



ADAPTATION FUND

AFB/B.43-44/14  
March 23, 2025

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Adaptation Fund Board

**Updated Management Response and Action Plan  
to the Thematic Evaluation of Scalability Concepts and Practice  
at the Adaptation Fund by the  
Technical Evaluation Reference Group (AF-TERG)**

## **Strategic Issues**

- a) The Secretariat largely agrees with the overall findings and recommendations provided by the Thematic Evaluation of Scalability Concepts and Practice. Scale-up and replicability are valuable outcomes and key considerations for projects funded by the Adaptation Fund, as outlined in the Operational Policies and Guidelines (OPG) and its Annex 5 “Project/Programme Proposal Template,”.
- b) It is also important to note that the Fund’s Strategic Policies, Priorities, and Guidelines, as well as the OPG, do not include a standalone scalability criterion within project eligibility or review requirements. The inclusion of replicability and scaling-up as explicit requirements in the OPG could be considered as a recommendation for the Board to discuss as part of the Fund’s broader strategic discussion.

## **Purpose**

1. This board paper presents to the Board for its consideration an updated management response and action plan reflecting the views expressed by the Ethics and Finance Committee at its thirty-fourth meeting on the findings and recommendations of the thematic evaluation on scalability concepts and practices.

## **Recommended Decision**

2. The Adaptation Fund Board takes note of this report, recalling its request to the Secretariat to prepare an updated management response and action plan reflecting the views expressed by the Ethics and Finance Committee at its thirty-fourth meeting on the findings and recommendations set out in the evaluation report ([Decision B.43/27](#)).

## **Background**

3. At the thirty-fourth meeting of the Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC) of the Adaptation Fund Board (the Board), the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) presented the Thematic Evaluation of Scalability Concepts and Practice as contained document AFB/EFC.34/5. In response to the recommendation contained in the above-mentioned thematic evaluation, the Secretariat prepared an overall management response, contained AFB/EFC.34/7, which provides detailed observations to each finding of the AF-TERG. Specifically, it identified areas in which the Secretariat disagrees with the evaluation, provides information on actions already being done to address some of the recommendations, and includes a detailed annex with specific responses to each finding. The full text of the decision is as follows:

Having considered the recommendation of the Ethics and Finance Committee, the Board took note of the initial management response prepared by the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat, as contained in document AFB/EFC.34/7 and decided to request the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat:

- (a) To prepare an updated management response and action plan reflecting the views expressed by the Ethics and Finance Committee at its thirty-fourth meeting on the findings and recommendations of the thematic evaluation on scalability concept and practices, for consideration by the Board during the intersessional period between its forty-third and forty-fourth meetings;
- (b) To report to the Ethics and Finance Committee, at its thirty-sixth meeting, on the progress made in implementing the action plan, as part of the report on the activities of the

### **Overall Management Response and Reflections on Recommendations**

4. Overall, the Secretariat welcomes the key findings and recommendations of the Thematic Evaluation of Scalability Concepts and Practice and notes the overall positive findings in the report including, among others, (i) that overall the Fund's strategies and policies include elements of scalability including the Medium term Strategy (MTS) II and its implementation plan which "have elements and proposed activities that can support the outcome of enabling the scaling and replication of fund results directly and indirectly"; (ii) that the Fund has adopted tools and approaches to incentivizes scalability including among other the scaling up framework under implementation between the Fund and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and (iii) that there is potential for the Fund to use its internal resources to further incentivize scaling up including its in-house scaling up grant funding window.
5. The Secretariat also notes that several of the recommendations contained in document AFB/EFC.34/5 align with areas covered under the Fund's mission that aims to "encourage and enable the scaling and replication of results, and strengthen complementarity, coherence and synergies with other adaptation funders and actor" and its current MTSII that includes a cross cutting theme of "Enable the scaling and replication of results". This document does not include the Secretariat's management response to the findings and recommendations under the theme "Evaluating Scalability," as its implementation falls under the responsibility of the AF-TERG.
6. The Secretariat is committed to explore areas for improvement and learning from the report's findings and proposed recommendations.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

7. The updated management response and action plant to the AF-TERG thematic evaluation of scalability concepts and practice at the Adaptation Fund and proposed recommendations as approved by the Board will be implemented by the Secretariat in accordance with the proposed timeline indicated in Annex 1. The Secretariat will report to the Ethics and Finance Committee, at its thirty-sixth meeting, on the progress made in implementing the action plan, as part of the report on the activities of the Secretariat, as per Board decision B.43/27.
8. Furthermore, the Secretariat will continue its collaboration with AF-TERG to integrate lessons learnt described in the evaluation report.

**Annex A: Updated Management Response and Action Plan for the Scalability Thematic Evaluation**

Findings/Recommendations <sup>1</sup>	Secretariat position	Updated Management response and Action to be taken	Responsible party and timeframe
<b>Fund Strategy and Programming on Scaling</b>			
<p><b>Finding a.</b> There are several elements of scalability and replication in the Fund’s strategies and policies, but there is not a unified definition of scaling or scalability across the Fund. Current practice in the adaptation community reflects a variety of ways of defining and assessing scalability that can be considered.</p> <p><b>Recommendation a.</b> Adopt a unified definition of scalability and a means of monitoring and evaluating it. The Evaluation Policy provides a definition and criteria for evaluations of scalability. Fund strategies, other policies, and guidelines should identify a definition for scalability that is evaluable and use it consistently across the strategic results framework and implementation planning documents.</p>	Partially agreed	The Secretariat recognizes that it does not have an in-house definition of scalability nor is there a universal or unified definition of scalability adopted by the Fund. The Fund will take into consideration the definition of scalability proposed under the Fund’s new Evaluation Policy and develop its own definition based on further analytical and strategic work that it is currently undertaking.	Secretariat  New definition to be determined by Dec-2025.
<p><b>Finding b.</b> The MTS II and its implementation plan have elements and proposed activities that can support the outcome of enabling the scaling and replication of fund results directly and indirectly. The Fund itself identifies the need to “incentivize scalability and replicability beyond project</p>	Agreed	The Fund has adopted tools and approaches to incentivize scalability including the scaling up framework under implementation between the Fund and the Green Climate Fund. Also, there is potential for the Fund to use its internal resources	Secretariat

<sup>1</sup> Findings and recommendations which are closely related, are grouped in the single line to improve clarity.

<p>scale-up grants as part of project design and implementation and readiness support” in its strategy (MTS II Implementation Plan para. 10).</p> <p><b>Recommendation b.</b> Leverage the proposed activities in the MTS II implementation plan to support scaling, setting specific targets and indicators for scaling support to be provided under each pillar. This activity can be done in conjunction with the revision of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Framework (EEF) of the Fund.</p>		<p>to further incentivize scaling up including its in-house scaling up grant funding window.</p> <p>The Secretariat developed a revised Strategic Results Framework (SRF), which includes indicators that will support tracking of scaled-up innovations for effective long-term adaptation to climate change, as part of a revised strategic outcome 8.</p> <p>The EEF can include indicators and targets that track progress for the expected result “Evidence for effective action generated and results replicated and scaled up”, under the innovation pillar of the MTS implementation plan. The development of a draft EEF will be undertaken in FY26.</p>	<p>SRF to be considered by the Board at the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting</p> <p>July-October 2025</p>
<p><b>Finding c.</b> The scaling-up framework that is currently under implementation between the Fund and the GCF, is a noteworthy effort to support the streamlining and increase efficiency of scaling-up Fund pilots. Establishing and strengthening collaboration and partnerships with funds and actors that provide scaling support is a way to complement the Fund’s support spatially, thematically and over time.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>The Fund seeks to strengthen and expand the existing joint AF-GCF scaling up framework across its entire portfolio, including innovation and locally-led adaptation projects, to better support countries in their scaling-up efforts and maximize project impact. In addition, the Fund has taken active steps to develop scaling up</p>	<p>Secretariat</p> <p>Throughout FY25 and FY26</p>

		<p>opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In complementarity and coherence with other multilateral climate funds, such as through country platforms;</li> <li>- In partnership with other multilateral donors such as MDBs and started conversation with other intergovernmental organizations; and</li> <li>- In collaboration with other bilateral donors: for example, a national climate fund of a contributor government is currently exploring how to pilot the scale-up of selected AF-funded projects within its priority areas.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation c.</b> Update the guidance to IEs in the funding proposal templates to detail what is expected in an understanding of scalability. While not all projects should be scaled up, it is useful to understand why they might or might not be suitable for scaling, how scaling could happen if the project will pilot concepts and activities suitable for scaling, and how scaling will be evaluated as one of the nine evaluation criteria under the Fund’s Evaluation Policy during and following project implementation.</p>	<p>Partially agreed</p>	<p>While the Secretariat recognizes that scale-up and replicability are positive outcomes and important elements for projects funded by the Adaptation Fund as stated in the Operational Policies and Guideline (OPG) and its Annex 5 “Project/Programme Proposal Template”, it is important to note that in accordance with the Fund’s OPG, a scalability criterion is not separately required in project eligibility or</p>	<p>Secretariat</p> <p>By December 2025</p>

		<p>review criteria or required otherwise. However, the Fund is already assessing project documents against the sustainability criteria that includes a reference to scalability and replication. Considering the importance of this element and building on the evaluation findings and recommendations, the Secretariat will work with implementing entities and operational focal points to better capture the approach to structure project at design stage for scaling up and maximized impacts. This aspect of replicability and scaling up as specific requirements in the OPG could be considered as a recommendation that the Board may want to consider as part of strategic discussion for the Fund.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation d.</b> Revisit the scale up grant funding window and consider focusing Fund support and awareness-raising for scaling under the action pillar window on single-country projects, where projects have scaled up using both the Fund and other funders, such as the GCF.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>It is important to highlight that under the MTSII, the implementation plan envisions an increase in the Scaling-Up Grant amount to \$300,000 per project. Additionally, its scope of activities and eligibility criteria will be expanded to include innovation initiatives</p>	<p>Secretariat</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

		<p>and locally-led adaptation projects, further strengthening support for climate adaptation efforts.</p> <p>Finally, it is important to clarify that these grants could be used to scale up any type of project, regardless of the funding window. The eligibility criteria won't restrict scaling-up grants to a specific funding window, ensuring flexibility in supporting the expansion of a diverse range of projects.</p>	
<p><b>Supporting Scaling in Projects</b></p> <p><b>Project-level findings: Types of Scaling, Understanding of Scaling</b></p>			
<p><b>Finding d.</b> Of the Fund-supported projects sampled by the evaluation, planned activities in support of piloting and scaling included interventions related to knowledge and information dissemination (78%), strengthening individual and institutional capacities (56%), and participatory processes (39%; N = 21). Stages of scaling supported by the Fund-supported projects include a) piloting, proof of concept, and testing (29%); piloting for scaling (demonstrating / enabling conditions for scaling (67%); and scaling (19%; N = 21).</p>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<p><b>Finding e.</b> The operational procedures and guidelines (OPGs) of the Fund do not require that applicants demonstrate scalability in project design but encourage that project funding</p>	Agreed	[See management response under recommendation c]	N/A

<p>proposals consider enabling scaling up with other funds after the project ends. The projects that were reviewed did not usually specify whether the project would scale and, if so, how the projects would support scaling. While some sampled projects described sources of funding for scaling, either within the project itself or through other sources based on pilot activities, 71% of the sampled project did not indicate how scaling would take place (N = 21).</p>			
<p><b>Project-level findings: Financial and Non-Financial Pathways and Instruments for Scaling</b></p>			
<p><b>Finding f.</b> Fund-supported projects that have scaled up have primarily done so by using external sources of financing, such as the Project Preparation Facility of the GCF, but project elements have also been scaled up in subsequent projects supported by the Adaptation Fund and other agencies. Only one Fund-supported project has utilized the Fund’s in-house Scale Up Grant financing window.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>No Action Required</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Finding g.</b> While selected Fund-supported projects have been scaled up using multilateral funds, most frequently the Green Climate Fund, the number of these projects relative to the size of the portfolio is limited.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>No Action Required</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Finding h.</b> Although not currently used under the Fund’s mandate and operations, non-grant instruments can further support the mobilization of adaptation finance at scale. Multilateral climate finance is only one tool for supporting scaling in projects,</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>The Secretariat acknowledges that non-grant instruments can be considered among the options for scaling up projects.</p>	<p>Secretariat  Throughout FY26</p>

<p>and it is insufficient to close the adaptation finance gap. Projects may also overlook non-financial support of scaling. The set of factors supporting projects for scaling interventions included multi- stakeholder interactions and partnerships, participatory processes, policy framework and operating guidelines and knowledge and information dissemination.</p> <p><b>Recommendation e.</b> Encourage project proponents and participants to establish and strengthen collaboration and partnership with funds and actors that provide scaling support, particularly through non-financial instruments and in-country presence. It can be helpful to engage private sector actors - as potential innovators, scaling partners or investors. It is imperative to use the combined strengths of the varied set of actors in society to instigate social impact. Readiness activities may be a source of support for this type of awareness-raising and networking.</p>		<p>Additionally, the Secretariat may encourage project proponents to explore non-financial instruments and pathways as part of the proposal development and during project implementation. This could be of particular relevance for the innovation projects.</p> <p>The new readiness strategy is expected to include enabling instruments or support in-country awareness-raising, bringing together private sector actors, CSOs, local and regional actors as potential innovator, scaling partners or investors.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation f.</b> Utilize the Learning and Sharing pillar of the MTS to increase the understanding of IEs regarding potential scaling pathways and types of scaling, particularly approaches that involve funds from public or blended finance. Continue and strengthen the engagement and learning of the AF Sec, IEs and project partners in learning communities and partnerships on non-financial</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>Under the Knowledge Management (KM) pillar of the MTS II and its implementation plan, the Fund has committed to exploring ways to further disseminate successful approaches to scaling up and replicating its projects. One such approach is through bundled learning and innovation grants. These grants will support the</p>	<p>Secretariat</p> <p>FY 25 and throughout FY26</p>

<p>scaling instruments such as Transformational Change Learning Partnership, Scaling Up Community of Practice (CoP) etc.</p>		<p>scaling of successful adaptation interventions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying transferable adaptation solutions and systems change opportunities.</li> <li>• Promoting continuous improvement through knowledge sharing and learning.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, the Secretariat will continue to engage with learning communities, including the Scaling Up Community of Practice (CoP), by providing a platform to share information on innovative and scalable adaptation solutions.</p>	
<b>Evaluating Scalability</b>			
<p><b>Finding i.</b> In the sampled projects that were assessed, evaluation activities were not sufficient to support scaling decisions on the part of project teams, as final evaluations did not gather information on scaling that could inform decision- making. This is important to note, as the Evaluation Policy criteria for evaluations include a criterion on scalability.</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>AF-TERG</p>
<p><b>Recommendation g.</b> Ensure that the scalability criterion of the Fund’s Evaluation Policy is well understood, review existing Evaluation Policy guidance for consistency, and include guidance on incorporating scalability into project design in the planned Evaluation Policy guidance note on mainstreaming evaluation into project design.</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>AF-TERG</p>