



ADAPTATION FUND

## Youth Engagement in Climate Change Adaptation: Lessons from the Adaptation Fund Portfolio of Projects and Programmes

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Taro patch Mangaia Ro, Cook Islands  
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# List of Acronyms

<b>AF</b>	Adaptation Fund
<b>AFCIA</b>	Adaptation Fund Climate Innovation Accelerator
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CTCN</b>	Climate Technology Centre and Network
<b>EbA</b>	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
<b>EDA</b>	Enhanced Direct Access
<b>EE</b>	Executing Entity
<b>ESP</b>	Environmental and Social Policy
<b>GCA</b>	Global Commission on Adaptation
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GPAP</b>	Gender Policy and Action Plan
<b>IE</b>	Implementing Entity
<b>MTS</b>	Medium-Term Strategy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>MIE</b>	Multilateral Implementing Entity
<b>NIE</b>	National Implementing Entity
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WFP</b>	United Nations World Food Programme



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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

This study provides an overview of youth participation in adaptation projects and interventions supported by the Adaptation Fund (AF). The study aims to understand the enabling factors, drivers and barriers to youth engagement in the AF portfolio. It is produced within the Learning and Sharing pillar of the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2022.

The study is based on the analysis of AF poli-

cies, the AF portfolio, and select case studies with active youth participation. It proposes several measures to support youth engagement in climate adaptation for consideration by the AF and its stakeholders. The results may interest AF stakeholders, including the Board, secretariat, Implementing Entities (IEs), Executing Entities (EEs), youth organizations and the AF NGO Network, as well as the general public interested in climate adaptation.

## Findings

Since its inception, the AF has supported projects that have largely benefited youth. This support occurs both directly and indirectly as youth make up a significant proportion of the population in project locations. Projects have invested especially in building capacity of youth through training and worked with them to raise awareness in their communities.

**Awareness.** Even though youth had a general knowledge of climate change, they often lacked a nuanced understanding of its impacts on their localities. Through project trainings, youth have come to understand the threats to their communities and ecosystems. This often leads to a sociocultural change in valuing the local environment and bringing long-lasting adaptation benefits.

**Participation.** AF projects have consistently engaged youth representatives to consultations during project development and implementation. This often leads to defining roles and responsibilities through their involvement in project activities. Youth have participated mainly in the implementation phase.

**Role as agents of change.** Overall, projects have not had a strategic approach to involving youth, specifically, as active agents in adapting to climate change (i.e., formulating and deciding on adaptation pathways). However, this is increasingly changing as the most recent approved projects (2019-2022) pay special attention to youth and conceive them as enablers of adaptation.

AF institutional arrangements consider the vulnerability of young people and support them in adapting to climate change:

- The **AF Gender Policy (GP)** requires projects to consider the vulnerabilities of young women, address gender gaps, and promote empowerment of women and girls. The GP's Action Plan indicates its targeted support to women and girls as positive change agents at the forefront of climate change.
- The **AF Environmental and Social Policy (ESP)** establishes that projects shall provide fair and equitable access to benefits in an inclusive manner and avoid any dis-

proportionate adverse impact on vulnerable groups, including children, women, and girls. The ESP also requires that stakeholders and project-affected people are involved as early as possible in planning.

- The AF Core Impact Indicators have promoted consideration of youth in adaptation projects by IEs and EEs, creating a de facto incentive to conceptualize, design, and implement projects that benefit youth.
- The Innovation Facility is piloting indicators, one of which requires to be disaggregated by youth status. Following the MTS for 2018-2022, the Innovation Facility has made it easier to access funding for youth through a global competition for innovative adaptation solutions.
- The AF secretariat has actively consulted with youth representatives about their experiences and expectations with climate change adaptation. It recently invited youth to share their views about the next MTS (2022-2026) and gathered their feedback.

**Drivers and barriers.** Across the AF portfolio, individual-level factors, as well as institutional drivers and barriers, shape engagement of youth in adaptation projects:

- The main factors influencing youth involvement in climate adaptation are youth's experience with extreme weather events, perceived vulnerability, climate change awareness and concern, and leadership and open-mindedness.
- At project level, the main drivers of youth participation are projects' offered trainings,

the potential for tangible results, family involvement and community support, engagement strategy (including dedicated finance and knowledge management with youth), and experience of IEs and EEs of working with youth.

- ▶ Giving youth a safe space to communicate their ideas, especially in community planning sessions, incentivizes their long-term participation.
- ▶ The "localization" of climate risks has been key to motivating youth to act, mainly to put in action practical knowledge.
- ▶ If family members attend project workshops or consultations, they are more likely to encourage youth to further support projects' implementation activities.
- At the Fund level, the main drivers of youth participation are the AF's stakeholder consultation requirements, results-based management, diverse financing modalities, advancement of intersectional analysis, and support for innovative projects.
- The main barriers to youth engagement are related to project needs, design, and implementation processes (e.g., time, technical expertise), or social, economic, and political context at the local and national level (e.g., youth migration, gender inequality, limited participation in decision-making processes).

Overall, youth participation in AF projects improves adaptation interventions' efficacy, acceptability, and appropriateness. Their participation in development of project activities brings out-of-the-box ideas. They



feel comfortable with experimenting with new methods that enhance the suitability of adaptation actions to the local context. This process improves the sustainability of

projects; activities are context-sensitive, and youth are empowered to continue working on adaptation and safeguard the advances.

## Recommendations

### ***Engage youth in multilevel adaptation***

- Encourage youth quotas in community committees.
- Develop and strengthen youth partnerships with governments
  - ▶ internships in national and regional governments involved in adaptation projects,
  - ▶ mentorship by adaptation and other technical experts.
- Coach programmes for youth in leadership skills and project management.
- Support establishment of youth networks.
- Encourage social entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Capture and share lessons on youth participation in adaptation.

### ***Ensure youth participation is meaningful***

- Encourage systematic engagement of youth – from stakeholder mapping to implementation of project activities.
- Enable youth to articulate their own needs and desires in adaptation to climate change impacts.
- Enable youth to discuss their views on their communities with older adults.
- Enable youth to be part of local and national decision-making processes, including those that reflect changing values and direction of social change.
- Move from consulting with youth to working with youth.

# 1. Introduction

## Overview

On March 15, 2019, thousands of young people from more than 100 countries walked out of school to demand their governments take decisive action to respond to climate change (Lee et al., 2020). The youth-led movement “Fridays for Future” had an impact across world regions (Chase-Dunn and Almeida, 2020). Youth emphasized that failure to deal with climate change would affect their generation more than any other, and that they were eager to be part of the solution (Warren, 2019). However, youth across regions face societal constraints

to participate meaningfully in their political systems and contribute to development of their countries. At times, young people do not believe that policymakers adequately represent their interests and needs regarding climate change (O’Brien et al., 2018). In this context, adaptation projects can give youth the opportunities to work towards resiliency of their communities and give them a say in today’s national and local adaptation planning and policymaking, all while enhancing intergenerational equity.

## Challenges and opportunities for youth in adaptation to climate change

In a changing climate, youth are in a dual position. On one side, there are specific vulnerabilities associated with being young. Youth are still developing, physically and psychologically, and will be impacted by climate change over their lifetimes (Lee et al., 2020). This means that youth will be exposed longer and more harshly to climate change impacts than older generations. This prolonged exposure increases risk factors at the individual level (e.g., disease, malnutrition), at the household level (e.g., increased family stress), at the community level (e.g., incapacity of public services to meet water demand), and at the national and regional levels (e.g., forced migration, social violence) (Sanson et al., 2019). In fact, many young people across rural areas of the Global South are already migrating to urban areas, particularly those affected by disasters and those seeking job opportunities lacking in their communities (Baez et al., 2017). Nonetheless, youth in urban areas also face higher levels of unemployment and receive lower wages than adults (ECLAC/ILO, 2012;

Mago et al., 2014), which directly affects their adaptive capacity.

On the other side, young people generate a good amount of the dynamism, creativity and innovation, open-mindedness, and flexibility that propels societies. Youth are highly motivated to take on challenges, and many of them are willing to make the necessary adjustments for a better world. Young people have a good overview of climate change, particularly at the global level, and many are engaged in tackling climate risks. When confronted with potential climate impacts, youth are often willing to make uncomfortable life changes, such as accepting a lower level of well-being than older generations (Chan et al., 2021). Of course, youth have personal aspirations and dreams. For some, a fulfilling life includes leading their communities towards a sustainable path. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report calls attention to youth’s role in supporting adaptation. It indicates

that harnessing youth innovation will support effective climate adaptation (IPCC, 2022). There is no doubt that youth can be agents of change in the path towards resilience.

However, youth across regions face societal constraints to participate meaningfully in their political systems and to help develop their countries. At times, young people do not feel represented as policymakers do not adequately consider their interests and needs (O'Brien et al., 2018). These challenges have not stopped youth; instead, young people have organized themselves effectively to influence the world.

The critical participation of youth in the international climate change debates in the last couple of years illustrates their influence.

The youth-led movement “Fridays for Future,” for example, has had a global impact. It led thousands of young people from more than 100 countries to walk out of school on March 15, 2019, demanding their governments take decisive actions to mitigate climate change (Lee et al., 2020; Chase-Dunn and Almeida, 2020). Youth have emphasized that a failure to deal with climate change will affect them more than it will affect previous generations, and that they are eager to be part of the solution (Warren, 2019). In this context, adaptation projects give youth the opportunities to work towards building community resilience, while developing their skills and improving their livelihoods. It can also give youth a voice in today’s national and local adaptation planning and policymaking, while enhancing intergenerational equity.

## Youth and the Adaptation Fund

The AF Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) states that projects “shall avoid imposing any disproportionate adverse impacts on marginalized and vulnerable groups, including children, women and girls, the elderly, Indigenous Peoples, tribal groups, displaced people, refugees, people living with disabilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS.” Thus, the Fund takes special consideration of youth due to their disempowerment and marginalization in some social contexts. It also encourages youth’s participation in adaptation efforts that benefit their communities, specifically the most vulnerable.

The AF further acknowledges that investing in youth can foster their unique potential to solve societal problems as they become leaders in their communities. Indeed, the AF supports developing countries’ access to climate finance through their own country institutions and systems, namely the Direct Access modality. It also encourages countries to involve all local stakeholders, including youth, for climate

finance. Youth have high regard for the AF’s pioneering work in supporting vulnerable communities in developing countries. In 2019, for example, the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg donated part of her Freedom Prize to the AF in recognition of its work.

As youth have communicated their intentions to lead climate responses by youth and for youth, the AF secretariat actively consults with youth representatives about their experiences and expectations with adaptation. During these consultations, it has become evident that more information about youth participation in adaptation projects is needed. In fact, there is limited information on the scope of youth involvement in climate adaptation across countries and regions (Chan et al., 2021).

Given the need to understand youth engagement in climate adaptation, this study aims to analyse youth’s participation in AF-supported projects. The AF supports locally led adaptation actions to increase the resilience of



the most vulnerable social groups. As such, it has a unique position to capitalize on its knowledge bank about youth's role in adaptation across regions of the developing world. Comparing cases across national and local contexts allows identification of common factors of youth involvement, the role of youth in adaptation interventions, and the benefits of participation. This, in turn, allows the AF, its stakeholders and other climate funds to identify cross-contextual opportunities and challenges and address them in the development of climate finance.

The AF has a leading portfolio of concrete adaptation projects under implementation. As such, it can play a central role in sharing and improving adaptation knowledge. This includes its reasoning, theoretical and technical approaches, and measures in relevant sectors and demographics. The AF Learning and Sharing pillar of the MTS 2018-2022 calls on the Fund to capture practical knowledge from its processes and projects and communicate it to adaptation stakeholders around the world. This would enable the Fund to enhance its own processes and activities, as well as those of its partners.

Considering the challenges and opportunities for youth in climate adaptation mentioned above, the Fund seeks to learn from its own institutional experience and funded projects. This reflective learning approach is supported by the secretariat's flexible leadership and creative capacities.

## How is "youth" defined?

Generally, "youth" is understood as the transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood. This is aligned to finishing high school education and finding one's first job (UNDESA, n.d.). While there is no clear-cut definition, a young person is generally understood to be no longer protected under children's legislation but without having reached "full" adult status.

Undertaking this study showcases the Fund's commitment to supporting youth's role in adaptation; it reflects on what has been done to date and what can be improved to engage youth in adaptation projects meaningfully. The study finds that youth have long been involved in projects' consultations and knowledge management activities and are increasingly seen as enablers of adaptation. They are particularly active in innovative adaptation interventions; youth seek tangible outcomes that can be scaled up.

The AF's Innovation Facility has pioneered a competitive process through an aggregator delivery mechanism (i.e., Adaptation Fund Climate Innovation Accelerator, AFCIA). Non-accredited entities can apply for this funding, opening the door for youth groups to access climate adaptation finance directly. The Innovation Facility also provides direct access to small grants through National Implementing Entities (NIEs) and large grants to all Implementing Entities (IEs). The AF has also established the Enhanced Direct Access (EDA) modality. This devolves control over project approval processes to national institutions, enabling local actors to define and implement appropriate activities via small grants. The AF encourages integrating youth into developing and implementing adaptation projects through all the indicated funding mechanisms.

But "youth" is not a homogeneous social group; within youth, there are differences in age, gender, socioeconomic status, schooling, employment, health, and personal interests and experiences. Nonetheless, youth generally lack assets and access to finance. They are only starting to develop their professional paths. They also rarely participate in public affairs. Thus, youth across the world share

various social, economic, and educational backgrounds, as well as interests, challenges, and needs (Peroviyic, n.d.).

Different age classifications of youth exist:

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has defined youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24, without prejudice to other definitions by member states.
- Other regional organizations define youth depending on their cultural context, such as:
  - ▶ 15–35 (African Youth Charter),
  - ▶ 15–29 (OECD and Eurostat).

In line with its country-driven process, the AF defines youth according to individual country definitions, acknowledging “youth” as a social construct. Country definitions are not uniform across AF projects as they are guided by countries’ individual social views and norms. Hence, AF Results-based Management’s (RBM) indicators are disaggregated by youth rather than age. For example, the new AF innovation indicators (see section 4.2.1) establish that “youth status” is based on each country’s own youth definition. In cases where such definition is unavailable, the UNGA definition of youth will be used.

### **What is ageism?**

*Ageism is the interpersonal or institutional practice to categorize and divide people based on their age, which can restrict opportunities and systematically disadvantage individuals. In practice, ageism refers to assigning stereotypes, holding prejudices, and discriminating against others due to their age. Ageism often intersects with other forms of discrimination such as sexism and racism (WHO, 2021).*

Following the AF approach, this study considers the cultural differences in defining youth, and respects countries’ own definitions; during data collection, the age range reported was between 13 and 40. Nonetheless, we note considerable differences within youth. These include distinct situations of urban and rural youth, young women and men, Indigenous youth, and youth from low-income families compared to those with higher-income families.

There are also major differences between age brackets. Those between 15 to 20 are finishing school and only starting to define their professional aspirations. Those between 20 and 30 have had more opportunities to learn skills and professions and aim to put these into practice. Meanwhile, those between 30 and 40 already have work experience and generally have family obligations such as supporting children and the elderly.

## 2. Objective

This study offers an overview of youth participation in select adaptation projects and interventions supported by the AF. Its overarching objective is to understand the enabling factors, drivers, and barriers to youth engagement in the AF portfolio. The study aims to:

- provide an overview of relevant policies and practices of the AF that support youth participation in adaptation projects,
- document brief case studies that demonstrate the role of youth in climate adaptation projects and their innovation solutions,
- identify opportunities and challenges youth face to engage in climate adaptation in their communities.

Youth engagement experiences will benefit AF stakeholders, including the Board, secretariat, IEs, EEs, youth organizations, and the AF NGO Network. They will also interest practitioners in climate finance; government officials; the private sector; civil society groups, including youth organizations; and the general public seeking to learn more about youth participation in adaptation projects.

The study is produced within the Learning and Sharing pillar of the AF MTS for 2018-2022, which focuses on enhancing the Fund's own processes and activities. It concludes by proposing several measures to support youth engagement in climate adaptation for consideration by the AF and its stakeholders.



# 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Study approach

This study uses three data collection methods to gain information about youth involvement in the AF portfolio: qualitative document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and surveys.

We carried out a qualitative document analysis by examining project and programme documents in the AF portfolio. All regular funded and innovation projects (approved, under implementation, and completed) were screened to identify the extent of youth participation in the project – from design to implementation. To this end, we reviewed all project documents. We also reviewed annual project performance reports, mid-term evaluations, and other documentation for each project or programme when available. The analysis allowed us to assess the extent to which projects consult with youth organizations in their project development phase, the roles assigned to youth in the projects, and the adaptation interventions in which youth participate.

We held semi-structured interviews with representatives of national, regional, and multilateral IEs and EEs to gather in-depth

information about the processes leading to youth engagement in climate adaptation projects. To that end, we considered the factors, drivers, and barriers to their participation. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with the secretariat acquired information regarding Fund strategies and mechanisms in relation to youth.

We sent a survey to all IEs related to each project they had or were implementing. The survey aimed to collect information on how the project benefited youth. It also sought to identify whether youth participated in implementing climate adaptation interventions, including the engagement strategy. Finally, it asked about barriers to involving youth in these activities and the benefits of their participation.

The analysis started by identifying the factors, drivers, and barriers to youth engagement. Data collected from the three sources were integrated to compare and validate the findings. This study identifies factors of youth engagement that actors (i.e., IEs, EEs, project managers) have validated. However, the youth themselves have not validated these factors.

# 4. The Adaptation Fund's role in facilitating youth involvement and empowerment

## 4.1 Policies that delineate youth's involvement in the AF

The Fund has policies and strategies that guide the development and design of projects. These policies and strategies have a significant influence on the projects' operational mechanisms. Hence, they can potentially help

empower youth in adapting to climate change. This study has analysed the AF safeguard policies, the MTS, and the AF Core Impact Indicators guidelines.

### 4.1.1. Safeguard policies

**The ESP**, approved in 2013 and amended in 2016, ensures the Fund does not support projects or programmes that unnecessarily harm the environment, public health, or vulnerable communities. The ESP sets out 15 principles for all projects to follow in their design and implementation. Two of these principles lay a foundation for youth inclusion:

- The principle on Access and Equity indicates that projects or programmes supported by the Fund shall provide fair and equitable access to benefits in an inclusive manner. Likewise, projects should not impede access to basic health services, clean water and sanitation, energy, education, housing, safe and decent working conditions, and land rights. Given that youth will experience climate change impacts throughout their lifetime, their access and equity to project benefits and public services and assets should be considered.
- The principle on Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups declares that AF-supported projects or programmes shall avoid imposing any disproportionate adverse impacts on marginalized and vulnerable groups. This principle

identifies several vulnerable groups, including children, women, and girls; there is no explicit reference to youth. Nevertheless, in situations where youth are particularly vulnerable, projects should assess and consider particular impacts on them as this principle requires that IEs shall "assess and consider particular impacts on marginalized and vulnerable groups" in the screening process.

Under both these principles, project proposal documents have largely considered youth in screening for their environmental and social impacts.

The ESP also defines public disclosure and consultation requirements. IEs need to identify all stakeholders, involving them as early as possible in planning any project or programme supported by the AF. They also need to share the final environmental and social assessment to project-affected people and other stakeholders. As young people are relevant national and local stakeholders and are often part of the project-affected people, they should be included in stakeholder consultations.

**The Gender Policy Action Plan (GPAP)**, approved in 2016 and amended in 2021, recognizes that climate change affects women and girls differently than it does men and boys. These differences stem from gender inequalities, gender discrimination, and social exclusion that systemic power imbalances and structural barriers could perpetuate. The GPAP indicates its targeted support to women and girls as positive change agents at the forefront of climate change adaptation, while addressing their higher vulnerability. In practice, this policy requires special consideration for women and girls during project development and implementation.

The AF secretariat already applies an intersectional lens throughout project proposal reviews. This aims to ensure gender equality, and other converging identities (i.e., youth status, ethnicity) are not negatively affected in adaptation projects. Thus, the AF project review process is considering the differentiated vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of young women. Still, a differentiated approach between young women and older women is not systematically found in the design and implementation of projects.

In project documents, women and youth are often considered together. This can be problematic when it obscures youth's particular vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities. This has led to confounding in the figures estimated in project proposal documents for women and youth. When this happens, it is difficult to estimate the percentage of youth who would benefit from or be involved in the project. An

exception to this pattern occurs if the estimate is reported in the project performance reports (PPRs) when the project is already under implementation. While women and youth share similar vulnerabilities (e.g., limited access to assets), distinct socioeconomic and political processes shape their experiences with climate change. Hence, a more nuanced understanding of youth vulnerability is required to tackle their adaptation needs appropriately.

The GPAP's encouragement of intersectional gender analysis can shed light on the age-related vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of women, attending to young women's needs. Furthermore, the GPAP recognizes that in certain situations, as determined by a gender analysis, men and boys could be more vulnerable to climate change impacts than women and girls and in need of targeted support. Thus, the GPAP supports the equal right of young women and men (as well as adults and children) to access and benefit from AF resources to increase their adaptive capacity and reduce their vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Moreover, in line with the GPAP, stakeholder consultations throughout a project's timeline must be gender responsive. The AF's guidance on compliance with the GP recommends that IEs make a targeted effort to include national women's machineries (i.e., a set of coordinated structures within and outside government that aim to achieve equality in all spheres of life for men and women) in consultations. The guidance document explicitly names "youth and gender equality agencies" as part of these machineries.

### 4.1.2 Medium-term strategy

The AF MTS (2018-2022) aims to further enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce the vulnerability of people, livelihoods, and ecosystems to climate change. The strategy is built on three pillars (action, innovation, and learning and sharing)

and has four crosscutting areas: i) engaging and empowering the most vulnerable communities and social groups; ii) advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; iii) strengthening long-term institutional and technical capacity for effective adaptation;

and iv) building complementarity and coherence with other climate finance delivery channels.

The MTS enhances youth's role in reducing vulnerability and improving the adaptive capacity of their communities in five ways:

- First, the strategy underscores the need to support the most vulnerable groups under the crosscutting theme of "Engaging and empowering the most vulnerable communities and social groups." As youth are one of the most vulnerable groups in some social contexts, then youth should be involved, and their role strengthened in adaptation efforts.
- Second, the strategy pays special consideration to young women with its crosscutting theme, "Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls." As a crosscutting theme, the MTS underscores the need to support young women in the process of adaptation.
- Third, the strategy emphasizes its support to "Strengthening long-term institutional and technical capacity for effective adaptation," its third crosscutting theme. This can only be achieved with the participation of youth who will carry on adaptation actions in the long term. Thus, projects are encouraged to incorporate youth in public consultations during project development.
- Fourth, the strategy emphasizes the AF's support of high-quality adaptation projects showcasing appropriate best practices, which has promoted local participation and consideration of the most vulnerable social groups, largely including youth.
- Fifth, and most importantly, the MTS promotes the developing and scaling-up of innovative adaptation practices, tools, and technologies. Youth are particularly keen on transforming and diffusing technologies learned, thus making strategic partners for innovation. Furthermore, the AF has established the Innovation Facility, which has allowed youth to access climate finance (see section 4.2).

### 4.1.3 Core Impact Indicators

Since the approval of the Core Impact Methodologies in 2014, projects have been required to disaggregate the number of beneficiaries to indicate the percentage of youth. This requirement does not mandate that all projects benefit youth or involve them at all. However, this study finds that AF Core Impact Indicators have promoted the consideration of youth in adaptation projects by IEs and EEs.

As the AF is requesting to measure benefits to youth, it has indirectly informed all AF stakeholders of the importance of youth in adaptation. This has created a de facto incentive

to conceptualize, design, and implement projects that benefit youth. However, reporting of direct and indirect youth beneficiaries has, to a certain extent, lagged behind as several PPRs do not indicate this figure. This may be due to several reasons. First, projects that have not prioritized engaging youth do not measure the percentage of beneficiaries according to age. Second, project entities might not have had the reporting capacities to disaggregate the figures. Youth involvement should be measured and reported annually, ensuring that all project entities are aware of the youth indicator requirement and of its importance.



## 4.2 Institutional arrangements that ensure youth's empowerment

The AF has set formal and informal arrangements to ensure youth participate in climate change adaptation in their communities with

the Innovation Facility, and at the international level through consultations with the secretariat.

### 4.2.1. Innovation Facility

Following creation of the Innovation Facility, the AFCIA was established with US\$10 million to support innovation in developing countries. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), along with the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), manage the AFCIA. It has two funding mechanisms that offer distinct services on a competitive basis:

- UNEP-CTCN provides technical assistance to developing countries through tailor-made solutions implemented by a technology provider.
- UNDP has launched a process in which entities not accredited with the AF (organizations, groups, associations, institutions, businesses, agencies, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], youth, vulnerable groups, and others) can implement their own innovation projects.

Through the AFCIA, youth who desire to implement adaptation projects can access climate finance through a global competition. This pioneering funding window has already expanded the accessibility of youth to engage with climate adaptation and provided them with technical advice in the development of their projects. So far, under the UNDP stream, one of the 22 projects selected in the first round is youth-led in Fiji and seven of the

projects selected have highlighted youth as their beneficiaries. They will be integrating new climate-smart agricultural practices on the ground with local farming knowledge and techniques. At the same time, the projects will foster youth entrepreneurship through establishment of social enterprises.

These grantees and other applicants had been involved with UNDP's Youth Co:Lab, which works to empower and invest in youth. Youth Co: Lab is part of the AFCIA's advisory group, which underscores the importance of working with youth-supporting organizations from the international to the local level. Finally, several other AFCIA-funded projects also aim to support youth by, for example, diversifying their livelihoods and supporting their resilience by restoring community forests.

Furthermore, in April 2022, the AF Board mandated the piloting of innovation indicators for setting targets and monitoring results. One of these indicators ("number of innovators supported") is ideally disaggregated by gender and youth status (i.e., youth or not youth). The youth status follows each country's own youth definition. If no definition is available, then the UNGA definition of youth shall be used (i.e., persons between 15 and 24 years of age). IEs are required to report on this indicator when submitting proposals for the Large Innovation Projects and for the Small Innovation Grants.

## 4.2.2 Consultations with youth

The AF secretariat has actively sought to integrate youth in the last four years. It has worked with youth participants of forums and webinars, consulting about their experiences and expectations with climate change adaptation. Its engagement started with a small number of youth representatives, usually already involved with the climate negotiations at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It has evolved into a bigger group from all developing

regions that work in climate adaptation in different sectors (e.g., NGOs, government, entrepreneurs).

In 2022, the secretariat has taken another step, inviting youth to share in developing the next MTS (2022-2026). At a meeting, youth representatives had the opportunity to voice their perspectives on how to integrate youth and to reflect on the main pillars of the next strategy.

# 5. Youth's roles and approaches in strengthening resilience to climate change

## 5.1 Overview of youth's participation in the AF portfolio

Since establishment of the AF, youth have been direct and indirect beneficiaries of funding that increases communities' adaptive capacity and overall resilience. Primarily, projects indicate that youth are a considerable portion of a community's demographic. Thus, young people benefit from adaptation interventions.

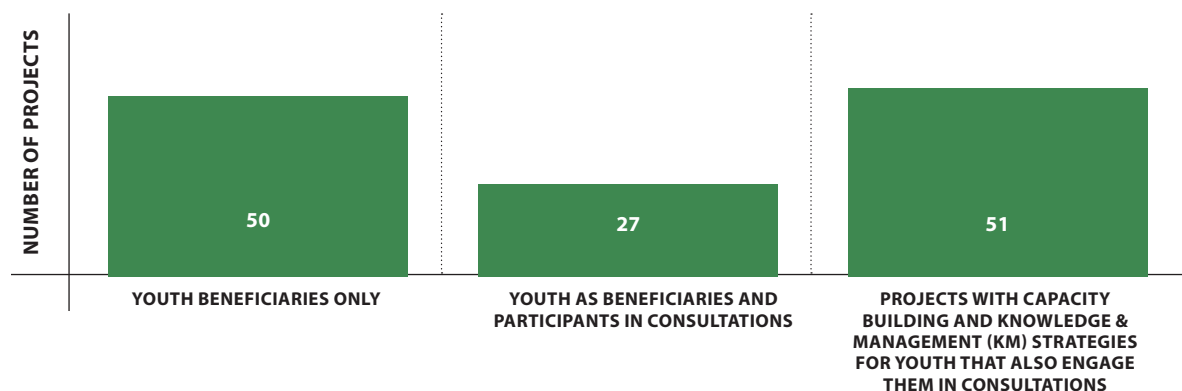
Projects have mainly engaged youth through consultations and knowledge management strategies (see Figure 1). To a large extent, projects in the AF portfolio have invited youth representatives to consultations during project development and implementation. Some projects have organized dedicated

consultation meetings with youth. These talks have allowed project managers to better understand the roles and responsibilities of youth in their communities and thus define how they can be involved in project activities.

Projects have also largely targeted youth in their capacity-building strategies. When projects have invested in adaptation training (e.g., water harvesting, sustainable agricultural methods, hydrological modelling and forecasting, drought management), youth have been a significant portion of trainees. Overall, IEs and EEs consider that training youth in adapting to climate change ensures the sustainability of projects over time.

**Figure 1. Youth participation in AF portfolio**

This chart showcases the way youth have been considered in the AF small-sized and regular-sized projects. This review does not include other funding modalities such as those under Innovation and Readiness.



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS REVIEWED: 125

Many projects have also worked with youth to carry out activities such as reforestation, mangrove rehabilitation, shoreline restoration, and dike building. Projects have also built on youth's ease with information technologies and worked with them to produce and distribute local weather information (i.e., early warning systems, use of drones for risk management) and raise awareness about climate change. Projects have relied on youth's disposition to collaborate in their communities. At the same time, they have developed youth's technical and communicational skills. However, projects have rarely focused on increasing youth's decision-making power by enabling participation in local committees, regional adaptation planning, or land management planning.

The review of the portfolio highlights the need to put further attention to youth's particular vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities. It also underscores the need to develop

strategic approaches to involving youth as active agents in adapting to climate change. Nevertheless, youth's role in the portfolio has consistently increased in the last four years. Recently approved projects emphasized youth as strategic enablers of adaptation. Youth are no longer seen only as recipients of adaptation benefits. Rather, they are viewed as active agents who can lead and implement adaptation interventions.

This change in youth's conceived role in adaptation aligns with youth empowerment in the climate change global arena. Since 2018, prominent youth organizations and leaders have taken the spotlight to call for climate change ambition targets and intergenerational justice. In that way, youth have shown their influential role in climate change adaptation. Organizations at the international, regional, and local levels are building on the enthusiasm and capacities of youth to address climate risks and promote a resilient pathway.

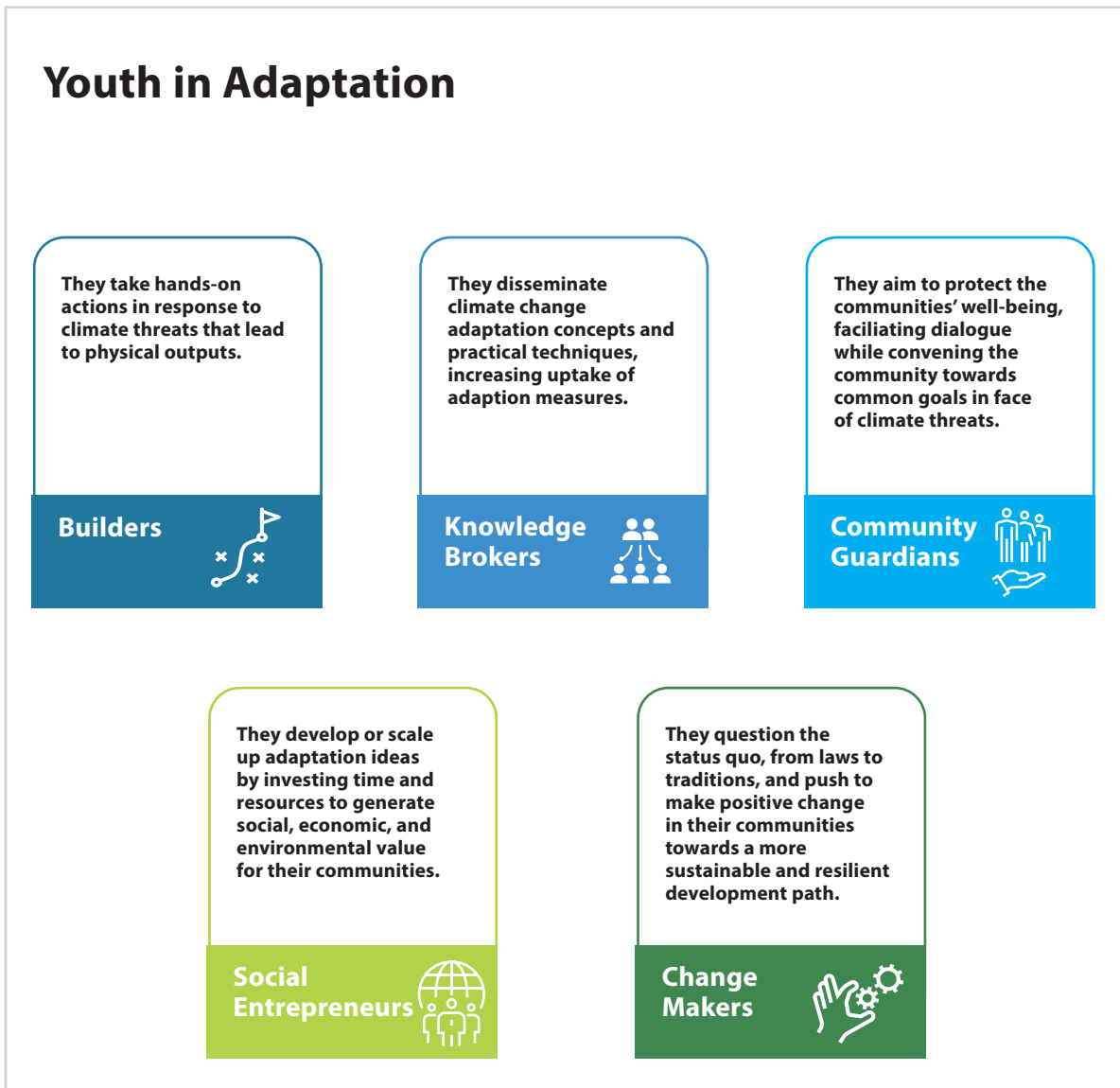
## 5.2 Youth's roles in adapting to climate change across the AF portfolio

The role of youth varies from community to community, across regions, cultures, and local contexts. Youth already take up public responsibilities in some localities and are encouraged to lead their communities. In other cases, youth do not find the support and opportunities that allow them to thrive in their communities. In still other cases, local social norms limit youth contributions. Hence, it is impossible to determine one main role of youth in adapting to climate change. Instead, it is vital to acknowledge the multiple roles of

youth in their localities, and how these roles are increasingly represented in adaptation projects.

This study finds that youth have assumed five main roles in AF portfolio projects: builders, knowledge brokers, community guardians, social entrepreneurs, and change-makers (see Figure 2). Youth can play different roles depending on the factors, drivers, and barriers that influence their engagement (see section 5).

**Figure 2.** Youth's roles in climate adaptation





## 5.2.1 Seychelles – Ecosystem-Based Adaptation to Climate Change in Seychelles – UNDP (US\$6,455,750)



EBA Project- Ecosystem Based Adaptation to Climate Change in Seychelles  
UNDP

## Project background

Climate change projections in Seychelles show that rainfall will become more irregular, while increasing in overall terms. Thus, the country faces both water scarcity and flooding. The project aims to incorporate ecosystem-based adaptation into the country's climate change risk management system. This would safeguard water supplies and buffer expected enhanced erosion and coastal flooding risks arising from higher sea levels and increased storm surges. The project aims to restore ecosystem functionality, enhance ecosystem resilience, and sustain watershed and coastal processes to secure critical water provisioning and flood attenuation ecosystem services from watersheds and coastal areas.

Youth beneficiaries and project benefits to youth:

- Total youth beneficiaries (direct and indirect) at completion: 20,000.
- Direct youth beneficiaries at completion: 1,500.
- A new climate change curriculum guide for teachers has been introduced, tailored to Seychelles.
- Youth, including those with physical disabilities, have participated in tree planting events.
- Communities (including youth), watershed committees, government agencies, and NGOs have been trained in ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA).

## Youth's role in the project: Builders

The project management sought youth to implement the planned adaptation interventions, such as tree planting and ploughing the palms. The project used targeted communication strategies, using youth's vernacular, communicating over social media, and working with schools. The response of youth to help implement the project was immense – both from affected communities and from other regions. Local youth had already experienced extreme events, such as flooding, making their participation “logical.” Youth from afar were particularly interested in responding to climate change threats and building resilience. Additionally, diverse youth-supporting organizations, such as the Seychelles Youth Council and the local Adventist Church, supported implementation of project actions. With the help of the young builders, the project accomplished its goals faster and increased the number of adaptation actions. Likewise, youth excitement with the project and its physical outputs led to greater dynamism of the project in the communities.



5.2.2 Dominican Republic – Enhancing Climate Resilience in San Cristóbal Province, Dominican Republic Integrated Water Resources Management and Rural Development Programme – Dominican Institute of Integral Development of Dominican Republic (IDDI) (US\$9,953,692)



Project staff member supervising tomato and cocoa cultivation in the community of El Fundo, Province of San Cristóbal in Dominican Republic.  
*Photo courtesy of IDDI*

## Project background

The project aims to increase resilience capacity to flooding and drought impacts in 30 rural communities in the Province of San Cristóbal. This province provides approximately 25 per cent of the water supply of Santo Domingo, the capital. On the one hand, the project implements climate-resilient water resource management activities. On the other, it develops capacities in key institutions and communities to manage long-term risks related to climate change. As such, the project supports integrated water management interventions to improve water supply and access, water storage and infrastructure, and sanitation services, and to diversify livelihoods of vulnerable communities.

Youth beneficiaries and project main benefits to youth:

- Total youth beneficiaries (direct and indirect) at mid-term: 8,212.
- Youth have received technical training in environmental issues, community social work methodology, conflict management, risk reduction, and gender equity.
- Youth have developed skills for effective participation, communication, and leadership. They actively participate in communities' committees.

## Youth's role in the project: Knowledge brokers

A vital aspect of the project is disseminating knowledge about climate change and its impacts on the communities to sustain interventions, ensuring the conservation of water resources and reforestation. A communications strategy was designed to understand the importance of peoples' participation as agents of change. It highlights the role of women and turning around rigid gender norms and power imbalances to increase ecosystem and community resilience. In this process, youth undertook a key role as "eco-promoters." They acquired new knowledge on climate change and gender issues, and strategically disseminated it across the communities. In this way, they became knowledge brokers. Youth visited families once per month to provide information and train them on sustainable water practices. Youth who participated in these regular visits were well regarded in their communities. They became a source of practical knowledge that enhanced communities' resilience to climate risks. At the same time, young participants overcame individual and social-level challenges that had previously hindered their participation in community affairs and grew into (young) community leaders.



5.2.3 Chile – Enhancing resilience to climate change of the small agriculture in the Chilean region of O’Higgins – Chilean Agency for International Cooperation (AGCID) (US\$9,960,000)



Small farmers in rural areas of Chile facing increasingly dry conditions are receiving efficient irrigation systems, water tanks, greenhouses and climate smart measures to diversify crops.  
*Photo by Adaptation Fund*



## Project background

In the Chilean region of O'Higgins, the effects of climate change are projected to exacerbate water scarcity and soil degradation and affect ecosystem services and biodiversity, intensifying the vulnerability of small farmers. The region is already enduring more food insecurity. Due to limited water availability and accessibility, traditional crops are no longer financially viable. In response, the project aims to increase the resilience capacity of rural farm communities in the coastal and inner drylands of the O'Higgins region. Farmer communities are encouraged to increase availability of water resources (e.g., rooftop rainwater catchment tanks, drip irrigation systems, crop diversification). They also build capacity by developing an information system for agro-climatic risk management. In addition, the project fosters agricultural education in rural schools with a specialized curriculum on climate-smart agriculture.

Youth beneficiaries and project main benefits to youth:

- Development of eight workshops on climate change and its effect on rain-fed agriculture for teachers and students in rural schools or colleges.
- Training of students on water harvesting and agroclimatology at three different rural schools.
- Nine climate-smart agriculture demonstration units.

## Youth's role in the project: Community guardians

When the AF project started implementation in 2017/18, youth from farmer communities had been migrating to cities in search of better economic and working conditions and quality of life. During implementation, two unforeseen challenges arose: the social unrest in Chile in 2019 and the global pandemic in 2020. Due to the pandemic, youth had to stay home in their communities and unexpectedly started to engage in the AF project. Youth were interested in getting trained and saw an opportunity to collaborate in the agro-climatic risk management system. They regularly measure weather conditions in the different microclimates of the O'Higgins region and send this information to the project management team. The team then distributes the information to communities every month so farmers can make better decisions. As youth became involved with the project, they also learned more about climate risks and the importance of conserving water, and the interlinkages with their communities' livelihoods. The youth experienced a paradigm change and have emerged as community guardians, balancing local values and traditions with the need for adaptive management. With youth participation in early warning systems, the project is successfully achieving its aim to improve the adaptive capacity of farmer communities.



5.2.4 Armenia – Innovation Project – Engaging Future Leaders: Digital Education Module on Adaptation Challenges and Best Practices for Youth – Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU) (US\$231,250)



The Fund's first Direct Access project in Eastern Europe was launched recently in Armenia by the country's Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU).  
*Photo by Ruzanna Martirosyan*



## Project background

The project aims to educate new generations of environmentally cultured young change-makers in developing countries by designing and introducing a replicable digital education solution for high school students in Armenia. The project proposed a gamified solution to identify climate adaptation solutions, while educating youth about their applicability, value added, and impact. Given that Armenian communities rarely participate in climate adaptation debates or planning, this project aims to empower youth specifically in climate adaptation. Thus, this project supports dissemination of adaptation knowledge and supports youth as “change-makers” who produce adaptation ideas for their communities.

Youth beneficiaries and main project benefits to youth:

- 1,484 schools and 1,107,346 active users of educational platform (i.e., students and their parents, school administrators, education executives).
- Game developed has been tested with 100 schools in different regions of the country.
- The game is expected to stimulate youth to apply new climate change knowledge.

## Youth’s role in the project: Change-makers

Youth (beyond high school) have been critical in developing online games for high school students. They have been working with software developers to monitor and assess the preferences and needs of the students to ensure these are included in the climate scenarios of the games. The involvement of youth in the development of these games helps ensure the product is modern, interesting, and appropriate for this demographic. In this way, it allows the project to realize its impact as an effective learning tool for students. This, in turn, will hopefully nurture youth’s ownership of building resilience in their communities. Without youth engagement, this project would face considerable challenges in understanding their generational characteristics and preferences and could not foster a societal change towards resilience. The project aims to facilitate change-makers who will participate in critical roles in government and society over time to work on climate adaptation.



5.2.5 Cook Islands – Akamatutu’anga i te iti tangata no te tuatau manakokoreia e tetau’anga reva – Strengthening the Resilience of our Islands and our Communities to Climate Change – UNDP (US\$5,381,600)



Young farmers in Mangaia, Cook Islands.  
*Photo by Melina Tuiravakai*



## Project background

The project focuses on the remote Northern Group of Pa Enea, which is made up of seven low-lying, sparsely populated coral atolls and sand cays, with little arable land. Some of these islands benefit from large, productive lagoons that support the farming of pearls, the country's leading export. They are also the main base for the fishing industry of the Cook Islands. The islands of Pa Enea have low relief and depend on rainfall for day-to-day water supply. This means they are particularly hard hit by drought and by cyclones and storm surges. The programme aimed to strengthen the ability of Pa Enea, and all Cook Island communities, to make informed decisions and manage anticipated climate change-driven pressures in a proactive, integrated, and strategic manner. The programme focused on capacity building on adaptation and disaster risk reduction, enhancement of knowledge management capacities, and implementation of adaptation measures in Pa Enea. The latter included community-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures in relation to crop production, coastal protection, fisheries, tourism, and health and water resources management.

Youth beneficiaries and main project benefits to youth:

- The project has built youth's capacities through direct trainings and small grants support.
- Within the island-based small grants initiatives, youth leaders were identified and engaged in the implementation of resilient activities to enhance water and food security.

## Youth's role in the project: Entrepreneurs

The programme supported projects with small grants for the implementation of climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures. As part of this, a Young Farmers' programme supported improvement of climate-friendly farming practices, providing opportunities for unemployed youth. For example, five young leaders in Mangaia, Pa Enea were trained in organic farming practices, such as germinating seeds; managing nurseries, pests and fertilizer; and composting. They also enhanced capacity in overall farm management, including quality control, marketing, and packaging. Building on their training, youth have been able to supply the local wholesale markets, as well as restaurants, hotels and retail shops throughout the Cook Islands. This helps alleviate the country's heavy reliance on foreign imports. Through youth's entrepreneurial activities, they are creating environmental and economic value for their communities.



## 5.3 Innovative approaches of youth in adapting to climate change

Youth have developed innovative approaches to adapt to climate change when participating in project interventions, in terms of both processes and products. Youth change and improve how project interventions are designed and implemented, as well as conceptualize and execute out-of-the-box solutions to developing new products. They have the capacities to develop innovative

processes as they integrate knowledge about their localities with new adaptive management ideas. They are usually open-minded about new ideas, feel at ease by trial-and-error methods, and are excited about tangible solutions to climate change impacts. The way youth innovate is by transforming and rooting techniques, using information technologies, and building upon local knowledge.

### 5.3.1 Cuba – Reduction of Vulnerability to Coastal Flooding through Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the South of Artemisa and Mayabeque Provinces – UNDP (US\$6,067,320)



Young farmer planting mangrove. Youth are actively involved in mangrove planting and monitoring marine life on Cuba's coasts to help protect their communities from sea surges and flooding, through project funded by AF.  
*Photo by Cuba Environment Agency*

### **Project background:**

Coastal communities in Cuba are vulnerable to coastal flooding and sea-level rise related to climate change. This project was located in the southern provinces of Artemisa and Mayabeque on the western Gulf of Batabanó. These areas are representative of vulnerable communities settled in mangrove ecosystems, which occupy 5.1 per cent of land area and are found on 70 per cent of the country's coasts. Specifically, the project addressed coastal erosion, flooding, and marine intrusion primarily through the recovery and restoration of mangroves in six communities in the two provinces; the integration of EbA into territorial management plans for coastal areas and agricultural production zones; and the creation of an enabling environment at the regional level for the effective and sustainable implementation of these plans.

### **Youth's role in the project: Innovators**

Youth participated in the design and implementation of this project. Youth were represented in project development and undertook key roles in managing the project. During project implementation, youth from the communities participated in the following:

- Project interventions that included planting mangroves, placing stake lines to reduce sea surges, and cleaning canals. The project faced challenges with international techniques in planting mangroves given the local conditions. A young leader experimented with planting methods, changing the planting niche's design, which led to successful plant propagation. This method was adopted and used in the project at large.
- The development of communication materials to raise awareness of climate risks to mangroves and adaptation mechanisms. As youth were involved in the knowledge

management component, they designed and implemented commercial ads and songs that raised awareness about climate change. These materials were sensitive to the local culture and successfully raised awareness throughout the communities.

### **Further benefits of youth involvement**

- Through project interventions, residents started recognizing the mangrove's value and their direct connection to this ecosystem because it shapes the communities' identity. Youth were critical in achieving a change of mindset that shifted from seeing mangroves as a source of resources to an ecosystem that increases the communities' resilience when healthy.
- The involvement of youth empowered them as leaders in their communities given that young folks are usually not involved in public affairs. Their participation has also allowed them to harness their potential by gaining practical skills, leading them to increase their employability and income.
- The participation of youth in the project, from design to implementation, fostered a professional community on climate adaptation. This community of young professionals has enabled climate adaptation, moving from technical issues to political positions. In this way, it has influenced subsequent projects supported by other climate finance organizations (i.e., Green Climate Fund).



5.3.2 Morocco – Climate changes adaptation project in oasis zones  
– Agence pour le Développement Agricole (ADA) (US\$9,970,000)



The Adaptation Fund project in Morocco is helping vulnerable populations become resilient to drought by reviving ancient underground water canals.  
*Photo by Mark Sugg*

## Project background

The oasis zone of southern Morocco is home to approximately 1.7 million people who predominantly work in agriculture and farming. This region endures drought and water scarcity, and the water and agricultural sectors are highly vulnerable to climate risks. The AF project tackles this situation in the Intermediary Gheris Basin and Maider Basin in several ways. It improves adaptive capacities in the water sector, diversifies income sources, improves living conditions of vulnerable populations, enhances the resilience of oases' ecosystems, and advances stakeholder awareness in management and knowledge sharing. A key aspect of this project is restoring and expanding a traditional system of underground water canals, Khettara, developed by the indigenous Berber people. The canals provide water for both community use and to supply date palms that are threatened by a persistent lack of water.

## Youth's role in the project: Environmental stewards

Beginning with project design, it was considered important to work with youth (and women) and engage them in the community adaptation efforts, given the need to anchor youth in their communities (due to out-migration patterns) and build on youth's innovative ideas to respond to climate change threats. For the latter, the project had a call

for projects that would promote economic diversification, funding 23 projects, most of them led by youth and women. These projects focus on agriculture, ecotourism, and handcrafts, improving youth employability and micro-entrepreneurship. The programme has made progress in promoting and supporting young rural entrepreneurs, providing facilitation and informational, organizational, technical, and financial support to these rural youth to develop innovative projects. The projects are innovative as they build upon local knowledge and use available technologies. For example, one project responded to the use of water in washing clothes, which was polluting water for irrigation. A youth entrepreneur conceived a system where women could use a high-quality and water efficient machine to wash their clothes. The used water is treated for irrigation, which avoids water pollution. At the same time, the women can access daycare for their children in the same location as the machine, making the system attractive to local women.

## Further benefits of youth involvement

- During implementation, youth got actively involved with the Khettaras rehabilitation. Youth have embraced and taken ownership of the ancestral Khettaras, which gives sustainability to the project and supports the canal system expansion over time.
- Youth also received training in conservation techniques, which improves families' livelihoods due to the development of more resilient small-scale agriculture.





Island Agriculture Manager in Cook Islands works with school children to manage hydroponics. Sales from what youth manage are used to purchase school supplies, while sales from what agriculture manages are used to maintain hydroponics and buy seeds. It is 2nd highest income earner for Island government and has a positive impact for an isolated atoll to foster regular access to vegetables.

*Photo by SRIC-CC*



# 6. Lessons learned on youth engagement

Considering the AF policy framework and projects' experience in designing and implementing adaptation interventions across world regions, this study finds factors that influence youth interest and participation in climate adaptation, and contextual drivers and barriers that facilitate or hinder youth involvement in projects. In each country and

locality, a set of factors, drivers, and barriers are at play. It is their dynamic that ultimately explains the extent and means of youth engagement. Also, these factors, drivers, and barriers are not set in stone; thus, it is possible to capitalize on the drivers and address the barriers identified to further involve youth in climate adaptation projects.

## 6.1 Main factors of youth engagement

Analysing the main factors that influence youth participation in climate change adaptation allows for understanding why some youth and not others in the same community participate in projects. Of course, "youth" is not a homogeneous social group, engendering differences in age, gender, socioeconomic status, schooling, employment, health, and personal interests and experiences. Together, these factors delineate each youth's involvement path with climate change adaptation. Fund projects have not systematically collected information on the characteristics of youth who participate in the projects. However, this study has identified situational and personal factors across cultural settings and regions:

**Experience with extreme events.** Some young people have already experienced extreme events (e.g., rainfall or droughts) and have seen their consequences first-hand. This subgroup is highly motivated to decrease the vulnerability of their communities and increase their resilience. Youth who have experienced extreme events are often already involved in local organizations supporting disaster risk management and social development interventions.

**Perceived vulnerability.** A subgroup of youth perceive they are exposed and sensitive to extreme climatic events and general environmental challenges given the location of their households within their communities. For example, families living by the riverbanks or near the sea might be more vulnerable. This subgroup includes youth who may not have experienced extreme events but believe they will.

**Climate change awareness and concern.** Other young people may not have experienced extreme events or environmental challenges personally. They may also lack a high perception of personal vulnerability. Yet they are aware of climate change and concerned about the impacts on their communities, countries, and globally. Some of these youth people are already involved in environmental organizations through their schools, community organizations, religious organizations, and national youth networks. In this case, youth are eager to participate in climate change adaptation projects.

**Leadership and open-mindedness:** Youth actively participating in adaptation projects show open-mindedness for several main reasons. They are receptive to new ideas and

knowledge and ready to learn, experiment, and develop new tools and approaches – when given the time, space, and support to do so. When working in adaptation projects,

youth also show leadership qualities, such as motivation, collaboration, problem-solving, passion, and communication.

## 6.2 Drivers and barriers to youth engagement

Drivers of and barriers to youth engagement refer to AF policies and mechanisms, as well as societal and project aspects, that intentionally promote youth involvement or obstruct their participation. Analysing these drivers and barriers helps identify strategies to reach out and bring along youth in adaptation projects and mitigate potential problems to their full participation.

they can learn new skills and observe their direct positive impact. This increases their perception of response-efficacy to climate change. Projects on pilot sites (e.g., climate-smart agricultural practices in school gardens) notably reported active engagement of youth. The AF is engaging and empowering youth in vulnerable communities by supporting concrete projects.

### Drivers

#### Project level

##### ***Adaptation training***

Training has proven to be a powerful medium to promote youth participation in projects as it fosters new skills among youth and enhances overall community resilience. Training has usually focused on providing an overview of climate change adaptation and developing technical and soft skills that would lead to tangible adaptation solutions. The integration of these two dimensions has meant that training has communicated the extent of climate change risks in particular communities. The “localization” of climate risks has been key to motivating youth to act, mainly to put in action the practical knowledge they have acquired. Further, projects that have given certifications to those who attend training have successfully attracted youth who seek to gain employable skills.

##### ***Tangible results***

Youth are particularly motivated to join adaptation projects that implement practical solutions and physical outputs as

##### ***Family involvement and community support***

A key role in youth participation is the support of their families and communities. Both family involvement and community support tacitly communicate to youth that climate change is happening and is important to address. Family members who attend project workshops or consultations are more likely to encourage youth to further support implementation activities and join the training offered by projects. In community workshops, when youth are given a safe space to communicate their ideas, especially in community planning sessions, they thrive and eventually take a lead on adapting to climate change.

##### ***Engagement strategy***

One of the most critical drivers in involving youth in adaptation projects is developing a youth engagement strategy. Successful strategies have identified youth needs, prepared communication material that connects with youth, used social media and online platforms to reach out to youth, worked with youth social networks to organize their sustained participation during project implementation, and organized participatory workshops for youth to empower youth while

addressing adaptation planning.

### ***Youth-oriented project partners***

Local youth networks are a key institutional partner for projects as their institutional arrangements can enhance youth participation. The involvement of educational facilities (schools and universities) are also important actors in communities that embrace adaptation projects as they support youth's training and skill development.

### ***Youth-dedicated finance***

Projects that include dedicated finance for youth, such as through funding for school-related activities or grants for youth-led activities, achieve a higher level of youth participation than those that do not separate dedicated funding. Projects not only have a higher number of youth participants but overall achieve further community benefits (see section 5.3).

### ***Knowledge management with youth***

Collaborating with youth in knowledge management products facilitates youth involvement. Youth are keen on disseminating new knowledge, given that sociability is generally highest in young people. This collaboration is also a way of empowering youth. It allows them to design and develop materials for their communities, and communities admire their work. Youth put their tech-savvy and arts-oriented approaches into action, achieving significant results and increasing the projects' objectives.

### ***Implementing and Executing Entities experience with youth***

Some IEs have built on their expertise with youth to engage them meaningfully in projects. These agencies are used to working with local youth organizations, involving them in consultations during project development and implementing adaptation interventions that consider their needs and aspirations. Through

this project management approach, youth are meaningfully integrated into adaptation projects and participate extensively.

## **Fund level**

### ***Consultations during project development***

During project development, IEs are to share and consult with local stakeholders and relevant communities. The project proposal templates include specific criteria to ensure that IEs consult with the most vulnerable communities in project development. The importance given to consultations with the most vulnerable during the evaluation of project proposals has led effectively to in-depth consultations, which have largely included youth representatives.

### ***Monitoring & reporting requirements***

The AF RBM has been central to include youth in the adaptation projects. The RBM includes a Strategic Results Framework that describes, at the Fund level, goals, expected impact, outcomes, and outputs, as well as indicators and targets. The requirement of projects to provide the number of youth beneficiaries has incentivized projects to consider the role of youth and involve them in projects.

### ***Finance modalities***

The diverse finance modalities of the AF, including Direct Access, Enhanced Direct Access, Small Grants for Innovation, and the AFCIA, have allowed projects to build effectively on youth skills and capacities and consider them during project design and implementation. Local actors recognizing the role of youth in adaptation have capitalized on their interests and embraced their leadership.

### ***Intersectional analysis***

The AF's GPAP encourages the use of intersectional gender analysis in project design and applies an intersectional lens throughout project proposal reviews. This

has been an effective way to highlight age-related vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of young women in projects. Projects using intersectional analysis have involved young women adaptation effectively.

### ***Support for innovation***

The AF's support for innovative solutions has made it easier for youth to participate as they are particularly interested in practical solutions using new and available technologies. Innovation project grants can be accessed by youth organizations through the AFCIA. Thus, this financial architecture has empowered youth to access climate finance and to design their own adaptation projects.

## **Barriers**

Generally, youth have shown a high level of interest in participating in adaptation projects. However, several barriers prevent them from meaningfully participating or joining at all. First, some barriers are related to project needs, design, and implementation. Adaptation projects need youth who are available to participate frequently and often during working hours, and this is a problem with youth who are studying or working. Ideal projects have people who are interested in environmental issues but also have knowledge about climate change or the technical expertise to implement adaptation measures. Given this situation, projects regularly invest in training youth and developing their skills. However, projects often prefer to build on those who already have

the skills required; these tend to be the more seasoned professionals and practitioners. At the same time, several implementing agencies and project management teams do not have expertise in youth that would allow them to understand their needs and vulnerabilities and then tailor a strategy to work with them.

Second, youth are immersed in a social, economic, and political context that influences their interests, empowerment, and leadership in the process of adaptation. Many young people across rural areas of the Global South migrate to urban areas for job opportunities lacking in their home communities. Many of these youth people are reportedly uninterested in continuing with traditional, often agricultural, work. They hope instead to get trained in other economic sectors. Youth also struggle to participate in their communities' public life, especially in localities with traditional social norms that revere older generations. Youth are not participating in their communities' decision-making process, which involves deciding the development paths of their localities. They have limited access to land and financial resources, which further limits their opportunities and the possibility of integrating adaptation actions supported by the projects. Without the chance to make their own decisions and be supported by their communities, youth play a diminished role in adapting to climate change. Further, young women endure more difficulties in many circumstances; gender norms prevent them from leading adaptation interventions even when young men are supported.

**Table 1.** Barriers to youth engagement

Barriers related to project needs, design, and implementation	Barriers related to social, economic, and political context
Lack of time or availability of youth during project activities due to studies or work	Migration
Lack of personal interest of youth in environmental issues	Limited engagement in community affairs
Lack of climate change knowledge of youth, particularly about vulnerability and adaptation	Limited participation in decision-making processes at local, regional, and national levels
Limited technical expertise	Complex disempowerment (e.g., gender inequality affecting young women)
Limited training in new technologies/software	Cultural norms supporting age-based hierarchies and fostering intergenerational deference
Lack of expertise on youth and climate change within project management	Lack of access to land
	Limited access to the Internet and/or devices
	Limited financial resources and access to capital and credit

### 6.3. Benefits of youth’s participation

AF projects have benefited considerably from involving youth (see Table 2) on several levels. At the individual level, the participation of youth in adaptation projects enhances personal development and working skills, improves employment opportunities and income, and empowers them within their communities. Thus, adaptation projects give youth the incentives and opportunities to stay and work towards the resiliency of their communities while improving their livelihoods.

At the community level, involving youth improves climate resiliency. For example, as youth spread their newly acquired knowledge and skills, their training enhances economic diversification. Their participation promotes stronger social capital to respond to extreme events, their inputs increase the number of project beneficiaries, and they embrace a new mindset that values the environment in the process of adaptation. Interestingly,

some projects observe that youth were initially aware of climate change but lacked a nuanced understanding of its implications for their localities. Through training, they have come to understand the particular threats to their communities and ecosystems. This has fostered a sociocultural change in valuing the local environment and brought adaptation benefits that are expected to be long lasting.

At the project level, youth involvement – from consultations to implementation – increases the acceptability, suitability, and efficacy of interventions. Youth promote culturally sensitive actions and innovative solutions. They also take ownership of the project, which can lead to replicating and scaling up the project in their regions. This process improves the sustainability of the projects; activities are context-sensitive, and youth are empowered to continue working on adaptation and safeguard the advances.

**Table 2.** Benefits of youth engagement

Benefits to the: INDIVIDUAL	Benefits to the: COMMUNITY	Benefits to the: PROJECT
Individual development (e.g., self-esteem, confidence, leadership)	Transfer of knowledge, skills, and practices to communities	Enthusiasm about project activities, enabling a positive project environment
Technical, communication, management and research skills developed	Economic diversification	Innovative ideas that improve adaptation interventions
Climate change adaptation knowledge	Stronger community bonds and intergenerational partnerships	Enhanced culturally sensitive project actions
Enhanced employment opportunities	Increased number of project beneficiaries	Improved project effectiveness
Increased income	Increased number of youth interested in science and environmental careers	Increased local project ownership
Empowerment in the local and national context	Cultural change valuing environmental assets	Enabled project replicability by local communities
	Decreased migration	Sustainability of project interventions





Innovative farm equipment provided by AF project helps to perform minor tillage, improves soil fertility, retains water and prevents erosion in the face of drought. The project partners with the Agricultural Research Institute (INIA) demonstration center and is piloting other innovations such as cisterns and fogcatchers, which utilize large screens to convert night mist to water.  
*Photo by AF*

# 7. Moving forward

## 7.1 Engaging youth in multilevel adaptation: from local actions to national policies and beyond

The study findings have shown the extensive participation of youth at the local level. This is especially the case in implementing project activities and promoting awareness of climate change. However, youth have much more to offer their communities and countries with respect to adaptation. Their participation brings benefits to their own development and increases ecosystem and communities' resilience. Thus, youth should be involved thoroughly in adaptation from the local to the national level. Youth are interested in shaping their futures; they should be empowered to participate in adaptation planning. This also generates the benefits of "investing early" and building long-term capacity for a long-term environmental change and potentially long-term societal challenge.

*How to promote youth engagement in adaptation planning?*

- Encourage youth quotas in communities' committees.

- Develop and strengthen youth partnerships with governments
  - internships in national and regional governments involved in adaptation projects
  - mentorship by adaptation and other technical experts.
- Coach programmes for youth in leadership skills and project management.
- Support establishment of youth networks.
- Encourage social entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Capture and share lessons on youth participation in adaptation.

## 7.2 Ensuring youth participation is meaningful: from climate change education to resilience-building

This study has found that youth are eager to participate in climate change adaptation, particularly when projects produce tangible results, embrace innovation, and support their empowerment. Some adaptation projects limit youth's participation to consultations during development or to educational modules about climate change. Youth greatly appreciate the space given to

participate in these project activities and directly benefit from them. However, the limited participation can frustrate them and misses an immense opportunity to ensure intergenerational cooperation in the path to adaptive communities and ecosystems. Thus, youth's participation should be encouraged in a more systematic way right from stakeholder mapping exercises to implementation of

project activities. Adaptation projects need to involve youth in a meaningful way that allows them to contribute their ideas, skills, and actions.

*What entails meaningful participation of youth in climate adaptation projects?*

- Youth articulate their needs and desires in adaptation to climate change impacts.
- Youth engage with older adults in discussing their views on their communities.
- Youth are part of local and national decision-making processes, including those that reflect changing values and direction of social change.
- Projects move from consulting with to working with youth.



## 8. Conclusion

This study has unveiled how youth have been involved in AF-supported projects since 2010. It has also shone a light on how the projects have created opportunities for youth to harness their potential engagement in adaptation in a meaningful way. The AF supports vulnerable communities in developing countries to adapt to climate change, particularly considering the most vulnerable groups. As a result, projects have largely benefited youth. They have received extensive training and have applied new adaptation techniques because they assisted in implementing projects.

This study, however, finds the potential of youth engagement in adaptation projects is not fully realized. Therefore, it provides some valuable insights to guide future design of adaptation interventions more broadly.

Adaptation projects need a more strategic approach to addressing youth needs and interests. When youth have been allowed to collaborate in projects that explicitly solicit their perspectives and inputs, they have thrived in their communities, increasing the project's outputs and adaptation outcomes. Youth have shown they can support adaptation

as builders, community brokers, community guardians, entrepreneurs, change-makers, innovators, and environmental stewards while thinking innovatively and proposing locally appropriate adaptation solutions. Thus, projects should empower young people to become leading actors in adapting their communities to climate change.

Further, this study has identified the factors and drivers that promote youth involvement in projects and the barriers to their participation. Institutional arrangements, such as those at the AF (e.g., policies, strategies) and of the IEs and EEs, can have a decisive role in fostering youth engagement. There is an immense opportunity to start promoting youth's involvement from project design by partnering with local youth networks. Projects should recognize youth as adaptation leaders and partners that are needed for successful implementation. Hence, youth's participation needs to be meaningful in order to integrate them into the design, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation projects. Meaningful participation empowers youth, enhances adaptation outcomes, and sustains interventions over time.

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