



ADAPTATION FUND

**Alignment of Adaptation Fund Portfolio
with National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**

SEPTEMBER 2025



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Executive Summary

About the Adaptation Fund

The Adaptation Fund (the Fund) is a financing mechanism set up under the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It has the mandate of financing concrete climate change adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Fund facilitates direct access to climate finance to accredited National Implementing Entities (NIEs), Regional Implementing Entities (RIEs) and Multilateral Implementing Entities (MIEs). NIEs and RIEs are nominated for accreditation by Designated Authorities (DAs) – government representatives that act as focal points for the Fund. DAs must also endorse project proposals to the Fund. In all, 143 countries have assigned a DA for the Fund and 37 have accredited NIEs.

As of April 2025, the Fund had approved 252 grants, committing \$1,386,586,768.¹ The vast majority of these approvals (192, or more than 96 per cent) directly supported concrete action. The remaining 60 projects provide various forms of readiness support and other technical assistance.

About this study

As of 2019, the Fund formally serves the Paris Agreement and therefore must support the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adapta-

tion Plans (NAPs). The pursuit of alignment of projects with NAPs and NDCs is also integrated into the Fund's Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027.

This study analyses the portfolio of the Fund, determining the extent of its alignment with partner countries' NDCs and NAPs, and identifying and attempting to explain trends. It also assesses to what extent Fund projects and the learnings derived from them may inform future NDC and NAP priorities. Besides the portfolio analysis, the results are based on an online survey and a series of interviews with representatives of Implementing Entities (IEs).

Findings

NDC alignment and trends

In all, 150 projects, or 60 per cent of all approved projects, were regular projects approved after an NDC had been published in the country of implementation. Almost all were either closely aligned to specific targets and activities in the NDCs or broadly aligned with sectoral priorities. The degree of alignment depended largely on the level of detail provided in the NDC.

- Eighty-two projects (55 per cent) were closely aligned to specific targets and activities presented in the most recent NDC prior to project approval.
- Forty-five projects (30 per cent) were implemented in countries where the most recent NDC did not provide specific adaptation targets. However,

1. In this report, '\$' refers to US Dollars.

nearly all of these were still broadly aligned to sectoral priorities. Three of these projects could not be compared to any priorities because the relevant NDCs did not address adaptation at all.

- › Fourteen projects (9 per cent) demonstrated only broad alignment despite the availability of detailed targets in the NDC.
- › Of the remaining nine projects, eight are funding facilities, so concrete activities were not predetermined. Just one project was not aligned to any sectoral priorities mentioned in the NDC.

The following trends in NDC alignment could be observed:

- › **Alignment by IE type:** Projects by NIEs were more often implemented in countries that had not (yet) included detailed adaptation priorities in their NDCs (46 per cent, versus 30 per cent and 19 per cent for RIEs and MIEs, respectively). As a result, projects implemented by NIEs **were less likely** to be closely aligned to specific NDC priorities (44 per cent) than those implemented by RIEs (57 per cent) and MIEs (61 per cent).
- › **Alignment by region:** NDCs in Asia-Pacific and Eastern Europe were more likely to lack details about adaptation priorities. This led to projects implemented in Africa (71 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (68 per cent) being **more likely** to be closely aligned with specific NDC priorities than

projects in Asia-Pacific (47 per cent) and Eastern Europe (9 per cent).

- › **Alignment by sector:** Agriculture and food security projects were by far the **most likely** to be closely aligned to specific adaptation targets in NDCs (81 per cent), primarily because most NDCs that cover adaptation include priorities in the agriculture sector. Forestry (33 per cent) and coastal management (36 per cent) projects were least likely to be closely aligned, as these sectors are less often included in NDC adaptation sections.
- › **Alignment by project volume:** Projects with larger volumes of financing were much more likely to be closely aligned to specific adaptation targets in NDCs (70 per cent for 10 million or more, versus 21 per cent for <1 million). The explanation for this is twofold. First, larger projects supported by the Fund tend to be more holistic, including a range of activities. Therefore, the likelihood that some of these overlap with NDC priorities is greater. Second, the share of projects with a budget of \$10 million or more has grown over time (from 5 per cent of projects prior to 2020 to 30 per cent of projects since 2020), as has the level of detail in NDCs; therefore, larger projects are more likely to have been approved after the submission of an NDC with detailed adaptation priorities.

› **Alignment by approval date:** Fund projects have become more closely aligned to NDCs over time, as NDCs have increased in both detail and prominence as national climate plans.

› **Alignment to NDCs published after project design:** Out of 56 projects in broad sectoral alignment with the previous NDC, mostly due to a lack of detail in that NDC, 34 could be compared to a subsequent NDC. Eighteen were found to be more closely aligned to this newer NDC, while in 15 cases the NDC still lacked detail. Just one project was not more closely aligned to the new NDC, even though it included more detail.

In summary, as far as NDCs and NAPs contain detailed adaptation priorities, the projects in the Fund's portfolio are closely aligned with these priorities. The variation in the level of NDC alignment between projects in different categories can almost fully be explained by the variation in the level of detail of NDCs.

NAP alignment

As the Fund began operations before the first NAPs were submitted (and many countries are still preparing their NAPs as of 2025), most Fund projects were approved before the country of implementation published a NAP. Twenty-three projects were approved after submission of a NAP in the country of implementation. Of these, 19 were closely aligned to specific NAP targets, and four broadly

aligned with sectoral priorities. An additional 14 projects were aligned with a NAP that was still in preparation at the time of project approval.

Pathways for alignment

This study included a survey sent to IEs, as well as a series of interviews, to understand the different pathways of alignment with NDC and NAPs. The results revealed that direct use of NDC and NAP priorities as the main inspiration for project design was the most common pathway of alignment. However, other factors also contributed to the alignment:

› Most countries engage a range of different stakeholders in NDC and NAP development, and most IEs are directly or indirectly involved in these processes.

› Eighty per cent of Fund DAs (whose role is to endorse projects for funding on behalf of the government) are the same agencies/ministries that lead NDC and NAP development in their countries. In addition, 41 per cent of NIEs are the same agencies/ministries responsible for NDC/NAP development. Therefore, the national stakeholders involved in Fund project design and endorsement can be expected to be familiar with national adaptation priorities. Especially in smaller countries, people working on similar issues in different public and non-public entities coordinate informally, including those working on Fund projects, NDCs and NAPs.

- › Fund projects address well-documented priority climate risks. Even with no attempt at alignment, most projects would likely be relatively well aligned with NDCs and NAPs.
- › Besides NAPs and NDCs, Fund IEs pursue alignment of project objectives with a range of other policies, plans and strategies. As countries pursue policy coherence, NAPs and NDCs are more likely to reflect existing priorities rather than set new ones.

This study has shown that Fund projects are closely aligned with national adaptation priorities as communicated in NDCs and NAPs. The importance ascribed to NDCs and NAPs has grown, both at the national and global levels, and countries have begun to invest more in preparation processes leading to ever-greater levels of detail. Consequently, Fund IEs and DAs have also increasingly aligned their activities with these plans.

Based on the results of the analysis, below are a few considerations for funds investing in adaptation projects and seeking alignment with NDCs and NAPs:

1. Perfect alignment with NDCs and NAPs should not always be pursued

Fund projects are closely aligned with specific adaptation priorities communicated by countries in their NAPs and NDCs. The approximately 10 per cent of projects that do not closely align to existing national priorities

as captured in NDCs and NAPs can be viewed as instances where countries, with support from the Adaptation Fund, are driving higher adaptation ambition, fostering innovation, or advancing adaptation interventions in hitherto overlooked sectors or communities. Learnings from these projects also have the potential to inform future NDCs and NAPs.

2. Adaptation projects could play a larger role in further strengthening NAPs and NDCs

Although some Fund projects include explicit goals to inform future NAPs and NDCs, it could not always be verified whether they had succeeded in doing so. In addition, some representatives of non-governmental IEs were concerned that seeking to inform government priorities could be viewed as lobbying by donors or external stakeholders.

Despite this, adaptation projects could contribute to strengthening future NAPs and NDCs through the following actions:

- › Encourage or require IEs to reflect on the potential for a project to inform new NAPs and NDCs in the project proposal phase, and identify explicit pathways through which to do this.
- › Ensure that project proposal and review templates serve NDC and NAP formulation, e.g. by requiring alignment of project monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks with national adaptation monitoring frameworks (where these exist), and also to capture

inputs provided by IEs to NDC and NAP processes.

- › Facilitate peer-to-peer learning between IEs on ways to inform NDC and NAP processes. Funders can also work with governments (including through DAs) to establish or strengthen formal feedback loops and enhance their ability to absorb and disseminate lessons from project implementation.

3. Adaptation funders could play a greater role in enhancing the monitoring of adaptation impacts through their projects, through direct support to countries and through their convening power.

IE representatives interviewed for this study saw great potential for funders to support development of internationally agreed adaptation indicators and monitoring strategies. National-level support could be provided through a technical assistance

facility like the Fund's Climate Finance Readiness Programme. Funders could also bring together NIEs and DAs to exchange lessons learned. Indicators and monitoring strategies could be tested through publicly funded adaptation projects.

4. Adaptation funders could support development of innovative adaptation financing mechanisms

International adaptation funders are in a good position to support experimentation with innovative financing mechanisms, and to build IEs' capacity to design and implement them. Funders could also consider providing capacity strengthening for the development of "bankable projects" or projects with greater private sector involvement, in areas where this is feasible. At the same time, they can continue to underscore the need for public financing for climate adaptation interventions that do not, and should not, generate financial returns on investment.

1. Introduction and context

1.1. Introduction to the Adaptation Fund

The Adaptation Fund (the Fund) is a financing mechanism set up under the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It has the mandate of financing concrete climate change adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Fund was the first climate fund to fully operationalize direct access to climate finance, through which National Implementing Entities (NIEs) can directly access financing and manage all aspects of climate adaptation and resilience projects

– from design through implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Besides NIEs, the Fund also provides accreditation to Regional Implementing Entities (RIEs) and Multilateral Implementing Entities (MIEs). NIEs and RIEs must be nominated for accreditation by Fund Designated Authorities (DAs) – government entities that act as focal points for the Fund. DAs also must endorse project proposals to the Fund for projects to be implemented in their countries, before they are submitted. RIEs and MIEs can implement single-country projects or regional projects that cover several countries in the same region.

1.2. Basis for alignment between Fund projects and NAPs/NDCs

As of 2019, the Fund has been serving the Paris Agreement formally and therefore must support implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). In addition, policy coherence and coordination are an important part of the NAP and NDC process; countries are encouraged to ensure that all climate change-related policies, plans and projects are aligned with each other, as well as with global agendas such as the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²

The pursuit of alignment of projects with NAPs and NDCs is also integrated into the Fund's Medium-term Strategy 2023-2027. Formally, alignment with NAPs is ensured through inclusion of a section in the project proposal guidelines that requires IEs to "Describe how the project/programme is consistent with national or subnational sustainable development strategies, including [...] national adaptation plan (NAP), [...] national communications, [...] or other relevant instruments, where they exist." IEs must also certify that the proposal is "in accordance with guidelines provided by the Adaptation Fund

2. https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/application/pdf/nap_overview.pdf

Board, and prevailing National Development and Adaptation Plans.” As mentioned previously, each DA must endorse every

project proposal, stating that it is in accordance with national priorities for climate change adaptation.

1.3. Objective of this study

The Fund’s second Medium-term Strategy (MTS2) includes a goal to “further explore how to strengthen the focus on the long-term capacity for the most vulnerable communities and local actors, e.g. through strengthening the readiness programme, including for innovation and learning and sharing, strengthen programming linkages with existing national planning processes (such as NAPs and NDCs, etc.).” This report aims to provide a baseline for this further strengthening of linkages with NDCs and NAPs specifically.

The study analyses the portfolio of the Fund, determining to what extent its projects align with countries’ NDCs and NAPs. It also goes beyond investigating alignment alone to assess to what extent Fund projects and the learnings derived from them may inform future NDC and NAP priorities. This study also provides some considerations for entities looking to align their adaptation projects to country NDCs and NAPs.

1.4. The Fund’s portfolio

1.4.1. Types of projects supported by the Fund

The Fund provides grants primarily for concrete activities that support climate change adaptation in the most vulnerable communities. In April 2025, the Adaptation Fund Board (the Board) raised the resource cap for projects from \$10 million to \$25 million³ for single-country projects and from \$14 million to \$30 million for regional projects.

Most of the funding is provided via direct access. In addition, the Fund’s Innovation Facility provides small and large grants for the development and testing of new

adaptation technologies and approaches. It includes an aggregator mechanism that allows for the provision of grants to non-accredited entities, the Adaptation Fund Climate Innovation Accelerator (AFCIA). The Fund’s Climate Finance Readiness Programme, meanwhile, provides small grants to support the accreditation process for new NIEs, to support project formulation, to support project scale-up planning and to strengthen capacity in NIEs to address environmental, social and gender risks in accordance with the Fund’s Environ-

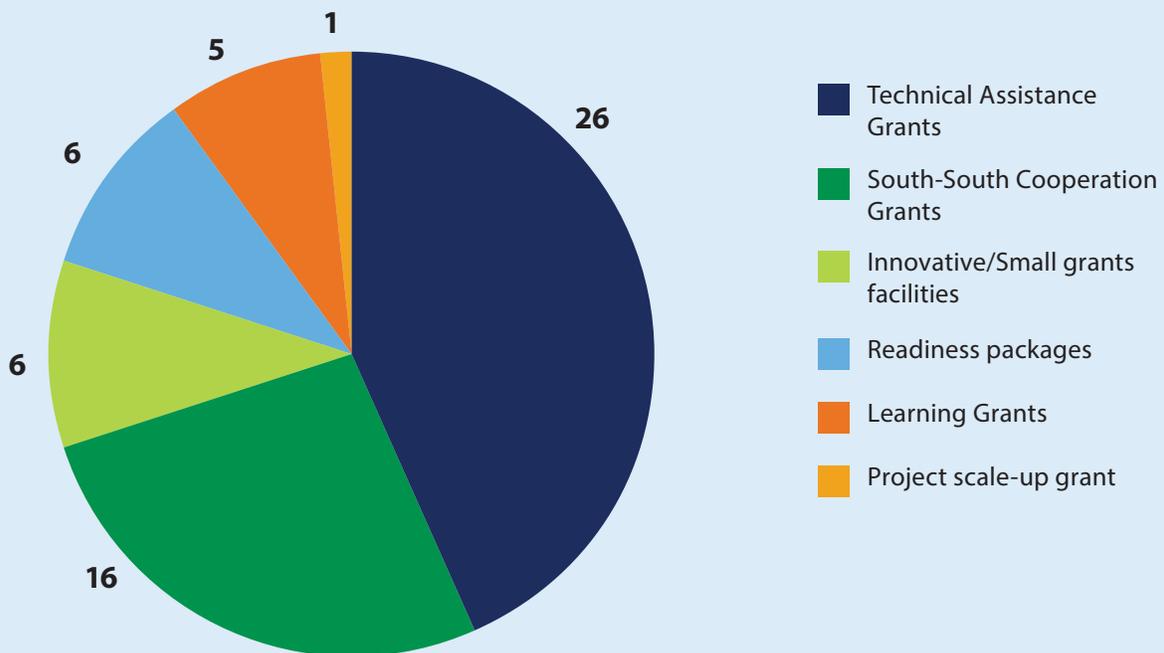
3. In this report, ‘\$’ refers to US Dollars.

mental and Social Policy (ESP) and Gender Policy. Besides AFCIA, the Fund has also capitalized four other small global grants facilities for adaptation, managed by MIEs. Finally, the Fund provides Learning Grants to strengthen NIEs’ capacities and promote knowledge transfer between NIEs and with the wider adaptation community.

Between 2010 and April 2025, the Fund approved 252 grants, committing \$1,386,586,768. The vast majority of these approvals (192, or more than 96 per cent of total funding) were regular projects that directly supported concrete action. The make-up of the remaining 60 is presented in Figure 1 below. South-South Cooperation Grants were a predecessor of the Readiness Packages.

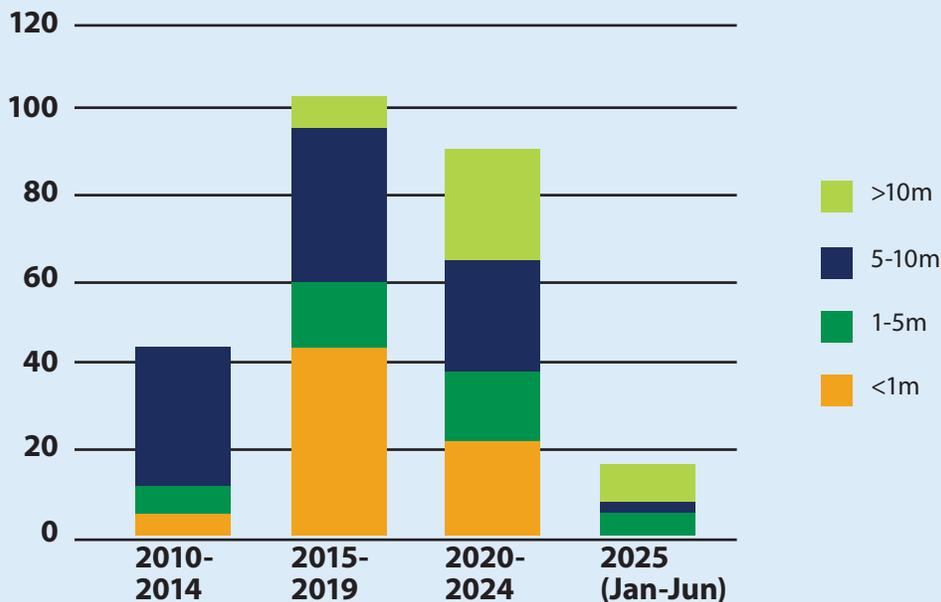
The number of projects approved by the Fund grew from 44 in 2010-2015 to 102 in 2015-2019 before decreasing slightly to 90 in 2020-2024 (See Figure 2). In the first half of 2025, 16 further projects were approved. The decrease in 2020-2024 is the result of the large number of smaller projects (primarily TA, Learning Grants, South-South Cooperation Grants) that were approved in 2015-2019. The total volume of funding approved grew from \$264.8 million in 2010-2014 to \$453.1 million in 2015-2019 and to \$532.8 million in 2020-2024. The number of large grants of \$10 million or over has also grown over time – from 0 in 2010-2014 to 23, or 25 per cent of the total, in 2020-2024. In 2025 thus far, close to \$136 million has been approved and nine out of 16 projects (56 per cent) have a budget of \$10 million or more.

Figure 1: Other types of projects supported by the Adaptation Fund, 2010-2025



Source: Adaptation Fund 2023.

Figure 2: Number of approved projects by product volume, over time

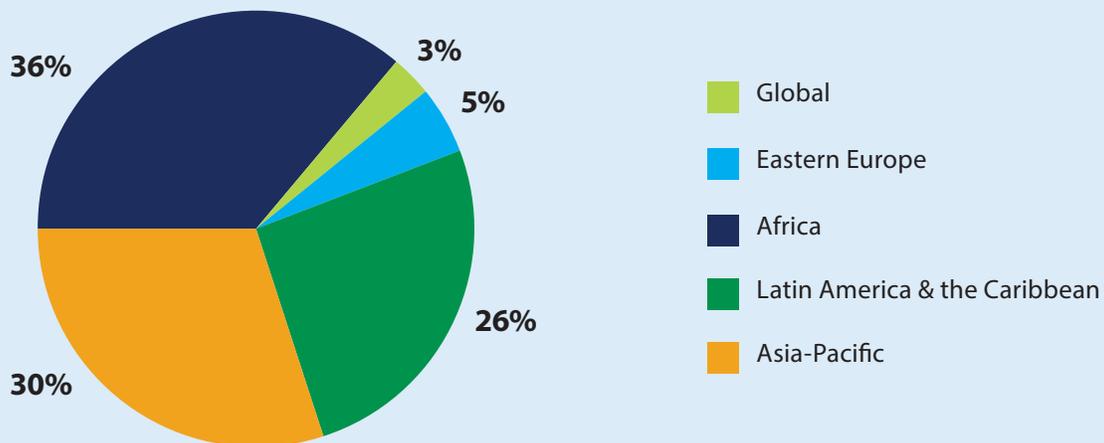


1.4.2. Regions

The Fund has approved projects in Africa (99), Asia-Pacific (76), Latin America and the Caribbean (57) and Eastern Europe (14). It also supports a small number of global projects (six) – these are the previously mentioned small grants facilities. To date, 36 per cent (\$503 million) of

total Fund financing has been allocated to projects in Africa, 29 per cent (\$408 million) to projects in Asia-Pacific, 26 per cent (\$358 million) to projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 5 per cent (\$74 million) to Eastern Europe (see Figure 3). The average project volume is similar

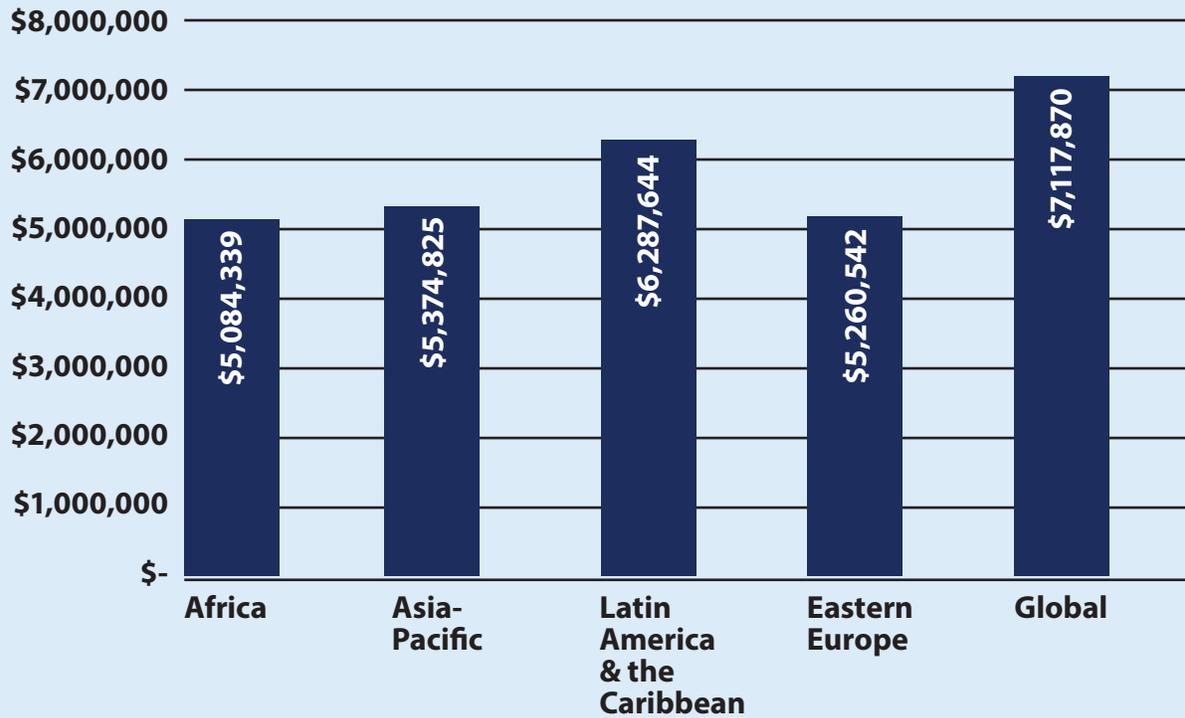
Figure 3: Funding volume per region, share of total



in different regions, ranging from \$5.2 million in Eastern Europe to \$6.3 million in Latin America (see Figure 4). The globally

active small grants facilities are on average slightly larger, at \$7.1 million.

Figure 4: Average project volume by region



1.4.3. Sectors

Considering only the regular projects and grant facilities, the Fund has supported projects in seven sectors: agriculture/food security (56), coastal management (17), disaster risk reduction (24), forests (five), rural development (21), urban development (nine) and water management (28) – as well as multi-sector projects (39).⁴ Between 2010

and April 2025, 31 per cent of total allocated funding was directed towards agriculture and food security projects (see Figure 5). The average project volume differed significantly by sector, ranging from \$3.4 million for forestry projects to \$8.5 million for disaster risk reduction projects (see Figure 6).

4. The sector designations are based on those included in the Fund project database, with some consolidation to reduce the number of categories.

Figure 5: Share of total funding, by sector

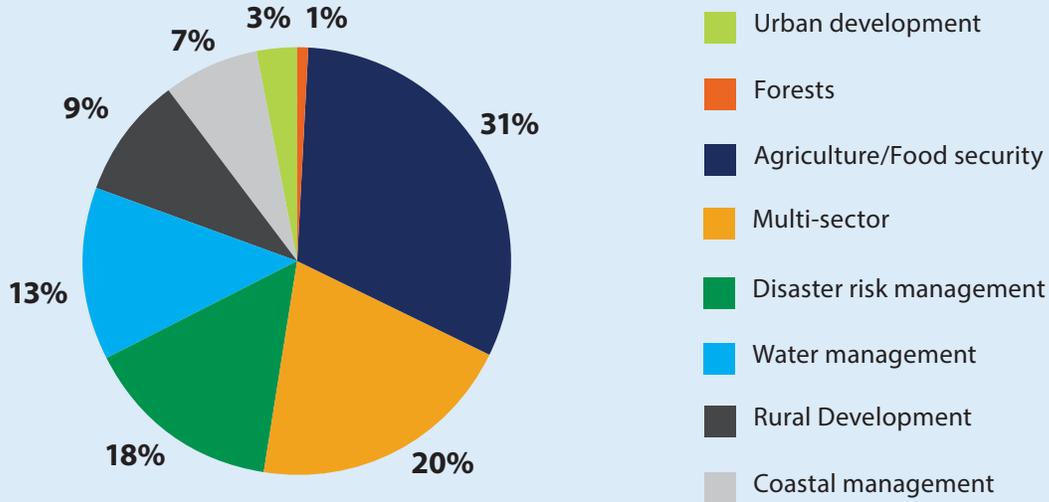
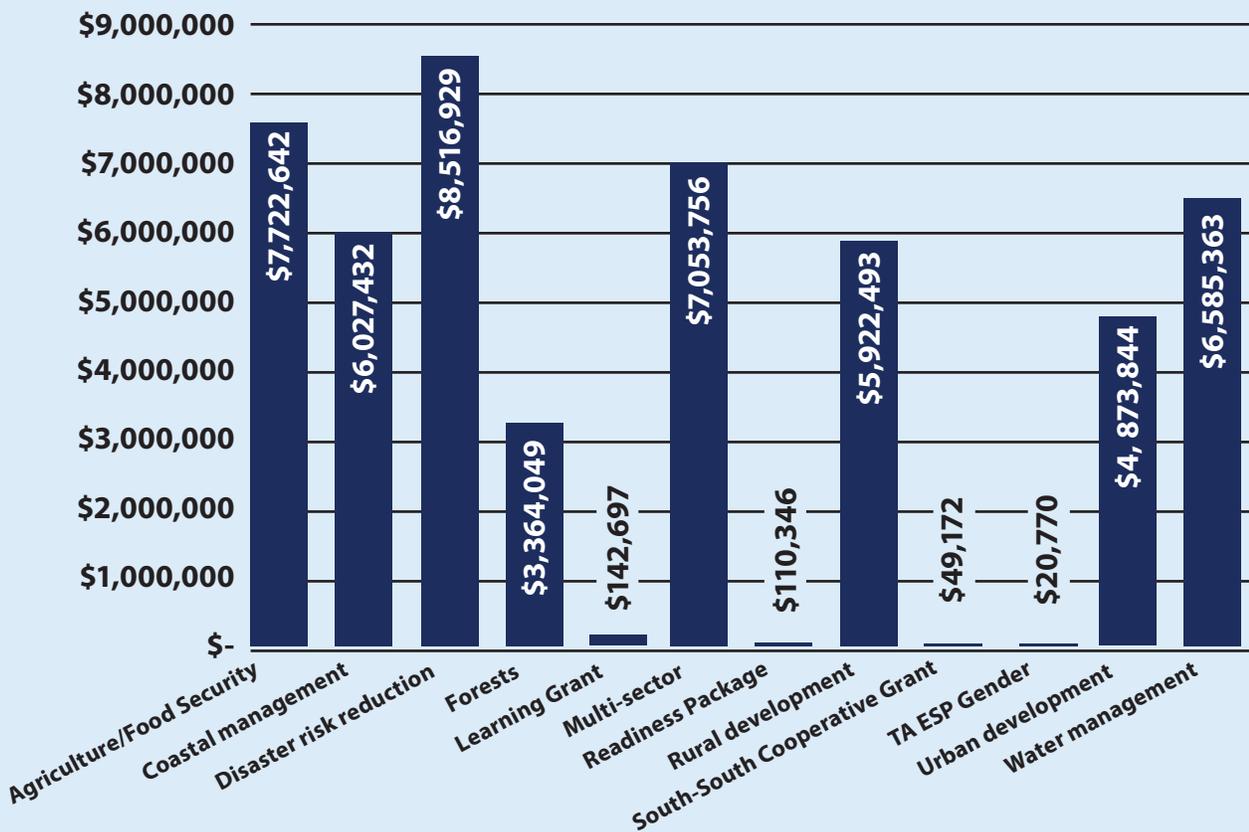


Figure 6: Average project volume by sector/type



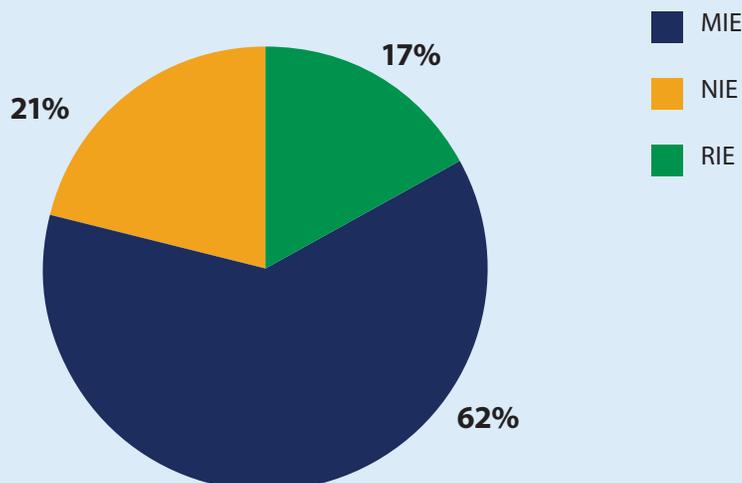
1.4.4. Implementing Entities

Between 2010 and April 2025, the Fund approved 118 NIE-led projects, as well as 110 projects submitted by MIEs and 24 submitted by RIEs. The average project

volume was \$2.5 million for NIEs, \$7.8 million for MIEs and \$9.9 million for RIEs. In total, 62 per cent (\$860 million) of committed Fund financing has been directed towards MIE-led

projects. NIE-led projects were allocated 21 per cent (\$290 million) of total funding and RIEs 17 per cent (\$237 million; see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Total funding committed by IE type



1.5. About NDCs and NAPs

1.5.1. Nationally Determined Contributions

The NDCs, through which parties commit to emissions reductions and climate change adaptation actions, form the backbone of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Each party to the Paris Agreement is required to prepare, communicate and maintain increasingly ambitious NDCs.

The UNFCCC NDC Registry contains different versions of most parties' NDCs. Parties submitted intended NDCs (INDCs) prior to their ratification of the Paris Agreement. When a party ratifies the Paris Agreement, the INDC is converted into an NDC.⁵ For this reason, many parties' First NDCs are identical to their INDCs.

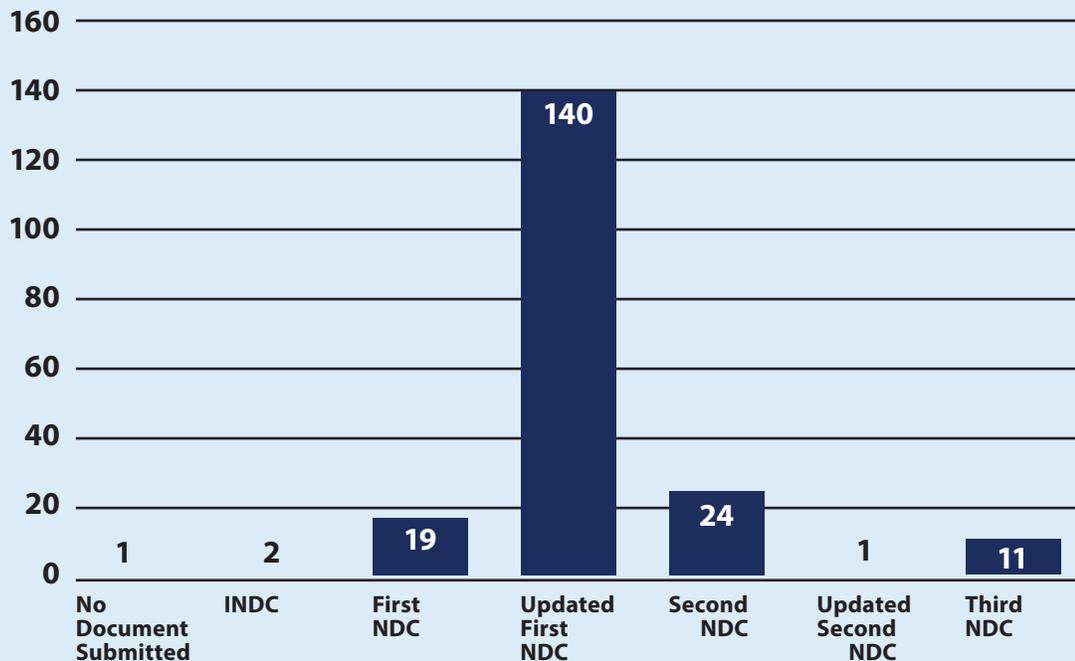
Under the Paris Agreement, parties are required to update their NDCs every five years. In 2020, the first major round of updates was conducted. Most parties' latest submission – called either an Updated First NDC or a Second NDC – was made during this round. In 2025, a further round of updates was under way. The 2025 NDCs, labelled NDCs 3.0 by the UNFCCC, are to be informed by the first global stocktake of progress under the Paris Agreement. This was concluded in 2023 at the 28th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in Dubai (COP28). See Figure 8 for an overview of the different versions of the NDC submitted by different parties.

5. <https://www.wri.org/indc-definition>

Successive NDC Synthesis Reports published by the UNFCCC have identified a growing focus on adaptation in NDCs. The 2024 Synthesis Report, which analysed the 168 latest available NDCs representing 195 parties,⁶ reported that 81 per cent of parties included an adaptation component in their NDCs. Sectoral priorities are well aligned with the sectors supported by

Fund projects: 90 per cent of NDCs that included an adaptation component identified agriculture and food security as a priority area, followed by water resources (89 per cent), terrestrial and wetland ecosystems (81 per cent) and key economic sectors and services such as infrastructure, energy and transport (75 per cent).⁷

Figure 8: Latest NDC submission as of 18 May 2025, by number of parties



Source: ClimateWatch NDC Tracker.

1.5.2. National Adaptation Plans

In 2001, the UNFCCC established its Least Developed Countries Work Programme, which included the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). By 2017, 51 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) had

submitted NAPAs, which aimed to identify and address urgent, short-term adaptation needs. The NAP process was initiated at COP16 in 2010 to support LDCs and other developing countries to identify,

6. The European Union submitted one NDC representing the commitments of its 27 member states.

7. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2024_10_adv.pdf

communicate and address medium- and long-term adaptation needs. The Paris Agreement re-emphasized the importance and relevance of the NAP approach.

As of November 2024, 143 countries had initiated the NAP development process⁸ and as of August 2025, 64 developing countries had submitted NAPs to the UNFCCC.⁹ Many countries are supported in their NAP development by international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP), or receive bilateral support from, for example, GIZ.

In April 2024, the UNFCCC Executive Secretary launched the third NAP cycle, referred to as NAP 3.0. NAP technical guidelines are being updated to promote the development of NAPs that can unlock adaptation finance from a wider variety of sources and ultimately accelerate adaptation action. Countries are expected to submit these new NAPs beginning in 2025.

1.5.3. Alignment between DAs, NIEs and government entities responsible for NDC and NAP development

In all, 143 countries have assigned a DA for the Fund and 37 have accredited NIEs. As of April 2025, not all of these countries have received financial support from the Fund.

During the analysis for this report, the entities responsible for NAP and NDC development in each country were recorded and compared to that country’s Fund NIE (where applicable) and DA. The results are presented in Figure 9 below. One country (Libya) has not submitted an NDC or NAP, so the NDC/

NAP entity could not be verified. Of the 142 countries with DAs that submitted either an NDC, NAP or both, the Fund DA was the same entity responsible for NAP and/or NDC formulation (i.e. the same ministry or an agency of the same ministry) in 113 cases. Of 37 countries with NIEs, this NIE was the same entity responsible for NAP and/or NDC formulation in 15 cases. In 22 cases, it was not – often, NIEs are not government entities but (semi-) independent funds or foundations.

Figure 9: Adaptation Fund DA and NIE alignment with entities responsible for NAP/ NDC formulation



8. <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/what-are-national-adaptation-plans-and-why-do-they-matter>
 9. <https://napcentral.org/submitted-NAPs>

As these numbers show, the entities, and sometimes even the people, who endorse project proposals to the Fund on behalf of partner country governments are most

often the same entities or persons leading the development of NDCs and NAPs. In addition, just over a third of NIEs are the same entities developing NDCs and NAPs.



Adaptation Fund's visit to Mongolia, Project Monitoring Mission
(Photo by Adaptation Fund)

Box 1: Examples of alignment of DAs and NIEs with NAP/NDC entities

No NIE; DA and entity responsible for NAP/NDC the same:

- In Burundi, the DA is an official in the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Livestock, which is also the ministry in charge of the development of NDCs and NAPs. Burundi does not have an accredited NIE.
- In Chad, the DA is an official in the Ministry of the Environment. NDCs and NAPs in Chad are developed by the Directorate for Environmental Education and the Combat against Climate Change, which is part of the Ministry of the Environment. Chad does not have an accredited NIE.

No NIE; DA and entity responsible for NAP/NDC not the same:

- In Malawi, the DA is an official in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, while NDCs and NAPs are developed by the Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources. Malawi does not have an accredited NIE.
- In Samoa, the DA is an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, while the latest NDC was developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Samoa does not have an accredited NIE.

DA, NIE and entity responsible for NAP/NDC all the same entity:

- In Antigua and Barbuda, the DA is an official in the Ministry of Health and Environment. This same person, as UNFCCC Focal Point, also leads NDC and NAP development through the Ministry's Department of Environment. The Department of Environment is also the country's NIE.
- In Peru, the DA is an official in the Climate Change Directorate of the Ministry of Environment, which also leads the development of NDCs and NAPs. The NIE is the Peruvian Trust Fund for National Parks and Protected Areas (PROFONANPE), which is chaired by the Ministry of Environment.

DA same as entity responsible for NAP/NDC; NIE different entity

- In Colombia, the DA is an official in the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. The NAP and NDCs are developed by the National Planning Department, which is part of the same ministry. The NIE is the independent foundation Fondo para la Acción Ambiental y la Niñez.
- In Jordan, the DA is the Minister of Environment. The Ministry of Environment is also responsible for NDC and NAP formulation. The NIE is a different ministry: the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

NIE same as entity responsible for NAP/NDC; DA different entity

- In Mexico, the DA is an official in the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, while NDCs are developed by the Secretariat (Ministry) of Environment and Natural Resources. The NIE is the Mexican Institute of Water Technology, which is an agency of the Environment Secretariat.

Neither DA nor NIE aligned with entity responsible for NAP/NDC

- In the Cook Islands, the DA is an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration. NDCs are developed by the Office of the Prime Minister, while the country's NIE is the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.

1.5.4. Alignment of Fund DAs and NIEs with Green Climate Fund National Designated Authorities and National Direct Access Entities

To support the development of a coherent global climate financing landscape, the Fund seeks to create operational alignment with other major climate funds, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Countries engaging with the GCF must assign National Designated Authorities (NDAs, analogous to Fund DAs) and can seek accreditation for Direct Access Entities (DAEs, more or less analogous to Fund NIEs).

Of the 143 countries with a Fund DA, 141 also have a GCF NDA (Afghanistan and Cyprus are the two exceptions).¹⁰ Forty-eight countries have one or more DAEs accredited by the GCF, 31 of which also have at least one Fund NIE. As the charts in Figure 10 show, in most cases, Fund NIEs are also accredited to the GCF.

Of 24 entities accredited to both the Fund and the GCF, 17 were accredited to the Fund first; two achieved accreditation to both funds in the same year; and five were

accredited first to the GCF. Studies suggest that learnings from the Fund accreditation process have helped entities achieve GCF accreditation afterwards, while also building their capacity for fundraising more generally; for example, for Peruvian NIE/NDAE Profonanpe, the Fund accreditation process “put in place many of the policies and safeguards also needed for GCF accreditation” and allowed the organization “to navigate a profound ‘learning curve’ [which] resulted in significant capacity-building.”¹¹

Fund DAs and GCF NDAs are also closely aligned – in 102 countries, they are the same agency, and in 46 of those, they are even the same person (see Figure 11). In 39 countries, the Fund DA is a different agency or ministry to the GCF NDA. This is primarily because the GCF has a smaller share of environment/ climate ministries and a larger share of finance ministries as NDAs than the Fund (see Figure 12). As

Figure 10: Alignment Fund NIEs with GCF NDAEs

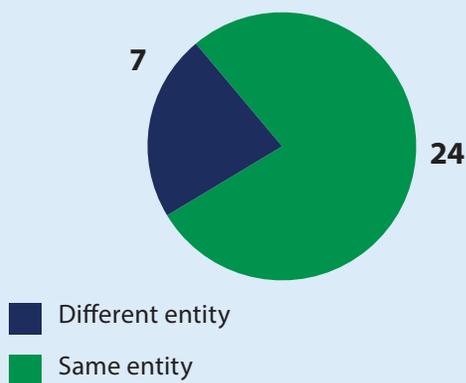
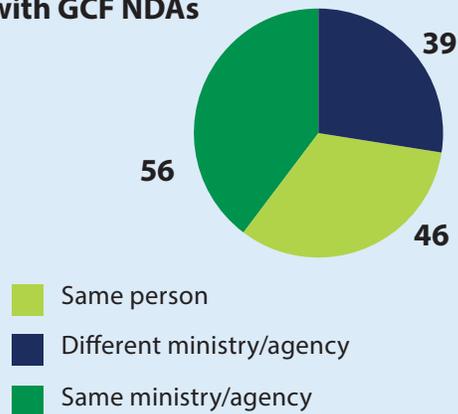


Figure 11: Alignment of Fund DAs with GCF NDAs



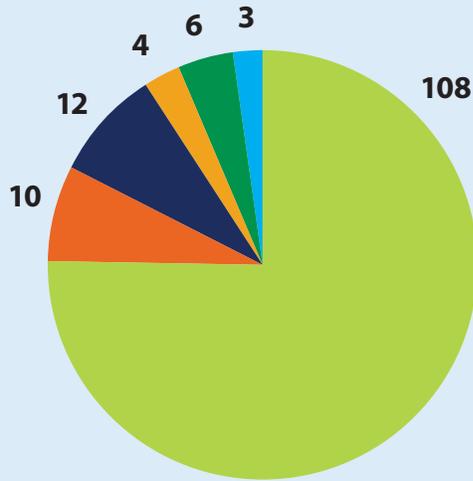
10. Conversely, six countries have a GCF NDA but no Fund DA.

11. <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2016-en-enabling-access-to-funds.pdf>;

<https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida62078en-towards-green-climate-fund-accreditation-and-support.pdf>

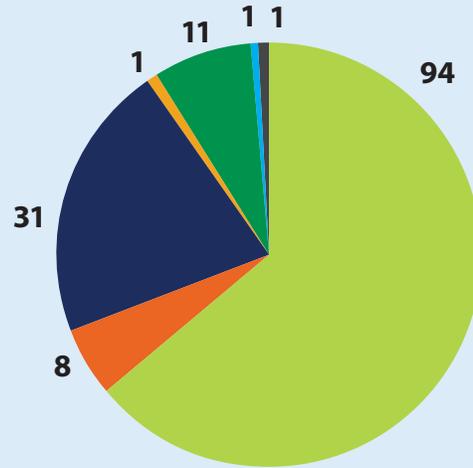
interviewees confirmed, this is because the GCF provides loans and guarantees as well as grants, so that more finance expertise and authority are required in the NDA.

Figure 12: Comparison of the types of DAs/NDAs of the Fund and GCF



Adaptation Fund DA types

- Environment ministry/agency
- Development ministry
- Finance ministry
- Foreign affairs ministry
- Office of the President/Vice President/Prime Minister/Cabinet
- Meteorological agency



Green Climate Fund NDA types

- Environment ministry/agency
- Development ministry
- Finance ministry
- Foreign affairs ministry
- Office of the President/Vice President/Prime Minister/Cabinet
- Meteorological agency
- Other

2. Methodology

Research for this report included a detailed portfolio analysis that compared documentation of 150 Fund projects to NDCs and NAPs in the countries of implementation. This analysis aimed to identify the level of alignment between project objectives and activities and NDC and NAP priorities, and to find evidence of projects informing later NDCs and NAPs.

To investigate pathways for NDC and NAP alignment and gain further insights into how IEs design projects, researchers conducted an online survey of IEs, which received 14 responses. They also interviewed representatives of seven IEs. More details about the portfolio analysis, survey and interviews can be found in Annex A; detailed survey results can be found in Annex B.



Adaptation Fund's Project in Colombia
(Photo by UNDP Colombia)

3. Findings

3.1. Summary - NDC alignment

In all, 150 projects, or 60 per cent of approvals, were regular projects approved after an NDC had been published in the country of implementation. Almost all of these projects were either closely aligned to specific targets and activities in NDCs or broadly aligned with sectoral priorities. The degree of alignment depended largely on the level of detail provided in the NDC.

The analysis of 150 projects revealed that most (82, or 55 per cent) implemented specific activities identified in NDCs as priorities for adaptation (“alignment to

specific targets/activities in NDC” in the charts in this section). In 24 projects (16 per cent), project documents do not acknowledge this alignment. An additional 43 projects (29 per cent) could not be aligned with specific targets or actions because the NDC did not contain any. However, they were aligned with priority sectors identified in the NDC. Three projects demonstrated no alignment because the NDC did not refer to adaptation (these 46 projects can be found in the charts as “alignment as far as possible, but NDC lacking in detail”). Fourteen projects (9 per cent) demonstrated only broad alignment

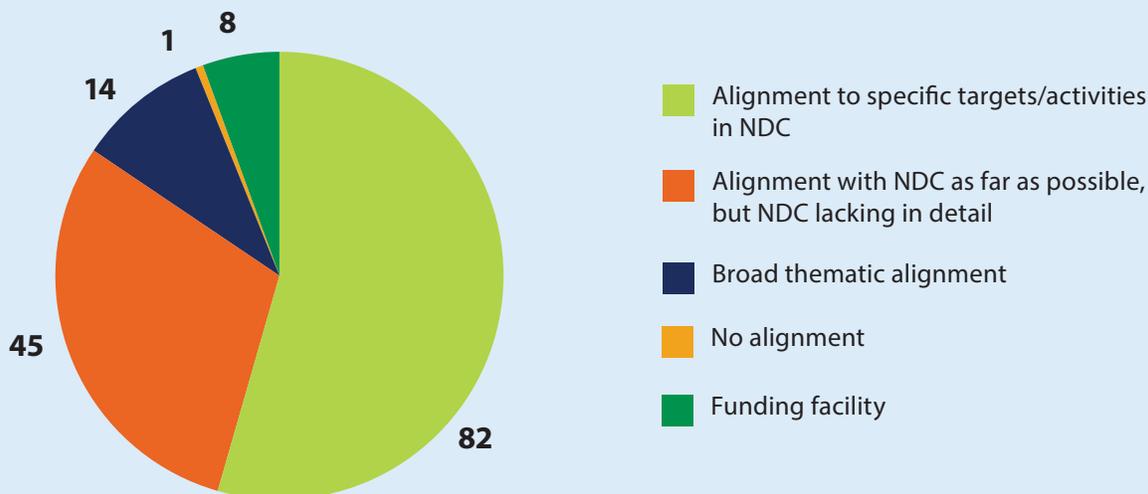


Adaptation Fund's visit to the Dominican Republic, NIEs Seminar and Project Visit (Photo by Adaptation Fund)

with priority sectors despite the availability of detailed targets in the NDC (“broad thematic alignment”). Of the remaining 11 projects, eight are funding facilities, so concrete activities were not predetermined (“funding facility”), and just one

project was not aligned to any priorities or sectors mentioned in the NDC (“no alignment”; see Figure 13). Box 2 below contains illustrative examples of these different levels of alignment.

Figure 13: Alignment with NDCs, number of projects



Box 2: Examples of NDC alignment categories

Alignment to specific targets/activities in NDC:

- The project “Increasing the resilience of poor and vulnerable communities to climate change”, approved in October 2015 and implemented by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of Jordan (NIE), aims to “better respond to climate change impacts and vulnerabilities in the context of the Syrian crisis in Jordan and Lebanon”, through a range of activities to improve the water security of displaced persons and host communities. Jordan’s INDC from September 2015 includes a focus on pressures exerted on the country’s energy and water systems “by the continuous flow of refugees from Syria in particular”. Interventions highlighted in the INDC and implemented by the project include “increasing the efficiency of irrigation systems” and “training people of different ages and social statuses on water saving and sanitation methods”.
- The project “Increasing the Adaptation Capacity and Resilience of Rural Communities to Climate Change in the Central African Republic”, approved in October 2023 and implemented by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, MIE), includes among its outputs “Best available technologies and integrated resilient crop varieties are implemented to enhance the resilience of crop production and post-harvest practices (rice, maize, cassava).” The Central African Republic’s Updated First NDC (2022) includes the specific targets “Improvement and dissemination of technical production guidelines for food crops, taking into account climate

(Continued)

projections (by 2030: cassava (+26 per cent), peanuts (+13 per cent), maize (+33 per cent), sorghum/millet (+29.7 per cent), sesame (+23 per cent)” and “Develop, by 2030, food crop varieties adapted to water stress and/or temperature in the central and northern regions of the CAR, for the benefit of the most vulnerable communities: cassava, groundnuts, maize, rice, sesame (at least 10 varieties).”

Alignment to specific targets/activities in NDC – not explained in project documents:

The project “Integration of climate change adaptation measures in the concerted management of the WAP transboundary complex: ADAPT-WAP (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger)”, approved in July 2019 and implemented by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (RIE), implements several specific adaptation interventions prioritized in the NDCs of Burkina Faso and Benin, including “Delimitation and development of pastoral areas” (Burkina Faso) and “Enhancing knowledge regarding the climatic system and the tools for generation of climate and water-related information and forecasting of weather conditions” (Benin). However, the project documents make no reference to these NDCs.

Broad thematic alignment: The “Ger Community Resilience Project (GCRP)” in Mongolia, approved in March 2023 and implemented by UN-Habitat (MIE), aims to increase the resilience of urban and peri-urban communities to flooding. Mongolia’s NDC mentions the undertaking of risk assessments and risk reduction but does not mention measures to reduce flood risk specifically.

Broad thematic alignment – no specific targets/activities in NDC: The project “Enhancing Climate Resilience in San Cristóbal province, Dominican Republic”, approved in March 2019 and implemented by the Dominican Institute of Integral Development (NIE), planned a range of activities to improve the water security of rural communities, including improving access to water and sanitation services, reforestation activities and increasing institutional capacity for integrated water management. The Dominican Republic’s First NDC did not include detailed adaptation priorities but did identify “drinking water” as a vulnerable sector and “integrated water management” and “floods and droughts” as “building blocks” for strategic adaptation planning.

Funding facility – supported projects aligned with NDCs and NAPs: The “Adaptation SMEs Innovation Facility (ASIF)”, approved in October 2023 and implemented by the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, MIE), supports deployment of innovative adaptation technologies and solutions by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In their proposals, SMEs are asked to provide evidence of alignment with NDCs and NAPs, and supported SMEs are connected to Fund DAs to discuss alignment and progress throughout the programme.

No alignment: Only one project falls under this category, namely “Engaging Future Leaders: Digital Education Module on Adaptation Challenges and Best Practices for Youth”, approved in October 2019 and implemented by the Environmental Project Implementation Unit of Armenia (NIE). This project designed a gamified educational module on climate change for high school students. Armenia’s First NDC was brief (five pages of content) and included no focus on youth. In relation to capacity building, it only mentioned “professional training and education”. It included broad adaptation priorities, but the project did not align with any of them.

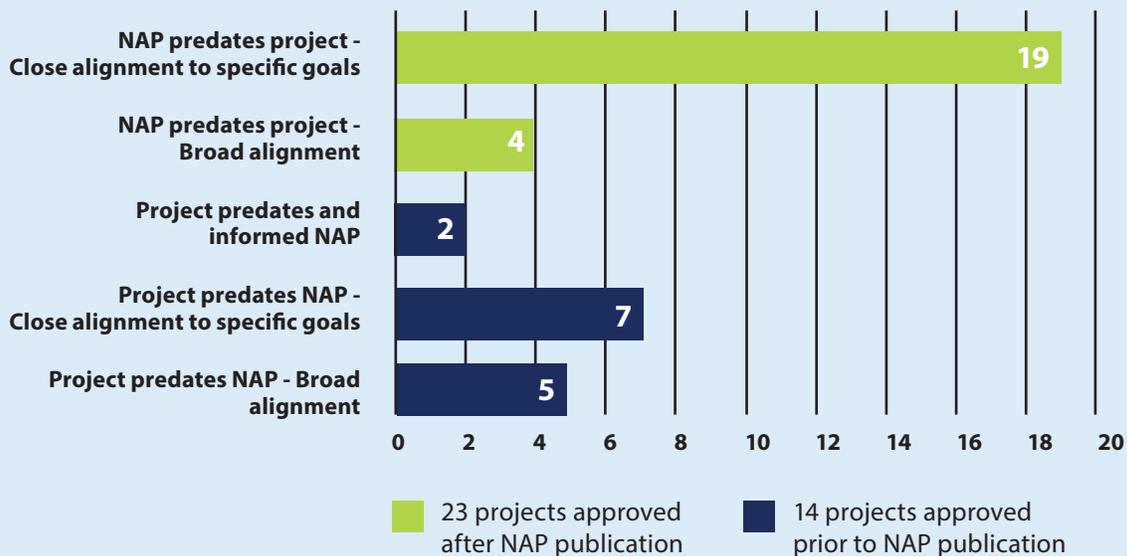
No alignment due to no adaptation priorities in NDC: The two projects implemented in Micronesia are not aligned with the most recent NDC prior to their approval as this NDC states that “FSM does not see this INDC as the vehicle to address its adaptation needs in the post 2020 context, even if these need careful consideration and assessment.”

3.2. Summary – NAP alignment

In the case of NAPs, 23 projects were approved after a focus country submitted a NAP. Of these, 19 were closely aligned with goals stated in the NAP. The project documents of an additional 49 projects mentioned alignment with NAPs that had not yet been submitted at the time of project approval. Of these, 14 projects could be compared with NAPs submitted in the intervening period to evaluate whether projects were aligned

with NAP priorities under development or perhaps even informed NAP priorities. Nine projects demonstrated close alignment with specific NAP goals, and the other five broad alignment with priority sectors (in some cases, due to a lack of specific goals in the NAP; see Figure 14). Of the nine projects that demonstrated close alignment to the NAP, two have verifiably informed NAP development – see the box below.

Figure 14: Alignment with NAPs, number of projects



Adaptation Fund's visit to Peru, Project Monitoring Mission (Photo by Adaptation Fund)

Box 3: Projects that informed NAP development

Alignment to specific targets/activities in NDC:

- “Increasing the resilience of informal urban settlements in Fiji that are highly vulnerable to climate change and disaster risks” (Fiji, MIE: UN-Habitat). The project document references consultations with the NAP Global Network to identify opportunities for harmonization of the project with NAP priorities. The NAP, which was submitted a year after project approval, quotes extensively from publications by UN-Habitat, the project IE, including from the project document.
- “Ger Community Resilience Project (GCRP)” (Mongolia, MIE: UN-Habitat). This project included a specific activity that aimed to inform the NAP: “ensure that urban adaptation priorities in Ulaanbaatar and elsewhere – which meet the needs of two-thirds of Mongolia’s population – are mainstreamed into future updates of the NDC and Mongolia’s forthcoming National Adaptation Plan (NAP)”. The NAP, submitted two years after project approval, includes a priority action that is very closely aligned to the project goals: “Conduct assessment of the flood protection preparedness of Ulaanbaatar city, aimag centres and settlements; ensure flood preparedness through taking measures towards assuring safety; renovating and improving the drainage lines of facilities; taking actions directed to target groups at flood risk; and improving the passing and protection capacity of roads, bridges and flood protection buildings.”

3.3. Trends and patterns

Due to the small number of projects that could be compared with NAPs, only trends and patterns in NDC alignment have been analysed. The sample of 150 projects compared with NDCs, once broken down by period, region or sector, is also too

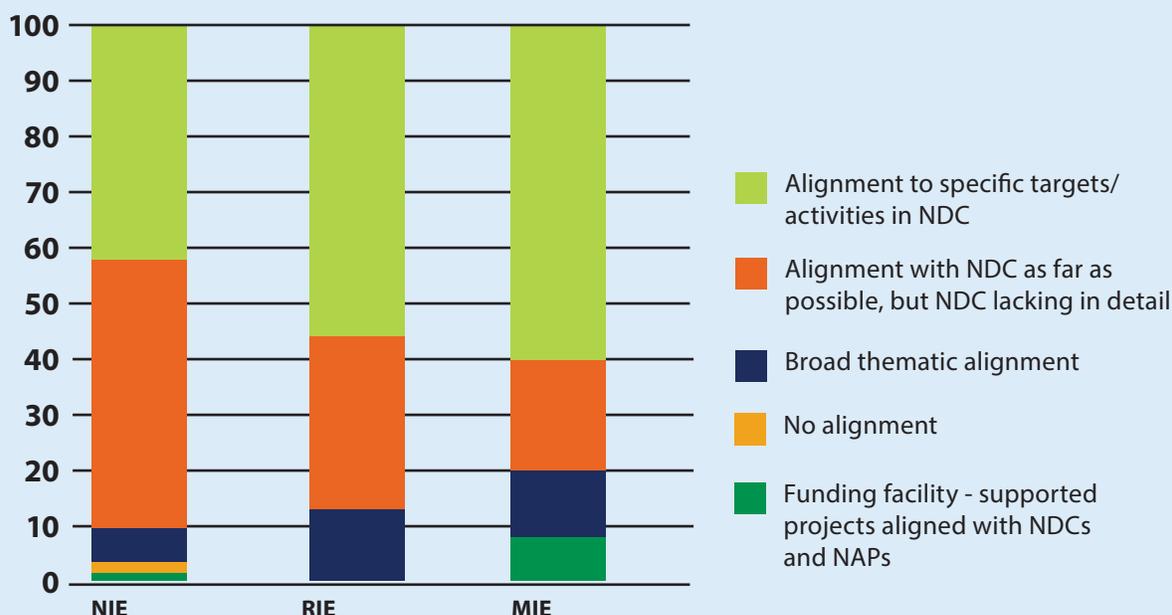
small to be able to derive statistically significant results (e.g. it contains only 11 projects implemented in Eastern Europe); therefore, the evidence presented below should be viewed as anecdotal.

3.3.1. NDC alignment by IE type

Of the 150 projects analysed, 50 were implemented by NIEs, 23 by RIEs and 77 by MIEs. NIE projects were more often implemented in countries that had not (yet) included detailed adaptation priorities in their NDCs (46 per cent, versus 30 per cent and 19 per cent for RIEs and MIEs, respectively). This led to projects implemented by NIEs being less likely to be closely aligned to specific NDC priorities (44 per cent) than projects implemented by RIEs (57 per cent) and MIEs (61

per cent; see Figure 15). Further, the average financing volume of projects implemented by NIEs tends to be smaller (see 1.1.4) whereas larger projects tend to be more closely aligned with NDCs (3.3.4). Finally, agriculture and food security projects, which are the most likely to be closely aligned with NDCs (see 3.3.3), made up just 20 per cent of NIE projects, compared to 31 per cent and 32 per cent of RIE and MIE projects, respectively.

Figure 15: NDC alignment by IE type



As highlighted in section 1.5.3, many Fund DAs and some of their NIEs are the same government entities responsible for NDC development. However, the portfolio analysis revealed no clear correlation between DA/NIE involvement in NDC development and project alignment with NDC priorities.

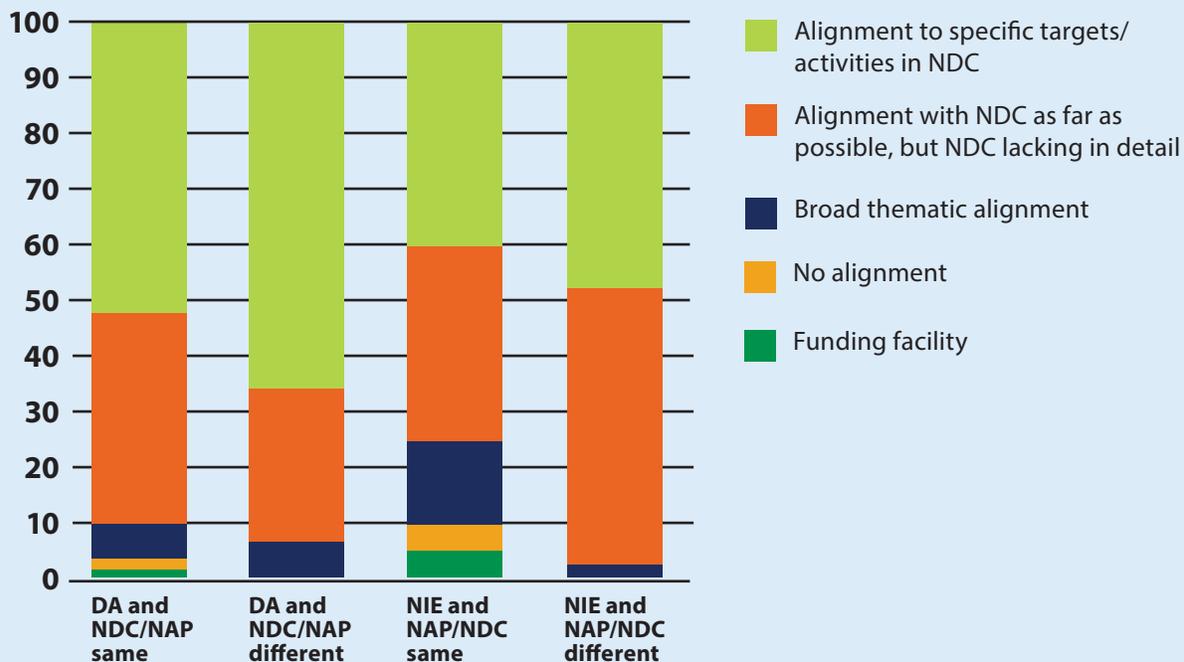
Of the projects endorsed by a DA that was also responsible for NDC development, 52 per cent were closely aligned to NDCs. Of the much smaller number of projects endorsed by DAs not responsible for NDC development, 64 per cent were closely aligned to NDCs. Of the projects

implemented by NIEs that are (part of) the same ministry that develops NDCs, 39 per cent were closely aligned to NDCs. Of the projects implemented by NIEs that were separate from the entity developing NDCs, 47 per cent were closely aligned to NDCs (see also Figure 16)¹²

In the interviews, IE representatives reported different levels of involvement of DAs, at different stages of project development. DAs were most often involved in the initial stages of project design, in determining (often jointly with IEs and other stakeholders) an overall focus and priorities for the project.

12. Total number of projects analysed: 117 single-country projects. Total number endorsed by DA responsible for NDC development: 103, 54 of which were closely aligned to NDCs; total number endorsed by DAs not responsible for NDC development: 14, nine of which closely aligned to NDCs. Fifty projects implemented by NIEs, 18 by NIEs responsible for NDC development (seven closely aligned to NDCs), 32 by NIEs not responsible for NDC development (15 closely aligned to NDCs).

Figure 16: NDC alignment, by alignment of DAs and NIEs with NDC/NAP development entities



The extent of involvement was influenced by the type of DA – unsurprisingly, environment ministries are more likely to get closely involved in project design than finance ministries. The IEs reported that involvement of DAs in environment or climate change ministries gave them easier access to data and additional expertise for project design. However, working with a DA in the finance ministries or office of the (vice) president also has its advantages. These bodies were generally more influential and had more convening power than the environment ministry. IEs were also able to enhance awareness of climate

adaptation issues by working with DAs in central ministries.

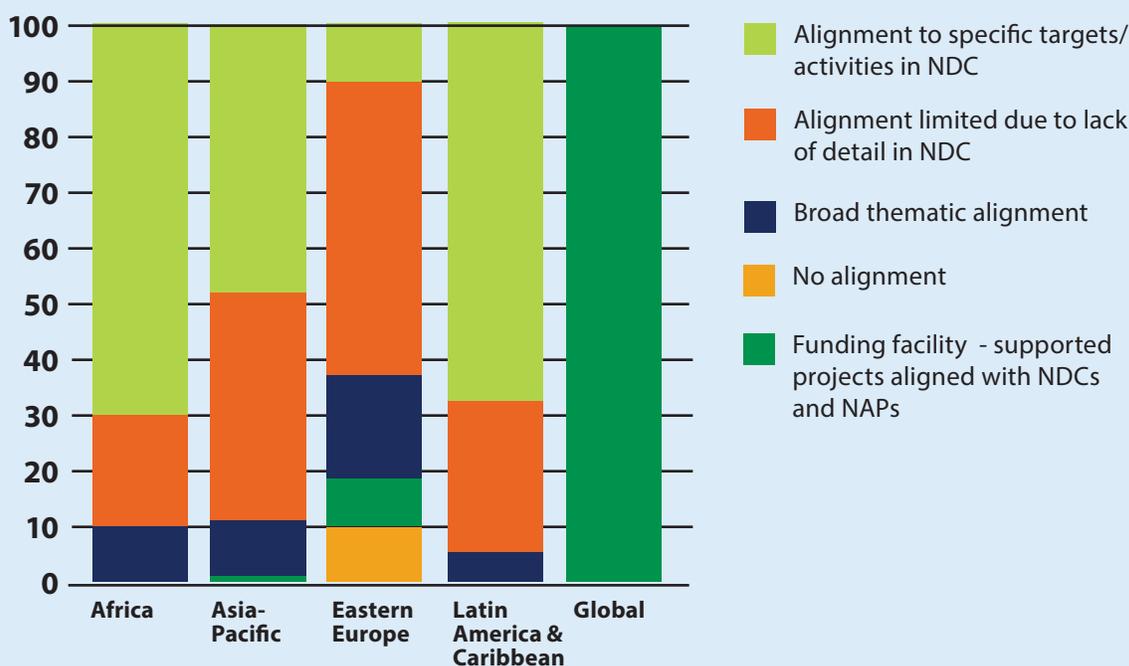
In cases where the NIE and DA were the same agency also responsible for the development of the NDC and NAP (e.g. Ministry of Health and Environment of Antigua and Barbuda), this led to efficiencies in the development of the adaptation project. However, separate DAs and NIEs also had advantages; other interviewees said that semi-autonomous or non-governmental NIEs were generally more agile and could move faster in project development.

3.3.2. NDC alignment by region

The 150 projects analysed included 48 projects in Africa, 51 in Asia-Pacific, 11 in Eastern Europe, 34 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the six global small grants facilities. As Figure 19 shows, NDCs

in Asia-Pacific and Eastern Europe were more likely to lack detail on adaptation priorities; as a result, projects in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean were the most closely aligned to NDCs.

Figure 17: NDC alignment by region

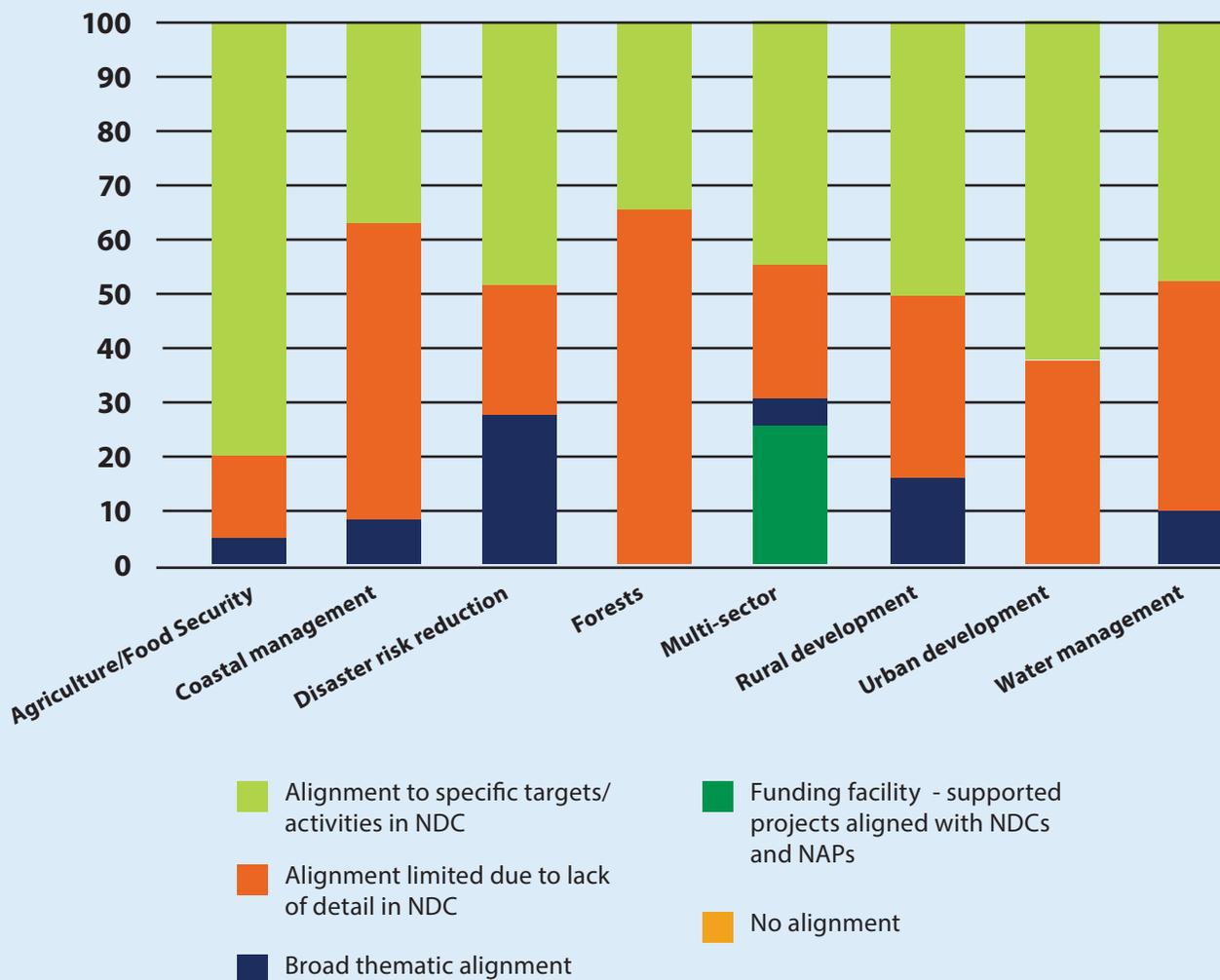


3.3.3. NDC alignment by sector

The 150 projects analysed included 42 agriculture and food security projects, 11 coastal management projects, 18 disaster risk reduction projects, six forestry projects, 33 multi-sectoral projects, 13 rural development projects, eight urban development projects and 19 water management

projects. Figure 18 shows that agriculture projects were more likely than projects in other sectors to be closely aligned to NDC priorities; this is likely because 90 per cent of NDCs with an adaptation focus include agriculture as a priority sector (see 1.2.1).

Figure 18: NDC alignment by sector



3.3.4. NDC alignment by project volume

The 150 projects analysed for NDC alignment included 14 projects with a budget of below \$1 million; 38 projects with a budget of between \$1 million and \$4.99 million; 58 projects with a budget between \$5 million and \$9.99 million; and four projects with a budget of \$10 million or more.

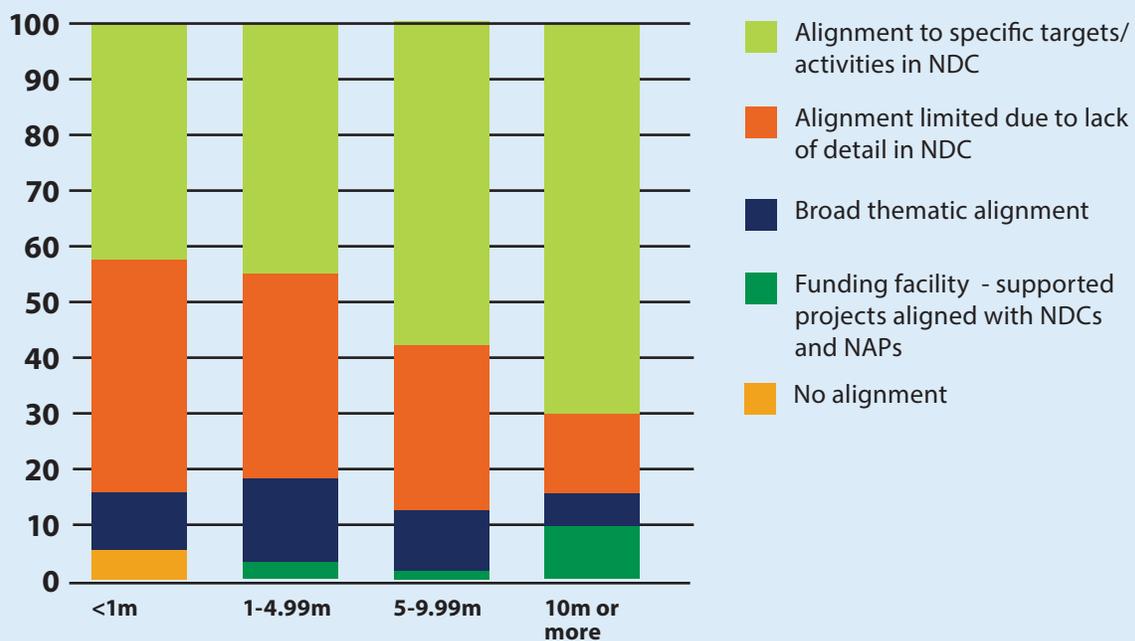
As Figure 19 shows, the share of closely aligned projects grows with budget size. This can be explained by the fact that several of the smaller projects focus on the piloting of one specific technology (e.g. “Strengthening of a Replicable Micro Ecosystem of Accelerated Technological Innovation for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change in Dominican

Republic through the Development of a Pilot Thermo Solar Desalination Appropriate Technology”, budget \$249,929; or “Enhancing Resilience to Climate-induced Flooding and Drought through the Deployment of a Water-filled Barrier” in Uganda, which deployed the SLAMDAM technology, budget \$250,000).

Larger projects, on the other hand, tend to adopt holistic approaches, imple-

menting a range of different activities sometimes covering various sectors. For example, many agriculture projects include activities related to irrigation infrastructure development, agroforestry and the promotion of resilient crop varieties. Therefore, given that most NDCs are relatively high level, a large project more likely includes at least some activities that are closely aligned to NDC priorities.

Figure 19: NDC alignment by project volume



3.3.5. NDC alignment by year of project approval

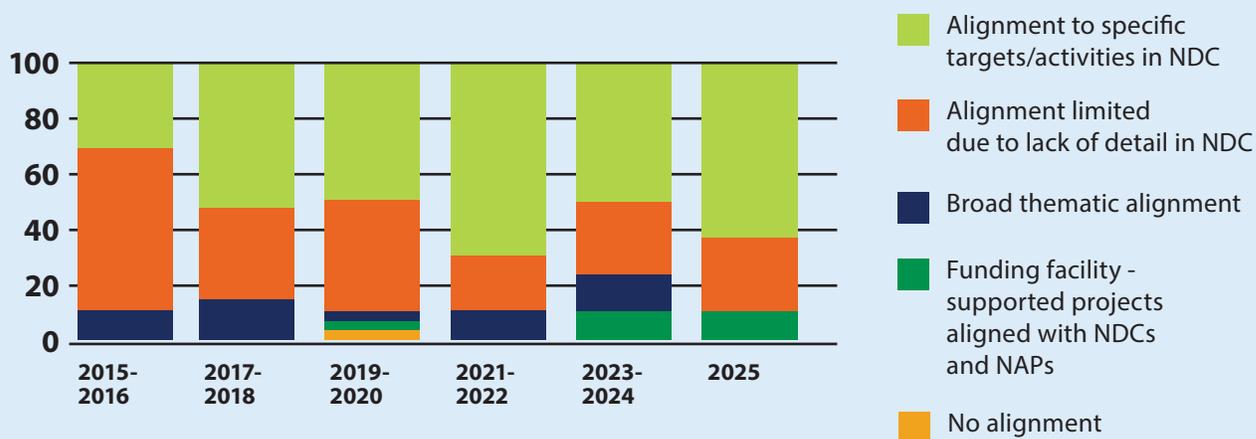
The 150 projects analysed for NDC alignment included nine projects approved in 2015-2016, 24 projects approved in 2017-2018, 38 projects approved in 2019-2020, 28 projects approved in 2021-2022,

35 projects approved in 2023-2024 and 16 projects approved in the first half of 2025. As Figure 20 shows, the share of closely aligned projects has grown over time, primarily due to more NDCs providing

detailed adaptation priorities. The share of projects that were only broadly aligned to NDC priority sectors – despite the NDC including detailed priorities (lightest

green in the chart) – remained more or less stable at around 10 per cent except for projects approved in the first half of 2025.

Figure 20: NDC alignment by year



3.3.6. Alignment to subsequent NDC

Nineteen of 150 projects analysed included references to, or even specific activities aimed at, contributing to the next NDC and/or NAP. For example, the project “Building climate and disaster resilience capacities of vulnerable small towns in Lao PDR” includes the aim to “influence NAP direction to include rapidly developing urban areas and resilient infrastructure”; the project “Climate change adaptation in vulnerable coastal cities and ecosystems of the Uruguay River (Argentina, Uruguay)” includes under Component 1 the following plan: “Results regarding adaptation will be systematized and will be included in National Adaptation Plans, Adaptation Communications

and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for Argentina and Uruguay.”

More than a third of projects (56 of 150) were found to be in broad thematic alignment with the most recent NDC prior to project approval. In 42 of these cases, limited detail in the relevant NDC made it difficult to assess alignment. Thirty-four of these projects were implemented in countries that have since updated their NDCs allowing for reassessment of alignment with the updated NDCs.

In many cases, the newer NDCs may be more aligned with government priorities that were left out of the previous NDC.



Adaptation Fund visit to Armenia
(Photo by Adaptation Fund)

Conversely, the projects themselves may have informed new NDC priorities. The comparison of project objectives with these later NDCs found closer alignment to specific priorities in 18 of 34 cases. Of the 16 remaining projects, the newer NDC also did not present any detailed adaptation priorities in 15 cases. In the one exception, the newer NDC did provide more detailed priorities, but the project is not aligned with them.¹³

This analysis shows that IEs can, and do, align projects with specific national adaptation priorities even when these are not included in the NDC, most likely through alignment with other climate change strategies and plans; and/or that IEs are able to inform NDC revision processes effectively with project learnings. It is likely a combination of both, though the latter is much more difficult to verify.

13. “Enhancing Resilience to Climate-induced Flooding and Drought through the Deployment of a Water-filled Barrier” in Uganda; Uganda’s Updated First NDC does not refer to flooding, although it does refer to water storage.

4. Interviews

The seven interviews provided more details and anecdotal evidence on how project design works in practice, and how IEs view the usefulness of NDCs and NAPs as documents to inform project design. Interviewees were also asked for ideas on how the Fund might support enhanced alignment. The main learnings from the interviews are summarized below.

1 NDCs and NAPs are widely used as a starting point for Fund project design, but even the most detailed still leave many specifics for IEs. This allows for creativity and innovation by project implementers.

2 Most government-affiliated IEs use Fund project results in UNFCCC reporting and for developing NDCs and NAPs, but direct influence on priorities is unclear. Some contribute informally through overlap between project staff and national climate committees. Non-governmental and regional IEs are concerned that attempts to inform policymaking may be perceived as lobbying, and are therefore much more careful. This can lead to missed learning opportunities. Interestingly, UN-Habitat, though not interviewed, has implemented Fund projects with explicit aims to inform NDCs and NAPs; other IEs may be able to learn from its experiences in informing future policies and strategies effectively. For example, “Increase

the Climate Change Resilience to Water Scarcity and Flooding in the Tuban Delta” aims to ensure that “an understanding between the connection of water and natural resource management and climate resilience is well integrated into the NAP”; and “Enhancing Adaptive Capacity in Lao PDR Provinces, and Building Resilient Housing in Vulnerable Communities” aims to integrate “gender-differentiated vulnerabilities into [...] the final NAP document.”).

3 The main challenge raised by interviewees was the absence of climate change adaptation indicators in most NDCs and NAPs. While projects may align with NDC/NAP priorities, without agreed measurement frameworks for adaptation outcomes, IEs cannot demonstrate their contribution to NAP and NDC implementation. Even when strong national indicators exist – such as the Catalogue of Adaptation Measures in Peru, which links to both the NDC and NAP – the lack of globally agreed indicators hinders consistent monitoring of adaptation progress across borders.

The interviewees provided a few recommendations for adaptation funders to consider:

1 Strengthen links to national plans:
Ensure that project submission guide-

lines require project priorities to be based on (not merely aligned with) NDCs and NAPs. Project design should start from these national priorities.

2 Build capacity of national authorities: Provide training and support for DAs or equivalent national focal points, enhancing their role as effective partners to IEs and as champions for climate change adaptation across government ministries and agencies. Facilitate peer-to-peer learning among DAs to share good practices.

3 Support development of adaptation indicators and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks: Invest

in the development, harmonization and uptake of adaptation indicators and MEL frameworks. Promote the design of smart, low-cost proxy indicators to measure project outcomes and community resilience. Publicly funded projects could serve to pilot and refine these tools, and funders could encourage or facilitate international harmonization.

4 Offer balanced guidance while remaining country-led: Maintain a country-driven approach, but provide slightly more structured guidance on project design, priority setting and implementation to help ensure quality and alignment with adaptation goals.

5. Pathways for NDC/NAP alignment

The results of the analysis demonstrate that, when NDCs and NAPs contain detailed adaptation priorities, the projects in the Fund's portfolio are well aligned to these priorities. Most survey respondents and interviewees reported using NDC and NAP priorities as the main inspiration in project design, other pathways for NDC and NAP alignment were also revealed:

- Most countries engage a range of different stakeholders in NDC and NAP development, and most IEs are directly or indirectly involved in these processes, or at least kept informed.
- Eighty per cent of Fund DAs are the same agencies/ministries or sometimes even the same persons as those leading NDC and NAP development processes in their countries. These persons/entities must endorse each project as aligned with national priorities. In addition, 41 per cent of NIEs are the same agencies/ministries responsible for NDC/NAP development. Therefore, the national stakeholders involved in Fund project design and endorsement can be expected to be familiar with national adaptation priorities.
- Especially in smaller countries, there is also likely informal coordination between people working on similar issues in different public and non-public entities, including those working on Fund projects and NDCs and NAPs. This was confirmed by several interviewees.
- Adaptation Fund projects directly address well-documented priority climate risks by implementing proven solutions. Thus, even if no attempts at alignment were made, most projects would likely be relatively well aligned with NDCs and NAPs. For example, many projects include the expansion or improvement of irrigation infrastructure; irrigation is mentioned in the NDCs of 106 countries, including almost all low- and middle-income countries. Other common interventions of Fund projects are also well represented in NDCs; mangroves are mentioned in the NDCs of 67 parties, agroforestry in 82, early warning systems in 108 and resilient crop varieties in 63.¹⁴
- Besides NAPs and NDCs, Adaptation Fund IEs pursue alignment of project objectives with a range of other policies, plans and strategies. In particular, the more recent NAPs and NDCs often state explicitly that priorities were derived from, or coherent with, other national policies. The interviewees supported this, stating that NDCs are often based on existing sectoral plans – in other words, NDCs reflect priorities; they do not set them.

14. Source: climatewatchdata.org/ndc-search

- An additional potential pathway for alignment is that several of the Fund's MIEs (e.g. UNEP, UNDP) support development of NDCs and especially NAPs. However, the sample of 150 projects contained no projects implemented by UNEP or UNDP in countries where these same agencies also provided NAP support. These factors help explain why many Fund projects are closely aligned with specific NDC and NAP priorities, even when this is not explicitly stated in project documents. It also explains the close alignment of many projects with activities included in NDCs and NAPs published after the projects started.

6. Lessons for adaptation funders

This study has shown that Fund projects are, overall, closely aligned with national adaptation priorities as communicated in NDCs and NAPs. In recent years, NDCs and NAPs have gained prominence nationally and globally. Moreover, countries have invested more in their preparation, including in the formulation of more

detailed priorities and implementation plans. Consequently, Fund IEs and DAs have increasingly aligned their activities with these plans.

Funders of adaptation could consider the following lessons emerging from this study:

1 Imperfect alignment with NDCs and NAPs can drive innovation

As this report has demonstrated, Fund projects are overall well aligned with specific adaptation priorities communicated by countries in their NAPs and NDCs. A small number of projects are aligned with priority sectors, but implement interventions and solutions not foreseen in national plans (“broad thematic alignment” in the charts in Chapter 3).

Some NAPs and many NDCs still contain little detail. Moreover, the nature of their development by committee may not always favor the inclusion of new, innovative or “risky” solutions. Consequently, such imperfectly aligned projects should be fostered as opportunities to drive ambition and test innovations, especially in overlooked sectors and regions.

2 Adaptation projects could play a larger role in further strengthening NAPs and NDCs

A 2021 article by a USAID climate finance expert highlighted that NAPs contain a good overview of priorities, but “are typically much weaker at identifying realistic financing methods”, and hence risk becoming ‘paper only’ plans.”¹⁵ A high-level panel at COP28 in 2023 came to a similar conclusion, identifying “a need to strengthen national capacity to implement NAPs effectively, with an emphasis on strengthening capaci-

ties at national and subnational levels to package adaptation priorities into bankable projects.” This panel also stressed that publicly funded adaptation projects produce learnings that can serve as input to strengthen NAPs.¹⁶

Although some projects analysed for this report included explicit goals to inform future NAPs and NDCs, it could not always be verified whether they had succeeded.

15. <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/how-usaid-and-other-development-partners-can-support-national-adaptation-plans>

16. <https://unfccc.int/news/cop28-event-highlights-urgent-need-to-accelerate-development-and-implementation-of-national>

There are several ways in which adaptation funders may be able to strengthen the potential for their projects to inform NAP and NDC development:

- › Encourage or require IEs to reflect on the potential for a project to inform new or revised NAPs and NDCs in project proposals, and identify the pathways through which it could do so.
- › Ensure that project review templates serve NDC and NAP formulation,¹⁷ e.g. by requiring alignment of project MEL
- › Facilitate peer-to-peer learning between IEs on ways to inform NDC and NAP processes. Funders can also work with governments to establish or strengthen formal feedback loops and enhance their ability to utilize lessons learned from project implementation, while ensuring that this process is country-led.

frameworks with national adaptation monitoring frameworks (where these exist), and capture inputs provided by IEs to NDC and NAP processes.¹⁸

3 Adaptation funders could play a role in improving adaptation impact monitoring through their projects, direct support to countries and convening power

As reported in section 4, IE representatives interviewed for this study saw great potential for adaptation funders to support development of internationally agreed adaptation indicators and monitoring strategies. National-level support could be provided through a technical assistance facility or help desk. Global

funders could also use their convening power to bring together NIEs and DAs to exchange lessons learned. They could organize workshops on low-cost, efficient adaptation monitoring for LDCs and small island developing states. Different monitoring strategies could be tested through publicly funded projects.

4 Adaptation funders could support development of innovative adaptation financing mechanisms

In response to the challenges reported in the articles under point 2, and to recent and ongoing cuts in public financing for climate action, the adaptation space has

witnessed an increasing drive towards unlocking private financing for adaptation action (see, e.g. the Adaptation Benefits Mechanism).¹⁹ Public adaptation funders

17. One survey respondent stated that “The standard template for the AF for M&E was not adequate for NDC or NAPs formulation so the DOE conducted our own and use this for the policy formulation.”

18. One survey respondent stated that “vulnerability assessments, community consultation outcomes” and other project deliverables had been shared with national authorities to inform future planning.

19. https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/gca-africa-adaptation-finance/case_studies/adaptation-benefits-mechanism-2/

are in a good position to support experimentation with innovative financing mechanisms, and to build IEs' capacity to design and implement them.

Funders could also consider providing capacity strengthening for the develop-

ment of "bankable projects" or projects with greater private sector involvement, in areas where this is feasible, while continuing to underscore the need for public financing for climate adaptation interventions.

Annex A: Detailed methodology

Portfolio analysis

The portfolio analysis for this study was based on a download of the entire project database from the Fund website in April 2025. As mentioned above, this database contained 252 projects. A total of 102 projects were excluded from the analysis:

- Any projects approved before submission of INDC of the country of implementation: 51 in total.
- Projects that did not support concrete adaptation actions:
 - 1 Project Scale-Up Grant
 - 5 Learning Grants
 - 13 South-South Cooperation Grants
 - 6 Readiness Packages for accreditation support
 - 26 Technical Assistance Grants (mostly related to ESP and gender mainstreaming)

The remaining 150 projects were analysed in detail for NDC and NAP alignment, through the following steps:

- Identifying the NDC relevant to each project (most recent version submitted prior to project approval date), in the Climate Watch NDC Explorer; and checking whether a NAP was submitted prior to the project approval date, in the UNFCCC's NAP Central database.
- Determining the project's objectives and activities, based on the Project Concept

and Project Document available on the Fund website.

- Skimming of the NDC/NAP for aligned specific targets or broad sectoral priorities (i.e. besides general priorities related to knowledge development, institutional strengthening and capacity-building).
- Searching through the project document for explanations of NDC/NAP alignment.

The documentation of regional projects was compared to all individual NAPs/NDCs if they involved three or fewer countries; for larger projects, mentions of NAP/NDC alignment in the project documentation were used and verified with at least one of the NAPs/NDCs.

Not all NAPs and NDCs analysed contained detailed adaptation priorities. To illustrate, the 117 single-country projects, implemented in 72 different countries, were checked for alignment with 90 different NDCs in total. Of these 90 NDCs, 60 contained at least some detailed adaptation priorities and 30 did not. Unsurprisingly, later NDCs tend to be more detailed: 60 per cent of INDCs and First NDCs contained detailed adaptation priorities, but for Updated First NDCs and Second NDCs this share was over 75 per cent:

- If projects were only broadly aligned with the relevant NDC, most often due

to a lack of specific priorities in the NDC, a later NDC was also viewed to check 1) whether it contained more detailed priorities; and 2) whether the project aligned with these priorities.

- If project documents mentioned alignment with NAPs still under devel-

opment, these NAPs were viewed (if submitted in the intervening period) and checked for alignment.

- Mentions in project documents of projects feeding into NDC and/or NAP development were also analysed.

Survey

An online survey of IEs in April 2025 received 14 responses. The survey asked respondents to focus on one specific project and answer questions about the primary inspiration for the project objectives; the ways in which alignment with NDCs and NAPs was pursued during the project design stage; and the extent to which project results served as inputs for future NDCs and NAPs.

Responses were received from 10 NIEs, two RIEs and two MIEs about projects in Africa (four), Asia-Pacific (four) and Latin America and the Caribbean (five). One respondent gave general feedback on their organization's processes.

Interviews

Following the portfolio analysis and the surveys, 10 IEs were invited to participate in interviews, to collect further information on the pathways by which alignment with NDCs and NAPs are achieved; the involvement of DAs in project design; challenges IEs encounter in pursuing NDC and

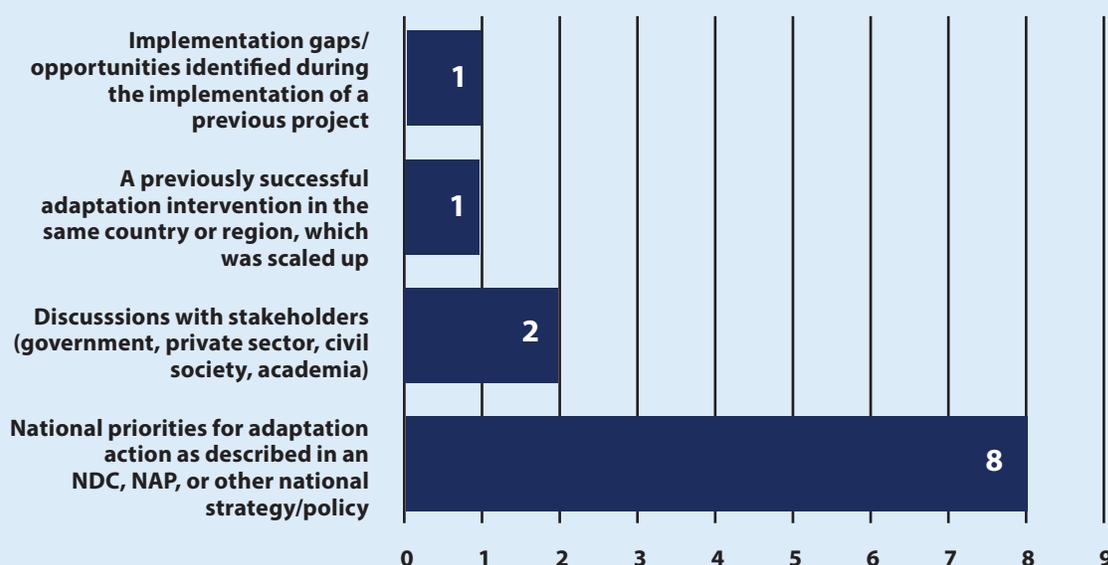
NAP alignment; and recommendations for additional support that the Fund might provide to enhance alignment. Seven interviews were held; the list of interviewees and interview questions can be found in the Annex.

Annex B: Survey findings

The findings of the survey among IEs are presented below.

Question 1: What was the primary source of inspiration for the project objectives and activities, during the design stage?

Figure 23: Primary inspiration for project objectives.



Two respondents chose “other” . The first responded: “We also take stock of conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations from final project evaluations in that country and build that into the design of the project.” The second responded: “In the case of our most recent project here reported the main source of inspiration was a previously successful adaptation intervention that is being scaled up. However, in the majority of cases it is difficult to identify only one primary source of inspiration for a project proposal. This usually comes from a mix of discussion with stakeholders and gaps identified at ideation stage. During consultations, stakeholders would normally mention national priorities for adaptation action as described in an NDC, NAP and other national strategies and policies, so this aspect will also be part of the mix.”

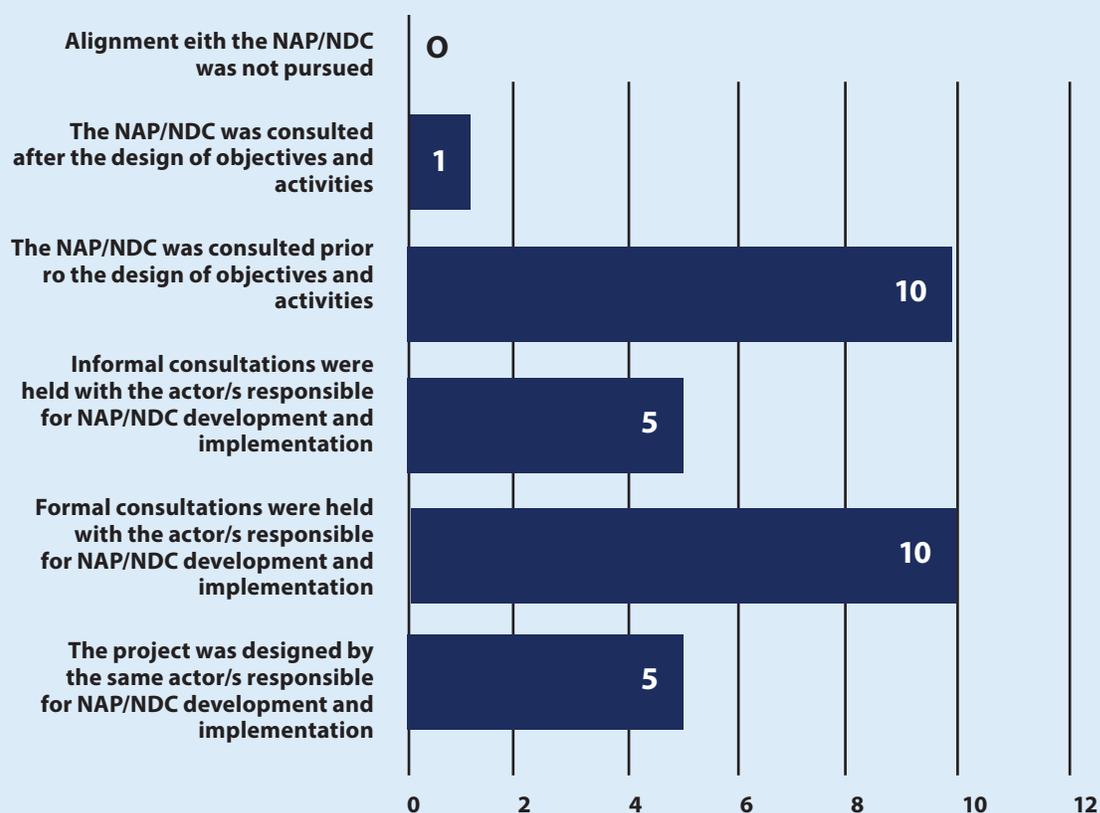
Question 2: If you chose the first answer to the previous question, which plan, strategy or policy were the objectives primarily based on?

Most respondents provided a list of plans and strategies that included NDCs and NAPs, although not always in the first place. Other strategies that guided project design included national development strategies, national climate change policies, sectoral plans, poverty reduction strategies and subnational government strategies.

Question 3: How was alignment with the country's/countries' NAP and/or NDC pursued during the project design stage? (multiple answers possible)

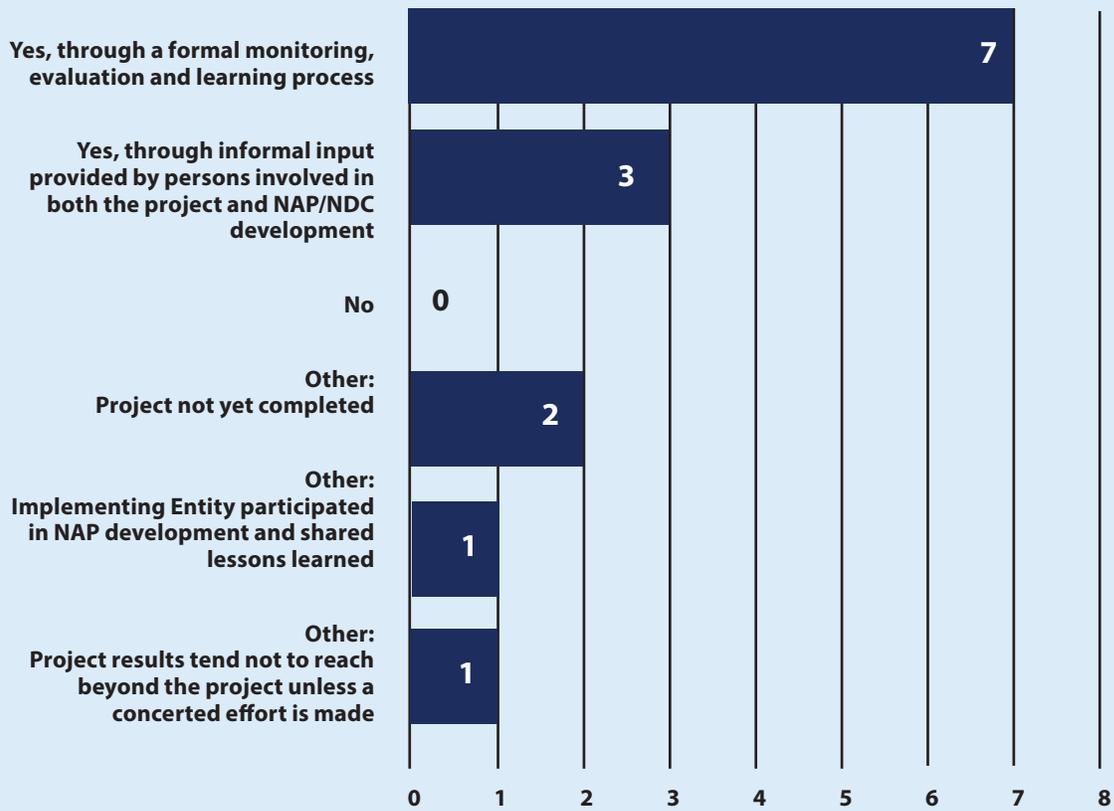
Most respondents provided a list of plans and strategies that included NDCs and NAPs, although not always in the first place. Other strategies that guided project design included national development strategies, national climate change policies, sectoral plans, poverty reduction strategies and subnational government strategies.

Figure 24: How was NAP/NDC alignment pursued? One respondent chose “other” and elaborated: “And consultations are held with national and local authorities as well as the communities themselves.”



Question 4: Have project outcomes and learnings (from this project or other Adaptation Fund projects implemented by your Entity) been fed back into NAP/NDC development processes?

Figure 25: Have project outcomes informed NDC/NAP development?



Annex C: Interview questions and list of interviewees

Interview questions

1. Could you describe the typical design process for a project concept for the Adaptation Fund? Which stakeholders drive the process, and which are involved?
 - a. To what extent is the country's Designated Authority involved in project design?
 - b. To what extent are the same people involved in NDC/NAP formulation involved in project design/implementation?
2. How useful do you find NDCs/NAPs as documents to inform project design? Is that what they are used for, in practice?
3. What are challenges in aligning projects with NDC/NAP priorities?
4. How could NDC/NAP alignment of Adaptation Fund projects be enhanced?
5. How have Adaptation Fund projects implemented by your organization informed NDC/NAP priorities?
6. How could the potential of Adaptation Fund projects to inform NDC/NAP priorities be enhanced?

Interviewees

- Central American Bank for Economic Integration (RIE) – Ruben Avila, Climate Funds and ESG Finance Officer
- Department of Environment, Antigua and Barbuda (NIE) – Jaabari Reynolds, Technical Officer, Watershed Management, Protected Areas, and Grants; and Garth Simon, Monitoring and Evaluation Associate
- Partnership for Governance Reform (Kemitraan), Indonesia (NIE) – Eka Melisa, Director, Climate Resilience and Finance Governance
- National Environment Management Council, Tanzania (NIE) – Fredrick Mulinda, Chief Environmental Officer
- Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (NIE) – Phuntsho Choden, Programme Officer
- Peruvian Trust Fund for National Parks and Protected Areas (NIE) – Claudia Godfrey, Director of Innovation and Strategic Management
- Micronesia Conservation Trust (NIE) – Mae Bruton-Adams, Executive Director



ADAPTATION FUND

**Alignment of Adaptation Fund Portfolio
with National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and
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