.

This section builds on a Landscape Analysis (see Annex B) that reviews a multitude of readiness and readiness-type support available, including the GCF's Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme (RPSP), the GEF, GIZ's Climate Finance Readiness Programme (CF Ready), the NDC Partnership, the Paris Committee on Capacity-Building (PCCB), JICA, and various multilateral development banks including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Inter-American Development Bank. It complements this review from feedback from stakeholders through the interviews and survey.

Finding 5: There is limited coherence between the Readiness Programme components, with only two countries having taken advantage of Components 3 (support to NIEs seeking accreditation) and 1 (support to accredited entities), and only one country having received parallel GCF support (Component 2).

Of the 41 countries that have received readiness support from the Adaptation Fund, only two (5%) have received support that corresponds with Components 1 and 3, representing a pathway from accreditation of a NIE to the development of technical capacities needed to receive climate finance:

- Côte d'Ivoire: In 2017, the country received an SSC grant, which facilitated peer support from Senegal's CSE, the first institution accredited by the Adaptation Fund. It also received readiness support in the same year from the GCF. Through this collaboration and support, Côte d'Ivoire's Interprofessional Fund for Agricultural Research and Advice (FIRCA) successfully obtained accreditation as a NIE in April 2020. The SSC grant played a crucial role in FIRCA's institutional development and readiness for accreditation. As highlighted in the GCF readiness support proposal for

FIRCA⁷⁶, although FIRCA had no prior experience with climate finance accreditation, it successfully completed the Adaptation Fund's accreditation process in under two years (November 2018 – April 2020).

Following its accreditation, FIRCA received a TA-ESGP grant in 2020 to enhance its capacity to implement the Adaptation Fund's environmental and social safeguards and gender policies. It has since received additional support from the GCF as well as funding from the Adaptation Fund for two projects, with another concept note submitted in 2025. Overall, this is an example of the combined support (Component 2) of climate funds positioning an NIE first for accreditation (Component 3) and then to develop the capacities needed for fundable projects (Component 1).

- **Zimbabwe:** Like Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe received an SSC grant in 2016, through which Zimbabwe's Environmental Management Agency (EMA) received peer support from Kenya's NEMA, an Adaptation Fund NIE. In 2019, EMA received accreditation by the Fund. That same year, it received a TA grant to further strengthen its capacity. EMA secured its first Adaptation Fund project support in 2024. This indicates coherence in Zimbabwe between Components 3 and 1. However, EMA has yet to receive GCF accreditation (despite being nominated), although Zimbabwe has received multiple grants from the GCF.

Given there are only two examples out of 41 countries who have engaged with both Components 1 and 3 (and, in one case, Component 2), the broader coherence between components appears to be limited to specific cases.

Finding 6: There is some alignment between different types of readiness programmes offered by other entities and that of the Adaptation Fund in terms of their objectives and modes of working, although these are not consistently or systematically coordinated, which may affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the Adaptation Fund's work.

As noted in our Landscape Analysis (see Annex B), there is a variety of readiness and readiness-type support available to countries and their institutions. Both the GCF and Adaptation Fund prioritise strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of institutions to directly access and manage climate finance and provide technical assistance for seeking accreditation with guidance on fiduciary standards, environment and social safeguards and gender policies. In relation to the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme, the GCF has a broader scope of work including both climate adaptation *and* mitigation and with an explicit and more comprehensive focus on NAPs, NDCs, long-term country strategies, and private sector engagement. Other types of readiness support are available but not in independent readiness-specific grant packages. Like the Adaptation Fund, GIZ and the GEF provide important capacity development opportunities for countries. MDBs provide capacity building and other support that helps to scale climate finance, and many act as implementing agencies for the GEF, GCF, and Adaptation Fund. Overlap of their documented objectives is supported by stakeholders, some of which noted that some readiness programmes share common features due to their shared intention to build national capacities for planning for, accessing, and implementing climate finance effectively.

Given their overlap and potential for synergies, the Adaptation Fund has prioritized coordination and collaboration with other climate funds in MTS I and MTS II, including

⁷⁶ <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/adaptation-fund-board-accredits-new-direct-access-entity-firca-in-cote-divoire-enhancing-access-to-climate-finance/>

through annual dialogues and joint operational initiatives on accreditation, direct access, readiness, and knowledge sharing. In 2019, it developed a “Climate Funds Collaborative Roadmap” that outlines multiple topics, related activities, and timeframes. These include identifying options for joint programming and leveraging cooperative advantages in response to country demand as well as organizing technical exchanges to leverage each funds’ strengths. A 2023 update on discussions about linkages between the GCF and the Adaptation Fund provides evidence that the AFB is keen for the Secretariat to continue to collaborate with the GCF, although the specific ways of doing that for readiness are not outlined.⁷⁷

In September 2024, the Adaptation Fund’s Secretariat recommended that the AFB engage with a “*draft action plan on complementarity and coherence*” between multilateral climate funds that is structured around four pillars: 1) policies and processes, 2) capacity building and programming, 3) knowledge exchange and communication, and 4) leveraging of financial architecture.⁷⁸ Coordination with these other funds was also seen later that year during COP29, during which the Fund collaborated with other climate funds in a joint pavilion, a joint statement on human development for climate resilience, and other events.⁷⁹ The Fund’s workplan for fiscal year 2025 also lays out some collaboration activities, including participating in the capacity building workshops of other organizations like the GCF, although coordination between funds is not listed as a specific priority for the Readiness Programme.⁸⁰

Finding 7: There is limited evidence that receiving multiple types of readiness support within a single country improves its ability to access climate finance, largely because opportunities for complementarity between different readiness programmes offered by other entities are not yet being fully realised at country levels.

DAs for the Adaptation Fund and NDAs for the GCF serve as their country’s respective focal points for the climate funds, while NIEs for the Adaptation Fund and DAEs for the GCF serve as those implementing the work. Institutional overlap in these functions can be “*very helpful*,” as one stakeholder noted. As an example, another stakeholder described how in one country, the IEs were able to access both GCF and Adaptation Fund readiness support that iteratively developed the entity’s capacity and allowed them to secure Adaptation Fund project funding. For the case study countries included in this evaluation, we found that seven out of the 11 countries shared focal points between the GCF and Adaptation Fund, and eight out of 11 countries shared at least one IE. In four cases the countries share both a focal point and an IE. There does not appear to be any significant difference between those countries who have overlapping focal points *and* IEs in terms of the number of readiness grants or projects that the countries receive compared to those with less overlap (see Table 10 below).

There is also anecdotal evidence from interviews that Adaptation Fund and GCF overlap may limit a country’s engagement with the Adaptation Fund. For example, one focal point told the evaluation team that “*Some of the Readiness Programmes under the GCF are still*

⁷⁷ See https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/AFB.B.40.6_Potential_linkages_between_AF_GCF_Clean.pdf

⁷⁸ See https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/AFB.B43.15_MCFs-Draft-Action-Plan-on-Complementarity-and-Coherence.pdf

⁷⁹ See <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/blog-adaptation-funds-inclusion-in-key-cop29-decisions-raises-promise-for-2025-and-beyond-for-vulnerable-countries/>

⁸⁰ See https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/AFB.EFC_33.4-Work-Plan-for-FY25_final.pdf

ongoing and wrapping up, which is another reason we haven't moved quickly on readiness support from the Adaptation Fund". Five stakeholders interviewed noted that they were indeed prioritizing the GCF over the Adaptation Fund given the larger funding amounts available. This is even more important in places like LDCs and SIDS, as noted by some stakeholders interviewed, where limited resources and in-country capacity result in the need to prioritize. While two stakeholders interviewed described Adaptation Fund Project Scale-Up Grants can be used to pilot projects that then received larger GCF grants for further implementation, the Fund has only approved one such grant to date in Rwanda in 2019. The Ministry of Environment has since received funding from the GCF, although the direct link between the two projects is unclear.

Taken together, this indicates a lack of coordinated planning in individual countries between the GCF and the Adaptation Fund, which may offer synergies for developing readiness that are not yet fully realized or well understood. In-country stakeholders appear to be approaching both funds based on an approach or rationale developed on their own rather than based on a strategy developed collaboratively. As a result, if a country limits its engagement with Adaptation Fund readiness support, it may miss opportunities to more closely align with Fund-specific modalities, project development priorities, etc.

Table 10: Overlap of entities in case study countries and support received

Country	AF DA	AF NIE	GCF National Designated Authority (NDA)	GCF Direct access Entities (DAE)	Received AF Readiness	Received GCF Readiness	Received AF Project ⁸¹	Received GCF Project
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA	Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and the Environment	Department of Environment, Ministry of Health and Environment	Ministry of Health and the Environment	Department of Environment, Ministry of Health and Environment	1	9	1	1
ARMENIA	Ministry of Environment	Environmental Project Implementation Unit	Ministry of Environment	1. ARMSWISSBANK Closed Joint Stock Company	2	8	2	2
	-	-		2. Environmental Project Implementation Unit				
BANGLADESH	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)	Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance	1. Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation	0	8	2	7
	-			2. Infrastructure Development Company Limited				
ETHIOPIA	Ministry of Planning and Development	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MOFEC)	Ministry of Planning and Development	1. Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MOFEC)	0	5	1	3
FIJI	Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	-	The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Fiji Development Bank RIE: SPREP RIE: The Pacific Community	0	3	2	2
GRENADA	Ministry of Economic Development, Planning, Tourism, ICT, Creative	RIE: The Caribbean Development Bank	Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy	RIE: The Caribbean Development Bank	0	11	0	1

⁸¹ Only single country projects were counted for both the Adaptation Fund and GCF.

Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

Country	AF DA	AF NIE	GCF National Designated Authority (NDA)	GCF Direct access Entities (DAE)	Received AF Readiness	Received GCF Readiness	Received AF Project ⁸¹	Received GCF Project
	Economy, Agriculture, and Lands, Fisheries & Cooperatives.	MIE: International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)						
INDONESIA	Ministry of the Environment and Forestry	Partnership for Governance Reform (Kemitraan)	Fiscal Policy Agency, Ministry of Finance	1. Kemitraan (Partnership for Governance Reform))	0	5	5	4
				2. PT Sarana Multi Infrastruktur (PT SMI)				
KIRIBATI	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	RIE: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	RIE: Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme	0	2	0	1
SENEGAL	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	Centre de Suivi Ecologique	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	1. Centre de Suivi Ecologique	2	13	2	6
		2 La Banque Agricole		2 La Banque Agricole				
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	Ministry of Planning and Development	RIE: Development Bank of Latin America	Ministry of Planning and Development		0	13	1	0
ZIMBABWE	Climate Change Management Department, Ministry of Environment, Water, & Climate	Environmental Management Agency (EMA)	Climate Change Management Department, Ministry of Environment, Water, & Climate	1. Infrastructure Development Bank of Zimbabwe	2	7	2	2

Finding 8: Coordination between the Adaptation Fund and the GCF, particularly with fast-track accreditation, has had success in accrediting more entities. However, there is no evidence that this is linked to support from the Readiness Programme.

This level of coordination is supported by the GCF's Fast Track Accreditation Programme,⁸² which notes that the Adaptation Fund's accreditation process follows the same standards as the GCF with only a few notable gaps (namely, the scope of investigations to evaluate transparency and accountability). It allows for accreditation of Adaptation Fund IEs assuming they comply with the GCF's Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS). The Adaptation Fund's own fast-track accreditation process was approved in Decision B.28/38; this process allows for IEs accredited with the GCF to go through a faster process for their re-accreditation to the Fund.⁸³ As of early 2024, 39 Adaptation Fund IEs have been fast-track accredited by the GCF, and there have been 26 fast-tracked Adaptation Fund re-accreditations.⁸⁴

Within the scope of this evaluation, the coherence between the accreditation processes has borne out. In one case study country, for example, an NIE stakeholder noted that their experience with the Adaptation Fund's accreditation and re-accreditation process boosted the institution's confidence to pursue GCF accreditation, serving as a stepping stone to future additional climate financing. In another case study country, a stakeholder from the NIE provided further evidence that Adaptation Fund accreditation led to easier accreditation with the GCF and the receipt of GCF project funding. Regarding case study countries that have received Adaptation Fund readiness support:

- Antigua and Barbuda: The Department of Energy (DoE) was accredited by the Adaptation Fund in 2015 and subsequently received a TA-ESGP grant in 2016. It received GCF readiness support in 2015 and was subsequently accredited by the GCF in 2017. It has since accessed both Adaptation Fund project and GCF readiness and project funding.
- Armenia: The Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU) was accredited by the Adaptation fund in 2016 and received a TA-ESGP grant in 2018. Armenia also benefited from a large sum (US\$ 5.8 million) in readiness support from the GCF, and the EPIU was accredited by the GCF in 2019. It has since received funds for multiple projects.
- Senegal: With the Adaptation Funds first NIE (CSE), Senegal has one of the longest engagement histories with the Fund. CSE was first accredited in 2010, re-accredited in 2015, and subsequently accessed additional readiness funds. CSE was also accredited by the GCF in 2015, and re-accredited in 2019. The country added its second NIE through fast-track accreditation in 2025, as La Banque Agricole was previously accredited with the GCF in 2020.

Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Indonesia also have entities that are accredited by both the Adaptation Fund and the GCF, but they have not accessed Adaptation Fund readiness support. These NIEs have, however, received both GCF and Adaptation Fund project funding. These examples from case study countries show that there are opportunities for

⁸² See <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/fast-track-accreditation-programme.pdf>

⁸³ AFB/EFC/19/7 (Decision B.28/38).

⁸⁴ See https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Gap-Analysis-AFB_B_42_5.pdf

coherence in accreditation that may, in turn, yield higher amounts of total climate financing for countries.

Finding 9: The Adaptation Fund’s potential value add compared to other readiness providers lies in its greater degree of accessibility as well as its possibility to better support SIDS and LDCs with less capacity. However, this value add was not uniformly indicated by stakeholders and may therefore be unrealized in some cases.

As noted in the Efficiency section, the Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Programme has an easier to navigate and faster application process compared to the GCF. Indeed, six of those interviewed noted that the Adaptation Fund has a smoother, simpler, and faster application process compared to the GCF, which often requires more iterations of documents. The Adaptation Fund, while focusing on climate adaptation in particular, also does not have a specific set of thematic areas of focus. This further increases its accessibility.

There is also limited evidence of the Fund’s value to newcomers and smaller entities. Although the funding amounts for the Readiness Programme are less than the GCF, Secretariat staff noted that this can be better for smaller NIEs who have less absorptive and institutional capacity to manage larger amounts of funding. These capacity constraints are what guided the development of the Readiness Package Grant, which as one stakeholder described, provide a smaller amount of money but with “exactly the amount you need for the specific thing you need the money for.” However, this value add has not been indicated by more stakeholders in interviews or surveys, meaning that it may not be widely acknowledge or is otherwise unrealized.

Effectiveness

This section assesses the effectiveness of the Readiness Programme, including the extent to which each of the programme’s objectives have been achieved to date. In particular, the section looks at how effective Readiness Programme Components 1–3 have been by assessing the change pathways captured in the Readiness Programme ToC (see Figure 6). In other words, we investigate whether planned outputs were delivered, the quality of those outputs, and whether they are leading to the desired outcomes (a topic that is further explored in the Impact section). **Overall, Readiness Programme grants address the programme’s objectives to variable degrees. Higher effectiveness is noted for Components 1 and 3, while effectiveness appears more limited for Component 2. While beneficiaries valued capacity building support and enhanced NIE preparedness, significant barriers remain. Key challenges include insufficient awareness of the Readiness Programme and its funding models, a lack of country-tailored capacity building approaches, and technically demanding application templates and tools.**

Since its inception, the Readiness Programme has approved 50 readiness grants worth US\$ 2,410,160 (including Project Scale-Up grants).⁸⁵ The grants approved each year have followed the evolution of the programme (see Figure 7 below), with a focus on SSC grants earlier in the programme’s history and a shift to RPGs once the SSC grants were phased

⁸⁵ Adaptation Fund (2025). ‘Report of the Secretariat on the Intersessional Review Cycle for Readiness Grants (AFB/PPRC.35/Inf.42)’. Bonn, Germany. [AFB.PPRC.35.Inf.42_Report-of-the-Sec-on-Intersessional-Review-Cycle-for-Readiness-Grants_Final-1.pdf](#)

out. An overview of the effectiveness of the Readiness Programme in achieving each component is provided in the subsections below.

Figure 7: Total number of approved Readiness Programme grants per year⁸⁶

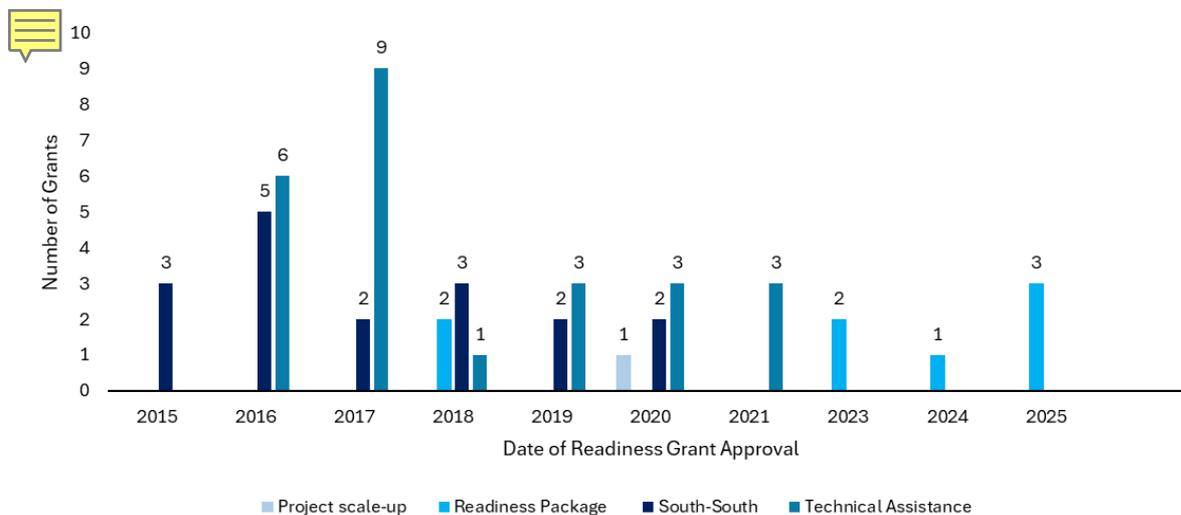
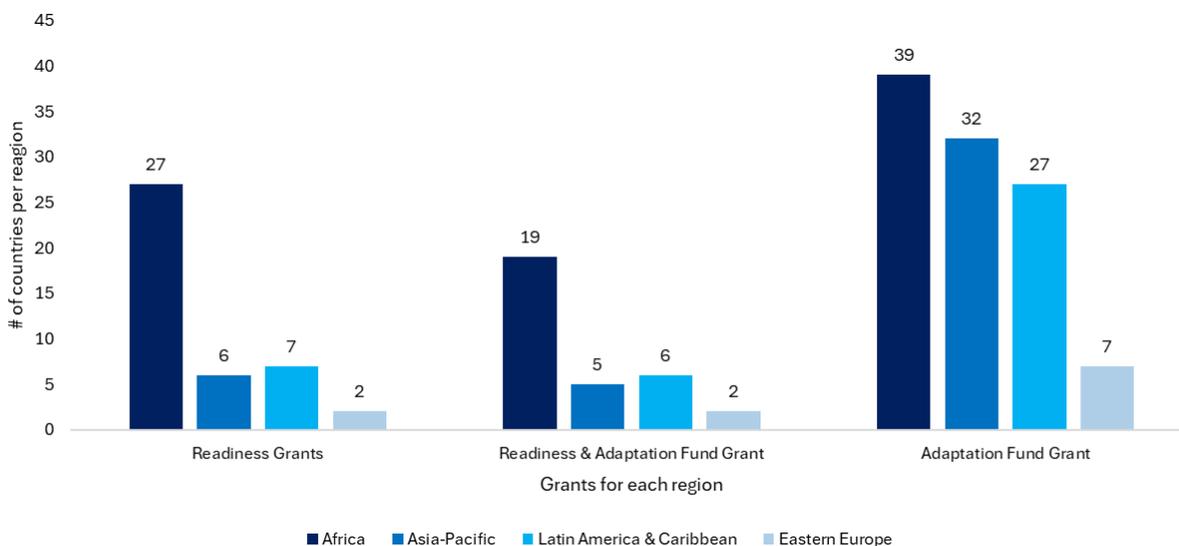


Figure 8: Countries per region that have Readiness Programme and Adaptation Fund grants



Finding 10: The Readiness Programme has demonstrated mixed results in building institutional capacity for ESP and gender integration. This has led to variability in equity and gender policy integration and minimal evidence of inclusion of vulnerable groups.

⁸⁶ Adaptation Fund readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness Programme team.

A review of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme portfolio indicates that, of the 50 Readiness Programme grant projects, 50% (25) have been focused on ESP and gender policies.⁸⁷ These grants build the capacities of NIEs to adhere to Adaptation Fund standards for successful project proposals. This is largely achieved by strengthening capacities on environmental and social risk management and addressing gender-related issues in the design, development, and implementation of adaptation projects.

In Antigua and Barbuda, Senegal and Zimbabwe (case study countries that have received TA-ESGP grants and have performance reports/mid-end reports available), TA grants improved project design and contributed toward the development of ESP policies. Interviewees in each country echoed the findings of these reports, describing how TA grants enabled the development of environmental and social management (ESM) plans or environmental and social safeguarding frameworks and improved project design. NIEs also trained staff upon the approval of ESP policies, made iterations to ESG policy drafts, manuals, and procedures, and developed tools that enhance project outcomes.⁸⁸ For example, Antigua and Barbuda developed training plans and selected entity staff to joining training workshops to increase their capacity to carry out various tasks related to the implementation of the ESP policies.⁸⁹

Stakeholders who have experience with readiness support reported meaningful improvements via the systematic integration of gender considerations, including sex-disaggregated data collection and emphasis on female-led projects. Interviews with stakeholders in Armenia and Senegal emphasised that effective gender integration requires embedding gender considerations throughout the entire project cycle – from initial concept development through to M&E – aligned with capacity-building objectives for project appraisals and assessments. In particular:

- Senegal demonstrated comprehensive gender policy implementation, including updating assessment procedures and guidelines to mitigate adverse gender impacts in line with the Adaptation Fund’s Gender Policy; conducting gender mainstreaming assessments at institutional and project levels; and developing screening tools and guidance for gender integration across institutional, communication, strategic, and operational activities.⁹⁰
- Armenia developed dashboards for undertaking project environmental, social, and gender-responsive risk assessment, developed a gender policy and gender action

⁸⁷ See www.adaptation-fund.org/projects-programmes/project-information/projects-table-view/ (accessed on 11 July 2025)

⁸⁸ Adaptation Fund (2016) ‘Antigua and Barbuda: Monitoring of Readiness Grant Projects (2016/181)’. Bonn, Germany. [6674_Project mid-term monitoring report_ATG readiness ESS and Gender_17 April 2018.pdf](#); Adaptation Fund (2016) ‘Senegal: Completion Report at Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion’. Bonn, Germany. [6641_Project-completion-report-TAG GENRE-CSE_Eng.pdf](#);

Adaptation Fund (2018) ‘Monitoring Report Six Months After Project Inception (NIE022)’. Bonn, Germany. [Zimbabwe_NEMA_SS Grant_Monitoring report 2.pdf](#)

⁸⁹ Adaptation Fund (2018) ‘Antigua and Barbuda: Monitoring Report Six Months After Project Implementation (2016/181)’. Bonn, Germany. Received from adaptation fund secretariat.

⁹⁰ Adaptation Fund (2016) ‘Senegal: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion’. Bonn, Germany. [6641_Project-completion-report-TAG GENRE-CSE_Eng.pdf](#); Adaptation Fund (2017) ‘Senegal: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion’. Bonn, Germany. [6597_Notification of project start and completion_TA ESP_CSE.pdf](#)

plan, and conducted training for Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU) staff that contributed to achieving gender-specific outcomes.⁹¹

Further evidence of this effectiveness in building capacity is indicated by the fact that four of the five countries that have had LLA projects have also received Readiness Programme grants (i.e. Côte d'Ivoire, Armenia, Rwanda, and Peru).

However, although there has been success in building NIE capacity to achieve ESP standards, case study interviewees mentioned relevant challenges, specifically around gender and equity. When it comes to the integration of vulnerable groups, just five interviews reported that the Readiness Programme facilitated greater inclusion of these groups' voices in project development. This trend is reflected in a write-shop report, which noted that 18 participant IEs see the biggest challenges faced in developing and getting proposals approved as effectively incorporating local community voices.⁹²

While some capacity building has occurred, the translation into inclusive outcomes remains limited and uneven across participating organisations. Some individuals have stated that readiness funding is easy and quick to access, however, one interviewee specifically highlighted how *technically demanding templates and tools to access support can be challenging without adequate capacity*, illustrating how complex procedural requirements create barriers that prevent many organisations from fully benefiting from programme opportunities. The complexity of requirements forced many implementing entities to rely heavily on external consultants, as evidenced by organisational efforts to strengthen ESP and Gender Policy compliance through 'hiring consultants to finalize risk checklist and Environmental and Social Management (ESM) standards'.⁹³

While some organisations with existing technical foundations successfully leveraged grants to *'develop tools used during project formulation and implementation', resulting in 'environmentally and socially sound project interventions that are sustainable and socially acceptable'*, this success was not universal. The requirement for technical sophistication created unequal access to programme benefits, with organisations possessing pre-existing capacity able to effectively utilise readiness support for tool development and institutional strengthening, while those lacking foundational project management experience faced significant participation barriers. The barrier to effective participation was not the technical sophistication of readiness applications themselves—which allow flexibility for entities to identify needed support and hire external experts—but rather the foundational institutional capacity required to effectively identify gaps, articulate needs, and manage the readiness support process.

Although NIEs can hire external experts to develop or update policies, methodologies, and screening manuals through a country-driven process, organisations lacking basic project management experience and institutional systems faced challenges in: (1) accurately diagnosing their capacity needs and determining which policies or tools required development or updating; (2) effectively managing consultants and integrating externally developed tools into their operations; and (3) translating newly developed policies and

⁹¹ Adaptation Fund () 'Armenia: Completion Report Submitted Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. Shared by the AFB Secretariat.

⁹² Adaptation Fund (2025) 'Adaptation Fund Readiness Write-shop in Recife, Brazil: Survey Evaluation Report'. Bonn, Germany. Received from Adaptation Fund Secretariat.

⁹³ Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Monitoring Report Six Months After Project and Every Six Months After the Last Monitoring Report (AFRDG00042-EMA-PJ-ER-GR-1)'. Bonn, Germany. [13277_TAESGP Monitoring Report Zimbabwe 5 Feb.2021.pdf](#)

manuals into consistent operational practice. Consequently, while the flexibility to access external expertise theoretically levels the playing field, organisations with stronger institutional foundations were better positioned to strategically utilize this flexibility, clearly articulate their requirements in readiness applications, and effectively absorb and institutionalize the outputs of technical assistance.

This disparity suggests that the challenge lies not in accessing external expertise per se, but in the institutional capacity to effectively deploy and integrate that expertise. The variability in ESP and gender policy integration, coupled with minimal inclusion of vulnerable groups, reflects how these foundational institutional capacity gaps translate into limited inclusive outcomes. The current approach indicates a need for differentiated support mechanisms that provide foundational institutional strengthening—including support for needs assessment, consultant management, and organizational systems development—ensuring that all entities can effectively utilize the flexibility to hire external expertise rather than assuming pre-existing institutional management capacities

Finding 11: The Readiness Programme has successfully facilitated access to climate adaptation finance for a significant minority of countries through accreditation and capacity development, but there is evidence that systemic coordination challenges and institutional gatekeeping practices have undermined this core function for many participating countries.

The Readiness Programme demonstrates a mixed but notable pattern of utilization, with approximately one-third to nearly half of countries following the intended capacity-building pathway before accessing major climate funds. Of the 41 countries receiving Readiness Programme grants, 13 (32%) accessed Adaptation Fund readiness support before securing Adaptation Fund project funding, while 18 (41%) accessed Adaptation Fund readiness grants before GCF funding (see Table 11).⁹⁴ These figures indicate that a significant portion of NIEs are successfully utilizing the programme as designed despite some challenges.

The non-linear nature of capacity building means that some countries strategically access major funding first and subsequently seek readiness support to strengthen implementation and institutional systems. This reverse sequencing, while not following the explicit logic outlined in the ToC, may reflect pragmatic responses to urgent climate needs, donor timelines, or country-specific strategic priorities. Such flexibility in timing can still contribute to enhanced institutional capacity, even if occurring after initial funding access. Interviews reveal that information and awareness gaps remain a primary barrier for those not accessing readiness support, with stakeholders consistently describing scenarios where relevant entities were unaware of readiness opportunities or unclear about access procedures. Three interviewees noted that the requirement for all Readiness Programme communications to flow through NIEs creates bottlenecks where key focal points and ministries function as 'gatekeepers', controlling information flow and potentially limiting access based on internal priorities or relationships. However, positive examples emerged where improved coordination mechanisms and reduced gatekeeping processes led to better programme uptake and outcomes. These cases demonstrate that when information flows are strengthened and procedural barriers reduced, the intended capacity-building pathway becomes more viable for NIEs.

Multiple interviewees identified that the coordination challenge reflects deeper systemic issues including inadequate ministerial coordination between NIEs and DAs, as well as

⁹⁴ See www.adaptation-fund.org/projects-programmes/project-information/projects-table-view/ (reviewed on 11 July 2025)

asymmetric power relationships that fragment communication across the climate finance architecture. Interview findings highlighted that these political and institutional asymmetries disrupt information sharing between MIEs, RIEs, and NIEs, creating an inefficient system where readiness support may fail to reach those entities that would most benefit from capacity building before accessing larger funding streams. The means that the ToC assumption that IEs are aware of grants is not currently present. While not unique to this programme, these systemic coordination issues suggest opportunities for enhanced information sharing, streamlined processes, and more adaptive sequencing that accommodates diverse country contexts and capacity-building trajectories while maintaining programme effectiveness.

Table 11: Countries that received Adaptation Fund or GCF grants after (check mark) or before (x) Readiness Programme grants. n/a means the country did not receive a grant^{95,96,97}

Country receiving Readiness Programme grant	AF grant?	GCF grant?
Afghanistan	n/a	✓
Antigua and Barbuda	✓	✓
Armenia	X	
Benin	✓	X
Bhutan	✓	X
Botswana	n/a	✓
Burkina Faso	n/a	X
Burundi	✓	X
Cameroon	X	✓
Cape Verde	n/a	n/a
Chad	n/a	n/a
Costa Rica	X	✓
Côte d'Ivoire	✓	✓
Dominica	n/a	X
Dominican Republic	✓	n/a
Georgia	X	X
Guinea	n/a	✓
India	X	✓
Kenya	X	X
Malawi		X
Maldives	X	X
Mali	X	X
Mauritius	X	X
Mexico	✓	✓
Micronesia	✓	✓
Morocco	X	X

⁹⁵ Adaptation Fund Projects & Programmes. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/projects-programmes/>

⁹⁶ Adaptation Fund readiness grants 2014-2025 provided by the Readiness team

⁹⁷ GCF Project Portfolio. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/projects>

Country receiving Readiness Programme grant	AF grant?	GCF grant?
Mozambique	n/a	X
Namibia	X	X
Niger	✓	✓
Panama	X	✓
Peru	X	X
Rwanda	X	✓
Senegal	X	X
Sierra Leone	✓	✓
South Africa	X	✓
Tajikistan	X	X
Tanzania	X	X
Togo	n/a	✓
Uganda	X	X
Zambia	✓	n/a
Zimbabwe	✓	✓

Finding 12: The Readiness Programme effectively serves countries through two pathways to climate adaptation funding: countries with stronger institutional capacity tend to access Adaptation Fund projects of larger amounts, while countries utilizing Readiness support tend to initially access smaller value Adaptation Fund projects that serve as strategic entry points for building climate finance experience.

The Readiness Programme addresses a critical equity gap in the climate finance landscape by targeting countries that would otherwise lack access to capacity building support. This targeted approach reflects the programme's fundamental purpose of supporting countries that might not qualify for larger funding opportunities without initial institutional strengthening. Analysis reveals that six out of seven case study countries without Readiness Programme grants successfully submitted applications and/or secured Adaptation Fund project funding despite receiving no readiness support (see Table 12), while countries with readiness support have generally accessed smaller amounts of project funding (see Table 13). Additionally, countries without prior readiness support are almost 10 times more likely to secure climate project funding than those with such support.

However, these patterns reflect the complex realities of capacity building sequencing rather than programme failure. Success rates among countries without readiness support appear linked to pre-existing institutional capacities and favourable national policy contexts. For example, in one such country, stakeholders attributed success to strategic elevation of adaptation to equal status with mitigation in national policy, with country-level priorities and IEs' existing prioritisation and investment in adaptation influencing project approval outcomes. Similarly, in a case study country that did access readiness support, stakeholders credited success in obtaining multiple Adaptation Fund projects to the NIE's accumulated institutional memory, deep understanding of approval processes, and knowledge of capacity requirements developed over time.

Table 12: Comparison of case study countries receiving Readiness Programme and Adaptation Fund grants

Case study country	Received Readiness Programme grant (n= # of grants)	Submitted application and/or received Adaptation Fund grant
Antigua and Barbuda	✓(1)	✓(2)
Armenia	✓(1)	✓(7)
Bangladesh	X	✓(4)
Ethiopia	X	✓(2)
Fiji	X	✓(2)
Grenada	X	✓(1)
Indonesia	X	✓(9)
Kiribati	X	X
Senegal	✓(2)	✓(4)
Trinidad and Tobago	X	✓(1)
Zimbabwe	✓(2)	✓(2)

These findings highlight the inherent challenges of attribution and sequencing in capacity building efforts. The Readiness Programme's focus on countries with lower baseline capacity means that smaller initial project sizes may represent appropriate entry points rather than limitations, providing first-time access to climate finance systems for countries that would otherwise remain excluded. The programme fills a crucial equity function by offering institutional strengthening opportunities to countries lacking the pre-existing advantages that enable others to access funding independently.

Nevertheless, resource constraints present ongoing challenges. Interviews with three stakeholders identified that funding amounts accessible through the Readiness Programme may not be sufficient for the scale of capacity development needed to transition from institutional strengthening to large-scale project implementation. This suggests that while readiness support can effectively improve systems and processes, the pathway from initial capacity building to securing substantial climate adaptation funding requires sustained, longer-term investment that extends beyond current programme parameters.

The analysis indicates a two-tiered structure in the climate finance landscape, where countries with existing institutional advantages continue to build on these strengths, while those most needing capacity support face longer development trajectories. This pattern underscores both the importance of the Readiness Programme's equity mandate and the need for realistic expectations about capacity building timelines in complex country contexts.

Table 13: Comparison between number of countries that received Readiness Programme grants and amount of Adaptation Fund grant funding versus countries that did not receive Readiness Programme grants

Amount of Adaptation Fund project funding (US\$)	Received Readiness support	Did not receive Readiness support
> 10,000,000	5 countries	23 countries

Amount of Adaptation Fund project funding (US\$)	Received Readiness support	Did not receive Readiness support
1,000,000-9,999,999	28 countries	58 countries
<1,000,000	12 countries	2 countries

Finding 13: While the Readiness Programme has established knowledge exchange platforms and maintains informal collaborations with key organizations (e.g., GCF, GEF), the absence of formalized partnership arrangements constrains strategic alignment and may limit the impact of these activities on institutional capacity building and coordination across the readiness support ecosystem.

The programme has fostered several collaborative initiatives that indicate strong potential for partnership development. Most notably, the Fund initially participated in a 'network of providers of readiness support for adaptation and capacity building' that successfully produced four bulletins, demonstrating early coordination capacity. The CPDAE represents a significant achievement in creating peer learning platforms (see the Coherence section), having facilitated a face-to-face meeting in Durban, South Africa, on 5–7 June 2019, which resulted in the development of an action plan based on capacity gaps identified by members and their expectations around capacity building, communication, cooperation, and dialogue with the Adaptation Fund and GCF.⁹⁸ Additionally, the leadership of the GCF, GEF, and Adaptation Fund have collectively affirmed a shared commitment to enhanced coordination, culminating in a joint declaration to strengthen complementarity and coherence and to streamline procedural frameworks governing access to climate finance.⁹⁹

These informal arrangements are evident in operational contexts, such as the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) independent programme supporting five countries in accreditation, where 'other organizations provided support' despite having 'never had a formalized arrangement'. A senior programme official acknowledged in a CPDAE report that 'there are opportunities' for formal partnerships, noting that organisations are currently 'doing it with their own resources' and that the Adaptation Fund 'could provide some non-financial modes of support', indicating recognition of partnership potential within existing informal structures.¹⁰⁰

However, the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme's coordination efforts face structural limitations that constrain their effectiveness.  Fund transitioned its network of providers of readiness and capacity-building support to the UNFCCC Paris Committee on Capacity Building (PCCB) Network in 2020. Following the success of the Fund's initial network initiative, there was mutual agreement between the Adaptation Fund and its partners to merge with the PCCB Network, including its Capacity Building Portal, which was providing similar services and additional products. This integration demonstrated effective coordination between climate finance institutions by avoiding duplication of efforts. The Fund and its partners continue to remain engaged with the PCCB Network and Capacity Building Portal, establishing a more efficient and effective mechanism for coordinating readiness support across the climate finance architecture. The absence of formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or structured partnerships with other organisations providing readiness support means that coordination relies on ad hoc arrangements that may lack

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT: "Coordinating GCF, GEF, and AF Focal Points" Data/Report shared by the Adaptation Fund Secretariat.

¹⁰⁰ CPDAE (2021) 'Report on the Meeting of the Community of Practice for Direction access Entities'. [Final_Report_on_CPDAE_meeting_Durban_2019.pdf](#)

sustainability and systematic approach.¹⁰¹ The limited formalisation of partnerships appears to constrain the programme's ability to leverage complementary expertise and avoid duplication. In case study countries, while studies, guidelines, policies, and regulations are developed, there is little evidence of these being informed by partnerships with other readiness climate funds. Activities including meetings that enable cross-readiness climate finance engagement – have been used to develop action plans, build frameworks, and share knowledge gaps, yet the translation of these efforts into sustained on-the-ground capacity building appears limited without more systematic partnership structures. This suggests that despite informal coordination mechanisms, the knowledge exchange and institutional learning potential remains underutilised.

Operational barriers further impede partnership effectiveness. The lack of CPDAE website development and its sustainable management affects both external communication and internal knowledge exchange within the community. While it maintains a dedicated microsite for the CPDAE on the AF website, this arrangement presents both advantages and challenges. On one hand, housing the CPDAE within the AF portal provides institutional stability, reduces maintenance overhead, and consolidates information within an established platform. On the other hand, this structure creates potential concerns regarding perceived ownership and independence of the partnership, as the CPDAE presence is embedded within a single member organization's digital ecosystem rather than operating through a neutral, standalone platform. Operational barriers further impede partnership effectiveness. While AF maintains a dedicated microsite for the CPDAE on the AF website, this arrangement presents both advantages and challenges. On one hand, housing the CPDAE within the AF portal provides institutional stability, reduces maintenance overhead, and consolidates information within an established platform. On the other hand, this structure creates potential concerns regarding perceived ownership and independence of the partnership, as the CPDAE presence is embedded within a single member organization's digital ecosystem rather than operating through a neutral, standalone platform.¹⁰² Additionally, the current web presence has limitations in facilitating robust internal knowledge exchange and collaborative tools that could enhance community engagement beyond basic information dissemination. The broader challenge of portal proliferation versus consolidation remains a strategic consideration—while multiple dedicated websites can fragment information access and create navigation challenges for users, a single consolidated platform hosted by one partner organization may inadvertently signal hierarchical rather than truly collaborative partnership structures. This tension between operational efficiency and partnership equity affects both external communication with stakeholders and the internal dynamics of knowledge sharing within the CPDAE community.

Additionally, institutional challenges such as limited ministerial inter-agency coordination between NIEs/DAs can constrain partnership formation. In contrast to other climate funds (GCF and GEF), the Adaptation Fund has more limited engagement with its DAs. While the Fund systematically communicates with DAs regarding capacity building events and workshops and follows up with DA offices when communications are undeliverable to ensure inclusion in future correspondence, communication gaps can still occur. These gaps sometimes arise when newly appointed DAs do not inform the Adaptation Fund of staff changes, resulting in outdated contact details in the Fund's database. One focal point noted they had not received an invitation to participate in Adaptation Fund focal point dialogues despite serving in the role for over two years, limiting opportunities for partnership

¹⁰¹ CPDAE (2023) 'CPDAE Annual Meeting, Yerevan, Armenia, 20–23 February 2024'. [CPDAE-AnnualMeetingReport2023.pdf](#)

¹⁰² Ibid.

development. Such instances highlight the importance of timely communication from countries to the Fund when DA appointments change to ensure continuous engagement and partnership development opportunities.

Finding 14: The effectiveness of Readiness Programme grants in supporting accreditation varies significantly, with successful outcomes in the form of accreditation of NIEs in Niger, Zimbabwe, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire demonstrating that well-timed support aligned with country readiness can accelerate NIE preparedness. Challenges in other countries highlight the importance of contextual factors and strategic timing.

Among the 41 countries that received readiness programme grants, four countries; Niger, Zimbabwe, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire achieved accreditation through Readiness Programme support and demonstrate key elements that contributed to successful outcomes. These successes provide valuable insights for understanding when and how the programme works effectively. The Côte d'Ivoire SSC grant did not have any documents published, and our analysis therefore focuses on Niger, Zimbabwe, Togo as success stories.

Niger, Togo, and Zimbabwe all established dedicated task forces that brought together relevant stakeholders and created institutional ownership. In Zimbabwe, *'mobilization adequately brought together all the players and relevant officers for accreditation and project design,'* while *'ownership and commitment to pursue accreditation was taken up seriously from the stakeholders engaged.'*¹⁰³ Similarly, Niger and Togo set up task forces specifically to train stakeholders on the accreditation process and raise awareness about NIE roles, creating the foundational structures necessary for sustained progress.^{104,105}

These countries also benefited from selecting institutions with relevant foundational capacities. Zimbabwe's selection of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) *'was adequate as it has strong environmental systems, policies and technical expertise in place,'* providing a solid foundation for accreditation requirements.¹⁰⁶ Niger's pre-selection criteria were prepared in collaboration with the DA, ensuring alignment between institutional capabilities and accreditation demands.¹⁰⁷

CSE provided crucial ongoing support by helping task force members assess accreditation files and identify remaining gaps across multiple countries. This continuous engagement allowed for iterative improvement and targeted capacity building based on specific institutional needs. While Togo experienced some delays due to presidential elections, the

103 Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Zimbabwe: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany.

[6688_Project completion report_Malawi and Zimbabwe_Final.pdf](#)

104 Adaptation Fund (2019) 'Niger: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [CSE_notification_of_readiness_completion_Niger + completion report.pdf](#)

105 Adaptation Fund (2015) 'Togo: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [S-S Readiness Grant -Togo Completion Report Revised_FINAL VERSION.pdf](#)

106 Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Zimbabwe: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany.

[6688_Project completion report_Malawi and Zimbabwe_Final.pdf](#)

107 Adaptation Fund (2019) 'Niger: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [CSE_notification_of_readiness_completion_Niger + completion report.pdf](#)

overall timing of support aligned with periods of institutional stability and political commitment, allowing for sustained engagement with the accreditation process¹⁰⁸.

Despite these successes and as discussed in the Relevance section, 20 of the 24 countries that received accreditation support or are currently receiving support through the Readiness Programme have yet to achieve accreditation, revealing significant implementation challenges that constrain programme effectiveness. It is important to note that the majority of these grants were provided under the SSC modality, which has since been discontinued and replaced by the RPG, which was introduced as part of broader efforts to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of accreditation support. Regarding accreditation, several countries faced fundamental capacity gaps, including systemic issues that would be difficult to address within programme timeframes. One interviewee noted their country was deemed '*not prepared to undertake the work required*' for accreditation due to insufficient Ministry of Finance support and critical staff turnover without replacement capacity. Even successful countries like Togo acknowledged that 'it is essential to have resources in order to develop some types of document such as the Project cycle management manual or the monitoring and evaluation manual,' with task forces lacking 'the capacities to develop those documents' and institutions being 'usually small ones so they cannot provide sufficient financial resources to recruit a consultant.'¹⁰⁹ While the RPG does provide financial resources intended to enable entities to hire such experts, this feedback suggests that the size of the RPG grant may not always be sufficient to fully meet the technical and capacity development needs of some institutions.

Success often required specialized resources that were not universally available. One SIDS's relative success '*depended on embedded climate advisors and sector-mobilized funding—specialized resources that remain unavailable to most other participating countries.*' Even successful cases acknowledged that '*the assistance goes beyond the initial time*', with NIEs needing ongoing support 'to answer to the AF's comments.'¹¹⁰ However, it is important to note that this feedback appears to reflect experiences of SSC grants. The RPG, which replaced SSC grants, includes a mandatory budget provision specifically to support entities in responding to comments from the Adaptation Fund Accreditation Panel. Furthermore, RPG timelines are country-driven, allowing entities to set durations based on their specific needs and circumstances. In addition, all readiness grant timelines can be extended in line with the Adaptation Fund policy on project delays. As such, the persistence of this issue in stakeholder feedback may reflect misunderstandings or outdated experiences on the part of some survey respondents rather than current RPG design or policy limitations. The fixed timeframes of Readiness Programme grants were sometimes not aligned with country readiness and political cycles. Extended timelines were common, with processes taking 'longer than expected' due to limited in-house expertise and resource constraints.

The variation in outcomes reflects both the programme's potential and its structural limitations. Successful countries benefited from a convergence of factors: appropriate institutional selection, stakeholder engagement, continuous support, and alignment with country readiness cycles. However, the low overall success rate of accreditation support

¹⁰⁸ Adaptation Fund (2015) 'Togo: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [S-S Readiness Grant -Togo Completion Report Revised FINAL VERSION.pdf](#)

¹⁰⁹ Adaptation Fund (2015) 'Togo: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [REDACTED]

¹¹⁰ Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Zimbabwe: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [6688_Project completion report Malawi and Zimbabwe Final.pdf](#)

suggests that these conditions are not consistently present or adequately supported by current programme design. The evidence indicates that while the Readiness Programme has enhanced preparedness for many NIEs, its effectiveness in achieving accreditation outcomes remains constrained by country-specific political, institutional, and resource contexts that standardized support mechanisms may not adequately address. The programme's contribution is most evident when support aligns with existing institutional capacity and political commitment, but it faces significant limitations when these foundational elements are absent or insufficient.

Finding 15: There is strong evidence that the Readiness Programme has built institutional capacities across participating countries. This success is demonstrated through enhanced technical capabilities and effective South–South knowledge exchange mechanisms, though the full extent of achievements remains difficult to assess due to incomplete performance reporting.

Available evidence from 11 participating countries demonstrates notable achievements in institutional capacity building. Of 50 approved and implemented Readiness Programme grants, 25 (50%) were allocated to SIDS and LDCs, with 12 specifically targeting ESP and Gender Policy requirements (Table 14). Where performance reports are available, they document tangible institutional strengthening outcomes with stakeholder interviews from SIDS case study countries providing evidence of enhanced technical capabilities. Respondents noted that support enabled them to *'develop an environmental and social management plan, as well as frameworks, policy documents, and guidelines for implementation'*. The systematic integration achieved was emphasised by another interviewee who stated that *'gender and environmental/social safeguards are embedded in project development, with success indicators based on these considerations'*.¹¹¹

Table 14: Spread of Readiness Programme grants across LDCs and SIDS

	# of LDCs	# of SIDS
Readiness Programme grants – total	17	8
SSC	7	3
RPG	3	0
TA-GP	2	1
TA-ESP	5	4

Official performance reports substantiate these interview findings. Antigua and Barbuda's performance report showed that Department of Environment project staff *'significantly benefited from TA support'*,¹¹² while Senegal's report documented that the programme *'built the capacity of CSE's staff to mainstream gender during the design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities, including indicators on gender*

¹¹¹ Adaptation Fund (2017) 'Senegal: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [6597_Notification of project start and completion_TA ESP_CSE.pdf](#)

¹¹² Adaptation Fund (2016) 'Antigua and Barbuda: Monitoring of Readiness Grant Projects (2016/181)'. Bonn, Germany. [6674_Project mid-term monitoring report_ATG readiness ESS and Gender_17 April 2018.pdf](#)

mainstreaming'.¹¹³ In Senegal, CSE staff gained critical technical skills in environmental and social safeguards, risk assessment, and mitigation through targeted training interventions.¹¹⁴

The Readiness Programme has demonstrated particular success in South–South knowledge exchange mechanisms. The Zimbabwe–Malawi exchange illustrated this value, with participating institutions (EMA and Malawi Endowment Trust) identifying concrete improvement areas including policy alignment with national frameworks, enhanced record-keeping systems, and development of AFB-required policies.¹¹⁵ Participants from NEMA, Malawi Environment Endowment Trust, and EMA reported gaining essential technical skills in crafting responses to Adaptation Fund queries and improving stakeholder communication.

The programme's strategic knowledge-sharing approach has generated demand among participating institutions and Secretariat staff. Secretariat representatives highlighted systematic engagement through local Board member participation in country events, regional thematic discussions supported by research findings, and proactive communication through documentation and press releases.¹¹⁶ This success is reflected in the high interest in readiness events and grant applications, coinciding with record-high project proposal submissions totalling US\$ 193.3 million across 21 single-country proposals and 16 regional pre-concepts.¹¹⁷

However, significant challenges limit both programme effectiveness and evaluation capabilities. Many Readiness Programme profiles lacked available performance reports, preventing the evaluation team from drawing general recommendations about the programme's capacity-building impact across diverse contexts. This reporting limitation undermines broader applicability of findings and highlights the need for more robust M&E practices across the programme.

Findings reveal significant variation in gender integration outcomes, with seven countries (64%) highlighting gender support as requiring more nuanced, context-specific intervention strategies. Interviews and secondary data identified particular challenges for LDCs and SIDS requiring intensive, context-sensitive support approaches. Effective capacity building depends heavily on understanding local institutional arrangements, power dynamics, and decision-making processes that may not be immediately apparent to external technical assistance providers. Generic guidance often failed to address unique socio-political contexts where traditional governance structures, customary laws, and informal decision-making processes significantly influence adaptation planning. While acknowledging that virtual events proved effective and accessible, Secretariat representatives emphasised that certain Readiness Programme activities require face-to-face interaction to generate

¹¹³ Adaptation Fund (2017) 'Senegal: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [6597_Notification_of_project_start_and_completion_TA_ESP_CSE.pdf](#)

¹¹⁴ Adaptation Fund (2017) 'Senegal: Evaluation of Readiness Grant Projects: Completion Report At Least Three Months But Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion'. Bonn, Germany. [6597_Notification_of_project_start_and_completion_TA_ESP_CSE.pdf](#)

¹¹⁵ Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Project to Support National Implementing Entity Accreditation through South South Cooperation in Malawi and Zimbabwe: Completion Report Submitted Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion (NIE022)'. Bonn, Germany. [6688_Project_completion_report_Malawi_and_Zimbabwe_Final.pdf](#)

¹¹⁶ Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Report of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.36/10)'. Bonn, Germany. [AFB.B.36.10-Report-of-the-thirty-sixth-meeting-of-AFB-4-1.pdf](#)

¹¹⁷ Adaptation Fund (2016) 'Report of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.26/7)'. Bonn, Germany. [AFB-26-report_final1.pdf](#)

maximum impact, particularly for learning and South–South cooperation where informal exchanges are crucial.¹¹⁸

The evidence suggests that while the Readiness Programme has achieved measurable capacity building successes in documented cases, systematic reporting gaps prevent comprehensive assessment of effectiveness across the full programme portfolio. Where evidence exists, it demonstrates both the programme's potential for institutional strengthening and the critical need for more context-sensitive, differentiated approaches to achieve consistent outcomes across diverse national contexts.

Finding 16: Programme grants demonstrate strategic programme evolution, including the particular success of peer-to-peer support in SIDS and LDCs as a critical enabler. The positive feedback from some stakeholders on these collaborative approaches and their associated outcomes offer key insights for future RPG design to enhance programme effectiveness.

The RPG has demonstrated strategic value as a targeted addition to the Adaptation Fund's capacity-building toolkit, with notable success in LDCs where its focused approach directly addresses particularly in the contexts where institutional bottlenecks are more pronounced. While the programme does not specifically target LDCs or SIDS as a performance mandate, these countries have nonetheless benefitted significantly from its focused support. The programme's effectiveness stems from precise targeting of its ability to address systemic barriers within the accreditation process through dedicated US\$ 150,000 funding grants, which that enables institutions to recruit fiduciary and governance experts to prepare essential accreditation documents such as, including strategic plans, internal audit frameworks, and ethics manuals. This targeted approach has helped successfully addressed three specific bottlenecks frequently identified by the accreditation panels: strategic planning, internal audit establishment, and ethics framework development. The grant's immediate impact is evidenced by participating NIE applicants submitting complete accreditation applications within just over one year of effective support delivery—a significant improvement over typical timelines—while delivering quality outcomes that exceeded what could have been achieved through internal capacity alone.¹¹⁹

The RPG's smaller funding amounts, compared to funding amounts by other readiness providers such as the GCF, prove particularly suitable for SIDS and LDCs, where these resources represent significant investments that can be more easily absorbed compared to larger climate funds, enabling countries to build institutional foundations necessary for accessing climate finance. However, challenges emerge where support providers lack sufficient understanding of accreditation requirements or capacity to deliver effective technical assistance, creating implementation gaps that limit programme effectiveness.

Peer-to-peer support has emerged as the programme's most significant success factor, with collaborative approaches demonstrating exceptional results across multiple contexts. This effectiveness is evidenced by widespread stakeholder demand, with six interviewees specifically calling for increased peer learning opportunities and 67% of survey participants identifying the need to '*facilitate more peer learning and South–South exchange*' as a priority improvement area. One NIE interviewee emphasised that '*South to South cooperation also remains very, very, very critical*', describing how their South–South partner provided

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Report on the Readiness Support Package Pilot (AFB/PPRC. 27/29)'. Bonn, Germany. [Report-On-Implementation-Of-The-Readiness-Support-Package-Pilot_final.pdf](#)

comprehensive guidance through the accreditation process while sharing a 'whole-of-government-and-society approach' to stakeholder engagement.

The Kenya–Zimbabwe partnership exemplifies this success, with interviewees reporting that *'the Kenya team is on a peer-to-peer learning and mentoring of the Zimbabwean team for accreditation'*. This collaboration contributed to Zimbabwe's successful stakeholder mobilisation and strong ownership commitment to pursue accreditation, leveraging EMA's existing environmental systems and technical expertise.¹²⁰ The partnership's impact extends beyond formal accreditation, with NEMA assisting EMA in developing tools and instruments while sharing experiences such as Kenya's plastic ban implementation¹²¹, illustrating how peer support evolves into broader environmental governance learning.¹²²

Similarly, participants in Botswana's knowledge exchange initiative reported valuable exposure to diverse experiences¹²³, while the 2014 NIE Readiness Workshop in Nairobi demonstrated structured peer learning impact by bringing together accredited African IEs with institutions seeking accreditation. Participants identified key learning needs including inter-regional and intra-regional peer support and South–South cooperation for project development.^{124,125}

Learning from the previously successful SSC programme offers valuable insights for enhancing future programme design. SSC grants proved effective in facilitating direct access to climate financing, with 17 of 41 recipient countries benefiting from the programme's multi-dimensional approach that secured high-level political commitment while building structured documentation and appraisal systems. Zimbabwe's case study exemplifies SSC's lasting impact, demonstrating sustained institutional benefits including enhanced global ratings, increased resource attraction potential, and strengthened internal capacities that generated competitive advantages in the climate finance landscape.¹²⁶

The SSC grants' strengths in peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, political engagement, and comprehensive institutional development highlight critical design elements that could address current RPG implementation gaps. The positive feedback from stakeholders on collaborative approaches and their sustained outcomes offer key insights for future programme design, particularly in strengthening technical assistance quality and ensuring support providers possess adequate understanding of accreditation requirements to enhance overall programme effectiveness.

¹²⁰ Adaptation Fund (2018) 'Monitoring Report Six Months After Project Inception (NIE022)'. Bonn, Germany. [Zimbabwe NEMA SS Grant Monitoring report 2.pdf](#)

¹²¹ Adaptation Fund (2018) 'Monitoring Report Six Months After Project Inception (NIE022)'. Bonn, Germany. [Zimbabwe NEMA SS Grant Monitoring report 2.pdf](#)

¹²² Adaptation Fund (2021) 'Project to Support National Implementing Entity Accreditation through South South Cooperation in Malawi and Zimbabwe: Completion Report Submitted Not More Than Six Months After Project Completion (NIE022)'. Bonn, Germany. [6688 Project completion report Malawi and Zimbabwe Final.pdf](#)

¹²³ Adaptation Fund (2024) 'Monitoring Report Six Months After Project and Every Six Months After the Last Monitoring Report (nie022)'. Bonn, Germany. [Botswana SS Project monitoring report - 1st April 2024.docx](#)

¹²⁴ Adaptation Fund (2014) 'Report of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.24/7)'. Bonn, Germany. [Report of AFB24 final.pdf](#)

¹²⁵ Adaptation Fund (2014) 'Report of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB/B.24/7)'. Bonn, Germany. [Report of AFB24 final.pdf](#)

¹²⁶ Adaptation Fund (2018) 'Monitoring Report Six Months After Project Inception (NIE022)'. Bonn, Germany. [Zimbabwe NEMA SS Grant Monitoring report 2.pdf](#)

Additional findings

Finding 17: African countries demonstrate a significantly stronger conversion rate from readiness support to project approvals compared to other regions.

African countries are the primary beneficiaries of Readiness Programme support, securing nearly two-thirds (32 of 50) of all readiness grants and 38% (80 of 209) of Adaptation Fund projects from 2014 onwards (see Figure 9). More significantly, the data reveals that 19 of the 32 African countries receiving readiness support have successfully converted this into Adaptation Fund project funding, demonstrating the strongest conversion rate among all regions at approximately 59%.

Positive outcomes in Africa are supported by evidence of capacity building effectiveness. One interview for an African case study country illustrates how readiness grants facilitated structured project development:

The grant was handy. We used it for a two-step approach. It helped us to develop a concept before going onto the full proposal, by providing additional resource. Helpful for structuring the programming, and the issue of baselining, as it is necessary to go into communities to ensure the proposal engages fully with those on the ground.

Another African country case study stakeholder further noted that

The grant also allowed us to gain expertise where we were lacking as an entity. It also increased our capacity as an institution by increasing knowledge within our institution, as well as on how to develop the project, and document issues related to climate change projects.

Similarly, evidence from one of the African case study interviews demonstrates tangible capacity building outcomes:

This also enabled us to develop an environmental and social management plan, as well as frameworks, policy documents, guidelines for implementation. So for the upcoming projects, the grant allowed us to use that knowledge and develop more bankable and sound project proposals.

The interviewee emphasized that readiness support facilitated crucial baseline work: *'If we did not have this grant, these technical studies would have been done, but a bit in a more difficult manner. So this made our lives a bit easier and our project's design also a bit easier.'*

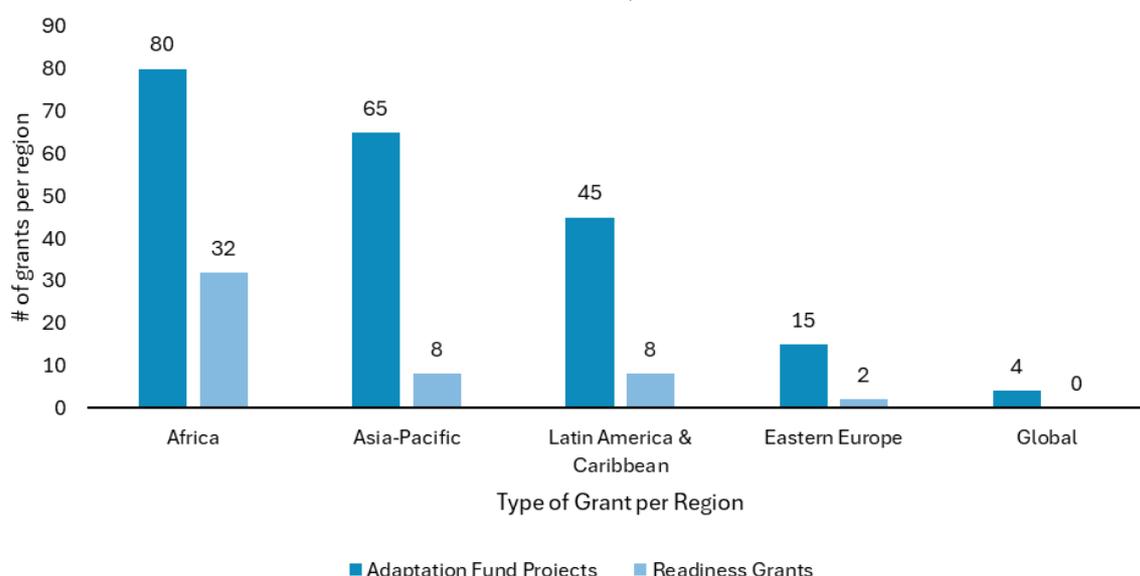
This observed pattern is important when looking across other regions. Despite significant climate vulnerability and large populations, the Asia-Pacific region receives proportionally modest readiness support (18%) compared to its share of Adaptation Fund project funding (32% or 76 projects). This means that either Asia-Pacific countries demonstrate greater efficiency in project development without readiness support, or that they access Adaptation Fund project funding through alternative pathways. Lower usage of readiness in this region may also reflect competition from other funding mechanisms, particularly given that Asia-Pacific has received substantial GCF readiness support (263 of 862 total GCF readiness grants), providing alternative capacity building pathways that reduce reliance on Adaptation Fund readiness support.

The Latin America and Caribbean region exhibits a similar pattern, with 16% (8) of Adaptation Fund readiness grants yielding 23% (55) of funded projects. Like countries in the

Asia-Pacific, this region has received the highest number of GCF readiness grants (275 of 862). Eastern Europe's minimal presence (2% readiness support, 7% projects) likely reflects either lower climate adaptation prioritization, different funding preferences, or potential systemic barriers in accessing Adaptation Fund mechanisms that warrant further investigation.

While Africa's higher conversion rate may be linked to investments in building robust NIEs that can effectively translate preparatory work into concrete projects, this connection requires cautious interpretation as direct causal evidence is limited. The role of MIEs appears significant but not definitively explanatory—Africa implemented 38 projects through MIEs compared to 39 in Asia-Pacific, suggesting MIE presence alone does not account for regional differences. Other reasons for high utilization in Africa may be institutional readiness, misalignment between readiness support design and regional needs, or successful diversification of funding sources. The evidence indicates that while Adaptation Fund readiness support can effectively build institutional capacity and facilitate project development, its effectiveness varies across regions.¹²⁷

Figure 9: Number of approved Adaptation Fund and Readiness Programme projects in different regions globally (since 2014)



Efficiency

This section assesses the extent to which the Readiness Programme is cost effective and timely without consuming unnecessary time and resources. It analyses whether the Readiness Programme has been implemented efficiently and the extent to which it has been timely and cost-efficient for NIEs. It also explores specific challenges to efficiency that serve the basis for recommendations.

Finding 18: Stakeholders indicated that the Readiness Programme is more accessible and straightforward than comparable readiness support mechanisms offered by other entities. However, the Fund's accreditation process remains technically demanding and resource intensive, and the requirements are seen as increasingly complex by some.

The Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Programme was designed to provide rapid, targeted support for countries seeking to strengthen their institutional capacity and technical readiness to access climate finance. Its lean application structure, particularly following the introduction of a single-window RPG modality under Decision B.36/25, has simplified the submission process and made the programme comparatively more accessible than other mechanisms, such as the GCF RPSP and GEF (see Table 15 below). The single-step process and standard templates are particularly advantageous for NIEs operating in low-capacity contexts. Several stakeholders praised the streamlined nature of the Fund’s proposal system, noting that modest funding amounts and clear templates make the application process manageable—especially for small TA grants.

However, despite these relative advantages, significant structural and procedural challenges persist—undermining the effectiveness, timeliness, and equity of the Readiness Programme. One major barrier relates to the **complexity of the accreditation process**, which remains technically demanding and resource intensive. Accreditation requires compliance with five rigorous standards, posing a steep challenge for entities in countries with limited administrative and technical capacity. As one stakeholder observed, the process is *‘not an easy one and requires a lot of resolve.’* Interviewees across regions emphasized that procedural burden—particularly around accreditation—often necessitates substantial support or *‘hand-holding’* to navigate

Table 15: Comparison of climate fund proposal processes

Process stage	Adaptation Fund	GCF	GEF
Initial screening and technical review	~3 weeks for Secretariat feedback after submission	~4–6 weeks for Secretariat screening and technical review	4–8 weeks for Project Investment Funds (PIF) review
Entity response time	~3 weeks to address comments and resubmit	4–8 weeks to address comments and resubmit	Varies (can be several weeks to months depending on documentation required)
Time to Board consideration	Next AFB meeting (held every 4–6 months)	Considered at next Board meeting or via intersessional approval	GEF Council meetings (biannual); CEO approval for small projects
Board decision to funding agreement	~1–2 months	Ranges from one week (fast cases) to several months	Moderate – biannual review, but CEO can approve small projects

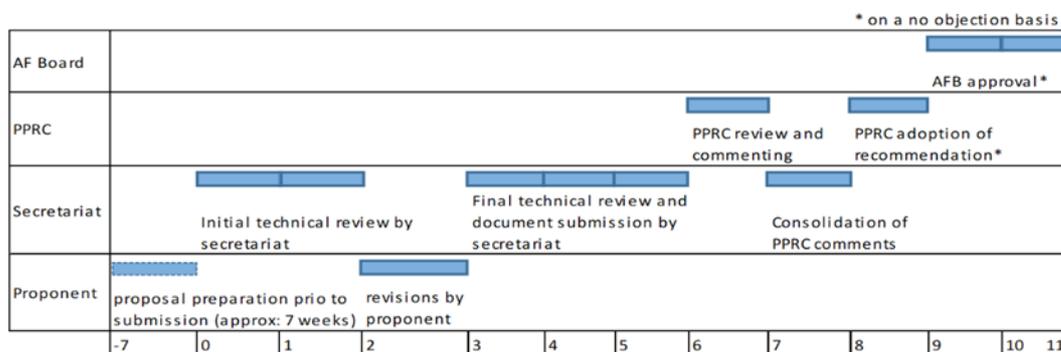
Source: Compiled from various reports, including those by the Adaptation Fund and the GCF (Adaptation Fund, 2022; Green Climate Fund, 2022)

Finding 19: The Adaptation Fund has a concrete process for approving readiness grants. Most grants are approved within the pre-defined timeframe, indicating that the process is efficient.

The process for approving Readiness Programme grants begins with the submission of an application by the potential grantee or proponent followed by an initial technical review by the Secretariat over a two-week period (as illustrated in Figure 10 below). Potential grantees are given a week to respond to comments. After this, there is a final technical review by the Secretariat over three weeks and a review by the PPRC (including the consolidation of

comments and the development of recommendations). Assuming there are no objections, the AFB approves the grant proposal by the twelfth week of the process, although this must align with the AFB’s meetings, which happen every 4–6 months.

Figure 10: Readiness Programme grant approval process¹²⁷



Based on portfolio data, grants have been approved within an average of 89 days, which aligns with the process laid out by the Adaptation Fund and indicates operational efficiency in processing proposals. More specifically, 16 grants were approved within 60 days, 18 grants approved within 61-120 days, and 15 grants required more than 120 days. There is little difference between grants of larger or smaller values.

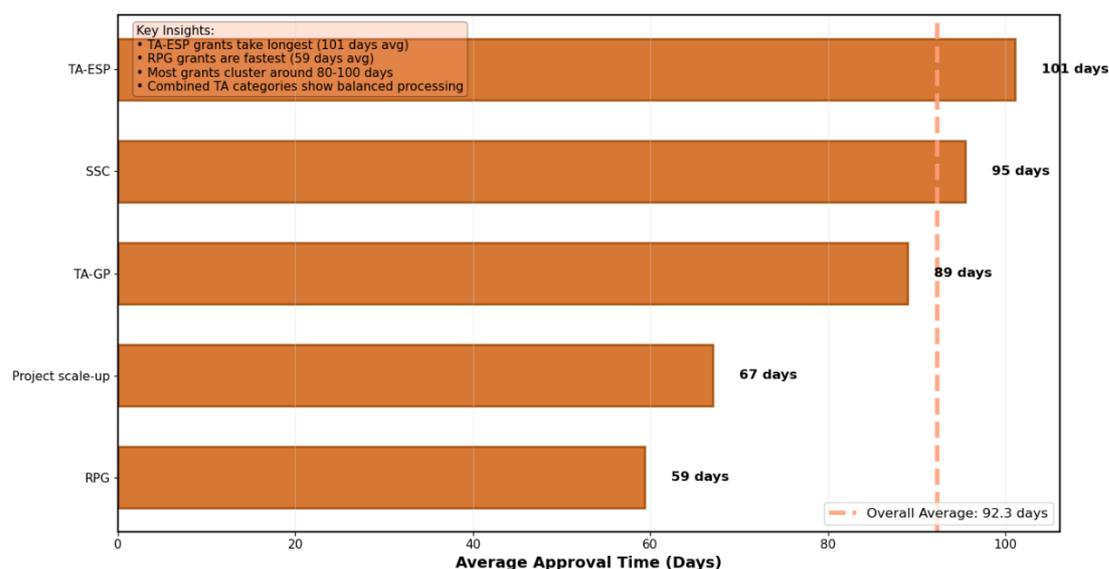
Proposals from the Africa region average 96 days from submission to approval, with the Latin American region averaging 94 days, Asia-Pacific averaging 80 days, and MENA 58 days. At least one NIE noted that the readiness proposal process only took several months and was a good process overall given the limited requirements. Additionally, no survey respondents cited the proposal process as a barrier or issue for them.

Although grant approval timelines are in line with the Adaptation Fund’s approach, analysis timelines across different grant types reveals some variation (see Figure 11 below). TA-ESP grants demonstrate the longest average approval time at 101 days across six grants, while Project Scale-Up grants show the shortest time at 67 days (though this is based on a single grant). SSC grants represent the most common grant type with 18 grants and have an average approval time of 95 days. In terms of consistency, TA-ESP grants exhibit the most predictable timing with the lowest variability (standard deviation of 22 days), whereas RPGs show the highest variability with a standard deviation of 49 days and approval times ranging from 51 to 182 days. Overall, the data indicates that TA grants generally require longer approval periods compared to other grant types, while SSC grants maintained moderate approval timeframes despite being the most numerous.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Figure provided by the Adaptation Fund Secretariat

¹²⁸ Given that the window for Readiness Programme applications is open for two months, it is possible that some of the variation is related to when the application is submitted during that window.

Figure 11: Average time from submission to approval per grant type



Following approval, disbursement times for grant funding ranged from 50 to 230+ days depending on legal and administrative factors. This includes protracted negotiations of grant agreements, institution delays in signing legal agreements and internal clearance procedures. ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} This lag in disbursement introduces delays for grantees. An analysis done by the AF-TERG reveals that legal negotiations, financial clearances, and contractual arrangements—especially between NIEs and executing entities—can stretch disbursement timelines well beyond initial planning assumptions.

Finding 20: Readiness Programme grant implementation durations exceed planned timelines with high variability. Analysis indicates that larger grants may take longer to implement and thus affect the total grant amounts used to date.

An analysis of grant durations reveals that the planned durations have a mean of approximately 180 days; the shortest planned duration is 90 days, while the longest is 720 days.¹²⁹ For actual durations, the mean is around 329 days, with a wider spread indicated by a standard deviation of approximately 449 days. The shortest actual duration is 120 days, and the longest extends to 1,793 days (Cabo Verde). Over a quarter of grants (28%) faced delays longer than a year, and 17% exceeded two years. This suggests that while most grants are planned to last around a year and a half, actual grant duration tends to be longer (and, in some cases, much longer). Indeed, an analysis of 29 readiness grants reveals a widespread issue of implementation delays, with 76% of grants completed behind schedule and an average delay of 329 days (nearly 11 months).

Grant documents indicate that the variability comes from a variety of sources, including unforeseen challenges such as political instability and the COVID-19 pandemic, or limited in country capacity. This is evidence of a lack of efficiency in Readiness Programme implementation with various challenges that are country and contextually specific.

The delays in implementation are also reflected in the rates at which grant funding is fully utilized by grantees. While 79% of grants are completed, only 65% of the total approved

¹²⁹ Antigua and Barbuda

funding has been utilised. Additionally, grants that are yet to be completed or closed tend to be significantly larger in grant size. Interviews with members of the Secretariat highlighted that countries have varied absorptive capacities in relation to the volume of financing, and this may affect the utilization of grant funding. To further illustrate this point, the Readiness Programme portfolio value stands at around US\$ 2.4 million, with completed projects accounting for US\$ 1.56 million and ongoing ones comprising US\$ 0.85 million. The average completed grant amount is US\$ 34,573, while the average ongoing grant is US\$ 142,399 4.12 times larger.

As a group, readiness grants for SIDS were delivered faster and with smaller average grant sizes, an average of US\$ 34,000 compared to an average of US\$ 49,000 for LDCs. Additionally, SIDS complete readiness grants an average of 31 days sooner than LDCs. This efficiency is likely linked to more focused, manageable project scopes characterized by smaller budgets. In contrast, LDCs face persistent implementation challenges that extend grant activity durations. These challenges include limited institutional capacity, staffing constraints, complex fiduciary requirements.¹³⁰ Taken together, this may indicate inefficiencies in implementing larger grants, particularly for LDCs.

Finding 21: The Readiness Programme's ratio of operational budget to grants approved averages around 30% annually. From fiscal years (FY) 2014 to 2025, a total of US\$ 8,571,584 was allocated to the Readiness Programme for operational costs, peaking in 2025 at US\$ 1,289,625 and representing a 176% increase in the operational budget, which has steadily grown at an average of US\$ 47,000 per year. During the same period, 50 readiness grants valued at US\$ 2,410,160 were approved. The average ratio of operational budget to grant amounts approved has is 3:1, although it has ranged from 11:1 in FY2021 to 11:5 in FY2018.

One reason for these ratios may be that the Readiness Programme receives a relatively low volume of proposals, resulting in fewer disbursements overall. Interviews with members of the Secretariat indicated that despite having structured review and approval processes, the limited pipeline of applications restricts the flow of funds and negatively affects the programme's potential reach and impact. Reasons for this low volume of applications may be found in other parts of this report. For example, a preference for other climate finance sources and limited institutional capacities could affect the number of Readiness Programme proposals. In this case, it would make sense for the Adaptation Fund to spend more on outreach and engaging potential beneficiaries of its readiness support, although the use of the budget for such activities cannot be verified with the information provided.

¹³⁰ Adaptation Fund, 2022

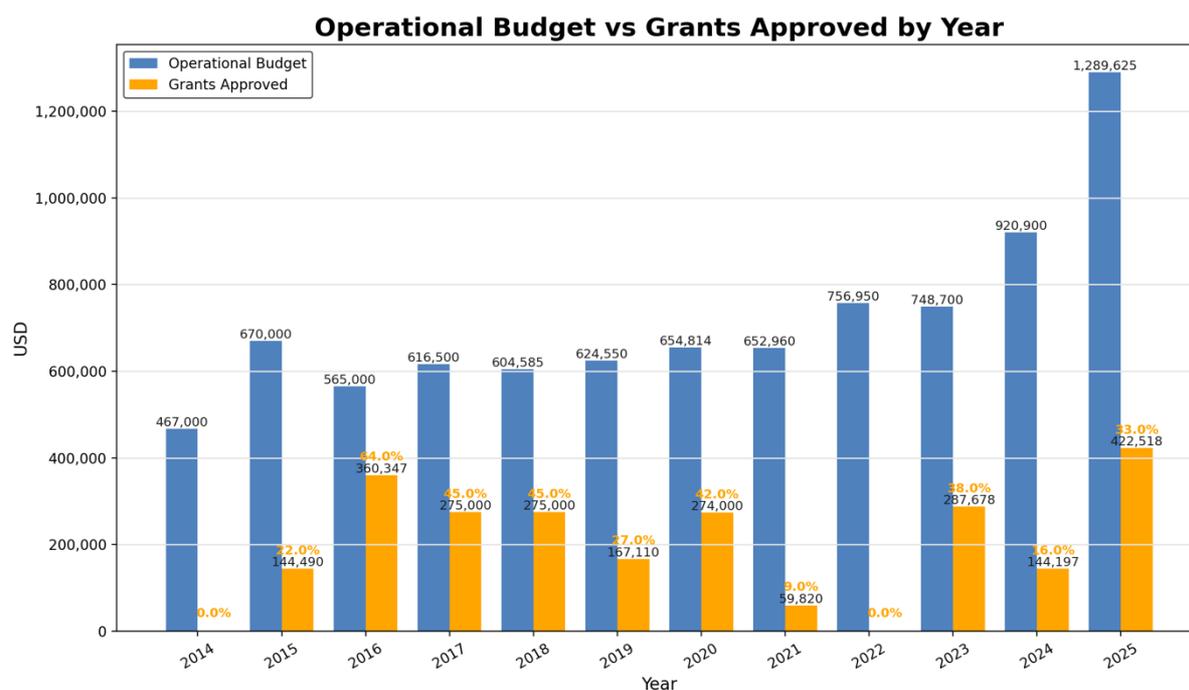


Figure 12: Operational Budget vs Grants approved by year

Finding 22: The AFB has embedded efficiency-oriented reforms to the Readiness Programme in its decisions, emphasising timely and cost-effective processes.

Board decisions reflect a commitment to efficiency within the Readiness Programme, notably Decision B.23/17 (March 2014), which introduced the Streamlined Accreditation Process. This reform aimed to broaden access for smaller countries (particularly LDCs and SIDS), which have limited institutional, technical, and financial capacity to meet the full fiduciary, environmental, and governance standards required for accreditation. Key elements of the reform include:

- **Simplified documentation requirements:** The process reduced the volume and complexity of documentation required for demonstrating fiduciary standards, environmental and social safeguards, and gender policies. This was particularly important for NIEs with limited institutional documentation or formal systems.
- **Flexible evidence standards:** Instead of requiring full institutional policies and audited histories, the streamlined process allowed for alternative forms of evidence (such as internal manuals or simpler financial systems), making it easier for smaller NIEs to meet the criteria.
- **Faster review timelines:** The process was designed to be more efficient in terms of timeline by reducing back-and-forth exchanges and streamlining the review at the Secretariat level. This meant NIEs could move from application to accreditation faster than under the standard route.
- **Capacity-sensitive criteria:** The revised accreditation criteria considered the operational realities and resource constraints of smaller institutions. This reduced the pressure to overhaul systems before applying, thus lowering entry barriers.

Box 2: AFB implications for efficiency

The AFB was intentionally designed with 16 members and 16 alternates, a compact yet representative model that facilitates timely decision-making without sacrificing inclusivity. Established under the authority of the Kyoto Protocol and guided by decisions 1/CMP.3 and 1/CMP.4 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP), the AFB ensures a balanced composition. It includes two representatives from each of the five UN regional groups (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe and Others), as well as one member each from LDCs and SIDS. Additionally, it includes representatives from both Annex I (developed) and non-Annex I (developing) countries, bringing the share of developing country representation to approximately 69%.

This design prioritizes vulnerable countries while avoiding the cumbersome size of other climate finance boards. For instance, the GCF has a 24-member board with equal developed-developing representation, meaning it faces more complex and slower consensus processes. The GEF board includes 32 members, representing developing countries and especially those vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change. These larger boards may be more representative, but they can also affect the speed of decision-making processes. In contrast, the AFB's structure enables faster turnaround on grant approvals, clearer mandate alignment, and more direct engagement with NIEs—a critical feature for the Readiness Programme's effectiveness.

Other decisions have also affected the efficiency of the Readiness Programme. One example is the integration of peer-to-peer support into RPGs following Board Decision B.36/25. This reform simplified fund architecture and ensured that capacity-building efforts through peer learning were embedded into a unified support system—enhancing both efficiency and effectiveness. Under this same decision, the AFB introduced a grant ceiling of US\$ 150,000 for NIEs, which sought to increase the efficiency of each grant by providing for sufficient and strategic readiness support. By focusing on NIEs, it also prevented resource concentration and ensured that support remains broadly accessible. This decision also created a standing grant window, marking a shift toward a more accessible and responsive readiness framework. It allows countries, particularly those with limited capacity, to apply for funding on a rolling basis without waiting for fixed submission windows. This flexibility improved planning horizons for applicants and lowered administrative delays.

Impact

This section explores the extent to which NIEs are likely to achieve impact with regards to the objective of the Readiness Programme, i.e. NIEs have increased access to funding which leads to higher-level positive impact, including increased resilience to climate disasters at the country, national, and regional level. It considers how impactful the Readiness Programme has been in making capacity improvements within IEs and the likely effect of this on long-term impacts. It also examines challenges or opportunities that are likely to be the most impactful going forward to increase the scale of the Readiness Programme's support and, thus, its positive impact.

Finding 23: While the Readiness Programme has increased the capacity of countries to directly access climate finance, there is variability in the degree to which NIEs have been able to translate that capacity into increased climate adaptation project funding.

The overall objective of the Readiness Programme is to increase the capacity of developing countries to directly access climate adaptation finance and to increase their overall capacity to develop and initiate implementation of concrete projects and programmes that increase

the resilience of vulnerable communities to the impacts of climate change.¹³¹ As noted elsewhere in this report, the programme has approved 50 readiness grants since 2014 (as of July 2025), with most grants approved in the years 2016, 2017, and 2020.¹³²

There is evidence that the Readiness Programme has improved the capacity of supported NIEs and has likely contributed to developing successful project proposals. During interviews conducted as part of three case studies with NIEs that have accessed TA grants, two of them described how Readiness Programme trainings increased their capacities to conduct vulnerability assessments and develop an ESM plan which, according to them, led to faster climate adaptation project approvals. Survey respondents from countries that have accessed the Readiness Programme indicated that the programme helped them gain accreditation and develop proposals in addition to improving their technical skills. Project completion reports from country case studies that have accessed the Readiness Programme show that the programme's technical grants have helped NIEs to review and update their policies and guidelines with regards to gender mainstreaming and environment and social safeguard policies, conduct staff trainings, and develop tools (e.g. project screening tools and dashboards that support the detection and management of environmental, gender, and social risks) that could be used for project formulation and implementation or monitoring that is likely to lead to environmentally and socially sound project interventions.^{133, 134, 135, 136} This strengthened their capacity to assess and manage environmental, social, and gender-related issues and also helped ensure compliance with the Adaptation Fund's environmental, social, and gender policies.

These findings demonstrate improved capacity of NIEs and the attainment of Intermediate Outcome 1 (*Increased capacity of NIEs to meet the Fund's fiduciary and accreditation standards (including gender, environment and social risks)*) and Intermediate Outcome 2 (*Increased capacity of accredited national and regional organisations to develop (design) and implement concrete adaptation projects*), as per the evaluation ToC.

Regarding progress towards achieving impact,¹³⁷ while the Readiness Programme has increased the capacity of developing countries to directly access climate finance, this is yet to translate into widespread access of climate adaptation finance through NIEs. As noted elsewhere in this report, there are challenges with converting Readiness Programme support for accreditation into accredited NIEs. Furthermore, of the 41 countries that received 50 Readiness Programme grants, 32 countries (78%) have accessed the Adaptation Fund for adaptation projects while nine countries (22%) have not yet accessed Adaptation Fund financing for climate adaptation. Out of all the countries that have accessed the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme, less than half accessed the Readiness Programme prior to accessing climate financing, and slightly more than half accessed climate financing from the Adaptation Fund first and then sought Readiness support. To summarize, out of the 41 countries that received support from the Readiness programme, four countries had NIEs

¹³¹ Adaptation Fund (2024) 'Annual Performance Report'. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/annual-performance-report-2024/> Accessed on 28 July 2025.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Department of Environment, Antigua and Barbuda (2018) 'Monitoring Report Six Months After Project Inception – Antigua and Barbuda. Adaptation Fund. Bonn, Germany.

¹³⁴ EPIU (n.d.) 'Project Completion Report – Armenia. Adaptation Fund. Bonn, Germany.

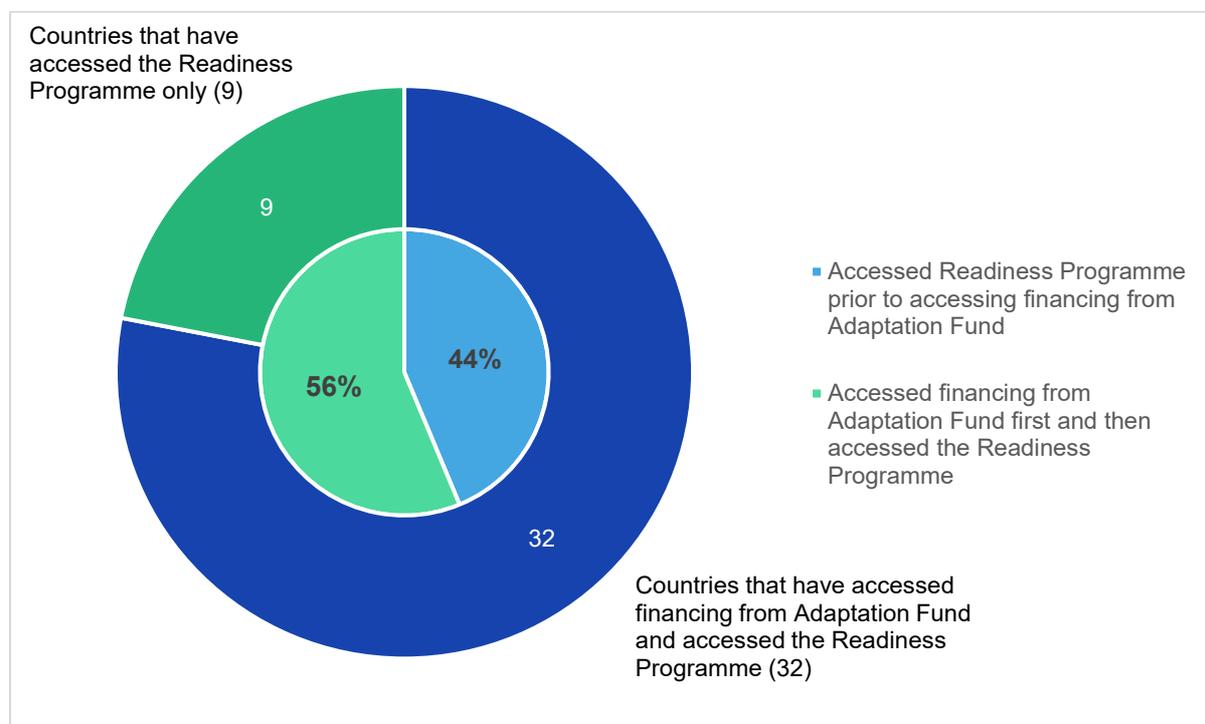
¹³⁵ CSE. (n.d.) 'Project Completion Report – Senegal'. Adaptation Fund. Bonn, Germany.

¹³⁶ EMA (2021) 'Project Completion Report – Zimbabwe'. Adaptation Fund. Bonn, Germany.

¹³⁷ According to the evaluation ToC, the impact of the Readiness Programme is 'Increased capacity within NIEs has increased access to funding expected to lead in the future to higher-level positive impact, included increased resilience to climate disasters at community, national and regional levels.'

accredited after receiving this support and 44% accessed Readiness Programme first and *then* accessed financing from the Adaptation Fund.

Figure 13: Countries that have accessed Readiness Fund and financing from Adaptation Fund



This indicates that while the Readiness Programme has increased technical capacity of countries, and it has a role in facilitating access to climate finance for some countries, this is yet to translate into Adaptation Fund climate financing in most countries. This is reflected in the figure above. However, it is important to note that almost all countries that have received Readiness Programme support have also accessed funds from GCF. 

Furthermore, in relation to achieving the high-level impact of building climate resilience, there is limited evidence that shows support from the Readiness Programme may lead to building resilience at community level. Reports reviewed for two Adaptation Fund projects in two country case studies that have received the Readiness Programme show early indications of community resilience. Based on the Project Completion Report for an Adaptation Fund project in one country case study, efforts through the project appear to have translated into improved arable lands, hay meadows, and pastures; beneficiaries expressing a desire to get seeds and seedlings of new varieties; and interest among beneficiaries in building greenhouses or dryers on their plots.¹³⁸ The Mid-Term Evaluation Report for an Adaptation Fund project in the second country case study that received the Readiness Programme noted that the project's implementation is contributing to creating an enabling environment for climate change adaptation at the national and sub-regional levels through outputs such as feasibility assessments, legislative and regulatory revisions, and

¹³⁸ Project Completion Summary (2024) 'Strengthening land based adaptation capacity in communities adjacent to protected areas in Armenia'.
<https://fifspubprd.azureedge.net/afdocuments/project/4132/Project%20Completion%20Summary.pdf>

progress toward the development of Local Area Plans.¹³⁹ These initiatives illustrate initial efforts to build community resilience from Adaptation Fund projects in countries that have received Readiness Programme support. However, they do not provide definitive support of the connection between the Readiness Programme and these long-term impacts.

Finding 24: Factors at entity and country level such as technical capacity gaps, staff turnover and the broader sociopolitical context (including political will) have played an influential role in the ability to translate Readiness Programme support into new and additional climate adaptation projects.

While knowledge gains have the potential to materialise into good-quality adaptation project proposals that are approved by the AFB to achieve the Readiness Programme's impact of increased resilience at community, national, and regional level, there are challenges inherent at the entity and country level that may affect the Readiness Programme's contribution to long-term impact as outlined in the evaluation ToC. Potential barriers to the achievement of impact noted by those interviewed include staff turnover within NIEs and other relevant entities, which limits capacity gains. This challenge is also noted in the Evaluation of GCF's Readiness Programme.¹⁴⁰ Feedback from a Readiness Programme capacity-building workshop highlights challenges faced by NIEs in writing technical proposals ranging from clearly articulating 'innovation' in a project in a local context that also meets the Adaptation Fund's requirements, to developing an M&E framework aligned with the Adaptation Fund's results framework and budget development, among others.¹⁴¹ This shows that a 'capacity gaps' analysis needs to be conducted prior to conducting capacity building activities as part of readiness. Such an analysis would allow for the development of nuanced and targeted support for NIEs that increases their capacity to develop proposals. Also, mechanisms for the institutionalisation of capacity building need to be developed, including a manual and recordings of trainings that NIE staff can follow independently without having to participate in the capacity-building events. This is likely to enhance the programme's contributions to impact.

There are contextual factors that also affect the ability of the Readiness Programme to contribute to impact. Political will is an enabling factor. The literature documents that lack of political will can be a significant barrier to adaptation.¹⁴² An interview with an NIE from a case study country that received support from the programme noted that political motivation is critical to accessing the Readiness Programme. However, another interview with a DA from a country case study that has accessed the Adaptation Fund but not the Readiness Programme mentioned that if climate change is not a government priority, then there are instances where countries do not access readiness support (for instance, in one case study country where, due to elections, there was a change in priority among the new government, and the country did not move forward with accessing the Readiness Programme).

¹³⁹ Adaptation Fund (2021) Mid-Term Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Programme in Antigua. https://fifspubprd.azureedge.net/afdocuments/project/5192/5192_MTR%20Jan%2021%202021.pdf (accessed on 22 July 2025)

¹⁴⁰ Independent Evaluation Unit (2023) 'Independent Evaluation of the GCF's Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme. Evaluation Report No. 16 (September)'. Songdo, South Korea: Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund.

¹⁴¹ Adaptation Fund (2025) 'Adaptation Fund Readiness Write-shop Survey Brazil (May 2025)'. Bonn, Germany.

¹⁴² Ricci, L., and Mangenot, M. (2023) 'Does Climate Finance Support Institutional Adaptive Capacity in Caribbean Small Island and Developing States? An Analysis of the Green Climate Fund Readiness Grants'. *Climate*, 11(7), 144. <https://doi.org/10.3390/cli11070144>

As noted elsewhere, limited awareness is a major constraint for the Readiness Programme's effectiveness and efficiency, as well as its likely long-term impact. This limited awareness exists among stakeholders in countries that have not received readiness support as well as those that have but were not directly involved in the implementation of the Readiness Programme within the country. This limits these stakeholders' ability to engage with and benefit from the programme, again limiting the likelihood of long-term impacts.

Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

Conclusions

Below are four high-level conclusions identified based on the findings from this evaluation. They are numbered and linked to the associated findings and recommendations in Table 16 below.

Conclusion 1: There is some evidence that the Readiness Programme is supporting Direct Access to climate finance in ways that are relevant to countries' needs and climate-related plans (e.g., NDCs), particularly regarding support for the development of country technical capacities. However, there is variability in the translation of readiness support into NIE accreditation, the inclusion of key groups, and the successful solicitation of climate adaptation project funding. This evaluation has found evidence that the programme has been effective in building the institutional and technical capacities of developing countries in accessing climate finance (both from the Adaptation Fund and the GCF). There is also continued demand for readiness support, including from SIDS and LDCs, indicating a critical role for the Readiness Programme in enhancing access to climate finance among eligible countries. Nonetheless, the limited number of entities achieving NIE accreditation and the variability of translating accreditation and capacity development into climate adaptation projects is important. This finding highlights a potential 'pipeline problem' or persistent gap in the transition from readiness to successful realisation of substantial project funding. It indicates that there are opportunities to further tailor readiness support to individual country contexts, ensuring the increased relevance, efficiency, and impact of the Readiness Programme and the support it provides.

Conclusion 2: The potential value add of Adaptation Fund readiness support is its ease of access as well as the manageable level of grant financing for countries with limited experience and capacity. In this way, the Readiness Programme can act as a stepping stone to more and larger climate adaptation projects. However, this particular value add is often unrealized due to issues with coordination and awareness, leaving the Adaptation Fund's readiness support underutilized. The Readiness Programme's objectives of increasing capacity in developing countries remains relevant, and there is strong evidence that the programme aligns with national needs and has a historical record of adapting its approach based on those needs. Capacity gaps frequently impede countries – and specifically LDCs and SIDS – from effectively accessing and managing climate finance for adaptation. The accessibility of the Readiness Programme, based on the straightforward nature of its application process and smaller grant amounts that are more manageable, is more aligned than other climate finance providers with those limited capacities. This is a key value add for the Fund that should be made the most of, including in collaboration with other climate finance providers. Indeed, there are limited examples of countries using Adaptation Fund readiness in conjunction with other types of readiness support (namely, the GCF) to successfully apply for and receive climate adaptation financing. However, this is not widespread.

Likely barriers are awareness and coordination at the country level as well as the ability to take potentially less burdensome routes to access Adaptation Fund financing (e.g., through MIEs and RIEs). Evaluation findings explicitly identify awareness, for example, as a

significant constraint that directly impedes the Readiness Programme's ability to maximise its scale and overall impact. And while pathways outside of NIEs may result in more immediate project finance, they do not contribute to the Readiness Programme's specific aim of '*cultivating independent national ownership and sustained institutional capabilities.*' The programme's core value lies in its pioneering support for the Direct Access modality, and with more awareness raising and collaboration, the Adaptation Fund can harness this value add to support national entities in building foundational experiences and confidence in managing climate finance, thereby empowering them to access larger funds in the future.

Conclusion 3: The lack of individual country strategies that outline how to take advantage of each Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme component and that are coordinated with other climate readiness providers means that readiness support may not be used as efficiently or effectively as possible. There is a need to further harmonise various climate readiness initiatives.

The evaluation has found that the Readiness Programme is not a vital prerequisite in accessing Adaptation Fund climate financing, and indeed approved readiness grants have declined in recent years. Countries are not effectively making use of the pathway of support provided by Components 3 (accreditation support), 2 (coordination with other climate finance providers), and 1 (technical capacity building). The amounts provided, country capacities, and the ability to access funding through other mechanisms (either MIEs, RIEs, or other climate finance providers) means that Adaptation Fund readiness support is not effectively utilized. Findings also indicate that coordination and awareness of different funds' complementary roles is often lacking at the country level, and country stakeholders may not fully understand how to strategically leverage support across funds. Overall effectiveness and likely impact are also hindered by the inherent complexities in each country.

Taken together, this has contributed to low readiness grant approvals and disbursements. These barriers could be addressed by a more harmonised approach within each country that takes advantage of the Readiness Programme's value add (see Conclusion 2) in conjunction with the needs of different stakeholder groups and the support provided by other climate finance institutions, particularly the GCF. In particular, enhancing awareness and promoting strategic engagement could help the Readiness Programme to better understand institutional structures mandated to achieving adaptation objectives as well as other stakeholder groups that are critical to effectively implementing climate finance in the long-term. A deep understanding of the context-specific climate finance access challenges and various kinds of support provided is vital in ensuring the programme's ability to provide effective and efficient support.

Conclusion 4: There is insufficient evidence to comprehensively assess the efficiency of the Readiness Programme. While its grant approval process is efficient, there are challenges with timely implementation of readiness grants, and the ratio between operational funding and grants approved is generally low.

The evaluation has found that the ratio between the Readiness Programme's operational budget and the grants approved is low (averaging 3:1 or 30%). While this suggests that more strategic resource allocation could be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme, there is insufficient evidence to state this with any degree of certainty given the lack of information available on non-financial activities and their outcomes. Budgetary allocations may relate to either the efficiency of the supply of funds based on the programme's strategy or the efficiency of demand in terms of the relevance of the support provided. In either case, the operational efficiency of the Readiness Programme, particularly concerning how its financial and technical resources are allocated and utilised, holds potential for strategic improvement based on improved monitoring of budget use and outcomes. This could involve, for example,

optimising the allocation of resources to ensure they are directed toward the most pressing and high-impact needs of entities, thereby maximising the overall impact and cost-effectiveness of readiness support.

Overall the Readiness Programme has made strong overall progress in increasing access to climate adaptation finance; however, the findings illustrate that the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and likely impact of the programme could be significantly enhanced through more targeted, localised, and sustained support combined with improved coordination, awareness raising, and knowledge management initiatives. Corresponding recommendations are shared below.

Lessons Learned

This evaluation has resulted in several lessons learned that are not specific to the Readiness Programme but could be useful for the wider Adaptation Fund and climate change adaptation community. It has also resulted in lessons about the evaluation methods and process and the organizational culture within the Adaptation Fund. These numbered lessons learned are described below.

Lesson Learned 1. It is essential that climate finance providers develop tailored engagement strategies for countries and their institutions, and that these strategies include activities to raise awareness about the kinds of climate financing support that is available as well as incorporate coherent approaches that bring together a variety of in-country and wider stakeholders to effectively and efficiently meet countries' climate adaptation needs. The evaluation findings indicate that the effectiveness of climate finance is variable and that, in many cases, this variability corresponds with the different country contexts in which climate finance institutions like the Adaptation Fund operate. Findings also point to important overlaps between climate finance providers, which in some cases result in duplication while in others can be mutually supportive, as well as issues with in-country coordination of key stakeholders (government institutions, civil society, and local communities, to name a few). It is therefore essential that climate finance providers work together and with a broader range of in-country stakeholders to develop coherent strategies to climate adaptation that include roadmaps to making efficient use of the resources available using tailored activities that respond to country needs and reflect the local context.

Lesson Learned 2. While independent or semi-independent evaluations have traditionally been standard, evaluations done outside of programmatic processes can limit data availability and (as a result) the robustness of findings. For learning and strategy development purposes, and to ensure the most effective use of evaluation resources, more consultation and collaboration in evaluation may yield more useful results. The evaluation process was limited due to the inaccessibility of certain stakeholders, both through interviews and the survey, as well as challenges in obtaining key information on the Readiness Programme. While collaboration and coordination with programmatic teams in evaluations can introduce bias, it can also ensure that there is an accurate understanding of the context among evaluation teams, that the full breadth of evidence is accessible, and that the right stakeholders are being reached. Often these programmatic teams have relationships with key stakeholders that can improve access. Additionally, evaluation processes may be duplicative or ill-timed if not done in coordination with programmatic review and strategy development. Therefore, it is important that future evaluations balance accountability objectives that emphasize independence with the need to gather robust evidence and engage with a variety of stakeholders.

Recommendations

This evaluation presents five high-level recommendations. Each is accompanied by suggested practical options to support effective implementation. Collectively, these five recommendations address key strategic and operational aspects of the Readiness Programme, aiming to inform the update and finalization of the enhanced readiness programme strategy. Implementing these five recommendations is expected to result in a more strategic, impactful, expanded, and streamlined programme, better adapted to the unique challenges, priorities, and capacities of Adaptation Fund-eligible countries, stakeholders, and recipients. These recommendations acknowledge the programme's significant improvements and iterative adaptations since its initiation in 2014, leveraging its increasingly solid foundations as well as recognising and unlocking its greater potential.

Recommendation 1. The Readiness Programme should further sharpen its value added, particularly regarding the ways in which its various components are designed to support countries as well as in relation to other readiness providers. This value added should be outlined in the new Readiness Programme strategy and communicated clearly and widely, ensuring that relevant stakeholders are aware of, know and understand how to access Adaptation Fund readiness support. Such a value added could be based on the accessibility of the programme for countries with limited experience or capacities, positioning it as a stepping stone. This would necessitate further tailoring of support to ensure its effectiveness, particularly regarding accreditation support. (*strategic*)

To address this recommendation, the Readiness Programme may consider optimizing support across countries and contexts, strengthening communication on its unique value proposition, and broadening the readiness criteria to include DAs and other stakeholders. (*high priority*)

Recommendation 2. In developing its new strategy, the Readiness Programme should clearly outline in its theory of change (in development) the specific value added of the programme, intended causal pathways for its use, and associated ways to track implementation, outcomes, and feedback from stakeholders. The AF-TERG could support this process. This would ensure that any gaps are identified early and that adaptations can be made to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and likely impact of the programme. (*strategic*)

To address this recommendation, the Readiness Programme may consider strengthening collaboration with AF-TERG to improve monitoring of the readiness's influence on accreditation, enhancing transparency of accreditation data, and scaling up peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing. (*medium priority*)

Recommendation 3. The Readiness Programme should strengthen its coordination with countries (and their institutions) as well as with other climate finance institutions. This could be achieved by aligning support more closely with national climate priorities and that capitalise on the unique value adds of different institutions. Improved communication and information dissemination would ensure that key in-country stakeholders are aware of the support that is available and being provided and that synergies are amplified and any overlap between climate readiness providers is addressed. (*operational*)

To address this recommendation, the Readiness Programme may consider enhancing stakeholder engagement and dialogue, bettering the understanding of the in-country institutional arrangements, power dynamics, and challenges and strengthening of

partnerships and coordination mechanisms with other Multilateral Climate Funds to reduce duplication and enhance complementary. (*medium priority*)

Recommendation 4. The Readiness Programme should consider ways in which to provide more tailored support to countries seeking NIE accreditation and/or climate adaptation financing. This would help ensure that readiness support translates into actual accreditation and secured funding in a timely manner. Such support could also clarify the complementary roles of different climate finance institutions, thereby maximizing resource efficiency and improving the relevance of support provided. (*operational*)

To address this recommendation, the Readiness team may consider enhancing alignment between readiness activities and national climate priorities and in-country stakeholder needs, strengthening capacity building and mentorship for enhanced effectiveness of readiness funding and improved learning over time, and better integration of gender and social inclusion through context-specific support. (*medium priority*)

Recommendation 5. The Secretariat, with support from the AF-TERG, should consider embedding mechanisms to systematically track efficiency in the enhanced Readiness Strategy that is currently being developed. This would enable the Readiness Programme to monitor how different types of support are being converted into results, identify what works best, and refine its approach over time. (*operational and high priority*)

These recommendations are mapped to the conclusions and findings in the table below.

Table 16: Map of Findings, Conclusions, & Recommendations

Conclusion	Associated Findings	Recommendations
<p>1. There is some evidence that the Readiness Programme is supporting Direct Access to climate finance in ways that are relevant to countries' needs and climate-related plans (e.g., NDCs), particularly regarding support for the development of country technical capacities. However, there is variability in the translation of readiness support into NIE accreditation, the inclusion of key groups, and the successful solicitation of climate adaptation project funding. This indicates that there are opportunities to further tailor readiness support to individual country contexts, ensuring the increased relevance, efficiency, and impact of the Readiness Programme.</p>	<p>Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 23, 24</p>	<p>R2. In developing its new strategy, the Readiness Programme should clearly outline in its theory of change (in development) the specific value added of the programme, intended causal pathways for its use, and associated ways to track implementation, outcomes, and feedback from stakeholders. The AF-TERG could support this process. This would ensure that any gaps are identified early and that adaptations can be made to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and likely impact of the programme.</p> <p>R4. The Readiness Programme should consider ways in which to provide more tailored support to countries seeking NIE accreditation and/or climate adaptation financing. This would help ensure that readiness support translates into actual accreditation and secured funding in a timely manner. Such support could also clarify the complementary roles of different climate finance institutions, thereby maximizing resource efficiency and improving the relevance of support provided</p>
<p>2. The potential value add of Adaptation Fund readiness support is its ease of access as well as the manageable level of grant financing for countries with limited experience and capacity. In this way, the Readiness Programme can act as a stepping stone to more and larger climate adaptation projects. However, this particular value add is often unrealized due to issues with coordination and awareness, leaving the Fund underutilized.</p>	<p>Findings 1, 9, 11, 12, 18, 19, 22</p>	<p>R1. The Readiness Programme should further sharpen its value added, particularly regarding the ways in which its various components are designed to support countries as well as in relation to other readiness providers. This value added should be outlined in the new Readiness Programme strategy and communicated clearly and widely, ensuring that relevant stakeholders are aware of, know and understand how to access Adaptation Fund readiness support. Such a value added could be based on the accessibility of the programme for countries with limited experience or capacities, positioning it as a stepping stone. This would necessitate further tailoring of</p>

Conclusion	Associated Findings	Recommendations
		support to ensure its effectiveness, particularly regarding accreditation support.
<p>3. The lack of individual country strategies that outline how to take advantage of each Readiness Programme component and are coordinated with other climate readiness providers means that readiness support may not be used as efficiently or effectively as possible. There is a need to further harmonise various climate readiness initiatives.</p>	<p>Findings 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 21, 23, 24</p>	<p>R3. The Readiness Programme should strengthen its coordination with countries (and their institutions) as well as with other climate finance institutions. This could be achieved by aligning support more closely with national climate priorities and that capitalise on the unique value adds of different institutions. Improved communication and information dissemination would ensure that key in-country stakeholders are aware of the support that is available and being provided and that synergies are amplified and any overlap between climate readiness providers is addressed.</p>
<p>4. There is insufficient evidence to comprehensively assess the efficiency of the Readiness Programme. While its grant approval process is efficient, there are challenges with timely implementation of readiness grants, and it is unclear what a majority of the Readiness Programme budget is used for.</p>	<p>Findings 18, 19, 20, 21</p>	<p>R5. The Secretariat, with support from the AF-TERG, should consider embedding mechanisms to systematically track efficiency in the enhanced Readiness Strategy that is currently being developed. This would enable the Readiness Programme to monitor how different types of support are being converted into results, identify what works best, and refine its approach over time.</p>

Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Questions	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders
Evaluation Criteria: RELEVANCE¹⁴³			
1. To what extent is the Readiness Programme strategically focused to address the needs and priorities of targeted stakeholders, including national implementing entities, and developing countries (LDCs and SIDS)?	1.1. To what extent is the Readiness Programme aligned to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national climate adaptation needs - the AF Medium-Term Strategy - the UNFCCC climate finance priorities, including guidance from the CM and the CMA¹⁴⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth understanding of in-country stakeholder needs</i>) • Landscape Analysis • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation Fund (AF) Board and Secretariat • NIEs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners • Accreditation Panel Members • DAs • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • Private sector and CSOs • South-South Cooperation Participants
	1.2. To what extent was the design of the Readiness Programme, its grants, the three components, and consecutive adjustments informed by credible evidence on the capacity building needs of NIEs of developing countries so that they can access climate finance, implement adaptation projects, and build resilience to address climate conditions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth understanding of in-country capacity needs and how that evidence has been gathered</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • AF In country partners and stakeholders • NIEs • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • Private sector and CSOs • DAs

¹⁴³ As per Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund, ‘Relevance’ is defined as 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.

¹⁴⁴ Parties to the Paris Agreement

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Questions	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders
	<p>1.3. To what extent has the Readiness Programme responded to evolving needs and priorities of NIEs to ensure its continued relevance over time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>examples of Readiness Programme responsiveness to in-country stakeholders</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • NIEs • Government Representatives • DAs • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs • South-South Cooperation Participants
	<p>1.4. To what extent is the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme an important pre-requisite for accessing the Adaptation Fund for countries to meet their adaptation needs and build resilience?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and secretariat • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs • South-South Cooperation Participants
	<p>1.5. To what extent do the design and implementation of Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme's projects include inputs of the designated authority (DA) and vulnerable groups as per Adaptation Fund's ESP and gender policy? What challenges exist to reaching a diversity of vulnerable stakeholders?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Panel • AF Board and secretariat • DAs • IEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs
	<p>1.6. <i>What strategies, approaches, and tools can the Readiness Programme use going forward to ensure that it is adaptive and stays relevant to evolving stakeholder needs such as of IEs and developing countries?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>to gather concrete, in-country recommendations from a variety of stakeholders</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and secretariat • Accreditation Panel • Private sector and CSOs • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Questions	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Analysis • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar Organizations (GEF, GCF, UNFCCC Capacity building Team) • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
Evaluation Criteria: COHERENCE¹⁴⁵			
<p>2. To what extent is the Readiness Programme of AF compatible with other similar programmes within a country, sector, or institution?</p>	<p>2.1. To what extent is the AF Readiness Programme complementary to other existing readiness programmes and successfully cooperated and coordinated with them? What roles does the Programme play in comparison to other, similar programmes and <i>what is its value add</i>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>exploring how these countries have engaged with other programmes</i>) • Landscape Analysis • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and secretariat • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners • Similar Organizations (GEF, GCF, UNFCCC Capacity building Team) • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
	<p>2.2. To what extent do the small grants under the Readiness Programme and its three components complement each other?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>looking at countries with multiple components to understand complementarity</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Accreditation Panel • AF Board • AF In-country partners & stakeholders • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • South-South Cooperation Participants
	<p>2.3. <i>What synergies or partnerships can the Readiness Programme amplify going forward to achieve its objectives and improve its value add?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>recommendations and learnings from in-country examples</i>) • Landscape Analysis • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation Fund Board and Secretariat • CSOs • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners

¹⁴⁵ According to the Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund, ‘Coherence’ is defined as the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Questions	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar Organizations (GEF, GCF, UNFCCC Capacity building Team) • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • South-South Cooperation participants
Evaluation Criteria: EFFECTIVENESS¹⁴⁶			
<p>3. To what extent has the Readiness Programme achieved its objectives of (a) increase in preparedness of applicant national implementing entities seeking accreditation by the Adaptation Fund and (b) increase the number of high-quality project/programme proposals submitted to the Board after accreditation?</p>	<p>3.1. To what extent has the Readiness Programme through its Component 1 ‘Support and accreditation to IEs’ strengthened IEs capacity to design, develop and implement adaptation projects/programmes and comply with AF’s policies, particularly ESP and Gender policies to receive climate financing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth understanding of how this process works and results in a specific country</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • Accreditation Panel • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs • Accreditation Panel
	<p>3.2. To what extent has the Readiness Programme through its Component 2 ‘Cooperation/Partnership with Climate Finance Readiness Providers’ enhanced capacity building for project development, monitoring and evaluation by accredited entities and entities seeking accreditation with the Fund for climate finance and climate change adaptation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth understanding of how this process works and results in a specific country</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs • South-South Cooperation Participants • Accreditation Panel
	<p>3.3. To what extent has the Readiness Programme through its Component 3 ‘Support to Countries Seeking Accreditation’ encouraged use of Direct Access and increase the capacity of national implementing entities to meet the Fund’s fiduciary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth understanding of how this process works and results a specific country</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Project & Programme Officers • AF Board • AF In-country partners & stakeholders • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs

¹⁴⁶ As per Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund, ‘Effectiveness’ the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Questions	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders
	standards and comply with policies of the Fund for e.g. Gender and ESP?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAs • Accreditation Panel
	3.4. <i>What are the important enabling and disabling factors for the Readiness Programme’s success, and how can the Adaptation Fund address or build on these in the future?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth understanding of factors in specific countries that can be explored more broadly</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • Accreditation Panel • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • Private sector and CSOs
	3.5. To what extent have the interventions supported by the Readiness Programmes reduced or perpetuated inequalities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Panel • AF Board and Secretariat • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • CSOs • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
	3.6. <i>What strategies or approaches can the Readiness Programme use going forward to increase the level of equity in its support?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • Accreditation Panel • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
Evaluation Criteria: EFFICIENCY¹⁴⁷			
4. To what extent is the Readiness Programme cost effective and timely without consuming unnecessary time and resources?	4.1 To what extent has the Readiness Programme been implemented efficiently by the secretariat, both in terms of cost and timeliness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>exploring efficiencies within the country</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation Fund Board and Secretariat • Accreditation Panel • AF In country partners and stakeholders • NIEs

¹⁴⁷ According to the Evaluation Policy of the Adaptation Fund, ‘Efficiency’ refers to – the extent that the intervention is cost effective and timely and does not consume unnecessary time and resources.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Questions	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders
		<i>context and factors that affect this)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
	4.2 To what extent has the Readiness programme's support been timely and cost-efficient for and from the perspective of NIEs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>detailed feedback from in-country stakeholders</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation Fund Board and Secretariat • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
	4.3 <i>What are some of the challenges that the Readiness Programme faces in terms of efficiency? In what ways can the Readiness Programme improve its efficiency in support of achieving its objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>contextually specific recommendations from in-country stakeholders</i>) • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation Fund Board and Secretariat • DAs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
Evaluation criteria: IMPACT¹⁴⁸			
5. To what extent has the Readiness Programme generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, higher-level Impact i.e. of increased capacity of NIEs that leads to positive impact including increased resilience to climate disasters at the	5.1 How impactful (intended/unintended) has the Readiness Programme been in making capacity improvements within the implementing entities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth exploration of capacity changes in-country</i>) • Landscape Analysis • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • NIEs • DAs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners • Similar Organizations (GEF, GCF, UNFCCC Capacity building Team) • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs • South-South Cooperation Participants

¹⁴⁸ According to the Evaluation Policy of Adaptation Fund, 'Impact' is defined as the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-Questions	Data methods and sources	Stakeholders
community, national and regional level'	<p><i>5.2. What strategies are likely to be the most effective going forward to increase the scale of the Readiness Programme's support?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies • Landscape Analysis • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and secretariat • DAs • CSOs • NIEs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners • Similar Organizations (GEF, GCF, UNFCCC Capacity building Team) • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers
	<p><i>5.3. In what ways could it improve its approach and increase the likelihood of impact related to implementing entity capacity?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews • Case studies (<i>in-depth exploration of capacity changes in-country</i>) • Landscape Analysis • Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AF Board and Secretariat • NIEs • DAs • Government Representatives • Other Climate Finance Readiness Partners • Similar Organizations (GEF, GCF, UNFCCC Capacity building Team) • Fund Portfolio Managers/Officers • CSOs • South-South Cooperation Participants

Landscape Analysis of climate readiness and support programmes

As countries grapple with the complex task of translating climate ambition into action, readiness programmes have emerged as essential building blocks for effective climate finance access and delivery. These programmes aim to equip national systems (particularly in developing and vulnerable countries) with the tools, skills, and institutional capacity needed to plan, access, and manage climate finance. While their goals are broadly aligned, the way each programme defines and operationalises ‘readiness’ differs widely.

This analysis explores key trends, overlaps, and differences across major readiness and capacity-building initiatives, structured around several dimensions: programme objectives, thematic focus, geographic scope, types of support, funding arrangements, readiness-specific support, and the potential for coherence.

Programme objectives

The primary aim of readiness programmes and initiatives is to strengthen national capacities to address climate finance gaps and improve access to funding for climate resilience. However, the nature and emphasis of this objective vary by organisation.

The Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Programme is designed to build capacity for direct access to climate finance and strengthen institutional systems, particularly for NIEs. Its objectives centre around enabling countries to formulate projects, navigate accreditation processes, and implement adaptation solutions aligned with national priorities. The focus is on resilience building, institutional empowerment, and country ownership.

The GCF’s readiness objective is broader and more strategically positioned. It aims to strengthen institutional capacity, governance, and planning systems, with a specific focus on NDAs and Direct Access Entities (DAEs). Its ultimate goal is to support a paradigm shift toward low-emission, climate-resilient development. This includes support for NAPs, NDCs, long-term strategies, private sector engagement, and country programming. Compared to the Adaptation Fund, GCF readiness support takes a more comprehensive approach addressing both mitigation and adaptation.

The GEF’s support is oriented around fulfilling countries’ obligations under the UNFCCC, including national communications, vulnerability assessments, and adaptation planning. While not branded as a ‘readiness programme’, these enabling activities provide foundational capacity for countries to engage in climate planning and access finance. The GEF focuses less on direct access or project pipeline development and more on compliance, reporting, and long-term national planning frameworks.

GIZ’s Climate Finance Readiness Programme (CF Ready), which is funded primarily by the German government, focuses on building national capacity for climate finance readiness and governance. Its objectives include supporting countries in accessing funds (especially from the GCF), enhancing financial governance, and integrating climate policy into development strategies. Unlike the Adaptation Fund or GCF, GIZ does not manage a centralised fund but provides TA and institutional support, often in collaboration with local governments. The

emphasis is on tailored technical cooperation and policy support for implementing the Paris Agreement, harnessing innovation, and identifying low-carbon local development opportunities.

JICA's climate support is embedded within its broader Official Development Assistance framework. While it does not manage a readiness fund, JICA contributes to climate readiness by offering technical cooperation, concessional loans, and grants. It helps enhance a country's readiness to access climate funds (especially the GCF) by helping countries strengthen the systems and infrastructure needed for climate resilience and low-carbon development. The approach is highly bilateral and development focused, with climate readiness often a secondary objective integrated into larger development-focused work.

MDBs – including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – play a critical role in scaling climate finance and delivering transformational impact. While they do not have formal readiness programmes, their objectives include mobilising climate finance, providing policy support, and building institutional capacity for both mitigation and adaptation. Readiness is embedded within broader investment operations, including project preparation, TA, and advisory services. MDBs also serve as implementing agencies for the Adaptation Fund, GCF, and GEF, thereby influencing multiple readiness pathways.

The NDC Partnership operates as a facilitator and accelerator of climate action. Its objective is to fast-track implementation of NDCs and related plans, especially in vulnerable countries, by providing TA and pooled funding. It focuses on coordination, action planning, and filling institutional or technical gaps, often working with ministries of finance, the environment, and planning. The Partnership plays a key role in aligning support across actors but does not manage its own fund.

The Paris Committee on Capacity-Building (PCCB) was established to identify and address systemic gaps in climate-related capacity building. Its objective is to ensure that efforts by different actors are coherent, sustainable, and aligned with the needs of developing countries. Unlike many other funding programmes, the PCCB supports institutional architecture, knowledge sharing, and coordination. It plays a meta-role, supporting the effectiveness and sustainability of other readiness efforts through standards setting and monitoring.

The objectives of readiness programmes as well as bilateral and multilateral aid is to improve countries' readiness. Some funds treat it as a central mission (e.g. the Adaptation Fund and GCF), while others embed it within broader mandates related to development cooperation, environmental compliance, or financial scaling.

Thematic focus

Across the climate readiness landscape, several core thematic areas emerge. While each fund or initiative tailors its focus based on its institutional mandate and delivery model, there is substantial thematic convergence.

- **Direct Access and accreditation support**

Readiness programmes aim to build the capacity of national institutions to directly access and manage climate finance. The Adaptation Fund and GCF are unique in institutionalising

direct access; others emphasise broader institutional readiness rather than accreditation pathways.

The Adaptation Fund provides targeted support to NIEs for accreditation, project formulation, and post-accreditation institutional strengthening. Similarly, the GCF RPSP supports DAEs and NDAs, offering technical assistance on strategic frameworks, accreditation, and governance. GIZ also contributes by working with institutions to enhance their capacity to access funds, particularly the GCF, although it does not provide finance directly. MDBs, GEF, and JICA are less focused on direct access; instead, they often act as implementing agencies themselves or embed support within broader programming.

- **Adaptation and resilience building**

All readiness programmes acknowledge the importance of adaptation, but their depth and mechanisms vary. For instance, the Adaptation Fund is entirely adaptation focused, supporting national adaptation priorities, project pipelines, and institutional capacity to plan and implement adaptation actions. The GCF readiness framework balances adaptation and mitigation, but provides significant support for NAP development, mainstreaming, and institutional resilience. The GEF supports adaptation planning and reporting through enabling activities, with a strong emphasis on foundational readiness.

The MDBs finance large-scale adaptation investments, often building on the planning work supported by others. GIZ and JICA provide sectoral adaptation support, especially in agriculture, coastal protection, infrastructure, and health. The NDC Partnership supports the integration of adaptation into NDCs and national planning, filling technical and coordination gaps.

Adaptation is, thus, a unifying theme across all readiness programmes as well as donor agencies, although only the Adaptation Fund focuses exclusively on it. Others integrate adaptation within broader climate and development efforts.

- **Strategic planning and investment pipeline development**

Many readiness initiatives focus on helping countries develop strategic frameworks and bankable project pipelines. GCF readiness leads this space with a strong emphasis on country programming, investment plans, and private sector engagement. It dedicates a portion of its funding specifically to pipeline development. Adaptation Fund readiness also supports project formulation to build pipelines aligned with national adaptation priorities.

The MDBs integrate investment planning into broader lending and advisory services, often co-financing feasibility studies or de-risking investments. GIZ offers planning support through tools like ClIF Reflect, focusing on country-led diagnostics and capacity self-assessment. NDC Partnership helps countries align NDCs with investment priorities, often through Climate Investment Plans and support for sectoral costing.

- **Knowledge management and peer learning**

Readiness involves not just building technical skills, but also fostering institutional learning, promoting knowledge exchange, and supporting long-term capacity development. The Adaptation Fund has a strong track record in supporting South–South learning, peer exchange, and knowledge products. The GCF also allocates part of its readiness funds to

knowledge sharing and learning, as well as to fostering partnerships within and across countries.

UNFCCC Capacity Building (via the PCCB) is a global platform explicitly focused on system-wide learning, capacity assessments, and avoiding duplication. GIZ, JICA, and the NDC Partnership integrate knowledge management into technical support, particularly around climate finance governance and sectoral mainstreaming. GEF's enabling activities build knowledge mainly through UNFCCC reporting instruments, which also inform national planning and programming. While knowledge management is widely valued, it varies in emphasis, from structured platforms (e.g. PCCB) to embedded learning within bilateral or project support.

- **Private sector engagement and low-carbon development**

Although readiness programmes have historically focused on public sector capacity, there is growing attention to engaging the private sector and promoting low-emission development. GCF readiness support is at the forefront, aiming to create enabling environments for private investment, especially in energy and infrastructure. GIZ and JICA support low-carbon strategies and sectoral decarbonisation, often through technical advice, early-stage project design, and measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems. MDBs mobilise private finance at scale using blended finance, guarantees, and policy-based lending, although this typically falls under implementation rather than readiness per se. The GEF focuses more on public institutions but promotes innovation and low-emission planning through its climate focal areas. NDC Partnership encourages countries to include private sector enabling reforms in their NDC implementation frameworks. So, while the GCF and MDBs lead in financing and enabling private sector engagement, others contribute by strengthening governance, policies, and pipelines.

- **Transparency, safeguards, and cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender and social inclusion)**

Some readiness programmes also prioritise environmental and social safeguards, transparency, and gender-sensitive programming. The Adaptation Fund integrates gender policy and environmental and social safeguards and emphasises accountability through its governance and project cycle. The GCF embeds similar cross-cutting principles, with a strong focus on transparency, results-based management, and inclusive planning. The GEF follows UNFCCC guidelines, especially in reporting and MRV. GIZ, JICA, and the MDBs apply safeguard systems in line with international standards but vary in how these are implemented in readiness versus project phases.

While safeguards and inclusion are increasingly mainstreamed, the level of enforcement and dedicated support varies. The Adaptation Fund and GCF have the most explicit frameworks.

Geographic scope

All readiness providers target developing countries, but their footprint and focus vary. The Adaptation Fund tends to work closely with countries that pursue direct access through NIEs, often in regions with lower capacity, such as SIDS and LDCs. Similarly, GCF readiness prioritises LDCs and SIDS, but its broader mandate and higher funding ceiling enable it to operate in a wider range of countries through NDAs and DAEs. The GEF's enabling activities are accessible globally through focal points and delivery agencies.

The MDBs have the widest geographic reach, working across all developing regions with regional banks like the ADB, AfDB, and IDB tailoring their support. The NDC Partnership responds to country demand, often engaging where government commitment to NDC implementation is high. GIZ and JICA, while also global in scope, are often guided by bilateral relationships and their respective government's development priorities.

Geographic overlap is common, particularly in climate-vulnerable countries, underscoring the need for better coordination to avoid duplication and ensure coherent sequencing of support.

Types of support provided

The climate readiness landscape comprises a range of programmes offering varied forms of support aligned to their institutional mandates and strategic goals. While most programmes focus on capacity building and TA, others extend into planning, coordination, and, in some cases, early-stage project preparation or financial facilitation. Based on a comparative review, readiness support can be characterised as falling under the following categories:

- **Institutional capacity development and strategic planning**

Several programmes prioritise strengthening national institutions, policy frameworks, and climate governance systems. This includes support for accreditation, strategic planning processes (e.g. NAPs and NDCs), and the development of Climate Investment Plans. The Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme provides targeted grants for NIE accreditation, institutional strengthening, and project formulation. It also supports country programming to identify and develop adaptation pipelines. The GCF RPSP focuses on strengthening NDAs and DAEs, development of NAPs and NDCs, and country-driven investment planning. It has recently moved to a multi-year programming approach to support more structured and sustained engagement. GIZ, through CF Ready, supports institutional diagnostics, capacity self-assessments, and TA tailored to countries' GCF access goals. It does not provide direct funding but operates through technical cooperation agreements. The GEF and PCCB also provide support for climate-related capacity building and enabling activities in developing countries.

These forms of support are foundational for national climate governance, enabling countries to articulate priorities, develop access strategies, and build institutional readiness for engaging with climate finance mechanisms.

- **TA and policy support**

Several readiness providers focus on technical expertise, analytical tools, and sector-specific planning, often as part of broader development cooperation programmes. The GEF supports enabling activities such as national communications, biennial reports, and adaptation planning under the UNFCCC. While not branded as a readiness programme, this support helps countries meet international commitments and serves as a platform for future financing.

JICA and GIZ contribute TA for low-carbon development, sectoral adaptation strategies, and MRV systems. Their work is typically delivered through long-term bilateral partnerships and often supports countries in aligning sector policies with climate objectives. MDBs provide technical advisory services, institutional diagnostics, and policy-based lending that frequently

include climate readiness components. These are usually integrated within broader development finance or infrastructure programmes.

These forms of support are often embedded within country engagement strategies and are aligned with national development plans. While they may not be framed explicitly as 'readiness', they provide essential capabilities for implementation.

- **Project preparation and pipeline development**

Some readiness efforts extend to early-stage project development and investment pipeline support, helping countries progress from strategy to implementation. The GCF RPSP includes dedicated support for investment pipeline development, helping NDAs and DAEs prepare project concept notes and align pipelines with GCF investment criteria. Countries can also work with pre-qualified delivery partners to advance project preparation. The Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme supports project formulation grants that enable accredited NIEs to prepare detailed proposals for submission to the Fund.

MDBs also provide project preparation facilities and advisory services to assist governments in developing bankable proposals. Their role in readiness is often integrated within infrastructure finance, with support extending to feasibility studies and risk assessments.

While project preparation support is not uniformly provided across all readiness programmes, where it exists it plays a critical role in linking upstream planning with downstream access to climate finance.

- **Coordination, knowledge sharing, and partnership facilitation**

Certain initiatives focus on facilitating coordination among stakeholders, supporting knowledge exchange, and strengthening the coherence of climate planning and delivery.

The NDC Partnership, co-hosted by WRI and UNOPS, provides demand-driven TA, coordination, and pooled funding to respond to country requests for NDC implementation support. It also plays a convening role by aligning development partner activities with national priorities.

The UNFCCC Capacity Building Framework, particularly through the PCCB, supports efforts to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of capacity-building activities. It does not implement readiness support directly but plays an important role in institutional mapping and information sharing.

These mechanisms enhance visibility, reduce duplication, and improve alignment across the readiness landscape. They also support countries in identifying available support and building partnerships around shared climate goals.

Funding architecture

Funding for readiness varies not only in size but also in how predictable and accessible it is to countries. Only a few readiness programmes provide dedicated funding envelopes with clearly defined country allocations; most others rely on project-based proposals, bilateral arrangements, or donor negotiations.

The Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme offers small, targeted grants, generally up to US\$ 150,000, for the accreditation of NIEs. While modest in scale, Adaptation Fund readiness grants are highly focused, filling key institutional gaps. In contrast, the GCF RPSP has evolved into one of the most structured and well-funded readiness mechanisms. Countries can access up to US\$ 1 million annually for readiness, and up to US\$ 3 million for NAP development. The recent shift to a four-year programming cycle has helped improve predictability and reduce transaction costs. This shift reflects growing recognition that institutional development takes time and requires sustained support.

The GEF, through its enabling activities and trust funds like the Special Climate Change Fund, Least Developed Countries Fund, and Capacity-Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT), provides grants typically in the US\$ 1–2 million range for projects furthering National Adaptation Programmes of Action priorities and sectors. CBIT supports the transparency and accountability pillars of the Paris Agreement.¹⁴⁹

Bilateral actors like GIZ and JICA generally do not offer direct funding windows. Instead, they provide TA, grants, or policy advisory services through negotiated country programmes. Support is often embedded in broader development assistance frameworks, which may or may not be framed as climate finance. MDBs provide huge funding for climate action to recipient countries through various financial instruments like loans, grants, equity, guarantees (de-risking investments), and large-scale and blended finance. Although they do not have a standalone readiness programme, readiness elements are often embedded within TA grants, project preparation facilities, or policy-based lending.

Finally, the NDC Partnership provides pooled funding and coordination support, while UNFCCC Capacity Building focuses more on knowledge than direct funding. As a result, many countries face fragmentation of resources, with multiple sources of support that do not always align in timing, focus, or scope.

Readiness-specific support

While many programmes contribute to readiness, few offer dedicated readiness pathways. This makes the Adaptation Fund and GCF unique. The Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme is structured around readiness as a distinct entry point, especially for countries with limited institutional capacity. Its support spans from accreditation preparation to post-accreditation institutional strengthening and pipeline development. Importantly, it focuses on direct access, making it highly relevant for countries seeking greater ownership of their climate portfolios.

The GCF's RPSP is similarly well defined but broader in scope. It covers DAEs, NDAs, and national systems, supporting strategic frameworks, NAPs/NDCs, and project development. Recent updates have expanded the programme's flexibility, enabling countries to design multi-year strategies and tap into pre-qualified delivery partners.

Other programmes, such as those led by the GEF, GIZ, or MDBs, support readiness indirectly. They often contribute through sectoral planning, governance reform, or public investment frameworks, but these are not always labelled or structured as 'readiness'. UNFCCC Capacity Building and the NDC Partnership fill critical gaps by providing

¹⁴⁹ For further information on CBIT, see:

<https://ndcpartnership.org/knowledge-portal/climate-funds-explorer/capacity-building-initiative-transparency-cbit#:~:text=Under%20Paragraph%2084%20of%20the,Co%2Dfinancing%20Requirement%20Details>

coordination, knowledge sharing, and alignment with global frameworks, but without direct financial mechanisms or a consolidated programme structure.

Stakeholders Interviewed

Country	Name	Title	Organization
Grenada	Martin Barriteau	CF Advisor	Climate Change Ministry in Grenada
Grenada	Mr Titus Antoine	Director	Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy
Grenada	Mr Trevor Thompson	Land Use Officer	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Kiribati	Mrs Ruth Phillips	Director Climate Finance Division	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
Trinidad and Tobago	Kennethia Douglas	Senior Programme Manager	Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development
Fiji	1. Leba Gaunavinaka,	Common Sensing Country Coordinator	Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment & Climate Change
	Ravneeth Dewan. Principal Climate Finance Officer, Head of Unit-Finance,	Principal Climate Finance Officer, Head of Unit-Finance,	Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment & Climate Change
	Matereti Mateiwai	– Adaptation Officer -1, Head of Unit – Adaptation	Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment & Climate Change
Indonesia	Nathalie Andre:	Regional Adaptation Lead;	Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)
Indonesia	Phonesavanh Latmany (Ki)	Climate Finance Lead	Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)
Fiji	Deepa Pullanikkatil	Commonwealth Climate Finance	Climate Change Division, Ministry of Environment & Climate Change

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Country	Name	Title	Organization
		Advisor to Government of Fiji	
Ethiopia	Mr. Mohammed Andoshe Faynet	Head, Environment and Climate Change Planning Implementation & Coordination Division; Lead Negotiator of Climate Change	Ministry of Planning and Development, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
Indonesia	Ms. Eva Kusuma Sundari;	Executive Board Members/	Partnership for Governance Reform (Kemitraan)
Indonesia	Abimanyu Sasongko Aji	Acting Executive Director	Partnership for Governance Reform (Kemitraan)
Indonesia	Ir. Laksmi Dewanthi;	Senior Advisor to the Minister of Environment; Board Member of the Indonesia Environmental Fund (BPDLH)	Ministry of Environment
Indonesia	Ms. Dian Ariestyowati;	Deputy on Climate Change; Ministry of the Environment	Ministry of Environment
Indonesia	Yulia Suryanti		Ministry of Environment
Bangladesh	Abu Nashir Khan	Assistant General Manager (AGM),	Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)
Bangladesh	Mr. Arif Mohammad Faisal	Programme Specialist, Environment & Energy, UNDP Bangladesh	UNDP

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Country	Name	Title	Organization
Antigua & Barbuda	Ms. Diann Black-Layne	Chief Environment Officer and Ambassador for Climate Change	Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and the Environment
Armenia	Ms. Margarita Gasparyan/	Head of the Cooperation with Donors Department	Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU)
Armenia	Milena Kiramijyan	Chief Specialist of the Cooperation with Donors Department	Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU)
Armenia	Mr Erik Grigoryan	CEO	Environment Group
Armenia	Ana Markhyam	Business Development	ARMSWISSBANK
Armenia	Anush A. Lokya.	Business Development	ARMSWISSBANK
Armenia	Artak Baghdasaryan,	UNDP Task Lead	UNDP
Armenia	Ms Diana Harutyunyan	UNDP CC Programme Coordinator	UNDP
Armenia	Mr Aram Ter-Zakaryan	Team Leader, National Adaptation Institutional Framework Enhancement	UNDP
Armenia	Tigran Sukiasyan	Independent Consultant	
Armenia	Muhibullo Junaidov	Director, CIIP	Center for Implementation of Investment Projects (CIIP)

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Country	Name	Title	Organization
Armenia	Faromuz Saidov	Focal Point for the RPG for Tajikistan project, CIIP	Center for Implementation of Investment Projects (CIIP)
Armenia	Ms Angez Avzalshoeva	Chief Finance Manager	Center for Implementation of Investment Projects (CIIP)
Senegal	Mrs. Mame Faty Niang Seydi	Direction de	Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement durable
Senegal	Prof. Cheikh Mbow	Director General	Centre de Suivi Ecologique (CSE)
Senegal	Aida Diop	Director	ANACIM
Zimbabwe	Maxwell Maturure	Manager - Environmental Planning & Monitoring National Focal Point - UNCCD	Environmental Management Agency (EMA)
Zimbabwe	Ms Hlompho Naledi Kulube	Environmental Officer	Environmental Management Agency (EMA)
Zimbabwe	Mr. Steady Kangata	Director	Environmental Management Agency (EMA)
Zimbabwe	Ms Munashe E.S. Mukonoweshuro	Climate Change Scientist	Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife
Zimbabwe	Emily Fadzai Matingo	Climate Change Adaptation Officer	Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife
Senegal	Dr. Mandy Barnett	Director	South African National Biodiversity Institute
Landscape Interview	Eldana Djumalieva	Readiness Lead	Green Climate Fund (GCF)

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Country	Name	Title	Organization
Landscape Interview	Mr Yoshida	Office of Sustainability Development	Japan International Coordination Agency (JICA)
Landscape Interview	Mr Taniguchi	Office of Sustainability Development	Japan International Coordination Agency (JICA)
Landscape Interview	Mr Tshewang Dorji	Sr. Climate Change Specialist	Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Landscape Interview	Guly Sabahi	Senior Advisor, Climate Finance	World Resource Institute (WRI)
Landscape Interview	Eszter Mogyorosy	NDC Partnership role	World Resource Institute (WRI)
Landscape Interview	Jella Haag	Advisor, Climate finance and private sector	GIZ
Landscape Interview	Sophie De Coninck	Director Means of Implementation Division (Climate Finance, Capacity Building & Technology)	UNFCCC
Board Member	Maria L. Dorotan Tiuseco	Undersecretary Climate Finance Policy Group	Department of Finance
Board Member	Rosa Morales	General Director of Climate Change and Desertification,	Ministry of the Environment of Peru
AFB Secretariat	Silvia Mancini	Countries and Partnerships Unit Lead- AF	Adaptation Fund

Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

Country	Name	Title	Organization
AFB Secretariat	Farayi Madziwa	Readiness Programme Officer	Adaptation Fund
Board Member	Diann Black Layne	Chief Environment Officer and Ambassador for Climate Change	Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and the Environment

Case Studies

Case Study 1 – Trinidad and Tobago, Kiribati, and Grenada

This case study focuses on three SIDS—Trinidad and Tobago,^{150,151} Kiribati,^{152,153} and Grenada¹⁵⁴, (Kiribati is also an LDC)—which have yet to engage with the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme or other Adaptation Fund project funding through an NIE. The objective of the case study is therefore to take a deeper look into each country's perspectives and experiences with directly accessing climate finance so that valuable insights may be developed as to how the Readiness Programme can make itself more accessible to some of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries.

Climate change context

As SIDS, these countries share similar climate vulnerabilities centred on rising seas, intensifying weather extremes, and mounting strain on freshwater resources. The introductions to their NDCs¹⁵⁵ all reference similar issues, including how coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion are threatening infrastructure, coastal settlements, and vital aquifers. For example, Kiribati *'is located in relatively calm latitudes but its low atolls (in many places no more than 2m above mean sea level and only a few hundred meters wide) are subject to long-term sea level rise and, more immediately, are exposed to continuing coastal erosion and inundation during spring tides, storm surges and strong winds'*.¹⁵⁶ More powerful hurricanes and heavier rainfall events are also being seen across all three countries, which disrupt agriculture, overwhelm drainage systems, and damage tourism and infrastructure assets. For instance, in 2024 Grenada suffered 'Storm Beryl', a Category 5 storm that hit the country earlier in the season than ever before and which left 98% of its infrastructure damaged.¹⁵⁷ Shifts in precipitation patterns further compound water-security challenges for households and industry.¹⁵⁸ Warming seas precipitate coral bleaching, fishery declines, and mangrove loss, undermining natural defences and food sources.¹⁵⁹ The World Health Organization recognises how climate change and health are interlinked, with its 2020 country report on Trinidad and Tobago finding that environmental stresses cascade into socioeconomic and health pressures—eroding tourism revenues, jeopardising livelihoods,

¹⁵⁰ UNFCCC (2014) 'Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Intended Nationally Determined Contribution'.

¹⁵¹ WHO and UNFCCC (2021) 'Health and Climate Change: Country Profile 2020: Trinidad and Tobago'. [Health and climate change: country profile 2020: Trinidad and Tobago](#).

¹⁵² UNFCCC (2015) 'Republic of Kiribati Intended Nationally Determined Contribution'. [STRUCTURE OF THE INDC - INDC KIRIBATI.pdf](#)

¹⁵³ World Bank (2021) 'Kiribati Climate Risk Country Profile'. [15816-WB_Kiribati Country Profile-WEB.pdf](#)

¹⁵⁴ UNFCCC (2015) 'Grenada Intended Nationally Determined Contribution'. [Grenada INDC.pdf](#)

¹⁵⁵ UNFCCC (2015) 'Republic of Kiribati Intended Nationally Determined Contribution'. [Structure of the INDC](#); UNFCCC (2022) 'Grenada Intended Nationally Determined Contribution'. [Grenada INDC](#); UNFCCC (2022) 'Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Intended Nationally Determined Contribution'. [Trinidad and Tobago Final INDC](#)

¹⁵⁶ UNFCCC (2015) 'Republic of Kiribati Intended Nationally Determined Contribution'.

¹⁵⁷ ReliefWeb (2025) 'Hurricane Beryl one year on'. [Hurricane Beryl one year on: A wake-up call for disaster preparedness in the Caribbean - Barbados | ReliefWeb](#)

¹⁵⁸ World Bank (2021) 'Kiribati Climate Risk Country Profile'. [15816-WB_Kiribati Country Profile-WEB.pdf](#)

¹⁵⁹ The Climate Reality Project (2025) 'Hot Water: The Danger of Warming Oceans'. [Hot Water: The Danger of Warming Oceans | The Climate Reality Project](#)

and heightening risks from heat stress and vector- and water-borne diseases.¹⁶⁰ Facing these challenges, Trinidad and Tobago, Kiribati, and Grenada have much to gain from climate adaptation finance. Therefore, understanding why they have not accessed the Readiness Programme will provide useful insight into informing the design of the programme's future strategy.

Climate change response and climate finance

All three countries have embedded climate considerations into their broader development plans. In Grenada this is seen in the National Sustainable Development Plan,¹⁶¹ while Trinidad and Tobago has sustainable development frameworks in place.¹⁶² In Kiribati, climate resilience is a key component of their KV20 (Kiribati 20-year Vision) plan, with a specific 10-year plan for called the Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan for adaptation and disaster that was developed through a consultative process with all the key sectors.¹⁶³ Ministries are responsible for all three country's response to climate change. In Grenada, this is the Ministry of Climate Resilience, the Environment, Forestry, Fisheries and Disaster Resilience. In addition, there are also appointed climate focal points for every sector. In Trinidad and Tobago, climate action is largely led by the Environmental Management Authority in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Development, while in Kiribati this is the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development, as well as the Climate Finance Division, which was set up in 2016.

With regards to climate finance, although they have not received Readiness Programme funding, all three countries have received other forms of climate finance. Trinidad and Tobago is the only one of the three that has received any funding from the Adaptation Fund to date, and this is a project under implementation through the RIE, the Caribbean Development Bank, on 'Multisectoral Adaptation Measures to Climate Change in the South Oropouche River Basin for Flood Relief'. Both Grenada and Kiribati have been included in proposals submitted by RIEs, but these are yet to receive approval. However, all three countries have accessed funding from the GCF, and more specifically the GCF RPSP through RIEs, amounting to approximately \$US 4.2 million for Grenada, \$US 1.6 million for Kiribati, and \$US 4.7 million for Trinidad and Tobago. Based on this context, it is important to understand the reasons why these countries have not accessed the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme.

Data collection methods

Case study interviews build on the document review that was conducted to provide an overview of the climate change context and climate change response in Grenada, Kiribati, and Trinidad and Tobago. The findings are based upon analysis of five remote interviews with stakeholders from all three countries, as they related to the evaluation matrix. Interviewees encompassed a range of stakeholders from DAs to aspiring NIEs, as well as

¹⁶⁰ WHO and UNFCCC (2021) 'Health and Climate Change: Country Profile: Trinidad and Tobago. : [Health and climate change: country profile 2020: Trinidad and Tobago](#)

¹⁶¹ UNFCCC (2017) 'National Climate Change Policy for Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique (2017–2021)'. [Grenada National Climate Change Policy 2017-2021.pdf](#)

¹⁶² Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (n.d.) 'National Climate Change Policy'. [National Climate Change Policy - Multilateral Environmental Agreements](#) (accessed on 22 July 2025).

¹⁶³ President of Kiribati (n.d.) 'Kiribati Climate Change Policy'. [Kiribati-Climate-Change-Policy.pdf](#) (accessed on 22 July 2025)

other ministry representatives, allowed us to capture a spectrum of experiences among countries yet to engage with the Readiness Programme.

Findings

Considering none of these countries have engaged directly with the Readiness Programme to date, the analysis focuses on understanding the relevance of the programme to these stakeholders, as well as its perceived coherence with other funds. This provides insight into what factors are preventing engagement with and access to the Readiness Programme, despite such countries' clear need for support with climate adaptation.

Finding 1: There is interest among the Case Study 1 stakeholders in accessing the Readiness Programme

The first question to ask when considering whether the Readiness Programme is relevant to these countries or not is: have they not accessed it because it is not relevant?

It would seem that this is not the case, as interviewees across all three countries expressed a need for greater support in accessing climate adaptation finance, and they have all received varying levels of readiness funding from the GCF. Additionally, both Kiribati and Grenada directly expressed their desire to receive such funding from the Adaptation Fund.

A representative from Grenada told us that, *'Our first priority is to pursue accreditation for a local institution here in Grenada'*, going on to explain that they have already appointed climate focal points within each sector and each ministry. These individuals are responsible for advancing the climate agenda within their different ministries and departments, with the intention that responses would come from the ground and ideas were bottom up and not top down. This shows a clear desire for country-directed adaptation.

Similarly, we were informed by an interviewee from Kiribati that *'the readiness support for accreditation aligns with the country's priorities to access climate finance through direct access modality... and the Minister of Finance instructed the Climate Finance Division to explore opportunities for accreditation a year ago.'*

Finding 2: The Readiness Programme is well aligned with the capacity and technical gaps that the Case Study 1 countries face when trying to access climate finance

Additionally, the key challenges the countries outlined in regard to accessing climate finance are issues the Readiness Programme is directly designed to support with. With regards to becoming accredited, a representative of Trinidad and Tobago mentioned a need for support in *'even just understanding the application process and building capacity in that area'*. This is something Component 3 of the Readiness Programme ('Support to those seeking accreditation') is specifically designed to address, and which is currently provided in the form of the RPG.

Aside from accreditation, the three countries also spoke of their ambition to receive more technical support to develop stronger proposals for accessing climate finance. The specific support they mentioned is offered under the TA grants of the Readiness Programme.

For example, a Grenadian interviewee stated: *'By ensuring experts from key sectors are involved in both proposal development and implementation, we can improve the efficiency and quality of our work. Sector-specific expertise will be especially helpful in addressing technical questions, ensuring smoother engagement with the Fund'*. More specifically, they

elaborated that, *'for us, readiness means building capacity to develop bankable proposals and ensuring that we have the necessary documentation, such as feasibility studies, vulnerability assessments, and other critical data. Without proper documentation and studies, we can't create proposals that convincingly address the issues at hand'*. This shows that Grenada is aware of the importance of complying with the Adaptation Fund's gender and ESP policies, and this ambition to meet these would be supported by the TA-GP and TA-ESP grants.

Additionally, a representative of Trinidad and Tobago explained that a priority was achieving their international climate commitments when stating *'We're very focused on meeting the multilateral environmental agreements, so making sure that we have our current NDCs and also making sure that we meet all the obligations under the Paris Agreement, Kyoto protocol, and all of those environmentally related initiatives'*. As was outlined in the 'Relevance' chapter, the Readiness Programme is aligned well with the priorities of the UNFCCC, in particular with supporting individual countries to meet their NDCs, often through the design and implementation of NAPs. Several NIEs who have engaged with the Readiness Programme positively referenced the flexibility of the grant, as it allowed them to adapt the funding to their specific needs and reflect the priorities set out in the NAPs and NDCs.

Finally, a Kiribatian interviewee also expressed a desire for the technical support the Readiness Programme offers, when stating: *'Having expertise in Kiribati to develop proposals to address these challenges would be helpful because it's a cross-sectoral area in terms of coastal protection, where infrastructure is needed and there's impact on services, land, food security, and water. Having the right technical skills available is important'*.

Therefore, there is not only an explicit eagerness on the part of these countries to access the Readiness Programme, but it is also well aligned with the areas they have identified as needing support, meaning it is crucial to determine what factors are prevailing to prevent their engagement.

Finding 3: Competing priorities and capacity constraints presented themselves as the two biggest hurdles preventing these countries from engaging with the Readiness Programme

Interviewees from Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago referenced recent and current extreme weather events that were causing a redirecting of resources away from routine projects. In Grenada, for instance, one interviewee explained that *'today is May 19th, and already there's a forced tropical disturbance heading for the Caribbean and it's not even hurricane season'*. This suggests extreme weather events are occurring with less predictability. In regard to Trinidad and Tobago, an interviewee explained that just *'last weekend there was rain for the entire weekend'* and that *'there are always certain points throughout the year when funds have to be diluted from certain programmes to support relief after a natural disaster'*. They went on to explain that not only do these weather events have immediate consequences, but they also have long-term repercussions, as they mean that money is redirected away from things that need consistent funding, such as education and social programmes. This demonstrates that these SIDS are already struggling with competing priorities within the country, and it was within this context that they expressed a difficulty in getting climate adaptation to be prioritised.

This may seem rather ironic when stronger climate adaptation would allow countries to be better prepared for such extreme weather events; however, stakeholders from all three countries explained that lack of capacity was the main barrier to them being able to apply for

support from the Readiness Programme. Grenada referenced resources and human capacity as a barrier to being able to commit the necessary time to prepare a readiness proposal. Kiribati also spoke to the issue of human resources when stating '*ministries are already stretched, and their staff often have multiple roles already*'. This demonstrates that short-term responses to immediate climate disasters are disrupting capacity to invest in longer-term solutions such as climate adaptation and the Readiness Programme.

Finding 4: The ability to access climate funding through MIEs and RIEs means that accessing funding as a national implementing entity becomes less of a priority, especially in the context of such competing priorities

Although, as already discussed, the countries expressed a desire to access climate funding directly that they could adapt to their individual country needs, in the context of competing priorities and lack of capacity this is less of a priority given that they are able to access climate funding through MIEs and RIEs without having to accredit their own institution. As explained above, Trinidad and Tobago currently has a project under implementation with an RIE, while Grenada is included in a large project proposal that was recently submitted by an MIE. A Grenadian representative spoke to the decision to apply for climate funds through an intermediary organisation, explaining that they deliberately prioritised tangible implementation over Adaptation Fund readiness efforts, given constrained in-country capacity and a strategic decision to allocate limited resources toward action rather than preparation. This demonstrates that accessing climate finance through any resource is the priority, and there is a perception that less effort is involved in accessing funding via intermediaries.

Finally, it cannot be overlooked that, despite the capacity constraints and competing priorities, all three of these countries have successfully engaged with the GCF's RPSP, and thus we enquired into the reasons for this.

Finding 5: The countries perceived the process of applying to the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme as entailing a relatively high level of effort, corresponding to a relatively low level of funding, when compared with other climate funds

Although the interviewed stakeholders from Trinidad and Tobago did not have much knowledge of their involvement with the GCF, stakeholders from both Kiribati and Grenada explained that one disadvantage they perceived with the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme was the relatively high level of effort corresponding to the relatively low level of funding. Kiribati expressed that the US\$ 150,000 available for accreditation support would not be enough for the extensive preparation activities needed, referencing supporting the DA in deciding which entity to propose for accreditation, as well as the necessary technical needs assessments and potential travel to other islands for consultations. On the contrary, they explained that there was US\$ 7,000,000 available through the GCF's RPSP, of which they have accessed US\$ 1.6 million to date. One stakeholder from Grenada made a similar point when saying that they have been more comfortable allocating resources to apply for readiness from the GCF given the much larger potential sum available.

Conclusion

Overall despite the Readiness Programme being quite relevant to the Case Study 1 countries' needs, capacity constraints mean it is not a priority. The components and grants of the Readiness Programme align with the capacity gaps and technical needs they face when trying to access climate finance. However, the competing priorities and capacity constraints they face due to immediate climate shocks mean that application to the

Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme is not being prioritised. Additionally, even when climate adaptation is pursued, the ability to access climate finance through RIEs and MIEs, as well as the potential to get more readiness funding from the GCF, leaves engagement with the Readiness Programme lower down the list of priorities.

Case study 2 – Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Fiji, and Indonesia

This case study focuses on four countries that have accessed Adaptation Fund grants via a RIE or MIE but have yet to access Readiness Programme grants. The objective of the case study is to understand perspectives of vulnerable nations that have accessed Adaptation Fund grants but have not utilized the Readiness Programme grants available. It seeks to explore barriers, gaps or alternative capacity building mechanisms that may influence their decisions to access climate finance.

Climate change context

Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Fiji, and Indonesia—while very different countries—are all among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Each faces severe impacts from climate change despite contributing little to global emissions. Bangladesh, which is situated on a delta, is vulnerable to sea level rise and storms, which threatens infrastructure, agriculture, and lives.¹⁶⁴ The 2023 WorldRiskIndex, which assesses the disaster risk of 193 countries, ranks Bangladesh as the ninth highest.¹⁶⁵ Ethiopia is ranked ninth in terms of the highest vulnerability by the Index based on its lack of coping and adaptive capacities stemming from its dependence on rain-fed agriculture and the increasing frequency and intensity of flooding and droughts.¹⁶⁶ This is particularly impactful given that 85% of Ethiopia's labour force is engaged in agriculture.¹⁶⁷ As a SIDS country, Fiji is vulnerable to sea level rise and coastal flooding, which are likely to contribute to coastal erosion, saline intrusion, and damage to fisheries, water quality, and other infrastructure.¹⁶⁸ These effects will also be felt more in marginalized, poor, and remote communities. Finally, Indonesia is ranked second in terms of its disaster risk and fifth in terms of its exposure.¹⁶⁹ With climate change driving rising sea

¹⁶⁴ International Monetary Fund. Asia and Pacific Dept. (2019). Bangladesh: Selected Issues. *IMF Staff Country Reports*, 2019(300). Retrieved Aug 5, 2025 <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781513514314.002>
<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2019/09/17/Bangladesh-Selected-Issues-48683>

¹⁶⁵ Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft / IFHV (2023): WeltRisikoBericht 2023. Berlin: Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft. https://weltrisikobericht.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WRR_2023_english_online161023.pdf
Accessed on 4 August 2025

¹⁶⁶ Wang, F. and Sinore, T. (2024). Impact of climate change on agriculture and adaptation strategies in Ethiopia: A meta-analysis. *Heliyon*. Vol 10. Issue 4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e26103>

¹⁶⁷ Dusseau, D., Lute, A., Ezra, A., Cummings, J., Condia, A., Fennelly, A., Gassert, K., Dobler-Morales, C., Fedor, P., McGlinchey, D., and Schwalm, C. (2025). *Climate Risk Assessment: Ethiopia*. Woodwell Climate Research Center. <https://www.woodwellclimate.org/climate-risk-assessment-ethiopia/>

¹⁶⁸ Climate Risk Country Profile: Fiji (2021): The World Bank Group
https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/country-profiles/15854-WB_Fiji%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf

¹⁶⁹ Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft / IFHV (2023): WeltRisikoBericht 2023. Berlin: Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft. https://weltrisikobericht.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WRR_2023_english_online161023.pdf
Accessed on 4 August 2025

levels and water temperatures as well as increased storm severity¹⁷⁰ and heatwaves,¹⁷¹ the country's agriculture and fisheries sectors are in danger along with its infrastructure and the health and wellbeing of its people. Each country requires targeted, context-specific adaptation efforts to protect vulnerable populations and ecosystems.

Climate change response and climate finance

The responses of each country to climate change and its effects are described below.

Bangladesh has shown strong commitment to climate action through progressive policies and long-term planning.¹⁷² Starting with the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) in 2005 and the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) in 2009 (updated in 2022), the country has prioritized adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and low-carbon development. Building on these foundations, it has launched ambitious frameworks such as the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, which aims to shift from climate vulnerability to resilience and prosperity. The NAP 2023–2050¹⁷³ further reinforces this trajectory by integrating climate resilience across sectors and emphasizing inclusive, participatory approaches. Together, these initiatives reflect Bangladesh's shift from reactive responses to a proactive, integrated climate strategy.

With regard to its access to climate finance, Bangladesh's Adaptation Fund focal point is the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate change, while its NIE is the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), which received fast track accreditation in 2021 after previously being accredited by the GCF.¹⁷⁴ Bangladesh received \$US 6.1 million in GCF readiness support and has received two Adaptation Fund climate adaptation projects to-date, one of which has gone through PKSF;¹⁷⁵ two other projects through the MIE are approved or under review.

Ethiopia has a structured approach to addressing climate change, primarily guided by its NAP (known as NAP-ETH).¹⁷⁶ Finalized in 2019, this document aims to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change by building adaptive capacity and resilience, and to strengthen the holistic integration of climate change adaptation into Ethiopia's long-term

¹⁷⁰ Kaczan, D, Nurhabni, F, Cheung, W, Frölicher, T, Kuswardani, A, Lam, V, Muawanah, U, Puspasari, R, Reygondeau, G, Sumaila, U, and Teh, L (2023). Hot Water Rising: The Impact of Climate Change on Indonesia's Fisheries and Coastal Communities. The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/publication/hot-water-rising-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-indonesia-fisheries-and-coastal-communities>

¹⁷¹ CMCC. (n.d.) G20 Climate Risk Atlas: Impacts, policies, economics.

<https://www.g20climaterisks.org/indonesia/>

¹⁷² UNCC. (2022). Climate Change Initiatives of Bangladesh: Achieving Climate Resilience. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

<https://doe.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/doe.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/2022-11-02-08-08-ade27c3a48eeeedbf1394e5fa527edd2.pdf>

¹⁷³ N.d. (2022). National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh.

https://doe.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/doe.portal.gov.bd/page/936c9ced_0267_48bf_87d0_4e0c43168cf0/2024-02-05-03-51-8662b05f8cc6b068e511c918b70a7cda.pdf

¹⁷⁴ The GCF focal point in Bangladesh is different from the Adaptation Fund focal point. The GCF NDA is the Ministry of Finance's Economic Relations Division (ERD).

¹⁷⁵ "Access to Safe Drinking Water for the Climate Vulnerable People in Coastal Areas of Bangladesh" with a budget of \$US 5 million

¹⁷⁶ N.d. (2019) Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy: National Adaptation Plan.

<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Documents/Parties/NAP-ETH%20FINAL%20VERSION%20%20Mar%202019.pdf>

development pathway. Developed in compliance with the Cancun Adaptation Framework (2010), it builds on and aligns with the country's existing Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy and the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II). The NAP-ETH specifically focuses on eight sectors identified as most vulnerable—agriculture, forestry, health, transport, power, industry, water, and urban—and proposes 18 specific adaptation options for implementation across all levels and development sectors.

In Ethiopia, the focal point for both the Adaptation Fund and the GCF is the Ministry of Planning and Development, and its NIE (also accredited by the GCF) is the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MOFEC). The country received GCF readiness support through GGGI for a total of \$US 4.1 million. It has also received two Adaptation Fund projects to-date, including one through MOFEC;¹⁷⁷ another project proposal is under review.

Fiji's National Climate Finance Strategy, developed in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and WRI, provides a structured roadmap for mobilizing and directing climate finance toward the country's most urgent adaptation needs¹⁷⁸. Based on the 2019 Climate Finance Snapshot, the strategy prioritizes investments in the blue economy, climate-resilient healthcare, and community relocation due to sea-level rise. Adopted in 2022 and embedded in the Climate Change Act, the strategy outlines climate finance priorities across 12 sectors and guides engagement with funders. It has already supported the development of key projects, including an Adaptation Fund proposal for nature-based seawalls to protect vulnerable coastal communities.

Although Fiji does not yet have an Adaptation Fund accredited entity, the Fiji Development Bank (FDB) is accredited by the GCF and has received #US 3.5 million in GCF readiness funding. Fiji has accessed two Adaptation Fund projects totalling \$US 10 million, which are implemented by a MIE or RIE. Its Adaptation Fund and GCF focal point, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, has relied on internal capacities and support from implementing entities to implement projects.

Indonesia's approach to climate change, as outlined in its NDC, places adaptation on par with mitigation. The national budget plays a crucial role in supporting adaptation programs, including the development of instruments like a vulnerable index for various climate-sensitive areas. Beyond government funding, climate change initiatives involve communities, philanthropic organizations, and local governments, with numerous villages participating in programs over the past 11 years. The Ministry of Finance maintains specific budget items for both mitigation and climate adaptation. Indonesia operates with an action plan, a National Development Plan (NDP), and specific targets for its climate change response. Proposals for climate funding must align with the criteria of individual climate funds, the objectives of the UNFCCC, and national development plans (medium and long term). To facilitate this, Indonesia hosts a "National dialogue meeting" where all stakeholders from various climate funds, NIEs, and others are invited, and the government shares its priorities and expectations for accessing funds.

The country's NIE Kemitraan was accredited by the Adaptation Fund in 2016 and reaccredited in 2021 under the fast-track modality (it was also fast-tracked by the GCF for

¹⁷⁷ "Climate Smart Integrated Rural Development Project," (2017 to 2022), with a budget of \$US 9.9 million

¹⁷⁸ WRI. (2023). Fiji Adopts a National Climate Finance Strategy <https://www.wri.org/outcomes/fiji-adopts-national-climate-finance-strategy>

accreditation in 2020).¹⁷⁹ While it has not accessed Adaptation Fund readiness support, Indonesia has received \$US 7.5 million in GCF readiness grants. Kemitraan has implemented multiple Adaptation Fund projects since 2019 with a budget of \$US 9.7 million, and it has four more proposals currently under review. Indonesia is also the world's largest recipient of GEF grants, having been allocated over \$US 100 million in four years (starting in 2022).

Data collection methods

Case study interviews build on the document review that was conducted to provide an overview of the climate change context and climate change response in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Fiji and Ethiopia. The findings are based upon analysis of eight remote interviews with stakeholders from all four countries, as they related to the evaluation matrix. Interviews with a range of stakeholders from DAs to NIEs/RIEs, capture a spectrum of experiences among countries that have accessed the Adaptation Fund but not engaged with the Readiness Programme.

Findings

Considering none of these countries have engaged directly with the Readiness Programme to date, the analysis focuses on understanding the relevance of the programme to these stakeholders, as well as its perceived coherence with other funds. This provides insight into what factors are preventing engagement with and access to the Readiness Programme, despite their access of GCF readiness support and both Adaptation Fund and GCF project funding.

Finding 1: Limited awareness, incomplete information, and varying institutional capacity levels have been key reasons for not accessing the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

Some stakeholders interviewed for this case study expressed a lack of awareness of Adaptation Fund readiness support, including one RIE and an NIE, who cited incomplete information from country focal points and a lack of understanding of the Readiness Programme application process. This is particularly important given a comparison with the GCF, which many stakeholders described as significantly more proactive in its outreach efforts, including by regularly organizing one-on-one sessions, regional workshops, and in-country technical support missions. These have the effect of making the GCF and its readiness support more visible. The GEF too was praised by a stakeholder of its transparent and inclusive communication model. In contrast, Adaptation Fund communication was described by some case study country stakeholders as typically directed to NIEs, leaving DAs under-informed. One NIE, for example, described regular meetings with the Adaptation Fund at which the DA has never been present. Another country's focal point shared that despite holding the position for two years, they had never been invited to an Adaptation Fund meeting or discussion. The Fund also regularly schedules its webinars and events around U.S. East Coast business hours, which makes it difficult for countries like those included in this case study to attend. More recently, the Adaptation Fund has strengthened its engagement with annual NIE gatherings and country exchange programs (including one

¹⁷⁹ Adaptation Fund Board (2021). *Accreditation Panel Recommendation on the Fast-Track Re-accreditation of the Partnership for Governance Reform in Indonesia (Kemitraan) as a National Implementing Entity (NIE) of the Adaptation Fund* https://www.adaptation-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Decision-B.36-37_14_FTR-of-Kemitraan.pdf

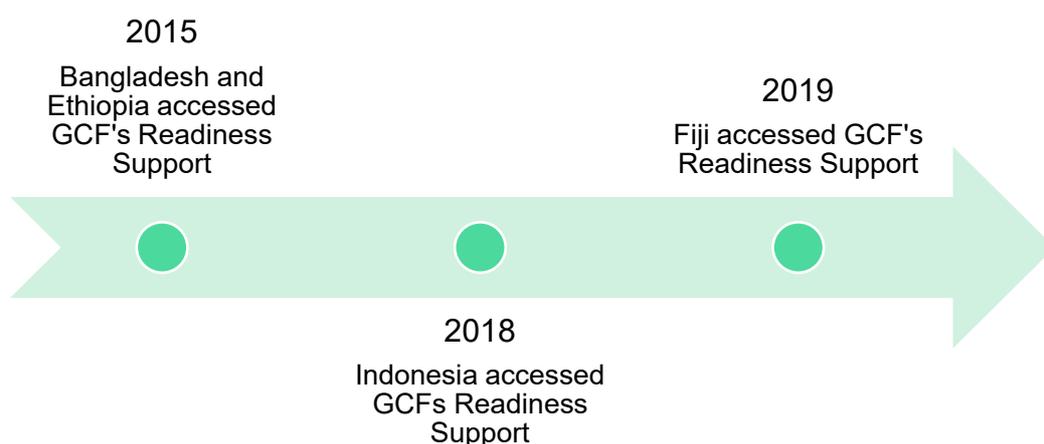
hosted by Indonesia), but stakeholders emphasized these need to be further scaled to raise awareness as well as improve the quality of proposals and enhance institutional alignment.

For other NIEs, Adaptation Fund readiness support has not been seen as strictly necessary given existing in-house expertise built through engagement with other funds such as the GCF. Some case study countries have strategically prioritized accessing larger-scale climate finance—such as its increased \$US 40 million allocation from the Adaptation Fund and substantial GCF resources—over smaller, more limited Readiness Programme resources. This reflects the countries’ focus on security high-impact investments aligned with its national adaptation priorities, rendering smaller readiness grants less relevant to current needs. Fiji, in particular, is a unique case as it benefits from dedicated, government-led climate finance units that have enabled it to develop strong proposals without Readiness support, leveraging embedded technical advisers and sectoral resources. Past concerns about high overhead costs from third-party delivery partners under GCF readiness have also reinforced the country’s preference for internal capacity-building and direct access.

Finding 2: Overlap with the GCF in these countries has increased synergies while also limiting the advantages of Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme support

Each of the four countries included in this case study received GCF readiness support in addition to Adaptation Fund project funding. The figure below shows a timeline of when the four countries accessed GCF’s Readiness support. All except for Fiji also have a shared accredited entity between the Adaptation Fund and the GCF, including two countries (Bangladesh and Indonesia) that have taken advantage of fast-track accreditation processes between the two entities. At least one country also has a plan in place to increase the coherence between and synergies of GCF and Adaptation Fund support, aligning readiness funding with feasibility studies to support projects funded by both entities. Such a plan considers the more streamlined Adaptation Fund processes and the higher funding amounts of the GCF to leverage institutional capacities across climate funds for greater efficiency.

Figure 14: Four countries accessing GCF Readiness support



While it is likely that these types of support have already been mutually reinforcing, some stakeholders also perceive them to be duplicative. In one country, early engagement with GCF readiness on training in institutional preparedness, proposal development, and the creation of a digital adaptation knowledge hub led to the perception that additional support from the Adaptation Fund would be redundant. This overlap goes beyond the GCF, with stakeholders in one country also citing the World Bank, GIZ, ADB, and FCDO as providing

similar capacity building support to national entities. In this case, additional readiness support is needed beyond just the NIE to subnational institutions and others where gaps still exist, yet the Adaptation Fund only provides readiness to NIEs. Similarly, in another case study country, the relatively small grant size of Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme grants (capped at \$US 150,000 in 2021) has meant that the GCF is perceived as a better value, particularly as it has adapted its proposal process over time to extend application windows and streamline procedures. In this country where there are high operational costs of working across its geography, Adaptation Fund readiness support is seen as too limited to justify the administrative and logistical effort.

Finding 3: Despite these challenges, countries recognize a diverse set of potential benefits from accessing the Adaptation Readiness Programme, including additional capacity building and the opportunity to further develop relationships with the Fund

Although the countries included in this case study have not yet accessed the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme, there is broad recognition of its relevance and strategic value, with some countries planning to apply in the future. One NIE that has relied on GCF-supported capacities noted that the country sees the utility of readiness support in proposal development and capacity building for its partners and described the Fund's Readiness Programme as potentially beneficial in the future. In another country, the NIE and focal point recognized the growing relevance of the Readiness Programme, particularly with the increased country cap, and stated that there are plans to apply for support to strengthen internal systems, improve standard operating procedures, and build capacity to manage smaller grants under the Innovation or LLA windows. Crucially, this NIE views the Readiness Programme as vital for helping the focal point better align proposals with national adaptation priorities, clarify strategic interventions, and understand Adaptation Fund-specific requirements, ultimately improving coordination across climate finance mechanisms. Even in countries like Fiji that have higher internal capacities, there is recognition that more technical support is needed to meet certain proposal requirements, bridge the gap between concept development and full proposal writing, and to build teams with cross-sectoral expertise. Countries also recognize that engaging with the Readiness Programme can strengthen their engagement and relationship with the Adaptation Fund more broadly.

Conclusion

Despite securing project funding from the Adaptation Fund, no countries in this case study have directly engaged with the Fund's Readiness Programme. This is due to a range of factors, including the relatively small grant size, limited awareness of the programme, and the lack of need when internal capacities and embedded advisors are sufficient or GCF support is already available. As a result, Adaptation Fund readiness support is not viewed as a prerequisite. Nevertheless, its relevance is still acknowledged, and there are opportunities to intentionally build on existing synergies and the ability of readiness support to enhance capacities, institutional systems, and long-term coordination.

Case study 4 – Armenia

Background and context

Climate change context: Overview of the effects of climate change on the country

Armenia is a small, landlocked country within the Caucasus region between Europe and Asia. Much of its territory lies at elevations exceeding 1,000m above sea level, with an average elevation around 1,800m, making it one of the most mountainous nations in the

world. Notable geographical features include a freshwater Lake Sevan, which covers approximately 1,242km², and the Seven River Basin, which has a surface area of 4,721 km² and spans approximately one-sixth of the nation's total land area. In 2024, Armenia's population was estimated to be approximately 3 million¹⁸⁰ people, and projections place its GDP at around US\$ 25.07 billion¹⁸¹ for the year. Armenia's climate can be described as highland continental, with large variation between summer highs (June to August) and winter lows (December to February).

Over the past century, Armenia has experienced profound climate shifts and disaster risk levels. It is ranked 101 out of 191 countries by the 2019 INFORM Risk Index¹⁸². Specific climate-related conditions in the country include:

- **Rising temperatures and declining precipitation:** Since 1990, Armenia's mean annual temperature has increased by 1.2°C,¹⁸³ while a 10% reduction in average annual precipitation volume was documented over the period 1935–2012.¹⁸⁴ Projections indicate that if global commitments are not met, temperatures in Armenia could rise by up to 5.6°C above the 1990s average by the end of the century.¹⁸⁵ This change is expected to be particularly severe in summer, with associated rises in drought and heat extremes.
- **Intensified weather hazards and ecosystem stress:** Armenia faces a surge in climate hazards, including:
 - *Droughts and floods:* Increased drought risk, erratic and severe floods (like those in northern Armenia in May 2024), and rising landslide vulnerability threaten agriculture and rural infrastructure.
 - *Forest and biodiversity loss:* High-altitude forests are under ecological stress as the treeline rises and semi-desert zones expand upward, endangering forest ecosystems.
 - *Water resources:* River flows are predicted to decline up to 39% by 2100,¹⁸⁶ with serious implications for irrigation, hydropower, and drinking water. Key rivers and Lake Sevan are especially vulnerable, as declining snowpack and earlier snowmelt reduce spring and summer water supply.
 - *Agricultural Impact:* By 2050, climate change could reduce crop and livestock yields by up to 37%,¹⁸⁷ causing major losses in agricultural productivity and threatening the food security of rural populations—especially in hotspots such as Ararat and Armavir provinces.

¹⁸⁰ World Bank (n.d.) 'Population total – Armenia'.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=AM>

¹⁸¹ World Bank (n.d.) 'GDP total – Armenia'.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=AM>

¹⁸² World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal (2021) *Climate Risk Country Profile: Armenia*

¹⁸³ International Monetary Fund (2022) 'Armenia: Technical Assistance Report: Quantifying Fiscal Risks from Climate Change'. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2022/329/article-A001-en.xml#A001fn2>

¹⁸⁴ EU (n.d.) 'EU4C Data Portal – Armenia'. <https://eu4climate.eu/armenia/>

¹⁸⁵ International Monetary Fund (2022) 'Armenia: Technical Assistance Report: Quantifying Fiscal Risks from Climate Change'. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2022/329/article-A001-en.xml#A001fn2>

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ World Bank Group (2024) 'Armenia Country Climate and Development Report'.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/publication/the-country-climate-and-development-report-for-armenia>

Climate change response: Overview of climate change-related policies and institutions in the country

Armenia is a country with an ambitious climate change agenda that has demonstrated a commitment to addressing the issues through the development of various policies, strategies, and institutional frameworks. The country is a party to the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement. Key elements of Armenia's climate change response include:

- **NDC:** Armenia has taken important steps to build a coherent National Climate Policy framework that is aligned with its international commitments. The country submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC in September 2015, which became its official NDC following the ratification of the Paris Agreement in February 2017. This NDC outlines a long-term vision for reducing greenhouse gas emissions through to 2050, making Armenia one of the few countries to define such an extended time horizon in its initial submission. The NDC commits to an economy-wide approach to both mitigation and adaptation, focusing on sectors such as energy, land use, agriculture, water, and health. Armenia updated its NDC in May 2021, reaffirming its goals with enhanced clarity, a stronger focus on adaptation, and a conditional target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, subject to international support.

NAP: The NDC is complemented by Armenia's NAP process, developed with support from the GCF and UNDP between 2021 and 2023, which has helped mainstream climate risk into national and local development planning. Armenia has also engaged in cross-sectoral coordination, developed regional adaptation plans in high-risk provinces such as Shirak and Tavush, and initiated the design of a national adaptation finance mechanism. These policies and institutions form the foundation of Armenia's climate change response and reflect a growing capacity to implement climate-resilient development.

To support the implementation of these policies, Armenia has also introduced climate-related strategies and sectoral action plans. For example, the Strategy for Energy Security and Energy Sector Development and the Forest Restoration and Development Strategy are aligned with national climate goals. The country has initiated long-term planning for low-emission development and is developing a Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy with support from international partners.

Overview of climate finance

Armenia's engagement with international climate finance mechanisms is crucial for supporting its climate change response. The country has established in-country delivery partners to facilitate access to and management of these funds. The country's climate finance landscape includes multiple sources such as the GCF, Adaptation Fund, GEF, and bilateral and multilateral partners.

Key institutions: The Ministry of Environment serves as Armenia's NDA for the GCF, DA for the Adaptation Fund, and Designated National Authority (DNA) for the UNFCCC processes, playing a central role in coordinating climate finance access and integrating climate action into national policy. Armenia has also gained Direct Access accreditation to the Adaptation Fund through the Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU), which became an NIE in 2016. This accreditation has enabled Armenia to design and manage country-driven adaptation projects with greater autonomy (as compared to going through a regional or multilateral implementing entity).

Below are the country's major climate flows:

- **GCF:** Armenia has been an active recipient of GCF funding,¹⁸⁸ including several RPSP grants totalling over \$US 5 million to strengthen institutional capacity, stakeholder coordination, and private sector engagement. In addition to this readiness support, Armenia has received GCF project funding. These include a project (FP010) co-implemented with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to retrofit public buildings to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions. For this project, the GCF provided \$US 20 million with over \$US 100 million in co-financing. Another GCF-funded project (SAP014), led by FAO, supports forest resilience and sustainable land management through afforestation and clean energy solutions in vulnerable rural areas.
- **GEF:** Armenia has also received a total of US\$ 23 million from the GEF in national grant funding for 11 projects in addition to participating in 19 regional/global GEF projects.¹⁸⁹ These funds have supported projects on biodiversity, climate-smart agriculture, energy efficiency, and sustainable land and forest management. They have been largely delivered through agencies such as UNDP, FAO, and the World Bank.

Adaptation Fund: Under the Fund, Armenia has received both readiness support (US\$ 19,500) and project funding (US\$ 12.1 million) (see Table 17 below) following the accreditation of the EPIU in 2016.

Table 17: Overview of the financial support provided to Armenia by the Adaptation fund

Period	Event / project name	Grant / project amount	IE	Description
Nov 2016	First NIE Accreditation for Armenia	-	EPIU	Armenia becomes the first Eastern European country to achieve Direct Access for the Adaptation Fund ¹⁹⁰
Dec 2018	Technical Assistance Grant for Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy	US\$ 19,500	EPIU	Readiness grant received to enhance the capacity of the EPIU to assess and manage environmental, social, and gender-related issues and its compliance with the Adaptation Fund's ESP and Gender Policy ¹⁹¹
Jul 2019- Sep 2021	Artik City Closed Stonepit Wastes and Flood Management Pilot Project	US\$ 1.43 million	EPIU	The project sought to improve the resilience of the highly exposed Artik city to hydro-meteorological threats that are increasing in frequency and intensity because of climate change
Mar 2019- Sep 2021	Strengthening Land-Based Adaptation Capacity in	US\$ 2.5 million	EPIU	Project launched to strengthen adaptation of communities near Khosrov Forest and Dilijan National Park ¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Green Climate Fund (n.d.) 'Armenia'. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/armenia>

¹⁸⁹ GEF (n.d.) 'Armenia'. <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/country-profiles/armenia>

¹⁹⁰ Adaptation Fund (2016) 'Armenia becomes first Eastern European country to achieve direct access under the Adaptation Fund'. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/armenia-becomes-first-european-country-achieve-direct-access-adaptation-fund/>

¹⁹¹ Adaptation Fund (n.d.) 'Technical assistance grant for ESP and gender – Armenia'. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/project/technical-assistance-grant-for-esp-and-gender-3/>

¹⁹² Adaptation Fund (n.d.) 'Strengthening land-based adaptation capacity in communities adjacent to protected areas in Armenia'. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/project/strengthening-land-based-adaptation-capacity-communities-adjacent-protected-areas-armenia-3/>

Period	Event / project name	Grant / project amount	IE	Description
	Communities Adjacent to Protected Areas			
Mar 2024	Enhancing the Land-Based Adaptation of Communities Adjacent to Arid Zones and Forest Protected Areas of Armenia	US\$ 3.7 million	EPIU	Full project proposal submitted; aims to expand successful mechanisms to Khosrov, Dilijan, and Lake Sevan zones ¹⁹³
June 2024	Enhancing Resilience of Communities to Climate Change in Shirak Marz Leveraging Best Practices of the Pilot Project Implemented in Artik Community	US\$ 4.47 million	EPIU	Proposal submitted that aims to enhance the resilience of Artik, Ani, and Ashotsk communities in the Shirak Marz region through flood protection, riverbank stabilisation, soil restoration, and municipal-level adaptation planning ¹⁹⁴

Data collection process

The data collection involved an in-country field mission conducted from 28 April to 02 May 2025. During this mission, interviews were conducted with a broad range of stakeholders, including the EPIU (the NIE), as well as representatives from UNDP (the RIE), Environment Group (a CSO), ArmSwissBank (a private sector bank), an independent consultant, and a remote interview with the Center for Implementation of Investment Projects (SSC participant).

Stakeholder engagement was further strengthened by a comprehensive document review, which included project completion reports, readiness grants documents, and relevant national strategic and policy frameworks related to climate change adaptation and climate finance.

Key findings

Finding 1: Armenia faces capacity-related challenges in terms of fulfilling its adaptation needs. While the Readiness Programme addresses these needs by supporting NIE capacity development through grant support, trainings, and workshops, there are aspects of the Programme that make it less accessible in comparison to other sources of climate funding

¹⁹³ Adaptation Fund (n.d.) ‘Enhancing the land-based adaptation of communities adjacent to arid zones and forest protected areas of Armenia by duplicating and expanding the successful mechanisms of the previous projects’. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/project/enhancing-the-land-based-adaptation-of-communities-adjacent-to-arid-zones-and-forest-protected-areas-of-armenia-by-duplicating-and-expanding-the-successful-mechanisms-of-the-previous-projects/>

¹⁹⁴ Adaptation Fund (n.d.) ‘Enhancing resilience of communities to climate change in Shirak Marz leveraging best practices of the pilot project implemented in Artik community’. <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/project/enhancing-resilience-of-communities-to-climate-change-in-shirak-marz-leveraging-best-practices-of-the-pilot-project-implemented-in-artik-community/>

Armenia faces several capacity-related challenges on fulfilling its climate adaptation needs. According to stakeholders, there is a lack of technical and financial capacity to develop adaptation tools, policies, and progress tools, as well as to manage the processes required by climate finance modalities. One stakeholder also raised concerns about lack of technical capacity within ministries and municipalities, and the need for sector-specific, actionable guidance for the integration of climate risks. The private sector was also described as having limited adaptation knowledge and awareness, which needs to be addressed so that private sector actors can support Armenia in meeting its climate adaptation needs, not only by accessing long-term funds for adaptation projects but also in accessing relevant new technologies. This demonstrates a strong need for training across technical, administrative, and financial domains in both public and private sectors.

The Readiness Programme has supported Armenia's adaptation needs such as lack of technical and financial capacity by providing capacity development for its NIE. In one interview, a stakeholder described the Readiness Programme as helping increase the capacity of the NIE, which in turn supports successful and efficient implementation of adaptation projects that are aligned with national requirements, increasing the NIE's capacity to address gender-related concerns and other needs of communities. They further mentioned that it has also supported the NIE to develop policies for ESG by hiring a consultancy that will help Armenia access the Adaptation Fund. According to a different stakeholder, the Readiness Programme is viewed as a regulatory prerequisite for accessing project funds from Adaptation Fund, like the regulatory requirements of private banks to access funds. The peer support provided by Armenia to its peer country, facilitated through the Readiness Programme, was viewed as helpful by the peer country in an interview with a stakeholder from there. The stakeholder from the peer country also finds the Readiness Programme helpful as it enables direct access to funds rather than through an intermediary, which then reduces the amount of funds the country can access to implement a project efficiently.

While these descriptions highlight the Readiness Programme's relevance not only in Armenia but also in the country it is providing peer support to, the small funding provided through the readiness grants and lack of awareness in the private sector about the Readiness Programme makes it difficult to access. Due to a cap on funding in the Readiness Programme, a stakeholder shared that if the NIE implemented a project and then sought to scale it up, it may consider developing a concept note and sharing it with the Adaptation Fund Secretariat showcasing the benefits of the project and justifying the need for more funds instead of considering the Readiness Programme's PFA grant, which has a cap on scale-up of projects. There is also a lack of familiarity in the private sector with the Readiness Programme in comparison to other similar programmes.

Finding 2: There are several stakeholders addressing adaptation issues in Armenia. Duplication of efforts is noted between the two Adaptation Fund's and GCF's readiness programmes, and stakeholders accessing these raised the need for synergies to address this duplication

There are several key stakeholders such as multilateral organisations, other climate funds, and bilateral engagements addressing adaptation concerns in Armenia. These organisations include the UNDP, FAO, GIZ, EU, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), ADB, Japanese Communications Fund, and Russian Fund, according to a stakeholder. They support adaptation projects across sectors such as developing nature-based solutions for municipalities, improving the water sector (irrigation systems, hydro stations, etc.), and improving early weather warning systems. Climate funds such as the

GCF and GEF are also supporting adaptation projects in Armenia. For instance, GCF supported UNDP in developing Armenia's NAP, while the GEF has supported biodiversity conservation projects in the country. The private sector has also engaged with the GCF's RPSP, with one company (ArmSwissBank) becoming the first private delivery partner for the GCF in Armenia.

There's an overlap in the readiness support provided by both the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme and GCF's RPSP. They both focus on strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of institutions to directly access and manage climate finance and implement climate projects for e.g. through development of guidelines and manuals, stakeholder consultations, such as those with women, trainings. Duplication in the efforts of the GCF and Adaptation Fund readiness programmes is noted by stakeholders, which indicates opportunities for further collaboration and coordination between the two funds. Both provide capacity-building support and have regulatory requirements with similar policies such as ESG. Stakeholders suggest these funds could bridge duplication, harmonise efforts, and leverage existing support such as by developing adaptation progress tracking tools and policies or by utilising opportunities created by synergies when the secretariats of both Adaptation Fund and GCF attend each other's meetings.

The NIE is accredited with both the Adaptation Fund and GCF and has accessed both the Adaptation Fund's and GCF's readiness programmes. In an interview with a stakeholder, it was noted that the GCF is seen as a larger fund that is cross-cutting as it focuses on both mitigation and adaptation, while Adaptation Fund is seen as a smaller fund with a narrow focus on adaptation only. Another stakeholder mentioned that the peer support provided through the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme is valued for its experience-sharing approach, wherein an experienced NIE shares knowledge and experience with a new applicant. Greater familiarity on the part of stakeholders with GCF's RPSP than with Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme is noted.

Finding 3: The Readiness Programme has supported developing capacity building for NIE staff in Armenia. However, there are challenges that affect the programme's effectiveness, namely staff turnover and complex and resource-intensive preparation for Adaptation Fund's funding proposals and reviews.

The Readiness Programme's capacity-building support for Armenia's NIE improved its ability to implement projects, communicate with communities, ensure the gender-related needs of communities are addressed, and address complaints from communities during project implementation, according to a stakeholder. As noted in the project completion report, readiness support also led to: the development of a dashboard that was used to undertake project environmental and social and gender risk assessments and that supports formulation of risk management plans that are gender responsive; a manual that covers the environmental and social and gender-responsive risks and assessment guidelines; the development of project-level grievance mechanism; and capacity-building workshops and webinars for NIE staff.¹⁹⁵ The Readiness Programme also supported capacity building of a peer NIE through Armenia's NIE. For instance, the DA in Tajikistan received advice from Armenia's NIE to incorporate a policy on how to manage personnel changes into its application. The peer NIE was also trained by Armenia's NIE. This supported capacity building for Tajikistan's application, and they valued the mentorship and technical guidance

¹⁹⁵ Adaptation Fund (n.d.) 'Project to support National Implementing Entity sourcing of Technical Assistance for Assessment and management of Environment, Social and Gender Risks within Projects and Programmes in Armenia – Project Completion Report'.

provided by Armenia's NIE on their readiness project application and on Adaptation Fund accreditation.

However, there are certain challenges that affect the effectiveness of the Readiness Programme. Although it is acknowledged as improving the capacity of the NIE, Adaptation Fund processes such as the preparation of the funding proposal and review are viewed as being complex and resource intensive, making it difficult for NIE staff to keep up. Additionally, staff turnover is a challenge that limits the institutionalising of capacity development.

Finding 4: The Readiness Programme's processes were considered timely and cost-efficient by the stakeholders interviewed in Armenia.

According to one stakeholder, the Readiness Programme's project approval process was viewed to be fast, and the Secretariat was seen as very responsive. The readiness grant application submission and approval took two months, which is around one month less than the Adaptation Fund average, with the longest step being approval from the AFB (which took 1.5 months). It was also noted by the stakeholder from Tajikistan that the peer support through the Readiness Programme reduced the peer NIE's reliance on external consultants, thus saving their resources.

Finding 5: After accessing the Readiness Programme, Armenia has accessed climate adaptation project funding from the Adaptation Fund as well as from the GCF. These projects, from both funds, are largely community focused and show initial efforts to build community resilience.

The Readiness Programme has supported technical capacity improvements and proposal development in the NIE. Armenia accessed funding for three adaptation projects from the Adaptation Fund, following the readiness support it received, and in 2025 it received funding for a locally led adaptation project.¹⁹⁶ The development of transparency and grievance redressal mechanisms through the NIE's website has also been attributed to the enhanced capacity of the NIE, and was highlighted in an interview with a stakeholder and in the project completion report for the readiness grant.¹⁹⁷ These developments are likely to contribute to Armenia's ability to successfully apply for Adaptation Fund projects.

Funding from the Adaptation Fund has been used to implement three initiatives at the community level: digital education on adaptation for youth, closed stonepit waste and flood management, and strengthening land-based adaptation capacity in protected areas. This is indicative of an initial appetite for these initiatives by community members. This pathway of initiatives shows how Adaptation Fund grants, accessed after the Readiness Programme, have the potential to lead to efforts that build community resilience. One of the projects that the NIE implemented through the Adaptation Fund between 2019 and 2022 was the 'Strengthening land-based adaptation capacity in communities adjacent to protected areas in Armenia' project. The project focused on protected land areas, including the Khosrav Forest State Reserve and Dilijan National Park, and intended to enhance the capacities of local communities to find alternative sources of income instead of using the forest to earn their

¹⁹⁶ Adaptation Fund (2024) 'Annual Performance Report'; <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/apply-funding/locally-led-adaptation/approved-eda-grants/> (accessed on 16 July 2025)

¹⁹⁷ Adaptation Fund (n.d.) 'Project to support National Implementing Entity sourcing of Technical Assistance for Assessment and management of Environment, Social and Gender Risks within Projects and Programmes in Armenia – Project Completion Report'.

livelihoods.¹⁹⁸ It sought to do this through rehabilitating ecosystems, improving irrigation water supply systems by installing pumps, the installation of drip irrigation systems, provision of mineral and organic fertilisers, the introduction of new varieties and hybrids of vegetable crops more adapted to climate change, constructing livestock watering points, encouraging smart agricultural practices (e.g. building an anti-hail network, planting shrubs, etc.), and installing solar dryers for drying fruits.¹⁹⁹ Based on the project completion report, these efforts appear to have translated into: improved arable lands, hay meadows, and pastures; beneficiaries expressing a desire to get seeds and seedlings of new varieties; and interest among beneficiaries in building greenhouses or dryers on their plots.²⁰⁰ These initiatives illustrate initial efforts to build community resilience.

Armenia has also accessed eight readiness activities and funding for seven projects from GCF.²⁰¹ Out of the seven projects, five are implemented across countries and two are under implementation in Armenia only. One is a mitigation project on ‘De-risking and scaling up investment in energy-efficient building retrofits’. It seeks to improve energy efficiency in Armenia through building retrofits, addressing high levels of energy poverty and high use of imported fossil fuels for heating. The project has made moderate progress with emission reductions of 18,943 tCO₂ per year due to encountering multiple challenges such as conflict escalations with Azerbaijan and six-month project restructuring during which the activities were halted.²⁰² Another project under implementation is ‘Forest resilience of Armenia, enhancing adaptation and rural green growth via mitigation’, which seeks to increase the role of communities in governing and managing natural resources through forest concessions and improved fuelwood management, timber production, and non-timber forest products. So far, the project has established and operationalised nurseries and conducted training courses on ‘Forest nurseries’ and ‘High-quality forest plant production’.²⁰³ These also show preliminary steps toward developing community resilience.

Conclusions

The Readiness Programme in Armenia has been a source of helpful support regarding the country fulfilling its adaptation needs. It has improved its technical capacity, helped engagement with communities, and created learnings on how to address environmental, social, and gender risks. Duplication of readiness efforts is noted between the Adaptation Fund’s and GCF’s readiness programmes and there is a need to increase the synergies between these. Since accessing the Readiness Programme, Armenia has gone on to access funding for adaptation from the Adaptation Fund and accessed funding for climate change projects from the GCF. It is likely that the Readiness Programme’s efforts contributed to Armenia applying for these climate funds.

¹⁹⁸ Project Completion Summary (2024) ‘Strengthening land based adaptation capacity in communities adjacent to protected areas in Armenia’.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/armenia> (accessed on 23 July 2024)

²⁰² GCF (2024) ‘De-Risking and Scaling-up Investment in Energy Efficient Building Retrofits: Annual Performance Report CY 2023’ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/fp010-annual-performance-report-cy2023-projects-programme-approved-under-pmfs-v.pdf> (accessed on 1 August 2025)

²⁰³ GCF (2024) ‘Forest resilience of Armenia, enhancing adaptation and rural green growth via mitigation: Annual Performance Report CY 2023’ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/sap014-annual-performance-report-cy2023.pdf> (accessed on 1 August 2025)

Annexes

Table 18: List of Stakeholders consulted

Country	Name	Title	Organization
Armenia	Ms. Margarita Gasparyan	Head of the Cooperation with Donors Department	EPIU
Armenia	Milena Kiramijyan	Chief Specialist of the Cooperation with Donors Department	EPIU
Armenia	Mr Erik Grigoryan	CEO	Environment Group
Armenia	Ana Markhyam	Business Development	ARMSWISSBANK
Armenia	Anush A. Lokya.	Business Development	ARMSWISSBANK
Armenia	Artak Baghdasaryan,	UNDP Task Lead	UNDP
Armenia	Ms Diana Harutyunyan	UNDP CC Programme Coordinator	UNDP
Armenia	Mr Aram Ter-Zakaryan	Team Leader, National Adaptation Institutional Framework Enhancement	UNDP
Armenia	Tigran Sukiasyan	Independent Consultant	Independent Consultant
Armenia	Muhibullo Junaidov	Directo	CIIP
Armenia	Faromuz Saidov	Focal Point for the RPG for Tajikistan project	CIIP
Armenia	Ms Angez Avzalshoeva	Chief Finance Manager	CIIP

Case study 5 – Senegal

Country context and profile

Geographic location and vulnerability to climate hazards

Senegal, located in West Africa, faces significant climate-related challenges due to its geographic location and socioeconomic conditions. The country's semi-arid to tropical climate and its position along the Atlantic coast make it particularly vulnerable to various climate hazards.

Key climate risks

While Senegal is at medium risk for major climate disasters, it faces high vulnerability when these occur.²⁰⁴ The most frequent hazard is **flooding**, which affects urban areas and is caused by heavy rainfall and poor drainage. Heavy rains in the wet season can lead to flash floods that particularly affect cities like Dakar, Saint Louis, and Kaolack. **Droughts** are common in arid regions, impacting agriculture and water resources. While Senegal has a long history of droughts, particularly in the Sahelian north, climate change has heightened rainfall variability, leading to reduced agricultural productivity and water scarcity. **Rises in sea level** and **coastal erosion** are threatening coastal communities, livelihoods like fishing, and infrastructure. There has also been an increase in the frequency and intensity of **heatwaves** and **wildfires**, threatening human health and ecosystems. Lastly, **desertification** remains a growing risk in the northern regions bordering the Sahara.

The effects of climate change

Senegal faces significant socio-political and economic vulnerabilities related to climate risks, which pose substantial challenges to the country's development and stability. Senegal's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, with about 60% of the population engaged in agricultural activities. Women comprise 60% of those working in the agricultural sector.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, 95% of farms are smallholdings, with the remaining 5% being larger, likely commercial farms.²⁰⁶

The sector is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to: reliance on rain-fed agriculture, with less than 5% of cultivated land being irrigated;²⁰⁷ the prevalence of smallholder farmers growing subsistence crops like rice, maize, millet, and sorghum; and projected reduction in crop yields due to warmer and drier climatic conditions.²⁰⁸ Consequently, the country relies on imports to meet nearly 70% of its food requirements.²⁰⁹ Under high climate change stress, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts the poverty rate could double as early as 2030, mainly due to higher food prices and reduced food production. Moreover, Senegal's coastal zones – which are home to 52% of the population and responsible for 68% of GDP – are threatened by climate-related changes such as flooding, coastal erosion, sea level rise, and salinisation, compromising the fishing and tourism sectors.²¹⁰

Climate change also exacerbates existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities. With limited progress in poverty reduction and growing inequality despite economic growth, climate change could push more than 2 million Senegalese into poverty by mid-century.²¹¹ According to the IMF, climate-induced migration is a growing concern, threatening to affect up to 1 million people in Senegal by 2050. Maduraga-Lopez *et al.* also points out how migration patterns are shifting, with coastal cities like Dakar, Saint Louis, and Thiès becoming the main hotspots of climate-induced out-migration. This is compounded with

²⁰⁴ UNDP (2024) 'Human Development Report 2024: Breaking the Gridlock'. <https://hdr.undp.org> (accessed on 29 July 2025)

²⁰⁵ International Fund for Agricultural Development (2019) 'Senegal Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2019–2024'.

²⁰⁶ LandLinks (2010) 'Senegal—Country Profile'. USAID

²⁰⁷ Maduraga-Lopez, S., Dieye, A. M., Thiam, I., Diop, A., and Sy, M. (2023) 'Advancing climate-smart agriculture in Senegal: Pathways for improving resilience in the agricultural sector'. CGIAR Initiative on Climate Resilience (ClimBeR)

²⁰⁸ IMF (2023) 'Senegal: Climate Change Policy Assessment'.

²⁰⁹ United Nations Capital Development Fund (2023) 'Climate finance and food security in Senegal'.

²¹⁰ IMF (2023) 'Senegal: Climate Change Policy Assessment'.

²¹¹ World Bank (2024) 'Senegal Country Climate and Development Report'.

rapid urbanisation, where climate risks intersect.²¹² The urban coastal zone, home to about 67% of the country's population and responsible for about 90% of its industrial production^{213, 2}, faces risks of flooding and erosion due to high population settlements and poor drainage infrastructure, impacting livelihoods, food security, physical infrastructure, and health.²¹⁴ Lastly, climate change has raised political and security concerns. Climate disasters such as desertification and droughts are exacerbating resource-based conflicts and amplifying land right issues, with more frequent and intense conflicts between farmers and migratory pastoralists. There are also legitimate concerns that climate-induced livelihood insecurity is contributing to the increased likelihood of radicalisation and recruitment of young men into armed and radical groups in vulnerable regions such as the north.

Climate change response: Overview of climate change-related policies and institutions in the country

On the international stage, Senegal is a signatory to frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework, while also participating actively in the UNFCCC. Under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, according to the IMF, Senegal is currently under a bilateral agreement with Switzerland for international emissions reductions trading²¹⁵. Additionally, Senegal collaborates with multilateral climate finance institutions such as the GCF, Africa Risk Capacity, the Adaptation Fund, the GEF, and the Africa Adaptation Initiative, which supports projects aimed at enhancing climate resilience promoting sustainable development and reducing vulnerability to climate related risks across key sectors such as agriculture, water resources, health and infrastructure. Senegal adopted its National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) in 2006, marking a pivotal moment in the country's climate governance and signalling a growing recognition of climate issues.²¹⁶ The NAPA represented the first national policy framework dedicated exclusively to adaptation, setting initial priorities for climate resilience. Between 2006 and 2019, there was a notable acceleration in the integration of adaptation considerations across the territory by both state and development actors, primarily through the implementation of various climate resilience projects and programmes.²¹⁷ Today, Senegal's climate action is more strategically guided by its NDC and the ongoing development of its NAP, which delineates priorities across key vulnerable sectors.

NDC: According to the Government of Senegal, Senegal's updated 2020 NDC outlines unconditional greenhouse gas reduction targets of 5% by 2025 and 7% by 2030, which can

²¹² Madurga-Lopez, S., Dieye, A. M., Thiam, I., Diop, A., and Sy, M. (2023) 'Advancing climate-smart agriculture in Senegal: Pathways for improving resilience in the agricultural sector'. CGIAR Initiative on Climate Resilience (ClimBeR)

²¹³ World Bank. (2019). *West Africa's coast: Losing over \$3.8 billion a year to erosion, flooding and pollution*. World Bank Group. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/publication/west-africas-coast-losing-over-38-billion-a-year-to-erosion-flooding-and-pollution>

²¹⁴ Government of Senegal (2020) 'Contribution Déterminée au niveau National (CDN)'

²¹⁵ Swiss Federal Council. (2021, June 23). *Federal Council approves bilateral climate protection agreements with Senegal and Vanuatu*. The Federal Council. <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-84104.html>

²¹⁶ Government of Senegal (2006) 'Programme d'Action National d'Adaptation aux Changements Climatiques (PANA)'

²¹⁷ World Food Programme (2020) 'Senegal: Climate Risk and Food Security Analysis'

increase to 23% by 2025 and 29% by 2030 with international support. These targets encompass both mitigation and adaptation priorities across key sectors²¹⁸.

In addition to the NDC, the Government of Senegal has an elaborate development strategy called the Plan for Emerging Senegal (PSE) for the period up to 2035. The PSE integrates the need to consider adaptation in the planning of economic and social development policies to increase the resilience of the country's production systems to climate change impacts. It explicitly integrates climate adaptation into the planning of economic and social development policies, aiming to enhance the resilience of production systems to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the strategy emphasises the importance of climate risk considerations and stresses the need to align unconditional commitments under the NDC—both in terms of mitigation and adaptation—with national medium- and long-term budgetary frameworks.

Institutions in the country

The Directorate of Environmental Classified Establishments (DEEC) serves as Senegal's national focal point for both the UNFCCC and the GEF. In addition, the DEEC functions as the DNA for the Clean Development Mechanism, the DA for the Adaptation Fund, and the NDA for the GCF.

ANACIM, focal point of the IPCC, has contributed significantly to work on climate projections in Senegal. ANACIM has significantly contributed to climate projections in Senegal through the development and application of the **ENACTS platform**, which merges satellite, station, and real time analysis data to generate high-resolution climate datasets. These are critical for seasonal forecasting, early warning systems, and long-term projections used across sectors such as agriculture and water management. Further ANACIM plays a key technical advisory role by generating and validating climate data and evidence used in funding proposals to multilateral climate finance institutions, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund, thereby ensuring that project designs are aligned with projected climate risks and national adaptation priorities.²¹⁹

CSE has been accredited as Senegal's NIE for the Adaptation Fund. In this capacity, it supports the formulation, development, and submission of project and programme proposals to access resources from the Fund. Additionally, CSE has also been accredited as a National Executing Agency for the GCF, enabling it to implement climate finance projects aligned with national adaptation and mitigation priorities.

The Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur les Énergies Renouvelables serves as Senegal's DNA for the UNFCCC Technology Transfer Mechanism. It plays a key role in the development, dissemination, and local adaptation of clean and climate-resilient technologies, contributing to national efforts to build technical capacity and reduce emissions through sustainable innovation.

The National Commission on Sustainable Development (CNDD), coordinated by the DEEC, is tasked with developing Senegal's national sustainable development strategy and action

²¹⁸ Government of Senegal. (2020). *Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Senegal*. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/SENEGAL%20NDC%20Version%20Finale_ENG.pdf

²¹⁹ CGIAR. (2023). *Training on the use of ANACIM Senegal ENACTS platform and Maprooms*. Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA). <https://aiccra.cgiar.org/publications/training-use-anacim-senegal-enacts-platform-and-maprooms>

plan. The CNDD is also responsible for reporting to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development on the country's progress in implementing Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, both of which are central to global sustainable development frameworks.

Climate finance flows in Senegal

Senegal has established a robust institutional framework to access and manage climate finance, led by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, which serves as the NDA for both the GCF and the GEF.²²⁰ Senegal has successfully accredited several NIEs, including CSE, one of the first NIEs accredited by the Adaptation Fund in 2010, and later by the GCF.²²¹ Additionally, La Banque Agricole and Attijariwafa Bank Senegal have been accredited by the GCF as DAEs, facilitating national access to large-scale climate finance.²²²

GCF

Readiness support: Senegal has received six GCF readiness grants (with approx. US\$ 2 million approved and US\$ 1.1 million disbursed) to strengthen institutional capacity, including accreditation of DAEs like CSE, Attijariwafa Bank, and La Banque Agricole.

Investment projects: The GCF has also financed larger adaptation and mitigation efforts in Senegal, including:

- The Senegal Integrated Urban Flood Management Project (FP021), which received a €15 million grant to improve flood resilience in the greater Dakar area through upgraded drainage, hydrological forecasting, and climate risk-informed planning; and
- The Green Climate Finance Facility for Climate-Smart Agriculture (FP262), which has a US\$ 27.4 million envelope (combining grants and loans) and is designed to improve climate-resilient agricultural finance and support smallholder farmers through local institutions.

Adaptation Fund

Senegal has successfully implemented two Adaptation Fund readiness grants, both managed by its NIE CSE. These grants, totalling US\$ 28,000, were part of the Fund's TA window, designed to enhance institutional capacities in key safeguards. The first grant, awarded in February 2016, was a TA grant for ESP, valued at US\$ 18,000. It focused on strengthening CSE's capacity to align with the Adaptation Fund's ESP requirements. The second grant, received in December 2016, was a TA-GP grant worth US\$ 10,000, aimed at supporting the development and institutionalisation of a gender-responsive policy framework within the NIE. Both projects were completed successfully, demonstrating Senegal's early and effective engagement with the Fund's readiness mechanisms.

Projects

Senegal's Adaptation Fund portfolio reflects a strategic and sustained engagement with climate resilience, anchored in coastal management and increasingly expanding into food security. By 2024, the country had secured funding for six adaptation projects, totalling

²²⁰ World Bank. (2023). *Country Climate and Development Report: Senegal*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/39596>

²²¹ CSE, 2020

²²² GCF, 2024

approximately US\$ 10.39 million, with an average project size of US\$ 1.73 million. All projects have been implemented through CSE, underscoring the NIE's institutional strength and central role in national adaptation efforts. The flagship initiative, Adaptation to Coastal Erosion in Vulnerable Areas (2010), received US\$ 8.62 million, accounting for 83% of Senegal's total adaptation portfolio, and has been completed. Other notable projects include Reducing Vulnerability in the Saloum Islands (2017), currently under implementation with US\$ 1.35 million in funding, and the recently approved Djigui Niokolo Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral Project (2024), focusing on climate-resilient agriculture and worth US\$ 244,459.

Overall, 96% of Senegal's adaptation financing has targeted coastal zone resilience, highlighting the country's acute vulnerability to sea level rise and erosion. A smaller share (2.4%) supports food security innovations, while only 0.3% has gone to TA through readiness grants. Project performance reveals a 50% completion rate, with two projects actively under implementation and timelines ranging from 2010 to 2024. This long-term involvement, consistent use of the NIE, and recent diversification into new sectors suggest both a strong institutional foundation and a growing responsiveness to emerging climate threats

Table 19: Overview of Adaptation Fund support to Senegal

Project title	IE	Grant amount	Approval year	Duration (years)	Status	Status category
Adaptation to Coastal Erosion in Vulnerable Areas	CSE	US\$ 8,619,000	2010	3	Completed	Completed
Reducing Vulnerability and Increasing Resilience of Coastal Communities in the Saloum Islands (Dionewar and Fadiol)	CSE	US\$ 1,351,000	2017	3	Under implementation	Under implementation
Djigui Niokolo: Developing Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral Models for Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Preservation	CSE	US\$ 244,459	2024	1	Grant submitted – NIE small grants for innovation, proposal approved	Recently approved
Learning Grant for Senegal	CSE	US\$ 144,848	2020	1	Under implementation	Under implementation
Technical Assistance Grant for ESP	CSE	US\$ 18,000	2016	0.5	Completed	Completed
TA-GP	CSE	US\$ 10,000	2016	0.5	Completed	Completed

Data collection methods

Data collection for this case study was conducted through a combination of field engagement and desk-based research. A country visit to Senegal took place from 28 April to 1 May 2025, during which the research team conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with two key institutional stakeholders. These included representatives from ANACIM and the CSE, both of which play significant roles in Senegal's climate data services and project implementation landscape. In addition, a remote interview was held with officials from the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development to gather insights on national climate finance governance, coordination mechanisms, and policy priorities. The fieldwork was further complemented by a comprehensive desk review of relevant documentation, including project completion reports, national strategic frameworks, climate finance readiness and grant-related materials.

Findings

Finding 1: The Readiness Programme played a catalytic role in supporting CSE's accreditation by strengthening institutional systems, building internal capacities, and providing targeted technical assistance.

Senegal's CSE serves as compelling example of the strategic importance of the Readiness Programme. As a public institution with parastatal status, CSE was among the very first entities globally and the first in Africa to be accredited by the Adaptation Fund, achieving this milestone with the technical and financial support of the Readiness Programme. At the time of accreditation, there was no established roadmap or shared best practices for national institutions in developing countries to follow in pursuing direct access, underscoring the pioneering nature of CSE's achievement. This trailblazing accreditation helped set the standard for Direct Access in developing countries, demonstrating the programme's relevance in enhancing early institutional leadership in climate finance access.

Stakeholders in Senegal highlighted the pivotal value of readiness grants in supporting Senegal, including a catalytic role in institutional strengthening through CSE to build the internal systems, procedures, and capacities needed to meet the Adaptation Fund's accreditation standards. This included establishing robust financial management systems, risk controls, procurement procedures, and environmental and social safeguards that previously did not exist in a coordinated or fully developed form. The grants have also provided TA that included facilitating targeted trainings, peer exchanges, and targeted guidance tailored to the accreditation process.

Specifically, CSE stakeholders emphasized how the Programme increased the number of projects ready for funding and strengthened capacity for project development, monitoring, and evaluation, enabled the development of quality adaptation projects and proposals while improving access to funding, successfully embedded gender and environmental safeguards in project development processes and facilitated direct access for national entities, enhancing their ability to meet fiduciary standards.

However this experience contradicts ANACIM experience, the national meteorological agency and the Ministry of Environment and Ecological Transition, both of which had minimal to no engagement despite their critical role in climate adaptation

In summary the Readiness Programme has been a foundational intervention that enabled Senegal to transition from climate finance aspirant to accredited actor, capable of directly designing and implementing its own adaptation solutions.²²³

Finding 2: Climate finance readiness efforts in Senegal demonstrate strong coordination and complementary roles across funding mechanisms, with the Adaptation Fund playing a foundational role in institutional capacity building.

Shared coordination framework: The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development serves as the DA for the Adaptation Fund and National Designated Authority for the GCF and engages with GCF through its focal point mechanism.

Complementary roles in institutional capacity building: The Readiness Programme demonstrates strong coherence in Senegal’s climate finance landscape, with significant evidence of successful integration and synergies with other climate funds. Senegal’s experience with the Adaptation Fund – particularly through the accreditation of CSE – helped lay the foundation for later engagements with the GCF. The readiness support and Direct Access modality pioneered under the Adaptation Fund directly informed similar processes under the GCF, where Senegal now has multiple national entities accredited, including CSE and Banque Agricole. Meanwhile, the GEF has contributed to long-term capacity building and foundational work like the preparation of NAPs and other enabling activities.

Challenges and opportunities for enhanced coherence: Despite alignment at the strategic level, challenges persist in harmonising M&E, streamlining reporting requirements, and sequencing funding across the three mechanisms. Opportunities exist to further strengthen coordination through joint programming, shared stakeholder platforms, and integrated capacity-building efforts.²²⁴

Systemic challenges and gaps: Despite these strengths, challenges persist. One of the key issues is the limited harmonisation between different climate finance sources such as the Adaptation Fund and the GCF²²⁵. This fragmentation leads to duplicated efforts and inefficiencies, especially in the readiness and implementation stages.

Finding 2: The Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Programme has been effective in strengthening institutional capacity, mainstreaming gender and safeguards, and fostering South–South learning in support of country-led climate finance access

CSE successfully completed all planned deliverables, including Gender Policy development, staff training, and institutional framework establishment. Staff were also trained as gender focal points to further embed gender mainstreaming. Further, all deliverables were translated into English as part of streamlining the process.

Additionally, the Adaptation Fund’s readiness grant was instrumental in positioning CSE as a regional knowledge hub. Through the grant, CSE facilitated South–South learning exchanges with peer institutions in Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. These exchanges not only strengthened CSE’s technical leadership but also fostered alignment

²²³ Adaptation Fund, Readiness Programme Evaluation Report, 2020

²²⁴ Adaptation Fund. (2020). *Options for Enhancing Coherence and Complementarity among the Climate Finance Delivery Channels*. AFB/B.35/Inf.9. Retrieved from <https://www.adaptation-fund.org>

²²⁵ Green Climate Fund (2023). *Enhancing Coherence in Climate Finance: Country Experiences and Pathways Forward*.

with broader global adaptation efforts, reinforcing coherence between national implementation and international climate adaptation objectives.

Finding 3: The Readiness Programme effectively strengthened institutional capacity and promoted locally grounded, sustainable adaptation planning.

CSE provides strong evidence of the programme's effectiveness in building institutional capacity. The support enabled CSE to develop high-quality adaptation projects and funding proposals while enhancing internal systems for project development, monitoring, and evaluation. A notable outcome was the successful integration of gender and environmental/social safeguards into project design and implementation processes. Additionally, CSE emphasized the importance of adapting support to the national context. Rather than relying solely on international consultants, the Programme's responsiveness to local cultural norms and institutional realities contributed to more effective, context-specific outcomes and stronger national ownership.

Finding 4: Effectiveness remains unassessed among non-participating institutions, limiting the programme's evaluative reach.

While CSE demonstrated clear gains, other institutions—such as ANACIM and the Ministry of Environment—reported being unable to assess the programme's effectiveness due to their lack of direct engagement. ANACIM explicitly noted that an evaluation was not possible without practical access or implementation experience. This highlights a critical gap, the absence of engagement by potential beneficiaries prevents a full assessment of the programme's effectiveness across the national institutional landscape and may limit broader learning and scaling opportunities.

Finding 5: The Readiness Grant was implemented with a high degree of efficiency and strategic foresight, demonstrating strong financial management, timely execution, and sustainable institutional integration.

Through this grant CSE demonstrated efficiency, maximising the impact of the US\$ 10,000 readiness grant through disciplined financial management and strategic implementation. With a 94% budget execution rate, US\$ 9,397 was disbursed while the organisation prudently retained a US\$ 603 contingency balance.

Operational efficiency was also evident throughout the grant lifecycle. A tightly structured two-day workshop format minimised time costs for stakeholders while ensuring high levels of participation and impact. The workflow, which progressed systematically from a comprehensive gap analysis through validation meetings, allowed for optimal use of consultant expertise and internal staff resources. Administrative execution was equally strong, with all deliverables produced on schedule, professionally translated into English, and adjusted in real time to incorporate unforeseen audit requirements without cost overruns or delays.

Strategically, the project avoided duplication by integrating gender considerations into existing institutional systems rather than creating parallel processes. This approach not only increased short-term efficiency but also reduced long-term operational costs and enhanced the sustainability of reform.

Finding 6: Efficiency improves during implementation, but systemic bottlenecks persist across the programme lifecycle.

Stakeholder feedback suggests that the Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme demonstrates greater efficiency during the implementation phase than during initial application and approval stages. However, efficiency bottlenecks remain a systemic concern. The lengthy timelines, and insufficient differentiation based on institutional capacity continue to limit the Programme's ability to scale equitably. The convergence of feedback across institutions at varying stages of engagement indicates the need for more streamlined, and tailored support mechanisms that reflect differing levels of institutional readiness. Stakeholders stressed the need for clearer navigation tools and more targeted support to understand the steps required for fund access. Lastly one stakeholder emphasized the need to accelerate foundational capacity-building processes to reduce bottlenecks and broaden institutional participation. These insights point to a systemic issue in early-stage access and guidance

Finding 7: The Readiness Programme has catalysed institutional transformation and strategic impact, but stronger community integration is needed to ensure inclusive adaptation outcomes.

The US\$ 10,000 readiness grant from the Adaptation Fund delivered high-impact results by significantly enhancing CSE's institutional capacity in gender mainstreaming. The grant enabled CSE to conduct a comprehensive diagnostic of its systems and practices, resulting in the development of key deliverables, including an updated Gender Policy, a gender-responsive grievance mechanism, standardised screening and monitoring tools, and a training programme for designated gender focal points. These outputs directly strengthened CSE's internal compliance with international climate finance standards and reinforced its ability to design, implement, and monitor gender-responsive adaptation initiatives. The interventions supported by the grant contributed to improved fiduciary readiness, programmatic accountability, and operational efficiency, positioning CSE for future access to larger and more complex funding portfolios.

In addition to internal institutional benefits, the grant produced broader strategic and programmatic impacts. Furthermore, alignment with Senegal's National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity has increased the relevance and potential replicability of the approach. As a result, CSE is now better positioned to contribute to regional leadership in gender-responsive climate finance, serving as a model for efficiency and sustainability within West Africa's adaptation landscape.

However, despite institutional progress, gaps remain in translating these gains into community-level impact. CSE acknowledged that local participation has not kept pace with institutional strengthening. While tools and frameworks have improved, stronger participatory approaches are required to ensure adaptation efforts are relevant, accessible, and beneficial to vulnerable populations. Embedding equity, simplifying assessments, and integrating local knowledge into project design will be critical for maximizing inclusive and sustainable impact.

Through targeted support from a readiness grant, CSE significantly advanced its institutional approach to gender equality. The grant enabled CSE to conduct a comprehensive diagnosis of its internal operations and systems related to gender mainstreaming. As a result, the organisation successfully updated its Gender Policy and strengthened the capacity of its staff through dedicated training and TA.

A suite of practical tools and guidance materials was developed to institutionalise gender considerations across all stages of project development and monitoring. These include a gap analysis report, a gender mainstreaming report, an updated Gender Policy, and a revised grievance mechanism that explicitly integrates gender-sensitive considerations. In

addition, a training report and a consultant’s end-of-mission report document the capacity-building process and its outcomes. Collectively, these products have positioned CSE to more effectively design and implement adaptation interventions that are inclusive, equitable, and aligned with both organizational priorities and broader gender-responsive climate action goals.

Conclusion

The Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Programme has been instrumental in strengthening institutional capacity and catalysing strategic impact in countries like Senegal. The NIE exemplifies this transformation, evolving from a recipient of capacity-building support to a strategic partner in climate finance. The Programme enabled CSE to develop robust gender policies, safeguards, and monitoring tools, enhancing both internal compliance and leadership in adaptation planning. Stakeholders also highlighted the Programme’s potential to foster sectoral impact and national adaptation systems. However, the benefits of institutional strengthening have not consistently reached the community level. To ensure inclusive and sustainable adaptation outcomes, there is a clear need for greater community participation, simplified tools, and integration of local socio-cultural contexts in project design.

At the same time, persistent efficiency challenges were identified across stakeholder groups, particularly in the early stages of fund access and capacity building. Complex procedures, limited guidance, and undifferentiated approaches continue to pose barriers—especially for institutions new to the climate finance landscape. While project implementation is generally efficient once approved, the Programme’s reach and impact could be significantly improved through streamlined processes and tailored support mechanisms

Annexes

Table 20: List of Stakeholders consulted

Country	Name	Title	Organization
Senegal	Mrs. Mame Faty Niang Seydi	Direction de	Ministère de l’Environnement et du Développement durable
Senegal	Prof. Cheikh Mbow	Director General	CSE
Senegal	Aida Diop	Director	ANACIM

Case Box – Zimbabwe

Climate change context: Overview of the effects of climate change on the country

Zimbabwe, a landlocked country in southern Africa, is characterised by diverse landscapes and five agro-ecological zones spanning from savannah to mountain highlands. Temperatures have increased by 0.4–0.8 °C since the 1900s and are projected to rise by 2–3°C by 2050. Rainfall has become erratic, leading to frequent droughts (notably in 2015/16

and 2019/20), cyclones (e.g. Idai in 2019), and floods. With up to 70% of the population reliant on rain-fed agriculture, shifting weather patterns threaten food production, water availability, and economic growth, particularly in low-lying and arid areas.

Climate change response: Policies and Institutions

Zimbabwe is a party to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. The Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife leads climate policy, guided by the National Climate Policy (2017) and the NDC, which targets a 40% reduction in per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (conditional on support). Adaptation priorities focus on agriculture, water, disaster risk, and public health. The NAP, which was launched in 2019, aims to integrate climate risk management into national and local planning. Zimbabwe also implements sector strategies such as climate-smart agriculture and renewable energy, while disaster risk response is led by the Department of Civil Protection.

Overview of climate finance

Zimbabwe relies considerably on international climate finance to support adaptation, resilience, and mitigation initiatives, reflecting its status as a climate-vulnerable, lower-middle income country.

Findings

Finding 1: The Readiness Programme has been relevant and helpful in terms of providing technical support to the NIE and facilitating engagement with local communities

Zimbabwe needs financial and technical support to address adaptation issues in the country. The country has a NAP and needs funding to implement it. According to a stakeholder we interviewed, they need support to mainstream climate change in development planning and to strengthen institutional capacity for resource mobilisation, which would in turn help develop concrete adaptation interventions. Another stakeholder mentioned that support from the Readiness Programme helped in structuring their programme and engaging with communities and vulnerable groups to ensure that project proposals capture the voices of those on the ground and the scope of the projects are informed by the needs of local communities. In addition to facilitating engagement with communities and vulnerable groups, the Readiness Programme is perceived to be a useful prerequisite to accessing climate finance. According to a stakeholder interviewed, the support received through the Readiness Programme helps develop concepts and proposals that are up to the standard needed by the Adaptation Fund, which in turn reduces time for review and enables timely implementation of the project.

A couple of challenges related to accessing the Readiness Programme were raised. A key issue is the lack of consistent awareness about the Readiness Programme between key stakeholders. An interview with a stakeholder mentioned that they had limited information about the readiness grant. The stakeholder also mentioned that it would be helpful for the DA to receive funding support from the Readiness Programme and that it is not limited to the NIE only, as this would allow them to use it for adaptation planning and programming in the country. Another stakeholder mentioned that it was challenging to find expertise in areas requested by the Adaptation Fund such as economic analysis, and they would appreciate technical support from the Adaptation Fund for the implementation of the grant.

Finding 2: TA support from the Readiness Programme has enabled the NIE to develop capacities to be compliant with Adaptation Fund’s environment, social, and gender compliance requirements

The project completion report of the TA grant noted that the support enabled the NIE to review and update existing environment and social and gender policies, develop tools that will be used during project formulation and implementation, and strengthened the NIE’s capacity to comply with the Fund’s policies and the country’s National Development Strategy 1 (2021–2025).²²⁶ This is also reflected in an interview conducted with a stakeholder who mentioned that the grant helped them improve the project design to develop a bankable comprehensive project proposal by helping them conduct needs and vulnerability assessments that informed the target of their interventions for their project. The stakeholder said that the grant helped them develop an environmental and social management plan, frameworks, policy documents, and guidelines for implementation, which contributed to developing sound project proposals. The grant also helped accommodate capacity gaps in the NIE by enabling access to consultants in areas where it had limited capacity. This ensured that their proposals met the required standards, according to a stakeholder. The SSC grant support received earlier was also noted by a stakeholder to be a learning experience for the NIE, helping it to understand the management structure needed to implement projects and to manage funds, as well as the need for executing agencies.

The NIE has experienced some challenges in terms of developing the project documents required by the Adaptation Fund. A stakeholder mentioned that it took them several rounds of submissions and review over years to submit a comprehensive climate change adaptation proposal. As noted above, the NIE also found it challenging to find expertise in necessary areas requested by the Adaptation Fund such as economic analysis, and they appreciated the technical support received from the Adaptation Fund.

Finding 3: Zimbabwe has accessed funding from the Adaptation Fund for community-focused adaptation projects after receiving support from the Readiness Programme

The Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate serves as the NDA to the GCF, the DA to the Adaptation Fund. The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) is the country’s main environmental regulatory agency and contributes to project development and oversight.

Table 21: Overview of the financial support provided to Zimbabwe by the Adaptation Fund

Year	Grant type	Project/grant title	Amount
2016	SSC grant	The Government of Zimbabwe received peer support for accreditation of a NIE to the Adaptation Fund from Kenya’s NEMA. The support included in-country visits, training workshops, and meetings	US\$ 50,000
2019	TA-ESGP	Zimbabwe’s EMA received the TA-ESGP, which seeks to enhance the capacity of EMA to assess and manage environmental, social, and gender-related	US\$ 25,000

²²⁶ Adaptation Fund (2021) ‘To support strengthening of the Environment and social policy and Gender policy to comply with the Fund’s Environment and Social Policy and Gender policy – Project Completion Report’.

Year	Grant type	Project/grant title	Amount
		issues and its compliance with the Adaptation Fund's ESP and Gender Policy	
2020	Project	Enhancing Resilience of Communities and Ecosystems in the Face of a Changing Climate in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas of Zimbabwe	US\$ 5 million
2024	Project	Enhanced Climate Change Adaptation in Semi-Arid Areas of Zimbabwe through Sustainable Business Models	US\$ 9.05 million

GCF: Zimbabwe has been awarded several major GCF projects and readiness grants. These include the Building Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Agricultural Livelihoods in Southern Zimbabwe project (implemented by UNDP with the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, and Rural Resettlement), with US\$ 26.6 million from the GCF (2019–2026). This focuses on climate-resilient agriculture, water infrastructure (solar-powered irrigation, boreholes, etc.), and ecosystem restoration in arid districts and includes readiness support grants to strengthen National Climate Policy, project preparation capacity, and MRV systems.

GEF: Zimbabwe has participated in more than 16 national GEF projects with total grants amounting to over US\$ 62 million since the early 2000s, mainly in the areas of biodiversity, climate adaptation (climate-smart agriculture, early warning systems, etc.), land degradation, and renewable energy.

Readiness support has increased the institutional capacity of the NIE. According to a stakeholder, the grant increased institutional knowledge about how to develop their project, how to document issues related to climate change projects, and how to manage finance issues related to project document development at an international level. In addition to increasing institutional capacity, Zimbabwe has accessed funding for two projects (in 2021 and 2024) from the Adaptation Fund after receiving readiness support. One project is focused on strengthening local communities' adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change through sustainable groundwater utilisation for food security and other productive uses. The other project is focused on enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems in the face of a changing climate in the arid and semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe. These projects are under implementation and consequently it is difficult to gauge their impact.

Annexes

Table 22: List of Stakeholders consulted

Country	Name	Title	Organization
Zimbabwe	Maxwell Maturure	Manager - Environmental Planning & Monitoring National Focal Point - UNCCD	Environmental Management Agency
Zimbabwe	Ms Hlompho Naledi Kulube	Environmental Officer	Environmental Management Agency

Evaluation of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme

Country	Name	Title	Organization
Zimbabwe	Mr. Steady Kangata	Director	Environmental Management Agency
Zimbabwe	Ms Munashe E.S. Mukonoweshuro	Climate Change Scientist	Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife
Zimbabwe	Emily Fadzai Matingo	Climate Change Adaptation Officer	Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife

Terms of Reference

Introduction

This Terms of Reference (ToR) was prepared by the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) based upon an initial literature review and consultation with the Adaptation Fund Board (AFB) Secretariat (the 'Secretariat') and other stakeholders. The purpose of this ToR is to provide key information to potential bidders and guide the evaluation team through specifying the expectations during the various phases of the evaluation.

The ToR is structured as follows: Section 1 presents the rationale, objectives and main users of the evaluation; Section 2 and 3 presents the context, subject, and the details of the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme; Section 4 defines the evaluation scope, criteria and questions; Section 5 identifies the methodological approach and ethical considerations; and Section 6 indicates how the evaluation will be organized. The annexes include the list of documentation that the evaluation team can build on.

Section 1: Background of the evaluation

Rationale

Thematic evaluations in the Adaptation Fund (AF) are conducted in line with the Adaptation Fund Evaluation Policy¹. The evaluation offers an opportunity for the AF to benefit from an independent assessment of its readiness programme and generate evidence to inform its future implementation. Additionally, the evaluation has been commissioned at a pivotal moment, coinciding with the implementation of the second Medium -Term Strategy (MTS II) of the Adaptation Fund (2023-2027).² The MTS II foresees an expanded and enhanced readiness programme as a cross-cutting area of work to support the three strategic pillars of action, innovation, and learning and sharing, as well as the six crosscutting themes, in particular related to enhancing access to climate finance and long-term institutional capacities.

To inform the development of the enhanced readiness programme, the Implementation Plan (IP) of the MTS II³ suggests as an activity under the crosscutting theme enhancing access to climate finance and long-term institutional capacity an evaluation of the Readiness Programme by the AF- TERG to identify further gaps and recommendations for enhancing existing capacity-building instruments and grants (see page 36, paragraph 10). The MTSII IP has also identified several activities related to supporting and enhancing the capacity of National Implementation Entities (NIEs) and Designated Authorities (DAs) of the Fund.

In line with the MTS II IP, this evaluation has been commissioned to initiate and provide direction for a comprehensive evaluation of the Readiness Programme under guidance from the AF-TERG. The evaluation will be executed as a semi-independent evaluation. The findings of this evaluation will also inform the Secretariat's development of a revised strategy for an enhanced readiness programme, which is planned to be presented to the Adaptation Fund Board in March 2025. The semi-independent approach allows for quicker integration of evaluative insights into the readiness programme, facilitating faster implementation of findings.

Main users of the evaluation

The evaluation will seek the views of, and be useful to, a broad range of internal and external AF stakeholders. The main audience for this evaluation will be the Adaptation Fund Board and its Secretariat. It is to be used as an internal document for self-reflection and to inform the revised Readiness Strategy being developed in parallel. Additionally, since this evaluation will be conducted in a semi-independent manner, the Readiness team of the AF will be fully involved in giving their inputs at various phases/ stages of its execution.

Section 2: Context of the evaluation

Capacity-building in Climate Change Adaptation (CCA)

Climate change is predicted to greatly affect the poorest people in the world, who are often hardest hit by weather catastrophes, desertification, and rising sea levels, but who have contributed the least to the problem of global warming. In some parts of the world, climate change has already contributed to worsening food security, reduced the predictable availability of fresh water, and exacerbated the spread of diseases and other threats to human health. The 2023 report on Adaptation Gaps⁴ by the UNEP showed a 15 percent decrease in adaptation specific finance commitments from 2020 to 2021 which further emphasizes the need for quick action.

In 2001, the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), through decisions 2/CP.7 and 3/CP.7 adopted two capacity-building frameworks that affirmed that capacity-building is essential to enable developing countries to implement the objective of the Convention. The frameworks provide a set of guiding principles and approaches to capacity-building and set out a way forward for capacity-building activities, such as developing and strengthening skills and knowledge, as well as providing opportunities for stakeholders and organizations to share their experiences and increase their awareness to enable them to participate more fully in the climate change process. Article 11 of the Paris Agreement reaffirms that capacity-building should enhance the ability of developing countries to implement climate action, and should facilitate technology development, dissemination and deployment, access to climate finance, relevant aspects of education, training and public awareness, and the transparent, timely and accurate communication of information. It also asserts that capacity-building should be country-driven, and should be an effective, iterative process that is participatory, cross-cutting and gender-responsive.

About the Adaptation Fund

The Adaptation Fund, established in 2001, was officially operationalized in 2007 to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are parties to the Kyoto Protocol and are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and serves the Paris Agreement. The Adaptation Fund finances projects and programmes that help vulnerable communities in developing countries adapt to climate change. Initiatives are based on country needs, views and priorities. The Fund is financed largely from voluntary contributions by government and private contributors, and also from a two percent share of proceeds of Certified Emission Reductions that is levied to assist developing country parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change to meet the costs of adaptation⁵. The AF provides readiness and capacity building support to developing countries, linking this work with the UNFCCC capacity building framework and Article 11 of the Paris Agreement.

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

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) is an independent evaluation advisory group accountable to the Adaptation Fund Board, established in 2018 to ensure the independent implementation of the Fund's evaluation framework.

The first AF-TERG strategy and work programme was approved intersessionally in June 2020, between the first and second part of its thirty-fifth meeting.

The second AF-TERG work programme has been drafted and is planned to be presented at B.42 in April 2024. The work programme specifically covers the work on the thematic evaluation of the Readiness Programme for the FY24-25.

Section 3: Subject of the evaluation

At its twenty-first meeting, the Board recognized the need for a programme to support readiness for direct access to climate finance for national and regional implementing entities. Subsequently the readiness programme was formally launched in May 2014 with two overall objectives: (i) increasing the preparedness of applicant national implementing entities (NIEs) seeking accreditation by the Adaptation Fund and (ii) increasing the number of high-quality project/programme proposals submitted to the Board within a reasonable time after accreditation. These would be achieved through a range of capacity enhancement measures from support in the identification of potential NIEs within a country, to strengthening the appraisal, design implementation, and monitoring of adaptation projects and programmes undertaken by NIEs and Regional Implementing Entities (RIEs).

Objectives of the Readiness Programme

In recognition of the early successes of the readiness programme to address readiness and capacity gaps, at its twenty-seventh meeting, the Board decided through Decision B.27/38 to institutionalize the readiness programme and make it a more permanent feature of the Fund. At its thirtieth meeting, the Board approved an updated results framework for the readiness programme and articulated the programme's specific objectives through decision B.30/45 to be:

- to increase the preparedness of applicant national implementing entities seeking accreditation by the Adaptation Fund, and
- to increase the number of high-quality project/programme proposals submitted to the Board after accreditation.

The decision of the Board is supported by Parties to the Kyoto Protocol at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 10), at which the Parties recognized the Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme and decided to invite further support for the readiness programme of the Adaptation Fund Board for direct access to climate finance in accordance with decision 2/CMP.10, paragraph 5. Further, CMP 18 reinforced the Parties' support for the readiness programme and requested the Adaptation Fund Board to continue to enhance access to the Fund and country ownership by considering strengthening the readiness activities for national implementing entities, considering their long-term capacity- building needs in accordance with draft decision -/CMP.18, paragraph 10(a).

Key components of the Readiness Programme

The Board identified priority intervention areas for the readiness programme and approved four key components under which readiness support activities would be planned and implemented. By organizing the implementation of activities around four key components, the Readiness Programme can promote lessons learned and exchange of best practices during the full Adaptation Fund financing cycle, from accreditation through project design, implementation and reporting. In addition, the four key components provide a framework for strengthening the promotion of Direct Access. The Readiness Programme's four key components are:

- Support to accredited Implementing Entities.
- Cooperation/Partnership with climate finance readiness providers.
- Support to countries seeking accreditation; and
- Knowledge Management.

A description of the key components is provided in Annex 1. Activities identified and planned under the four key components would be approved by the Board annually and implemented as per the budget also approved by the Board annually.

Evolution of Adaptation Fund's Readiness Programme

The Programme started off as primarily an awareness-raising instrument (assessed yearly) which has evolved into a permanent feature of the Adaptation Fund, fully integrated into its operational guidelines with a set annual budget. Conducting workshops, organizing events, and supporting capacity-building for countries are some of the main activities undertaken under this programme with the aim to strengthen the capacity of national and regional implementing entities to receive and manage climate financing, particularly through the Fund's Direct Access modality, and to adapt and build resilience to counter changing climate conditions in sectors ranging from agriculture and food security to coastal zones and urban areas. For the first couple of years of the Programme, workshops were conducted in various regions with the aim of guiding the countries on accessing the funds as well as to increase the awareness about the Adaptation Fund and its processes and procedures. Since then, the focus has shifted toward training and capacity building.

The Adaptation Fund Readiness Programme has evolved through several key stages (See Figure 1).

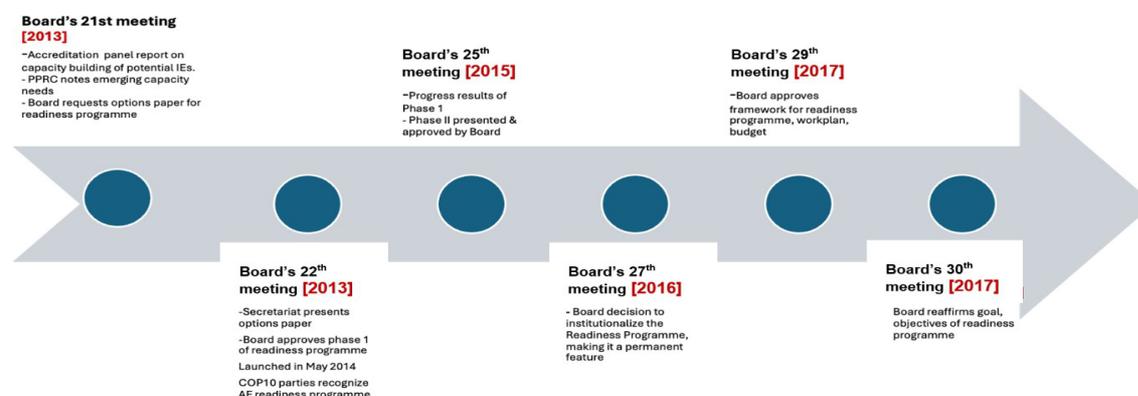


Figure 1: Evolution of Readiness Program (Source: TERG's interpretation based on literature review)

At its twenty-first meeting⁶, the Adaptation Fund Board discussed the necessity for capacity enhancement measures, including support for potential National Implementing Entities (NIEs) and strengthening project cycle processes. Recommendations from the Accreditation Panel (AP) and the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC) underscored the need for capacity building. Responding to these needs, the Board requested the Secretariat to prepare options for a readiness programme supporting direct access to climate finance for national and regional implementing entities, aiming to enhance their preparedness and increase the quality and quantity of project proposals.

In response, the Secretariat developed document AFB/B.22/67, outlining elements and options for a phased Readiness Programme. Phase I was approved at the twenty-second meeting, with a budget of US \$970,000, focusing on performance-based funding principles. The programme was launched in May 2014 and recognized at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 10) and decided to invite further support for the readiness programme of the Adaptation Fund Board for direct access to climate finance in accordance with decision 2/CMP.10, paragraph 5. Phase I witnessed the successful execution of Climate Finance Readiness Seminars, engaging experts and accredited entities, particularly NIEs. Workshop reports, and some post workshop assessment reports are available here: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/readiness/news-seminars/>. These efforts proved fruitful, leading to an increase in accredited NIEs and project proposals.

Building on the success of Phase I⁸, the Secretariat proposed Phase II at the twenty-fifth meeting. Phase II was approved with a total funding of US\$ 965,000, aiming to further enhance benefits and expand gains achieved in Phase I. The combined success of Phase I and II was evident in the

increased number of accredited NIEs, project proposals, and the growth of the readiness grant portfolio. Consequently, the Secretariat proposed institutionalizing the Readiness Programme as a permanent feature of the Fund¹⁰. The Board supported this proposal, institutionalizing the programme through Decision B.27/38 at its twenty-seventh meeting¹¹. Subsequent steps were taken to integrate the Readiness Programme into the Fund's operations, policies, and guidelines, culminating in the approval of the results framework for the programme at the twenty-ninth meeting (see results framework in Annex 2).

Implementation modalities

To meet the objectives of the Readiness Programme, the following activities are carried out by the Readiness Team to enhance IE capacities to develop high-quality project/programme proposals, increase project/programme implementation capacity and to increase the capacity of entities seeking accreditation with the Fund to navigate the accreditation process¹².

Workshops and trainings: Workshops are conducted to prepare and train organizations to meet the fiduciary standards of the Fund while meeting gender, social and environmental safeguards in accordance with the Fund's ESP and GP. The workshops are developed by the AFB Secretariat and have also been conducted in partnership with other organizations such as those already helping countries in establishing NIEs. Trainings are also provided to

manage gender considerations, and social and environmental risks in projects as well as familiarizing the IEs with AF’s policies and on preparing high quality adaptation projects. In addition the AF’s Readiness Team engages the NIEs by organizing webinars, seminars, and country exchange visits, to further support capacity building and knowledge sharing efforts at the country and local levels.

Grants for IEs: Various grants have been made available for accredited implementing entities with tangible achievements with the Fund to apply for, to assist national entities applying for accreditation or existing NIEs requesting additional assistance in pursuit of developing high quality projects. More details on the Grants are reflected in table 1.

Partnerships: A (informal) partnership with the GCF was established to support the Community of Practice for Direct Access Entities (CPDAE). CPDAE is a platform that fosters knowledge exchange, capacity building, and peer support among National Implementing Entities (NIEs) of the Adaptation Fund and Direct Access Entities (DAEs) of the GCF, aiming to strengthen their ability to access and implement climate finance effectively, promote South-South cooperation, and enhance the overall efficiency of direct access mechanisms. Various partnerships have been established with other partners who have initiatives that support readiness and capacity building for adaptation, mostly resulting in co-funding and hosting joint events.

The Adaptation Fund Board has made available several small grants under the Readiness Programme to help National Implementing Entities (NIEs) provide peer support to countries seeking accreditation with the Fund and to build capacity for undertaking various climate finance readiness activities. These are namely, the Readiness Package Grants, which replaced the South-South Cooperation (SSC) Grants as per AFB Decision B.36/2513, the Project Formulation Grants (PFG), the Project Scale-up Grants, and the Technical Assistance (TA) Grants for ESP and Gender Policy. However, out of these, the Readiness Package Grants, the Project Scale-up Grant, and the Technical Assistance Grants are operational while the rest have either been discontinued or merged into the existing Grants. Table 1 below summarizes the current Grant structure.

Table 1: Current Grant structure of the AF Readiness Programme

Grant Type	Description
Readiness Package Grants (replaced the South-South Cooperation (SSC) Grants)	Small grants meant to facilitate the delivery of more enhanced, targeted, and tailored readiness support for accreditation to developing countries. The maximum amount of grant is US\$ 150,000 per NIE to support NIE accreditation to the AF through South-South Cooperation (SSC)
Project Scale-up Grants	Provide readiness funding to National Implementing Entities (NIEs) to support planning, designing, enhancement and overall capacity to develop scale-up pathways for AF funded projects nearing completion or already completed. Project Scale-up Grants are available up to a maximum of US\$ 100,000 per project and programme.

<p>Technical Assistance (TA) Grants for ESP and Gender Policy</p>	<p>These are small grants to help NIEs build their capacity to address and manage environmental and social as well as gender associated risks within their projects/programmes in accordance with the Fund’s Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) and Gender Policy. Through these grants, NIEs have the option to hire external expertise to help them address these issues. There are two types of Technical Assistance grants:</p> <p>Technical Assistance Grant for the Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy (TA-ESGP): Aimed at strengthening the capacity of NIEs to identify, screen, address and manage environmental and social risks as well as gender related issues in their projects and programs in line with the Fund’s Environmental and Social Policy and Gender Policy. The grant is up to a maximum of US\$25,000 per NIE.</p> <p>Technical Assistance Grant for the Gender Policy (TA-GP): Meant for NIEs that already have robust environmental and social policies to put in place measures to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate adverse gender impacts in accordance with the Adaptation Fund’s Gender Policy. The grant is up to a maximum of US\$10,000 per NIE.</p>
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Technical assistance: The readiness programme collaborates with consultants to develop manuals, training materials, and guideline documents. This includes providing assistance in the accreditation or re-accreditation process by developing and disseminating various manuals and guidelines on the Fund’s operational policies. These policies cover areas such as social and environmental risk identification and assessment, project delays, gender assessments, and grant application and review processes.

Knowledge Management: This involves facilitating country exchanges and webinars on key topics identified as areas of interest by NIEs, sponsoring adaptation conferences with expert speakers from across the adaptation finance spectrum,; webinars with experts; supporting the community of practice for direct access entities (CPDAE); links to helpful resources; and doing outreach through traditional and digital media to build awareness of the Fund’s direct access and capacity building.

Budget for the Adaptation Fund’s Readiness Programme

The annual budget for the Readiness Programme activities has steadily risen over the years as the programme has evolved along with an evolution in the capacity building initiatives and activities conducted under it. From an approved budget total of USD 670,000 in FY14-FY15 (2 years), the budget has reached USD 920,900 in FY24, with the latest proposed budget for FY25 being approximately USD 1,200,000. See figure 2 below.

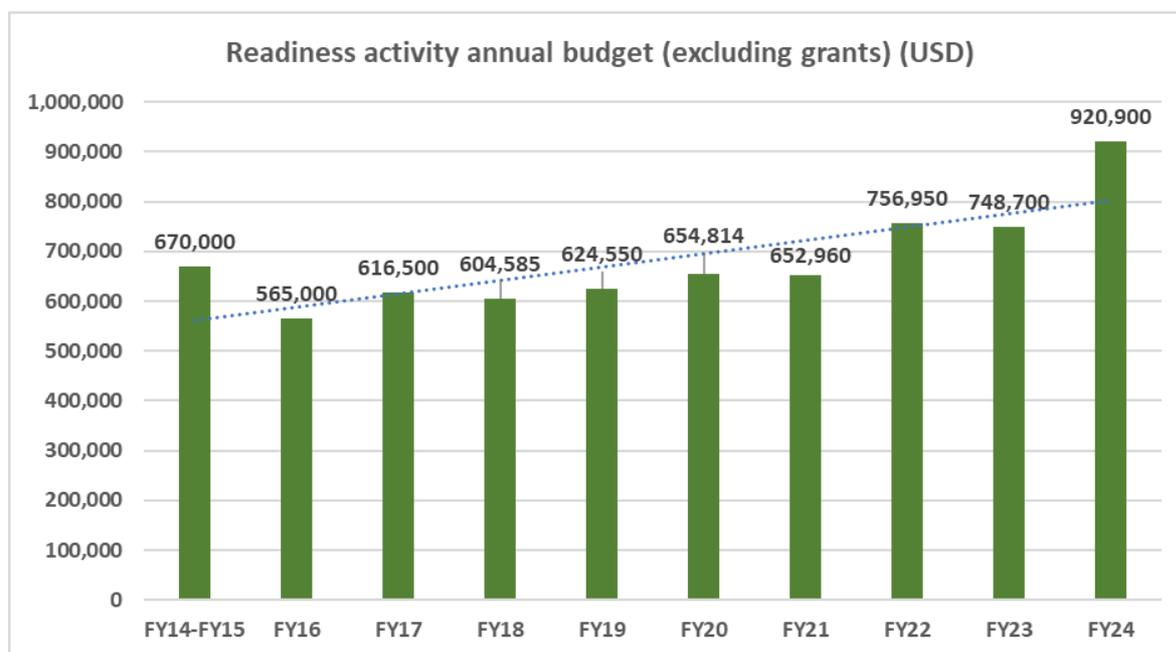
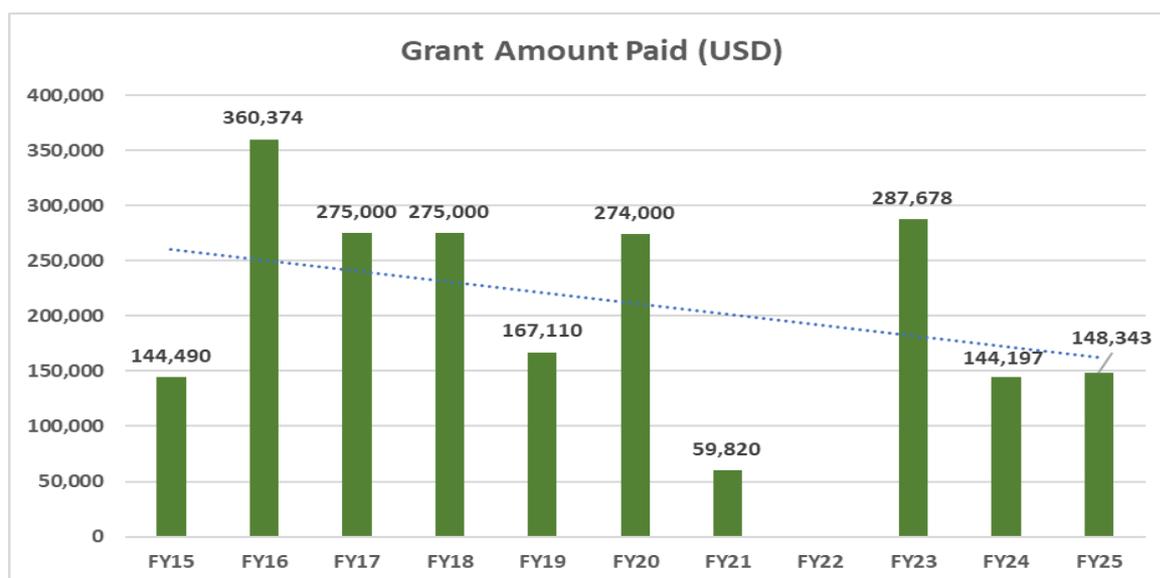


Figure 2: Readiness activities yearly budget (Source: Adaptation Fund Board decisions)

In addition to the approved annual budget are the grant amounts disbursed under the Readiness Programme. These show a varied disbursement trend since FY15 with the highest disbursed amount being US\$ 360,347 in FY2016 and the lowest being US\$ 59,820 in FY2021. In FY2024, the amount has been US\$ 144,197 with a prediction of US\$ 149,340 in FY2025. Figure 3 below provides a summary of the variation in disbursement.

Figure 3: Readiness Grants Paid (Source: Adaptation Fund Board decisions)



The Secretariat monitors the progress of the Grants implementation as part of the overall monitoring of the Readiness Programme. For the monitoring and evaluation process under the Readiness programme, refer to AFB/B.29/8.

Section 4: Evaluation purpose, scope, and criteria

Evaluation purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to have a comprehensive assessment of AF's readiness programme since its inception and chart a course for its future in supporting the accreditation process effectively and increasing the number of approved project proposals by the Board. The readiness programme evaluation is to be conducted as a thematic evaluation. It will be executed as a semi-independent evaluation¹⁷ as defined in the Adaptation Fund Evaluation Policy and guided by the policy's evaluation principles and criteria. It must also be stressed that this evaluation shall provide, through findings and recommendations, guidance on the future development and evolution of the readiness programme to further enhance its purpose especially considering that the readiness team will be revising the readiness strategy in parallel with this evaluation.

Evaluation scope

The evaluation will consider the entire period, comprehensively covering every aspect of the Readiness programme, as well as in context to the overall performance of the AF.

The unit of analysis of this evaluation is the AF Readiness Programme which is managed by the Readiness Unit of the Secretariat. The readiness programme is understood as the set of components, objectives, outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs that were included in the results framework approved by Board, as well as any subsequent revisions in the results framework to revise indicators and enable performance measuring as outlined in AFB/B.30/818. The evaluation will cover readiness components 1 to 3. Component 4 on knowledge management is excluded as this is managed under a separate knowledge management unit within the Secretariat. However, a brief assessment regarding readiness contribution to knowledge management will be conducted.

The evaluation will assess the focus of the programme at its genesis in 2014, the evolution in its priorities and operations over the years, particularly under the Fund's first Medium-Term Strategy (2018-2022), and provide insights and recommendations for its path forward in accordance with the mission and objectives of the second MTS of the Fund (2023-2027) and its Implementation Plan. The evaluation team should also explore the extent to which the readiness programme sought to learn from other partners/stakeholders in the climate finance through a landscape analysis of the climate finance readiness space encompassing not only climate funds, but also other donors. In line with the MTSII Implementation Plan, the evaluation team should also identify potential gaps and recommendations for enhancing existing capacity-building instruments and grants under the Readiness Programme.

Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation will adhere to the AF Evaluation Policy criteria, encompassing Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact. During the inception phase, the evaluation team, collaborating with the TERG, will establish a theory of change for the readiness programme and refine these questions accordingly. Furthermore, the Evaluation Team will identify learning themes derived from ten years of implementing the readiness programme to

be addressed in the inception report, translating them into specific lines of inquiry under the relevant evaluation questions and sub-questions.

Table 2: The Evaluation Questions

EQ 1 – To what extent is the Readiness Programme strategically focused to address the needs and priorities of the national and regional implementing entities? (Relevance)	
1.1	To what extent is the readiness programme aligned to national and regional entity priorities, the AF Medium-Term Strategy and the UNFCCC climate finance priorities, including guidance from the CMP and the CMA?
1.2	To what extent was the design of the readiness programme and its consecutive adjustments informed by credible evidence on the capacity building needs for climate finance access and programming?
1.3	To what extent did the readiness programme adapt and respond to evolving needs and priorities to ensure continued relevance during implementation?
EQ 2 - To what extent has the Readiness Programme achieved or is expected to achieve its objectives and outcomes? (Effectiveness)	
2.1	To what extent did the readiness programme strengthen the capacity of national and regional implementing entities to receive and manage climate financing, particularly through the Fund’s Direct Access modality?
2.2	To what extent has the Readiness Programme been successful in supporting countries seeking accreditation and re-accreditation through small grants?
EQ 3 – To what extent is the Readiness Programme of AF compatible with other similar programmes within a country, sector, or institution? (Coherence)	
3.1	How well has the Readiness Programme complimented existing readiness programmes in supporting accredited entities through learnings and grants?
3.2	To what extent has the Readiness Programme successfully collaborated with other climate finance readiness providers?
3.3	To what extent has the readiness programme been effective in fostering cooperation and coordination among climate finance readiness providers?
EQ 4 - To what extent is the Readiness Programme cost effective and timely without consuming unnecessary time and resources? (Efficiency)	
4.3	To what extent was the readiness programme delivered in a cost-efficient and timely manner?
EQ 5 - To what extent is the Readiness Programme generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended, or intended, higher-level effects? (Impact)	
5.1	How impactful has the readiness programme been in making capacity improvements within the implementing entities?

5.2	How well and in what ways did the readiness programme establish and leverage strategic and operational partnerships to maximize long-lasting change?
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Section 5: Evaluation approach and methods

Approach

The evaluation will employ a hybrid, phased approach to carrying out the expected work which includes desk-based research, data analysis, literature review, semi-structured interviews with the various key stakeholders identified, and field visits, etc. Since this is the first ever evaluation of AF's Readiness Programme, it would be beneficial to have the analysis and the findings sequenced along with the major modifications/ events surrounding the program, especially in the recent years, as the program evolved since 2014. As mentioned earlier, as a semi-independent evaluation, consultations will happen with the Readiness team at every phase to guide and shape the evaluation execution. The approach is further elaborated below.

Phase 1: Evaluation scoping and design (Inception Phase)

The evaluation team will develop the draft theory of change for the readiness programme and refine the evaluation questions to be answered by the evaluation. The inception report will present the results from initial consultations and retrospective theory of change exercise, fine-tune questions of the overall evaluation and contain clear protocols for field visits and for the focus groups and stakeholder conversations (particularly from the Board, AFB Secretariat, AF-TERG and the IEs), organized by respondent type.

The inception report will identify, in consultation with the AF-TERG, key stakeholders to be interviewed and will lay out the plan for country visits, and in-depth case studies for process tracing, while ensuring representativeness of the sample. It will explicitly discuss the criteria for selecting case study countries, striving for representativeness within the portfolio while considering time and budget constraints. An evaluation matrix linking evaluation questions to verification tools and methods will be compiled. Finally, the inception period will conclude by finalizing the protocol for the portfolio analysis.

Phase 2: Data extraction and interviews phase (Evaluation Phase)

The second phase will involve data collection from the activities established in Phase 1. Additionally, a comprehensive synthesis of documentation and the readiness portfolio will be performed.

Phase 3: Data analysis and synthesis phase

The third phase of the evaluation will consist of analyzing the obtained data (Readiness programme components, perceptions, interviews, etc.) and synthesizing the existing evidence to extract emerging lessons. Multiple methods will be employed to triangulate data and ensure the robustness of any inferences.

Phase 4: Reporting phase

During the last phase of the evaluation period, an initial draft of the evaluation will be prepared in accordance with guidelines established in this ToR as well as consultations with

the AF-TERG. This will also contain a technical annex consisting of an evidence trail to discuss methods used for the evaluation. It will also provide recommendations for strengthening the Readiness programme going forward based on the findings of the evaluation and the evaluation questions. The draft will be circulated to the AF-TERG team as well as the AFB Secretariat for feedback. Then, a final draft report of the evaluation with the technical annex and the customizations as per the AFB Secretariat's management response will be presented to the Board.

Methods

The Evaluation will employ a mixed method approach. It will examine key changes during implementation and possible learning by the readiness team.

Literature review of key documents: The evaluation will review decisions from the AF Board that are related to the readiness programme, guidelines, administrative processes, management structures and the results framework for the programme including policy documents, guidance documents, proposals, progress reports, board documents and any in-house or other assessments that may have been undertaken. The initial documents to be consulted are found in Annex 3.

Key informant interviews: Key stakeholders including experts, selected stakeholders at the AF Board, representatives of other entities that are doing similar work, selected country stakeholders including but not restricted to designated authorities, implementing entities and focal points, members of the readiness team and others inside and outside the AF. The questionnaire will be developed in consultation with the AF-TERG. The readiness coordination mechanism will also be assessed.

Focus group discussions: at key events such as scheduled structured dialogues or specific events held for accredited or to be accredited entities. The design of the FGDs will be developed in consultation with the AF-TERG and the AFB Secretariat.

Survey(s) needed: may be conducted to gather perceptions regarding the AF's Readiness Programme from key stakeholders such as Implementing Entities, Designated Authorities, AFB Sec, AF-TERG to inform the evaluation. The language of the survey(s) shall be English, French, and Spanish.

Site visits and specific case studies: Specific countries will be identified, in consultations with AF-TERG, for site visits and for detailed understanding of specific questions that the evaluation team may want to address. Countries/cases will be chosen to ensure that there is adequate representativeness especially for stage of engagement with the Readiness team as well as country groups (SIDS, LDCs, Africa, others) and that each case has specific questions it will address. The method for selecting country case studies and implementing entities will be elaborated in the inception report in consultation with the AF-TERG.

Landscape analysis: To conduct this analysis, the evaluation team will do a literature review of and engage with staff and leads of relevant readiness initiatives in the climate finance space encompassing not only climate funds but other donors to understand key challenges and strengths that can inform the implementation of the AF readiness programme.

Evaluation timeline and deliverables

Table 3: Evaluation timeline overview

Task	Deliverable	Timeframe
Phase 1: Inception	Inception report prepared and approved following consultation, synthesis, evaluation design.	September 2024
Phase 2: Data Gathering	Data collection activities complete with all elements of design followed. Data recorded, cleaned, arranged, and primed for analysis. To be delivered: data files, reports, interview minutes, interviewee details, data analysis strategy.	October 2024
Phase 3: Data Analysis	Data analysis completed and emerging finding/lessons recorded, and initial design of final reporting prepared. To be delivered: Report with initial findings based on the data analysis that was performed in accordance with the established evaluation questions.	–November - December 2024
Phase 4: Reporting	Final report submitted as per requirements in the ToR. A draft final report with an initial set of recommendations is to be delivered by mid-December 2024.	December 2024 – January 2025

Evaluation management and quality assurance

The evaluation will be managed by the AF-TERG with inputs from the AFB Secretariat. Quality Assurance of the evaluation will be performed as per the quality assurance framework of the Adaptation Fund (“AF-TERG is responsible for commissioning, conducting, and managing high quality evaluations at the strategic and Fund levels...” – page 17 of EP, 2022)

The contracted firm will report directly to the AF-TERG Secretariat Coordinator/Senior Evaluation Officer. Guidance will also be received from the AF-TERG Focal Point, and all the deliverables shall only be cleared after meeting all the quality standards of the AF-TERG.

The contracted firm shall have a robust data validation process and procedure in place to ensure transparency and accuracy of the data used for the evaluation. Full validation of data shall be achieved for internal peer reviews of deliverables, methods of data collection, sources of data collection, etc. Regular check-ins with the AF-TERF shall further strengthen the validation process.

Section 6: Application and selection process

The application and selection process will be conducted in line with the World Bank procurement rules and procedures. The bidder must provide a statement of absence of conflict of interest with any other work that it or the involved consultant(s) deliver for the Adaptation Fund.

Section 7: Work principles of the AF-TERG

Based on the AF-TERG's mandate and its two overarching objectives, 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 contracted firm will ensure that these principles are followed in the processes and product.

