

EX POST EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT

Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Water and Agriculture in Anseba Region, Eritrea

JANUARY 2026





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Cover: Musha Sheba Reservoir. AF-TERG 2025.





ABOUT

The Adaptation Fund (the Fund) was established through decisions by the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. At the Katowice Climate Conference in December 2018, the Parties to the Paris Agreement decided that the Fund shall also serve the Paris Agreement. The Fund supports country-driven projects and programmes, innovation, and global learning for effective adaptation. All of the Fund's activities are designed to build national and local adaptive capacities while reaching and engaging the most vulnerable groups, and to integrate gender consideration to provide equal opportunity to access and benefit from the Fund's resources. They are also aimed at enhancing synergies with other sources of climate finance, while creating models that can be replicated or scaled up. www.adaptation-fund.org

The Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) is an independent evaluation advisory group accountable to the Adaptation Fund Board. It works on improving the quality and effectiveness of the Adaptation Fund through generating evaluations, promoting evaluation utilization, and supporting evaluation capacity building. AF-TERG's work helps the Fund, and its partner organizations, enhance the impact of climate change initiatives on people, livelihoods, and ecosystems. It also guides responsible investment by the Fund, as an essential element for its political and public support. Learn more at www.adaptation-fund.org/about/evaluation/

The Adaptation Fund supported project "Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Water and Agriculture in Anseba Region, Eritrea" was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by the Ministry of Land, Water, and Environment of Eritrea (MoLWE) between 2012 and 2018.

This ex post evaluation was commissioned by the Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG). The management team for this evaluation included Susan Legro (AF-TERG focal point), Vladislav Arnaoudov (Team Task Leader) and Mariana Vidal Merino (Evaluation Officer). The evaluation was conducted by Universal Management Group. The evaluation team consisted of Esther Rouleau (Team Leader), Dr. Eric Abitbol (Senior Evaluator and Quality Assurance Advisor), Beement Alemayehu (Evaluator and Project Manager), Rennie Jordan (Evaluator), and Netsereab Azazi Amir (National Evaluator).

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Musha Sheba dam and gardens
Photo by: AF-TERG



EVALUATION BACKGROUND

This ex post evaluation examines the *Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Water and Agriculture in Anseba Region, Eritrea*. It is the sixth ex post evaluation of Adaptation Fund projects, commissioned by the Board to strengthen the evidence base on how adaptation interventions contribute to building resilience in developing countries, recognizing the complex array of influencing factors.

While these assessments are typically conducted for projects closed between three and five years earlier, this evaluation is unique in taking place seven years after project completion. Commissioned by the

Technical Evaluation Reference Group of the Adaptation Fund (AF-TERG) and conducted by Universalia Management Group between March and November 2025, the evaluation addressed three key questions:

1. Have the project outcomes been sustained since completion?
2. Which factors have contributed towards – or detracted from – sustaining the project’s adaptation outcomes over time?
3. How do the sustained outcomes support local resilience?

Asmara, Eritrea
Photo by: AF-TERG





PROJECT GENERAL INFORMATION

The Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Water and Agriculture in Anseba Region, Eritrea was a US\$ 6.52 million project carried out with Adaptation Fund support in the sub-Zobas of Habero and Hamelmalo, between 2012 and 2018. It was implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the Ministry of Land, Water, and Environment (MoLWE) of Eritrea as the national executing entity and the

Zoba Anseba Administration's Department of Agriculture and Land as the on-ground implementor.

At the national level, the project responded to critical challenges of climate change vulnerability, low adaptive capacity, and high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Within the project region, two sub-Zobas were selected considering criteria related to

Climate Change Adaptation Programme in Water and Agriculture in Anseba Region, Eritrea ([project site](#))

Project ID	ERI/MIE/Rural/2010/2		
Location	Sub-zobas of Hamelmalo and Habero, Anseba Region, Eritrea		
Implementing Entity (IE)	UN Development Programme	Approval date	18 March, 2011
Executing Entity (EE)	The Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MoLWE) Zoba Anseba Administration – Department of Agriculture and Land (on-ground implementer)	Implementation period	November 2012 – September 2018 (revised completion date).
Focal area	Rural Development	Date of mid term review	August 2017
Grant amount	USD 7,803,605	Date of final evaluation	May 2019
Goal	To promote increased food security in Eritrea through ecologically sustainable and climate-resilient improvements in agricultural production.		
Objective	To increase community resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change through an integrated water management and agricultural development approach.		
Components	Component 1: Increased Water Availability for Farmers Component 2: Climate-Resilient Production Component 3: Improved Climate Risk Information and Community Preparedness Component 4: Knowledge Management and Policy Advocacy		



Fruit trees with Villager

Photo by: AF-TERG

vulnerability to food insecurity and drought, with land degradation and low agricultural productivity being other notable challenges in this area.

The project identified four outcomes; each aligned with one of its components:

OUTCOME 1: Increased Water Availability and Erosion Control through Groundwater Recharge, Rainwater Harvesting, Irrigation and Soil and Water Conservation Measures.

OUTCOME 2: Climate-Resilient Agricultural and Livestock Production Enhanced.

OUTCOME 3: Improved Climate Risk Information and Climate Monitoring Used to Raise Awareness of and Enhance Community Preparedness to Climate Hazards.

OUTCOME 4: Knowledge Management System Established, and Knowledge Management Activities Implemented.

At the time of the final evaluation, the project's goal and objective were found to have been successfully achieved, though ratings varied by outcome. Overall project sustainability at that time was rated Moderately Likely.¹

1. Source: Fobissie et al. (2019). Terminal Evaluation Report. Available at: https://ffspubprd.azureedge.net/afdocuments/project/5/5_2019%20Climate%20Change%20AF%20TE%20May%202019.pdf



EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation used a theory-based approach, drawing on the AF-TERG Sustainability Framework for the Ex Post Evaluation of Adaptation Interventions (ExPost-EAI).² As part of the inception process, a training session was held with the AF-TERG team on the ExPost-EAI toolkit. Methodological development included crafting a project Theory of Change and, subsequently, a Theory of Sustainability.

In line with the ExPost-EAI framework, the sustainability of adaptation outcomes was assessed by examining the extent to which the project's benefits for the environment and communities continued beyond the project's completion. This included evaluating how sustainability is being supported by resources, partnerships, capacities, and ownership across various levels (e.g. individual, institutional, community, and ecosystem). Sustained outcomes are rated following a six-point scale

(highly satisfactory to highly unsatisfactory).³

Within this overarching framework, the evaluation pursued a mixed methods approach for data collection, utilizing Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), document review, project site visits, transect walks, and direct observation as key sources of data.

The evaluation launched in March 2025, and field work was carried out in August 2025. Eight out of the 16 project sites were visited, including Hamelmalo (two sites), Habero – Fiza (two sites), Habero – Tsa'eda, Musha Shebah, Mahabesh, and Adi Tekelezan. A ninth site – Habero – Mezret – was represented by beneficiaries who traveled to meet the evaluation team, though the site itself was not visited. In total, 96 stakeholders (24 women and 72 men) were consulted, including 67 project beneficiaries.

Methodological Approaches	Data Collection Methods			Data Analysis
Theory-Based	Mixed Methods Approach	Key Informant Interviews	Field visit to Eritrea	Qualitative Analysis
Sustainability Framework for the Ex Post Evaluation of Adaptation Interviews		Focus Group Discussions		Quantitative Analysis
		Document Review		Descriptive and Contextual Analysis
		Project Site Visits		Explanatory Analysis
		Transect Walks		Gender and Inclusion Analysis
		Direct Observation		

2. Available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/toolkit-for-the-ex-post-evaluation-of-adaptation-interventions-2/>

3. The narrative justification for the rating of sustained outcomes can be found in the Ex Post Evaluation Toolkit, available at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org/document/toolkit-for-the-ex-post-evaluation-of-adaptation-interventions-2/>



KEY FINDINGS

OUTCOME 1: Increased water availability and erosion control through groundwater recharge, rainwater harvesting, irrigation and soil and water conservation measures

Sustained improvements in water access and soil quality are perceived as having significantly supported agricultural and household needs. However, the quality of water infrastructure and persistent maintenance issues, if left unaddressed, pose risks to the long-term sustainability of outcomes.

In five consulted project sites, water management infrastructure constructed through project support (including micro-dams, check dams, diversion structures, reservoirs, and green water harvesting mechanisms) was found to bring continued benefits to community members in terms of improved water access for irrigation, pastoralism, and hygiene. However, in several cases, siltation was identified as a key barrier to sustaining surface water levels seen at project closure, with maintenance issues identified across project sites as key concerns to water availability and thus the sustainability of benefits associated with this outcome.

Clarity in communication around roles and responsibilities, lack of spare parts availability, and financial resources were found to be important contributing factors to maintenance issues. Further, in two project sites infrastructure has been damaged; while there may have been multiple contributing factors, this raises considerations on the quality and suitability of the infrastructure to withstand shocks.

Erratic rainfall continues to contribute to soil erosion in Zoba Anseba; however, terracing activities to reduce erosion and improve soil fertility were observed in project site visits. Stakeholder perceptions on how soil and water conservation activities have contributed to improved soil quality varies, with some reporting positively on this and one site expressing concerns that the water from the dam was saline and not suitable for agricultural production.

SUSTAINABILITY RATING:
Moderately Satisfactory



Hamelmallo Dam and Reservoir
Photo by: AF-TERG

OUTCOME 2: Climate resilient agricultural and livestock production enhanced

Sustained shifts toward diversified, climate-resilient agriculture and livestock production have been enabled, including an expansion of the Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package (MIHAP) Programme, improved agricultural inputs, and changes in livelihoods.

Three sites visited included beneficiaries of the MIHAP Programme,⁴ with one of the sites being a replica. The introduction and expansion of the MIHAP Programme implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, have contributed to sustained agricultural diversification and increased livestock production, with strong evidence of the institutionalization within the Ministry and expansion of this programme.

MIHAP beneficiaries consulted by the evaluation team reported substantial improvements in food and nutrition security, attributed to dietary diversification and the regular consumption of a variety of fruits, vegetables, and meat, as well as eggs and milk, which were not previously part of their diet.

Two types of economic activities were observed among consulted MIHAP beneficiaries: 1) several practiced subsistence farming with occasional selling of surpluses at local markets; and 2) a small number of beneficiaries engaged in small- and medium-scale commercial farming. This is consistent with quantitative data reported by regional au-



Cows in Musha Sheba
Photo by: AF-TERG

thorities from the Zoba Anseba, which indicate that, among the 640 households participating in the MIHAP Programme, 58 have graduated to small- and medium-sized commercial enterprises.

The ex post evaluation found continued benefits related to improved, drought-resistant seeds, including continued distribution to farmers by the Ministry of Agriculture through its extension workers, and seed multiplication and redistribution between farmers.

SUSTAINABILITY RATING:
Satisfactory

4. The Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package (MIHAP) was a concept developed by the Ministry of Agriculture for improving household income and food security. The project supported MIHAP by providing farmers in this program with dairy animals, improved forage, cereal and vegetable seed, fruit and wood tree seedlings, bee hives and chicks. This proved to be a very effective livelihood diversification adaptation measure (Final Evaluation, p. 11).

Outcome 3: Improved climate risk information and climate monitoring used to raise awareness of and enhance community preparedness to climate hazards

Hydromet stations continue to provide climate data, with promising applications in agriculture and research. However, routine maintenance, more structured dissemination, and system integration remain key areas for strengthening.

Observations of three of the six hydromet stations confirmed that all are generating data, but two had partial functionality due to broken parts. Maintenance practices – under the responsibility of the entity in charge of the station (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, Hamelmalo Agricultural College [HAC]) – varied across stations, with some stocking spare parts in advance while others did not.

Hydromet data is not yet integrated into a central automated system, limiting its accessibility and timeliness. Extension agents use data from the hydromet stations, which is physically collected, as well as from regional offices, to advise farmers on planting schedules and other agricultural decisions. However, this process is not systematic and only some farmers have benefited from the guidance.

An unintended value of hydromet data has been its use in academic research and teaching at Hamelmalo Agricultural College (HAC), contributing to knowledge generation and research capacity in Eritrea.

SUSTAINABILITY RATING:
Moderately Satisfactory



Hydromet station in Fiza
Photo by: AF-TERG

Outcome 4: Knowledge management system established, and knowledge management activities implemented

Knowledge management at multiple levels has contributed to behavior change, replication, and farmer engagement, with untapped opportunities for sharing knowledge beyond the Zoba Anseba.

Extension agents have been key in con-

tinuing to share knowledge at local level. Farmers have also reported engaging in peer exchange, and HAC continues to play a key role in producing the knowledge that is then transferred to the farmers. At the Zoba level, there has been one post-project experience-sharing event (MIHAP presentation at Regional Assembly), which has enabled the replication of the MIHAP Programme across other sub-Zobas of the Anseba region.

SUSTAINABILITY RATING:
Moderately Satisfactory



Musha Sheba dam and gardens
Photo by: AF-TERG

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES

The project has contributed to several unintended or broader outcomes, particularly in relation to energy access, food diversity and sedentarization. While many have been positive, some have been more nuanced or challenging to sustain, with maintenance a notable shortcoming.

The project supported the introduction of 748 household solar systems (including panels and batteries) across all beneficiary communities, which had multiple unexpected benefits such as: reducing the need to cut trees for lighting; removal of the need to pay for cellphone charging; and increased family, community, and study time beyond daylight hours. These benefits, however, were not sustained due to the limited battery life of the solar systems. The loss of this benefit has reportedly contributed to some tension within households which were accustomed to having light in the evening.

Fish farming emerged as a positive unexpected outcome of the project. With support from the Ministry of Marine Resources, micro-dams were used as fishponds and were managed by local committees, particularly women, enabling households to consume fish regularly – something many had never experienced before. However, the positive

“With the project, we learned that going after animals is not the better way and now, we live a better lifestyle by having a garden, cows and milk.”

– Community beneficiary, Fiza

unexpected outcome was not sustained because dam siltation made it impossible to continue fish production in the ponds.

The project has also contributed to the government of Eritrea’s broader strategy of promoting sedentarization by making water and agriculture the foundation of community livelihoods. Consulted beneficiaries explained that they previously moved in search of pasture and water, but that the availability of permanent water structures has allowed their families to settle, cultivate land, and build new livelihood strategies in the face of climate change.

CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF PLANNED OUTCOMES

Project outcomes on water access, erosion control, and climate-resilient agriculture remain highly relevant, aligning closely with Eritrea’s national climate adaptation priorities.

Water availability and erosion control remain at the heart of Eritrea’s adaptation

“We are here because of the dam”.

– Community beneficiary from Musha Shebah Village, Hamelmalo

strategies, and climate-resilient agriculture and livestock production are recognized nationally as key to food security and rural development. Further, enhanced climate risk information and monitoring are understood nationally as enabling conditions for adaptation, reinforcing the value of the project's work in this area.

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ADAPTATION OUTCOMES

- **Stakeholder ownership** is widespread and multi-level though stratified, from national government, through Zoba, sub-Zoba, Kebebi and down to village level. However, despite strong ownership overall, there were a few cases in which limited input from community members in the design and setting of water infrastructure inhibited, to some extent, community-level ownership.
- Overall, **technical capacities** at local and sub-Zoba level are reasonably strong in areas to ensure dam repair. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and its extension workers in the Zoba Anseba have strong capacities to sustain soil and water conservation activities and agricultural knowledge transfer to farmers (e.g. to sustain terracing activities, improved seeds uptake, etc.). Concerns remain over capacities to ensure quality, suitability, and sustained functionality of water infrastructure. Capacities for hydromet services and knowledge management are mixed, with some institutional gaps.
- Sustained outcomes have been enabled by a **multi-level national partnership** that

mobilizes the state apparatus through a 'whole-of-society' approach.

- **On Resources/Assets:** The Adaptation Fund supported project is one of a number of projects in Eritrea that have worked to address key topics relating to climate change, food insecurity, livelihoods, and natural resource management. There is some indication of subsequent projects building on or planning to build on components or lessons from the Adaptation Fund supported project, which itself can be seen in the context of a wider compendium of investments.

CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL RESILIENCE

- There are conditions in place to heighten the resilience of the project sub-Zobas and their communities. For example, the project has contributed to increased groundwater levels and reduced soil salinity, which has in turn improved communities' agricultural production, thereby improving their resilience to climate change. However, the functionality of some systems to enable timely and adequate responses to shocks are undoubtedly constrained by significant and persistent maintenance issues.

**"Before the dam,
underground and wells
were dry. Winter has
changed to summer."**

– Community beneficiary, Hamelmalo

- The creation of livelihood opportunities through the MIHAP Programme has offered communities new resources to withstand shock. This has resulted in increased food availability for household consumption/subsistence and for sale at market. In some cases, beneficiaries have also reported reinvesting their income to sustain economic activities (e.g. through the purchase a motor pump, seeds or other agricultural inputs). Additional national resources to sustain and expand the MIHAP Programme have helped the population to better prepare for climate-related events through continued

We are really happy with the construction of the dam. It's still good, but silt is a problem."

*– Community beneficiary,
Mezret Village Village*

livelihood opportunities. However, maintenance issues of water infrastructure limit the degree of community preparedness as there continue to be some water shortages during the dry season, hindering to some extent the productivity of gardening activities.

- Evidence indicates sustained participation and leadership of women in post-project activities, a shift away from burdensome water fetching responsibilities, and improved school attendance among children. Continued engagement of women's organizations as well as women's presence in sub-national government roles reflects a good measure of institutionalization of equitable participation in post-project activities.
- Power dynamics within households and communities have shifted in both positive and challenging ways as a result of the variability of sustained outcomes.
- The project has contributed to sustaining institutional and community capacities to engage in climate risk response, though gaps in information flow and unclear responsibilities continue to limit full adaptive effectiveness.



CONCLUSIONS

Seven years after completion of the climate change Adaptation Fund project in Eritrea, the sustainability of project outcomes is assessed to be **Moderately Satisfactory**. Several outcomes were found to be sustained across project sites visited, including water availability enabled by the micro-dams, check dams, diversion structures, and water harvesting systems developed with project support; climate-resilient agricultural and livestock production, including the expansion of the MIHAP Programme and uptake of drought resistant seeds among farmers. Continued efforts related to combatting soil erosion were also observed.

If left unaddressed, significant and persistent maintenance issues are likely to adversely affect outcome sustainability.

Despite improvements in water availability at project sites visited, maintenance issues are persistent, and dams and reservoirs are not functioning to their full capacity. Routine maintenance was also an issue in two of three hydromet stations observed by the evaluation team. While technical expertise to fulfill maintenance requirements is generally present, lack of financial resources and spare parts availability are a major and ongoing impediment, with clear communication around longer-term roles and responsibilities a noted challenge.

The project has contributed to fundamental and transformative changes in the lives and livelihoods of beneficiaries. The project provided a positive example of the long-term benefits of the MIHAP Pro-

gramme – a model with strong replication potential, that has supported beneficiaries in sustaining and growing their agricultural activities. At the time of the ex post, the government had invested human resources for the institutionalization and replication of this approach to four additional sub-Zobas in the Zoba Anseba.

Knowledge sharing, particularly at local level through extension services and among farmers themselves, has been fundamental in enabling the uptake and replication of good climate-resilient agricultural practices. Ad hoc knowledge sharing events have also proved key to the replication of the MIHAP programme. However, the project also provided insight into the possibility of contributing to tensions in cases where benefits are not sustained, as seen in the case of the solar powered lighting.

Strong ownership of the project by government and community-based stakeholders, combined with a multi-level and whole-of-society partnership, has contributed to the human and technical capacity as well as financial resources that are needed to sustain project outcomes. Development cooperation with key partners such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) and climate finance institutions offer promising opportunities to sustain and even scale up outcomes related to water resources management, climate resilient agricultural production, and early warning. Still, there may be room to further capitalize on community contributions as a fundamental resource to sustain outcomes.



LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This ex post evaluation raises a number of key lessons learned and recommendations for the design and implementation of future climate adaptation projects.

FOR THE IMPLEMENTING ENTITY

LESSON #1: The sustainability of assets such as water management infrastructures and hydromet stations require ongoing maintenance and repair. A clear definition of the specific roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, from communities, to Kebabi, sub-Zoba and Zoba levels, is fundamental. Equally important is communication to all stakeholders regarding expectations of their involvement in this process. Effective maintenance and repair also require clarity over the financial resources and spare parts required as well as a clear plan for mobilizing these resources.

Associated Recommendation #1: Develop and deploy clear operations and maintenance (O&M) plans for all physical assets of projects, already within project design.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT

LESSON #2: Livelihood and income generation opportunities from climate-resilient agricultural and livestock management activities can provide important socio-economic and health-related benefits to

smallholder farmers and their families. In addition to purchasing additional food items and school supplies, and to pay for any health expenses, the income generated through these activities can be used by farmers to reinvest in agricultural inputs and expand farming activities. In some cases, increased income can also be reinvested into farms, allowing small businesses to further grow their productivity while also generating local demand for employment. However, this requires farmers to have strong capacity to market their products while also ensuring food safety. In this process, opportunities also exist for women to become economically empowered by contributing to food processing and marketing.

Associated Recommendation #2: Develop an enabling environment for agricultural market development and provide technical, financial and administrative support and guidance to MIHAP Programme farmers, to favor the successful development of their agro-entrepreneurship. This process should also ensure opportunities for women's economic empowerment.

LESSON #3: Knowledge management is fundamental to the identification and sharing of good practices on water resources management and climate-resilient agriculture. Knowledge management can take different shapes and forms, from South-South cooperation to political dialogues/encounters – which led to the development and replication of the MIHAP, respectively – to awareness raising and training provided by extension agents to farmers. But for knowledge management to have a meaningful effect on climate change

adaptation objectives by informing the widespread uptake of good practices through replication and scaling up, an intentional learning agenda with clear objectives and learning mechanisms is needed.

Associated Recommendation #3: Pursue an intentional knowledge management agenda with a view to accelerating replication and scaling of project and post-project activities and benefits.

FOR THE ADAPTATION FUND

LESSON #4: The project has generated important lessons on how climate change adaptation approaches can benefit other countries. At the same time, there are opportunities for Eritrea or other governments implementing climate change adaptation projects to continue learning from other countries to strengthen their adaptive capacity to climate change. The Adaptation Fund has a role to play in enabling such learning beyond local contexts.

Associated Recommendation #4: Provide support to enable South-South learning opportunities, to bring to light some of the best sustainability practices and outcomes.

FOR THE AF-TERG ON METHODS

LESSON #5: While comprehensive, the ex post evaluation methodology includes complex concepts and overlapping criteria that can hinder a shared understanding among AF-TERG, evaluation teams, and beneficiaries. At the same time, early knowledge-sharing initiatives—such as the webinar launching the Ex-Post Toolkit—have proven valuable in aligning approaches and fostering learning across teams. Together, these experiences highlight the need for both simplification and continuous learning to strengthen consistency and usability of the methodology.

Associated Recommendation #5: Continue to develop, refine, and streamline the ex post evaluation methodology and related guidance while institutionalizing learning across evaluations.



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