



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GCF'S INVESTMENTS IN THE AFRICAN STATES

BACKGROUND

The evaluation¹ asks Relevance and Effectiveness of the GCF's approach and investments in the African States. The evaluation is the third and last assessment to examine GCF's investments in the vulnerable groups; SIDS, LDCs, and African States.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Relevance and targeting of the GCF in Africa

The evaluation found that **GCF's portfolio in Africa is weighted towards mitigation results areas**. African states stakeholders have called for a re-balancing to take place towards adaptation, given the real and imminent climate impacts they are facing. Cumulatively, the GCF's mitigation-focused projects have made up 59% of GCF finance approved for the African states. Also, more than 40% of the approved financing in Africa addresses the "energy generation and access result area". The applicability of results areas for investment and the monitoring requirements of the Fund is very limited.

2. Coherence in climate finance and delivery

Regional or portfolio-level complementarity efforts by GCF among other climate funds are limited. The GCF Secretariat has pursued a high-level approach to cooperation with the GEF at the strategic level, and to a far lesser extent with the AF and CIF. While observed efforts for coherence and complementarity are realized primarily by accredited entities (AEs) of the multiple funds at national and in some cases, regional (or multi-regional) project levels, **the pursuit and operationalization of cooperation and complementarity remain unsystematic, unincited, and thus limited.**

3. Country Ownership of projects and programmes

While stakeholder engagement is well documented in policy and guidance notes, **actual stakeholder engagement in implementation monitoring and learning at the country level is still limited** in GCF's funded activities. Also, civil society remains a vastly under-utilised source of experience, wisdom, and capacity.

4. Institutional capacity for accessing the GCF

The existing menu of support for accessing the GCF is not effective for some African states. Many African

¹ Independent Evaluation Unit (2023). *Independent Evaluation of the Relevance and Effectiveness of the Green Climate Fund's Investments in the African States*. Evaluation report No. 14 (February). Songdo, South Korea: Independent Evaluation Unit, Green Climate Fund.



LDC and FCV states are not accessing all the RPSP support to which they are entitled. Given that the RPSP is often the gateway to engaging with the GCF, challenges in accessing GCF’s climate funding become a major impediment. The PPF also barely serves the needs of SIDS and FCV states. Only a few PPFs have reached approval in African FCV states and SIDS to date.

5. The GCF’s engagement with countries

The GCF is perceived as difficult to access for African states due to its geographical and cultural distance.

The English-only working language of the GCF is a serious and costly impediment confronting non-Anglophone African states. In fact, to date, six countries out of 54 are without any approved GCF Funding Proposals (FPs). In addition, 17 countries are without any approved single-country FPs.

6. Gender equity and social inclusion

Across the portfolio, reporting on gender-related co-benefits is limited and largely confined to commentary on formative processes identified in gender action.

The comprehensive learning and knowledge management mechanism for mainstream gender transformation is lacking. Also, the consideration and active involvement of indigenous peoples are limited. In particular, the stages of project development struggle to speak comprehensively to indigenous people’s policy objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Targeting and positioning of the GCF in Africa

Focus more on **addressing adaptation needs** in the African states **through more accessible financial instruments for LDCs and FCV states.**

1. Consider shifting its African states portfolio towards a greater focus on adaptation based on specific country needs, comprehensive stakeholder mapping and engagement, and an intentional use of result areas for programming. In doing so, GCF should remain responsive to the priorities of African states in all their diversity, particularly regionally and for vulnerable countries and FCV states, while

Table 1. Key challenges facing African States in accessing GCF

CHALLENGES AND FACTORS FOR DELAYS	
Accreditation and RPSP process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy and complicated RPSP/accreditation approval process • Complicated GCF’s policies and standards • Delays in fulfilling accreditation conditions by AEs • Insufficient communication from both the Secretariat and the applicant • Language-related barriers
Project appraisal and approval stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High operations costs in Africa, in particular in SIDS and FCV states • Insufficient AE fees to cover costs • One-size-fit-all project approval process • Lack of consideration for the country context • High turnover of NDA/focal point personnel and GCF dedicated staff members • Language-related barriers
Post-approval and implementation stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currency risks during the project implementation • Inflexibility • Lack of AEs operating in the country in particular, for multi-country projects • Absence of GCF presence in the country

Source: Qualitative interviews with NDAs, DAEs and Secretariat staff

- paying attention to linguistic diversity.
2. Aside from non-grant instruments, focus on a greater number of smaller and more accessible national-level projects based on grants, particularly for LDCs and FCV states in Africa. In doing so, the GCF should decrease the risk profiles of such states and increase the likelihood of co-financing and co-investing there.

Recommendation 2. Institutional coherence and complementarity

Operationalize the framework of complementarity and coherence at the country and project level, with the intention to reach various types of stakeholders. Such an operationalization may benefit from RPSP and PPF support as well as project financing informed by shared learning and knowledge-sharing processes.

1. Further engage with climate funds, development organizations, regional governance and development bodies, and implementing/executing entities to lead processes for a systematic and increased information exchange on project planning, development, and implementation.
2. Based on the lessons from the **Green Great Wall Initiative**, consider incentivizing programmatic approaches which allow for the consideration of complementarities among entities that develop and implement projects for multiple climate institutions.

3. Consider directing some RPSP resources towards NDAs/focal points to foster the capacity for complementarity, coherence, and coordination among the climate funds, their accredited and executing entities, and other partners at the country level.

Recommendation 3. Country ownership and institutional capacity

1. Clarify and reinforce guidance on **the selection of, and responsibilities allocated to the NDAs/focal points of African states** while providing a more tailored approach to RPSP support in Africa and terms of reference and/or guidelines for NDAs that provide clear guidance to them on how to work with the GCF.
 - a. Incentivize and monitor RPSP for African LDCs, SIDS and FCV states. Tailored guidance on the RPSP should aim at encouraging national multi-stakeholder convening, inclusive of state and non-state actors, for planning, networking, collaboration, project design, implementation, and sharing of investment results.
 - b. Consider and remedy high transaction costs for participating in the RPSP through simplifying the processes used to access the RPSP, and shortening their duration with multi-lingual approaches to increase access for non-Anglophone states.

CASE STUDIES SUMMARY

In addition to the country's deep dives into Kenya and South Africa, this evaluation conducted three thematic case studies as follows:

1. **Case study on Complementarity, coherence, coordination and scaling-up.** This study explored efforts in donor coordination through the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGW). IFAD, an AE of both climate funds, developed and is implementing the parallel projects receiving the funds from GCF and GEF while taking the programmatic approach. **This collaboration effort can be replicated** in supporting and accelerating the implementation and scaling up of the GGW while strengthening complementarity, coherence, and coordination among climate funds.
2. **Case study on FCV societies.** The case study found **the GCF is largely thought to be maladapted to operate in African FCV states**. GCF portfolio in these countries is mostly composed of multi-country and multi-regional projects, challenging the country ownership concerning the role of the NDA. **A more tailored approach** is needed to support these countries under difficult conditions.
3. **Case study on countries without GCF a single-country project.** The case study found that multi-country projects that are being implemented by international entities are not necessarily in alignment with national priorities. Other challenges for those countries include **language barriers**. In addition, **the lack of communication between GCF and NDAs** was often observed due to a high staff turnover within GCF or internal changes within NDAs that are not well captured by GCF's secretariat.

- c. **Test and consider support for particular entities to overcome financial barriers to applying for the RPSP.** Such support should, in particular, benefit entities in African LDCs, SIDS, FCV states, and those countries without DAEs and also no single country FPs.
- 2. Clarify roles and expectations on local stakeholder engagement by a national designated authority/ focal points throughout the project cycle.

Recommendation 4. Access and partnership

Make special efforts to remove the barriers in African states – in particular for entities operating in LDCs, SIDS, and FCV states in detail:

1. Revisit accreditation requirements and processes for national DAEs in LDCs, SIDS, and FCV states, to reduce the transaction costs of becoming a partner to the GCF (ex. the simplification of processes and extending the accreditation period)
2. Revisit its policy on fees for AEs operating in Africa, to account for the high operating costs of working in the continent, particularly in LDCs, SIDS, and FCV contexts in Africa.
3. Encourage the pursuit of strategic accreditation among private sector actors in the African states, in particular for local financial intermediaries.
4. Tailor their approach to private sector engagement towards MSME participation.
5. Provide CSOs with opportunities for capacity building and direct access. African civil society can support localized decision-making, particularly on climate change adaptation investments.

Recommendation 5. GCF's engagement with countries

Consider steps to increase efficiency in its engagement with stakeholders of the GCF ecosystem, to enhance planning, implementation, and access to the GCF such as:

1. Increase its **regional presence and engagement in Africa**, through existing institutional structures (e.g., regional dialogues, structured dialogues).
2. Review and change the organization's hitherto

English-only policy for project submissions and accreditation applications, as well as for supporting documents (e.g., policies) to remove a major obstacle to the development of country ownership and project portfolios in African non-Anglophone countries.

3. Increase the Secretariat's human, institutional, linguistic, and financial capacity for absorbing the heightened workload that increased and diversified engagement in Africa will entail.

Recommendation 6. Learning and vulnerable groups

Consider a comprehensive and integrated learning and knowledge management approach in the African states. Also, GCF should become more proactive in applying its indigenous people's policy in the African states. Such efforts could be complemented by the following actions:

1. As GCF advances gender transformation, **use tailored, African-led, independently verifiable assessments**, to supplement the monitoring of data. This should build a systematic and synthetic understanding of its gender impacts in the region.
2. Revise its monitoring and reporting approaches and align them with the indigenous people's policy.

METHODS

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, employing qualitative and quantitative data and methods to develop the report's evidence-based findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Specific data sources and methods included, among others: a literature review, portfolio-level analysis of data, informant interviews, analysis of geographic information systems data, and an online survey of stakeholders. The evaluation includes case studies of GCF's complementarity, coherence, coordination, and scaling-up efforts in Africa, GCF's approach to fragile, conflict, and violence-affected (FCV) societies, and countries without GCF a single-country project. In addition, the evaluation team conducted country-deep dives into Kenya and South Africa. More than 250 stakeholders were interviewed throughout the evaluation process.

CONTACT THE IEU

Independent Evaluation Unit
Green Climate Fund
175, Art center-daero, Yeonsu-gu
Incheon 22004
Republic of Korea

☎ (+82) 032-458-6450
✉ ieu@gcfund.org
🌐 ieu.greenclimate.fund



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Unit

