

ENGAGING WITH THE ADAPTATION FUND: FIRST STEPS FOR WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS



ADAPTATION FUND

This brief updates the information and approaches included within the 2019 Prospera/WEDO report “*Women’s Organizations and Climate Finance: Engaging in processes and accessing resources.*” That report examined four climate funds’ approaches to gender and potential pathways for women’s organizations to engage with the funds, detailed challenges for women’s organizations in accessing climate finance, and presented an overarching framework for women’s organizations seeking greater engagement. Five key recommendations for women’s organizations emerged from this work:

1. *Learn the processes and procedures of the climate fund(s) of interest.*
2. *Connect with stakeholders and networks directly engaging with the climate funds, particularly those already receiving funding for approved projects.*
3. *Pitch themselves to implementing entities or pursue funding directly.*
4. *Develop a mapping tool of implementing entities.*
5. *Identify and pursue further research in several areas.*

With a focus only on the Adaptation Fund, this document features the latest information and outlines the Adaptation Fund’s specific opportunities for women’s organizations, feminist advocates, and gender-related groups to engage in promoting and implementing gender-responsive climate finance.

ABOUT THE ADAPTATION FUND

The Adaptation Fund was established in 2001 under the Kyoto Protocol to finance concrete adaptation projects to reduce the vulnerability and increase the adaptive capacity of communities in developing countries in accordance with country needs and priorities. At the beginning of 2019, the Adaptation Fund also began formally serving the Paris Agreement, which the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility also serve. The Fund is primarily financed by voluntary contributions from government and private donors.

Developing countries access funding through accredited implementing entities, which can be national, regional, or multilateral, and which propose adaptation projects or programmes. The Adaptation Fund pioneered the “direct access” modality to enhance country ownership and capacity to adapt to climate change and build on local expertise. Through direct access, accredited National Implementing

Entities (NIEs) propose projects for their countries and manage all aspects of these projects, from design through implementation to monitoring and evaluation. The Fund has accredited 50 implementing entities to date, including 32 NIEs.

The Adaptation Fund is managed and governed by a board with support of its secretariat. Developing and developed country representatives serve on the Board, which meets twice a year in person and makes additional intersessional decisions.

Since first disbursing funds in 2010, the Adaptation Fund has committed approximately 720 million USD to 100 adaptation projects and programmes reaching over 8.7 million direct beneficiaries and 19 million indirect beneficiaries.

KEY RESOURCES

www.adaptation-fund.org (website)

[Climate Adaptation Finance: Direct Access \(pdf\)](#)

[Operational Policies and Guidelines for Parties to Access Resources from the Adaptation Fund \(pdf\)](#)

GENDER POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND RESOURCES

Since 2013, when the Fund adopted an [Environmental and Social Policy](#) that included “gender equity and women’s empowerment” as a standalone principle, gender considerations have been integrated into the Fund’s operations, including accreditation, readiness, and project development. The Adaptation Fund’s gender policies and practices have been articulated and strengthened over time and are currently outlined in its [Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan \(2017-2019\)](#).

The Adaptation Fund is currently updating its Gender Policy (only available as a draft). As part of this update, it has [reviewed the progress and operationalization](#) of the previous policy and solicited public comments on the new draft. The Fund also recently produced [an assessment on selected projects and programmes](#) highlighting instructive experiences and outcomes related to comprehensive stakeholder engagement, sex-disaggregated indicators, and gender-responsive monitoring, while noting challenges and opportunities for gender mainstreaming, such as improving capacity on gender among implementing and executing entities.

The policies and procedures of the Adaptation Fund have established a foundation for the engagement of women’s organizations. The Gender Action Plan (2017-2019) included the expectation and promotion of consultation and engagement with affected

women, stakeholders, and partners, and the Fund published a guidance document for implementing entities on achieving and assessing compliance with the Gender Policy. One recommendation in the guide was to proactively reach out to “national women’s machineries...women’s networks and gender and women’s rights advocacy organizations from civil society or academia on the national and local level.”

The Adaptation Fund has endorsed the value of engaging with women’s organizations, feminist advocates, and gender-related groups throughout all stages of the project or programme cycle, even including gender as a cross-cutting theme in its current [Medium Term Strategy \(2018-2022\)](#), and the following engagement pathways represent multiple possibilities for these organizations.

KEY RESOURCES

AF Knowledge and Learning: Gender (webpage), including links to

- [Assessing Progress: Integrating Gender in Adaptation Fund Projects and Programmes](#)
- [Guidance Document for Implementing Entities on Compliance with the Adaptation Fund Gender Policy](#)

[Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan \(2017-2019\) \(pdf\)](#)

[Draft Updated Gender Policy \(pdf\)](#)

PATHWAYS FOR ENGAGEMENT

These three potential pathways are options women's organizations can consider based on their interests and capacity. This list represents different ways of engaging and is not a checklist, nor is the order significant. While learning more about the Adaptation Fund, each organization should consider which pathways are relevant and capable of being pursued, if any.

JOIN THE ADAPTATION FUND NGO NETWORK

Civil society organizations following the work of the Adaptation Fund have formalized their work through the [Adaptation Fund NGO Network](#). This coalition works together to make their voices heard by the Adaptation Fund Board by drafting policy recommendations, providing comments on proposed projects and programmes, and organizing a “Civil Society Dialogue” as part of the official agenda of each Board meeting. They also engage in their respective countries to create dialogue with Adaptation Fund actors; build knowledge about the Adaptation Fund, including disseminating best practices and lessons learned with other CSOs; and conduct assessments of projects and programmes being implemented.

The NGO Network is one of the best opportunities for any women's organization to learn more about how the Adaptation Fund works, both globally and

in one's country, and to leverage connections with other stakeholders. It is [open to membership](#) by any interested civil society and Indigenous Peoples stakeholders. Membership is free, and the NGO Network publishes a regular newsletter in addition to its coordination and knowledge-sharing activities; however, no funding is provided to support the activities of the members, such as attending Board meetings.

KEY RESOURCES

[Adaptation Fund NGO Network \(website\)](#)

[Adaptation Fund NGO Network Flyer \(pdf\)](#)



PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO NATIONAL IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES (NIEs)

Another opportunity for women's organizations is to support NIEs to operate with gender-responsiveness. The *Readiness Programme* provides grants and activities to prepare national and regional implementing entities to build capacity to propose and implement projects, through workshops or other outreach with stakeholders. The Fund offers specific grants to accredited NIEs for strengthening institutional capacity to address gender-related issues in projects and programmes as well as in operations so as to comply with the Fund's Gender Policy.

Women's organizations in countries with NIEs can reach out to the NIEs directly regarding the *technical assistance grants* and other readiness grants, advocating for women's organizations to be leveraged as consultants and trainers. They can also connect with NIEs to provide skilled inputs and feed their experiences into the institutional strengthening process.

KEY RESOURCES

[Readiness Programme for Climate Finance \(webpage\)](#)

[Technical Assistance Grants \(webpage\)](#)

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APPLY FOR AN INNOVATION GRANT

The Adaptation Fund debuted a new funding opportunity at COP25 in Madrid in December 2019. Approximately 45 grants of up to 250,000 USD will be awarded to non-accredited entities working in developing countries that do not yet have NIEs. UNEP and UNDP are overseeing the delivery of these funds and will develop pathways for applying.

Interested organizations should check the [innovation grants webpage](#), which will be updated as new information becomes available. The Fund currently offers innovation grants through a separate window of funding dedicated to NIEs, but this webpage will also share information on the grant opportunities for non-accredited entities.

KEY RESOURCES

[Innovation Grants \(webpage\)](#)

[Press Release: Adaptation Fund Launches New Grant Programme \(webpage\)](#)



ADDITIONAL PATHWAY: BECOME THE NATIONAL IMPLEMENTING ENTITY FOR YOUR COUNTRY

This opportunity is an additional pathway because it is appropriate for a select number of women's organizations.

Of the two major climate finance funds with direct access modalities—the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund—the Adaptation Fund's [accreditation process](#) is shorter and simpler and includes a streamlined option to open up possibilities for smaller NIEs to access the Fund's resources. Once accreditation is complete, NIEs can submit proposals for projects and programmes. These NIEs assume full responsibility over grant management and project management, monitoring, and reporting.

Becoming the NIE is an engagement pathway with several caveats, however, as there are challenges and circumstances that severely limit its applicability to women's organizations. First, only organizations working in countries without NIEs can consider this option, as there is only one NIE per country. (See the list of NIEs [here](#).) Secondly, if a country has achieved or is approaching the current ceiling of funding for each country (\$10 million) through projects led by regional and multilateral implementing entities, becoming the accredited NIE would serve

little purpose as no new projects could be proposed while that ceiling remains. (See the list of funding awarded [here](#).) Furthermore, this opportunity is only appropriate for larger women's organizations with strong track records of implementing policies and procedures for financial management and project implementation, and the human resources to devote to the accreditation process.

An overview of the accreditation process for NIEs is provided through the online course, "[Direct Access: Unlocking Adaptation Funding](#)," which reviews the criteria, procedures, and timelines for applying for accreditation. This e-course is currently available in English and French but will soon be launched in Spanish as well.

KEY RESOURCES

[Guidance on Accreditation Standards \(pdf\)](#)

[Instructions for Preparing a Request for Project or Programme Funding from the Adaptation Fund \(pdf\)](#)

[Direct Access: Unlocking Adaptation Funding \(e-course\)](#)

[Accès direct : Débloquer le financement de l'adaptation \(e-course\)](#)

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

New opportunities may emerge when the Gender Policy is updated. Additionally, one activity from the 2017-2019 Gender Action Plan—establishment of an expert roster—holds particular relevance but is still under development. The Plan recommended the Secretariat establish a roster of gender expert consultants, presenting a key opportunity for technical experts working in gender and women’s rights advocacy organizations to provide technical support mainstreaming gender across the Adaptation Fund, including within approved projects and programmes. The Adaptation Fund is currently collaborating with partner organizations to establish a joint roster of gender experts.



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