



ADAPTATION FUND
Readiness Programme
for Climate Finance

Webinar: Unlocking Adaptation Innovation: Designing Accelerators, Incubators & Competition Based Mechanisms that Deliver Adaptation Solutions

19 March 2026

Summary Report



Introduction

The Adaptation Fund hosted an interactive webinar on Unlocking Adaptation Innovation: Designing Accelerators, Incubators & Competition Based Mechanisms that Deliver Adaptation Solutions. Launched at COP25 in 2019, the Adaptation Fund Climate Innovation Accelerator (AFCIA) supports early-stage climate adaptation innovations through competitive funding, incubation, and technical support to help test and scale locally led solutions for vulnerable communities. AFCIA has been pivotal in fostering innovation in climate adaptation across developing countries, deploying competitive small grants through implementing partners, including UNEP-CTCN, UNDP, and WFP. Building on these rich implementation experiences, this webinar is aimed at strengthening the capacity of National and Regional Implementing Entities (NIEs and RIEs) to develop innovation proposals under the Fund. The webinar highlighted practical lessons and insights for NIEs and RIEs interested in establishing similar mechanisms.

The discussion centered on Adaptation Fund Climate Innovation Accelerator programmes implemented by partners including UNEP through the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), UNDP, and the World Food Programme (WFP). These initiatives were presented as practical laboratories for testing new technologies, institutional arrangements, and financing approaches in diverse country contexts. The webinar aimed to synthesize emerging evidence, identify common challenges, and explore pathways to strengthen sustainability and scale-up of community-led adaptation solutions.

Key Highlights

- The webinar provided a comparative overview of community-led adaptation programmes implemented across different institutional platforms. Despite variation in delivery models, several common technical features were identified. These include a strong emphasis on co-design with local communities, particularly women, youth, and vulnerable groups, to ensure relevance, ownership, and sustainability of adaptation solutions.
- Programmes supported under the AFCIA window have demonstrated that small, flexible grants, when paired with targeted technical assistance, can enable local organizations to test context-specific solutions and generate evidence on what works.
- At the same time, speakers noted that the broader innovation landscape remains fragmented, with multiple accelerators, funding mechanisms, and support programmes operating in parallel, often without sufficient coordination at country level.

Key Discussion Points and Feedback

- A central theme of the webinar was the role of AFCIA in surfacing systemic gaps. Participants emphasized that pilots are particularly effective at identifying regulatory, standards-related, policy, and financing constraints that limit the

adoption and scaling of climate solutions. However, without deliberate pathways to address these constraints, successful pilots risk remaining isolated.

- Monitoring and evaluation emerged as a recurrent challenge. Speakers from UNDP, UNEP-CTCN and WFP noted that baseline data are often weak or inconsistent across pilot contexts, complicating efforts to demonstrate impact and attract follow-on financing. In addition, limited post-project monitoring constrains the ability to capture longer-term adaptation outcomes once implementation teams transition to other assignments.
- The discussion also underscored the importance of aligning monitoring frameworks across programmes. IEs are increasingly seeking to align indicators with emerging global frameworks, including the Global Goal on Adaptation and the revised Adaptation Fund Strategic Results Framework, to improve comparability and portfolio-level learning.
- The webinar highlighted that while community-led adaptation programmes have demonstrated promising results, scaling remains a significant challenge. Participants observed that engagement with private sector actors, multilateral development banks, and local financial institutions is often initiated late in the project cycle, reducing opportunities for sustained financing.
- Several speakers emphasized the need for structured and replicable pathways to connect successful pilots with interested financiers. This includes early engagement of financial institutions during project design, clearer articulation of risk and return profiles, and the creation of communities of practice that bring together innovators, implementing entities, and investors. Experiences from UNDP and WFP programmes illustrated how clustering grantees by country and thematic area can help build local ecosystems and reduce transaction costs for both implementers and financiers.

Way Forward and Next Steps

Looking ahead, the webinar identified several priority actions to strengthen the effectiveness of AFCIA and innovation in adaptation. These include reinforcing national ownership by convening adaptation focal points, technology and innovation actors, and financial institutions around shared priorities. Speakers also emphasized the importance of embedding adaptation innovation within national policy and planning frameworks, rather than treating pilots as stand-alone interventions.

The Secretariat highlighted ongoing efforts by implementing partners to further align monitoring tools, adopt common core indicators, and strengthen baseline data collection. Planned activities include continued global calls for proposals, regional cohort models, and acceleration programmes that combine grant funding with technical assistance, business coaching, and investment brokering.

Q&A Summary

Question	Response
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<p>Are we able to apply for AFCIA Phase II and also submit an innovation proposal directly to the Adaptation Fund?</p>	<p>For AFCIA, financing is provided through AFCIA partner programmes implemented by Multilateral and Regional Implementing Entities. Applicants are therefore encouraged to review the eligibility criteria and requirements outlined in the respective calls for proposals issued by these partners. At the same time, National Implementing Entities may apply directly to the Adaptation Fund under the Small Innovation Window or the Large Innovation Window.</p>
<p>How can NIEs engage to strengthen peer learning and synergies around AFCIA?</p>	<p>National Implementing Entities are free to reach out to AFCIA aggregators and other NIEs to foster peer learning, cross-pollination of ideas, and collaboration. Additional opportunities for engagement are available through the Community of Practice of Direct Access Entities (CPDAE), jointly supported by the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund.</p>
<p>How are AFCIA programmes selected and what options are available to NIEs?</p>	<p>AFCIA programmes are implemented following invitations by the Adaptation Fund Board after a call for Expressions of Interest. Beyond AFCIA, all other Adaptation Fund funding windows remain open to National Implementing Entities on a rolling basis.</p>
<p>How is 'success' measured across AFCIA programmes, and are there common indicators?</p>	<p>This question was raised in recognition of the challenges of measuring adaptation outcomes. While adaptation impacts can be difficult to capture quantitatively, AFCIA programmes are increasingly aligning with shared indicators and results frameworks, including those linked to the Global Goal on Adaptation and the Adaptation Fund's revised results framework, while retaining flexibility for programme-specific design.</p>

<p>How can NIEs engage with the CPDAE in relation to AFCIA and innovation learning?</p>	<p>NIEs are encouraged to engage through the CPDAE as a platform for peer exchange and learning. For CPDAE membership, interested entities should contact the CPDAE Chair, Claudia Godfrey Ruiz (cgodfrey@profonanpe.org.pe).</p>
<p>How can adaptation innovation programmes create structured, replicable pathways to attract MDBs and large financiers for scaling successful pilots?</p>	<p>The need for early engagement of financial institutions, clearer articulation of risk and return profiles, and the development of structured communities of practice to connect pilots with potential financiers.</p>
<p>What mechanisms can ensure continued monitoring and reporting once projects close and implementation teams transition?</p>	<p>The webinar highlighted this as an unresolved challenge. Limited post-project tracking constrains the ability to capture long-term adaptation outcomes and emphasized the importance of designing programmes that remain connected to longer-term monitoring frameworks.</p>
<p>How can baseline data quality and availability be improved across diverse pilot contexts to demonstrate long-term adaptation impacts?</p>	<p>Weak and inconsistent baseline data is a systemic issue. The discussion underscored the need for stronger baseline investments and alignment with global monitoring frameworks to improve credibility and learning.</p>
<p>Which existing structured models could be adapted to systematically link pilots with interested financiers?</p>	<p>The potential adaptation of structured matching mechanisms, such as pre-identified pools of financial partners, to move beyond ad hoc and opportunistic scale-up approaches.</p>

Concluding Remarks

Ms. Saliha Dobardzic, Lead of Programming and Innovation team, underscored that by fostering collaboration among implementing entities, aligning results frameworks, and engaging financial actors earlier in the adaptation cycle, the AFCIA program can move beyond isolated pilots toward sustained, system-level impact. She underscored the Fund's

commitment to supporting these efforts through continued learning, partnership, and strategic alignment.