



ADAPTATION FUND



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**LESSONS LEARNED AND
APPLIED FROM THE PANAMA
COUNTRY EXCHANGE**

Integrated Water Management

PANAMA, 9-13 FEBRUARY 2026



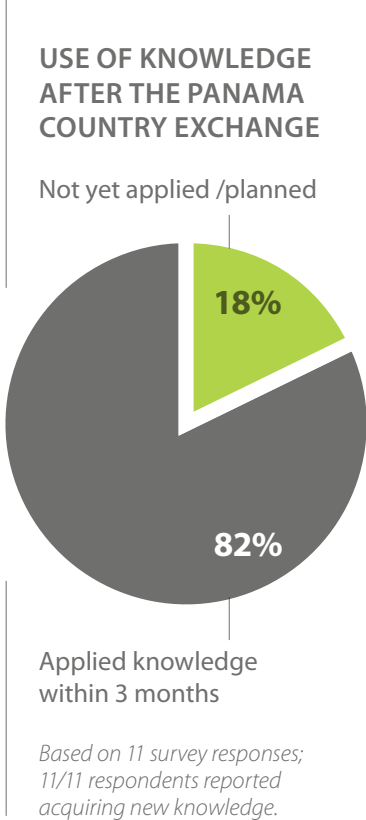
Country Exchange – Panama.
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1. Introduction: Advancing Adaptation through Peer Learning

In February 2026, representatives from 12 National Implementing Entities (NIEs) and 1 Regional Implementing Entity (RIE) came together in Panama for a four-day country exchange on **Integrated Water Management (IWM)** under the Adaptation Fund. Hosted by Fundación Natura, the National Implementing Entity of Panama, the exchange blended field visits, technical discussions, and concluded with a Knowledge Fair. To date, the Adaptation Fund has organized six country exchanges, each concluding with a Knowledge Fair: two in Latin America (Chile and Panama), two in Africa (Tanzania and Senegal), and two in Asia-Pacific (Indonesia and India).

The exchange focused on practical, hands-on learning beyond presentations and theory. Participants visited project sites, met with local communities and practitioners, and saw first-hand how water management, agriculture, climate information, and ecosystem restoration can be brought together to address real challenges. These interactions provided practical insights across the full project cycle, showing how learning can inform project design and strengthen implementation.

A follow-up survey conducted three months after the exchange shows that participants are already applying the learning in practical ways, from strengthening ongoing initiatives to informing future adaptation planning and institutional learning. All survey respondents reported acquiring new knowledge, and most reported applying it in their professional work.



2. Thematic Focus: Integrated Water Management

The exchange centered on Integrated Water Management (IWM) as a cross-sectoral approach to climate adaptation, linking water, agriculture, ecosystems, and livelihoods. Rather than looking at water challenges in isolation, the exchange showed how water governance, ecosystem health, livelihoods, and local institutions all need to work together if adaptation efforts are to last.

Fundación Natura demonstrated how IWM can be operationalized through:

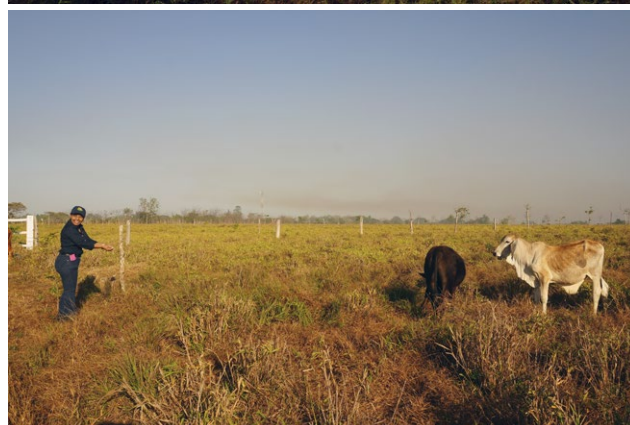
Climate-resilient livelihoods: linking agricultural production, livestock systems, energy solutions, and market access so that adaptation investments also improve household resilience and income opportunities.

Water governance and planning: strengthening basin-level coordination, climate-informed decision-making, and water allocation mechanisms

Ecosystem-based adaptation approaches: using restoration, agrosilvopastoral systems, soil conservation, water harvesting, and nature-based solutions to reduce climate risks and protect natural resources

Climate information systems: translating meteorological data into practical guidance for farmers, local authorities, and project teams.

Together, these areas show how integrated landscape approaches can address multiple climate risks simultaneously, enhancing resilience across sectors.



Country Exchange – Panama.

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3. Key Knowledge Gains Across Participants

The exchange generated strong learning outcomes, with participants reporting enhanced technical and strategic knowledge across several thematic areas:

Climate Data and Decision-Making

Participants emphasized the importance of reliable, accessible climate and weather data, not just for analysis, but for guiding practical decisions. From early warning systems to catchment planning, better data was seen as essential for improving both targeting and impact.

Uganda initiated a stock-take and upgrade of weather stations to strengthen climate-risk analysis and early warning systems, informing catchment planning.

Nepal is advocating for integration of hydrological and climate data into national planning, improving water governance and investment decisions.

Integrated Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EbA) Approaches

A key takeaway was the value of linking water, ecosystems, and livelihoods through practical EbA approaches. When combined, measures such as water harvesting, agroforestry, and restoration can produce stronger and more sustainable results than isolated interventions. These approaches not only reduce climate risks but also improve productivity, protect natural resources, and support livelihoods over the long term.

Armenia is applying rotational grazing, pasture restoration, water infrastructure, and agrosilvopastoral elements.

Costa Rica applied field-based practices such as soil conservation, agroforestry, and water protection measures in technical support to their AF-funded projects.



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Stakeholder Engagement and Governance

Across responses, participants stressed the importance of engaging communities and local authorities from the outset. This was consistently linked to stronger ownership, more sustainable outcomes, the importance of local ownership and multi-stakeholder coordination.

Zimbabwe integrated lessons on stakeholder participation and environmental education, enhancing community-based project delivery.

Côte d'Ivoire established a planning platform to guide next steps for applying lessons from the exchange.

Knowledge Management and Learning Systems

The exchange highlighted the value of structured learning systems, drawing not only on the projects visited in Panama but also on the presentations shared during the Knowledge Fair. Participants stressed that learning should not be limited to one-off events, but should continue through peer exchanges, knowledge platforms, follow-up discussions, and informal networks.

Nepal is exploring the application of participatory learning approaches, such as Knowledge Fairs and multi-stakeholder dialogues.

CAF received follow-up interest from other entities to learn more about floodable parks that the CAF representative presented during the Knowledge Fair.

Market Access and Livelihoods

Participants noted that adaptation measures become more viable when they are connected to income opportunities. Connecting climate-resilient livelihoods to value chains and market opportunities can help communities benefit economically while becoming more resilient.

Uganda is mainstreaming value-chain development and market linkages into livelihood interventions within its catchment restoration Adaptation Fund project.



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4. Success Stories: Translating Knowledge into Impact

UGANDA

Advancing Climate-Informed Catchment Planning and Resilient Livelihoods

Uganda's Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) reported one of the most direct applications of the exchange to an Adaptation Fund project. The Panama experience helped the team strengthen two implementation areas: the quality of climate-risk information used for planning, and the connection between climate-resilient livelihoods and market opportunities.

Lessons Learned	Concrete Actions Underway
Reliable meteorological data is a foundation for early warning, climate-risk screening, and investment prioritization.	A stock-take of weather stations was initiated across catchments, with plans for rehabilitation and selective upgrades to automatic weather stations. This is informing climate-risk assessments and catchment planning in the Mpologoma Adaptation Fund project.
Climate-risk information should be embedded into Integrated Water Resources Management and catchment restoration plans.	Coordination is being strengthened among water, wetlands, agriculture, and local-government actors. Catchment Management Committees are being encouraged to incorporate climate-risk information into restoration plans.
Adaptation livelihoods are more sustainable when production, value addition, and market access are considered together.	Value-chain development, value addition, and market access are being mainstreamed into catchment-based livelihood interventions under the Mpologoma Adaptation Fund project and other Ministry initiatives.
Community-driven planning improves ownership and implementation quality.	Uganda refined its Devolved Climate Financing initiative so districts and communities have a stronger role in identifying, prioritizing, and monitoring adaptation investments.





Climate Finance Readiness Workshop – Costa Rica.

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COSTA RICA

Strengthening Implementation through Practical Adaptation Solutions

Fundecooperación para el Desarrollo Sostenible is using the exchange to strengthen implementation support under the Adapta2 programme. The main value of the exchange was exposure to practical field-level solutions that could be discussed with executing organizations and rural communities.

Lessons Learned	Concrete Actions Underway
Technical assistance to executing entities and rural communities can help move field practices from examples to implementation options.	Soil conservation, water harvesting, agroforestry systems, forage banks, protection of water sources, and riverbank restoration are being socialized in technical exchanges to assess how they can be applied in project implementation.
Agroclimatic Technical Committees show how climate information can reach producers.	Fundecooperación is exploring opportunities to strengthen the generation and sharing of climate information for producers and rural organizations.



ARMENIA

Transforming Pasture and Water Management Systems

Armenia's Environmental Projects Implementation Unit State Agency (EPIU) applied lessons from Panama to ongoing adaptation initiatives outside the Adaptation Fund portfolio, showing the broader relevance of the exchange beyond the AF-funded portfolio. In doing so, it provides a useful example for adaptation practitioners, illustrating how Integrated Water Management approaches can be adapted from tropical settings to mountainous and semi-arid pastoral landscapes.

Lessons Learned	Concrete Actions Underway
Rotational grazing, restoration zones, improved access to remote pastures, and balanced distribution of grazing pressure can reduce degradation.	Community-level pasture management plans in Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor regions now include stronger attention to watering point rehabilitation, water infrastructure, and access to remote grazing areas.
Rainwater collection, water storage, solar-powered pumping, and rehabilitation of watering points work best as a package of measures.	The project is advancing concepts for rainwater and meltwater collection systems and solar-powered pumping solutions to support remote alpine grazing areas.
Agrosilvopastoral practices can support degraded dryland landscapes.	Technical discussions now include fodder trees and shrubs to improve soil protection, reduce erosion, and create more climate-resilient grazing systems.



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NEPAL

Integrating Local Knowledge and Hydrological Data into Adaptation Planning

The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) used the exchange to sharpen its approach to water-centered, locally led adaptation. The NTNC does not yet have an approved Adaptation Fund project, but the survey shows that the exchange is influencing project pipelines and institutional thinking on water governance, hydrological information, and participatory learning.

Lessons Learned	Concrete Actions Underway
Adaptation should be both locally led and water-centered, with watershed-level planning linked to community priorities.	Nepal is placing stronger emphasis on local knowledge, community priorities, and watershed planning in climate resilience initiatives and project pipelines.
Hydrological assessments, environmental flows, and climate-risk information can improve water governance and investment decisions.	Nepal is advocating for stronger use of climate and hydrological information in development planning, natural resource management, and investment decisions.
Knowledge Fairs and peer exchanges can support two-way learning among government, communities, technical experts, and partners.	Nepal is exploring Knowledge Fair methodologies and other interactive learning approaches for adaptation and natural resource management initiatives.



5. The Value of the Exchange

The Panama Country Exchange demonstrated the value of experiential, peer-based learning in advancing climate adaptation. Direct exposure to field-level solutions, combined with open dialogue among practitioners, enabled participants to move beyond concepts and engage with how approaches are implemented in practice. This helped identify not only what works, but under which conditions solutions can be adapted and scaled across different contexts. It also strengthened collaboration among implementing entities, creating networks for continued knowledge sharing and problem-solving beyond the event.

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