

Climate Change and Social Development: Synergies Between the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and Multilateral Climate Funds¹

Authors²

Gaia Hasse
Marina Guião de Souza Lima
Lorenzo Silveira Pajaro

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1. Introduction

The Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, launched at the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro in November 2024, aims to mobilize collective action and align domestic and international resources (financial and knowledge, public and private) to scale country-owned, evidence-based programmes to eradicate hunger and poverty (SDGs 1 and 2), prioritizing those most at risk of being left behind. At its core is the Policy Basket, a set of policy instruments serving as a reference for programs eligible for support. Multilateral climate funds, increasingly central to financing and technical assistance for emission reduction and resilience, can – and in many cases already do – channel resources to initiatives aligned with the Global Alliance Policy Basket.

This brief offers an analysis of four multilateral climate funds – Green Environmental Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Climate Investments Fund (CIF) and the Adaptation Fund (AF) – through the lens of the Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty mission, unveiling how they currently support climate adaptation with a focus on social protection, food systems, and climate resilience. Drawing on the most recent projects disclosed on each fund’s public portal and assessing their alignment with the Alliance’s Policy Basket, the objective is to identify what type of policy instruments are being implemented through these funds, as well as the main gaps in terms of coverage and where their portfolios can adapt to include aspects that mobilise climate action for social development.

Going beyond a descriptive stocktake, this brief adopts an explicitly action-oriented approach. It situates the portfolio evidence within today’s financing landscape – marked by constrained fiscal space and rising adaptation needs - and translates it into concrete policy asks. These recommendations aim to reinforce the links between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG1 (No Poverty) SDG2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), with climate-adaptation strategies³ and, ultimately, the Alliance’s mission to connect climate action with poverty reduction, food security, and dignified livelihoods. This brief ultimately serves as a strategic and pragmatic roadmap for strengthening climate action while advancing sustainable development and climate justice.

³ This working paper focus is specifically on climate adaptation and resilience. This in no way erases the importance of other types of programmes included into the Global Alliance Policy Basket that can support climate mitigation efforts, which could be further explored in future works.

2. Background Chapter

2.1. Climate Resilience, Sustainable Development and Climate Justice

Scientific evidence confirms that widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere are already underway, with human-caused climate change affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe (IPCC, 2023). As this reality deepens, climate change has become a widely recognized concern and moved to the center of international debates and policy efforts. Advances in climate science and a sharper grasp of its disproportionate impacts, have widened the conversation to foreground the links among human rights, sustainable development, and the climate crisis. Although the human rights-climate change nexus is not new – indeed, it is recognized in the Paris Agreement preamble – the growing emphasis on it is reshaping the contours of climate debates (Hasse & Serra, 2025).

Unsurprisingly, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda have multiple synergies, and the SDGs are frequently referenced in climate negotiations. Implementing the SDGs has the potential to strengthen global resilience to climate change and is therefore essential to minimizing loss and damage and advancing climate justice. In this context, both development and climate action require finance. However, developing countries in the UN climate negotiations have emphasized that the climate emergency and the need for adaptation⁴, as well as the costs associated with loss and damage⁵, constitute an additional cost to development – placing a further burden on the Global South – and therefore require new and additional ODA finance⁶.

The resource imperative rests on a simple fact: climate change does not affect all countries, territories or social groups evenly – its impacts are unevenly distributed. Those already most vulnerable, with fewer protections and guarantees, bear greater harm and face higher risks of human rights violations (Fagundez et al, 2025). Adaptation is inevitable; so too is the reality that poorer people and countries, having contributed less to the current crisis, will shoulder a disproportionate share of its costs. This demands scrutiny of the legal, ethical and moral dimensions of adaptation – which, if neglected, risks an “adaptive apartheid” (Hall & Weiss, 2021), with direct consequences for the incidence of loss and damage and deepening of climate injustices. Put plainly, climate

⁴ Adaptation is defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as the adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

⁵ The term loss and damage is understood as the harm from (observed) impacts and (projected) risks, and can be economic or noneconomic.

⁶ Official development assistance (ODA) refers to government aid aimed at promoting the economic development and well-being of developing countries. It has been the main form of international development finance since it was established by the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

justice requires that climate change be addressed with attention to differentiated responsibilities and vulnerabilities, and with a commitment to correcting inequalities and injustices (Hasse & Serra, 2025).

Crucially, shortages of human, technical and financial resources remain among significant constraints on implementing climate action, advancing development policies and realising climate justice. Without adequate support, initiatives to confront the climate crisis and foster sustainable development encounter formidable barriers. National and international efforts must therefore pair policy design with resource mobilising to ensure actions are delivered effectively, fairly and inclusively.

2.2. Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty

The Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty was launched at the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro in November 2024 to accelerate country-owned, evidence-based action toward SDGs 1 (No Poverty) and 2 (No Hunger). It mobilizes and aligns public and private finance, technical assistance and knowledge to help countries expand proven programmes to reduce hunger and poverty, with a particular focus on those most likely to be left behind. As of November 2025, the Alliance had around 200 members, including more than 100 countries, alongside 30 international organizations and 14 international financial institutions, including the Green Climate Fund.

At the core of the Alliance is the Policy Basket, a curated “reference list” of policy instruments and country examples with rigorous evidence that countries can use to inform the programmes that they want to enhance through the Alliance. The Support Mechanism of the Alliance connects countries to find other members who can provide the requested technical support, financing or knowledge, in line with the “country-driven” principle of the Alliance. The Alliance is not a fund but rather a platform for the promotion and implementation of national programmes that helps countries unlock and align existing financing from members, including multilateral funds.

Policy instruments and country programmes are included in the Policy Basket only if they meet five inclusion criteria:

- i. Instruments must be well-defined (i.e., a national programme-level intervention rather than broad strategies or small scale local projects).
- ii. They should be implementable or already implemented by governments (national, subnational, or local). In humanitarian settings, this can include programmes initiated or maintained by international institutions which are later institutionalized by the Government.
- iii. Policy instruments must have an evidence base demonstrating a direct impact and proven effectiveness on dimensions such as poverty

- reduction, food insecurity and malnutrition reduction, well-being, nutrition, and other SDG indicators
- iv. They should primarily reach people experiencing poverty and hunger, with specific attention to groups at heightened risk (e.g., women and girls, adolescents, displaced populations).
 - v. They must contribute primarily to SDGs 1 and 2 by meeting at least one of eight sub-criteria, such as: expanding social protection coverage; advancing the right to adequate food; enabling access to basic services, productive assets, skills and economic inclusion; addressing discrimination against women; targeting smallholders; improving access to healthy diets; fostering climate-resilient food production; and reducing vulnerability to climate-related shocks.

The Policy Basket organizes instruments under 7 broad categories:

- 1) Social Protection (e.g., cash transfers, social pensions, school meals, social care, unemployment benefits);
- 2) Access to Basic Services (e.g., housing, WASH, education, health, mobility, energy);
- 3) Support to smallholder farmers (e.g., irrigation, resilient technologies, inclusive finance and insurance, market infrastructure, value addition, access to inputs and markets);
- 4) Nutrition (e.g., maternal and early childhood nutrition, micronutrient programmes, treatment and prevention of malnutrition, access to healthy diets);
- 5) Cross-cutting instruments (e.g., social and farmer registries, payment mechanisms, digital information systems, financing);
- 6) Funding (e.g. progressive tax reforms); *and*
- 7) Integrated Programmes that combine different instruments in a “bundled or sequenced package” (e.g., climate- and shock resilience, economic inclusion, gender equality and empowerment).

Many instruments in the Policy Basket are directly relevant to climate adaptation and resilience. For instance, in the face of recurrent extreme weather events, social protection instruments, such as cash transfers, are among the most robust policy tools to address poverty before and after climate shocks and protect the non-poor from being pushed into poverty. Similarly, within the category of Agriculture and Markets, instruments such as Climate resilient agricultural technologies can provide vouchers that financed the total or partial cost of a climate-smart agricultural technology chosen by the producer.

The integrated programme for climate and shock resilience, including programmes related to anticipatory, adaptive and shock-responsive social protection provide a combination of different instruments such as regular safety-net transfers, productive economic inclusion, climate-smart public works as well as crisis-preparedness planning with the aim of reducing participants' vulnerability and, potentially, their exposure to these hazards. An example of such a programme is Kenya: Hunger Safety Net Programme⁷.

The Belém Declaration recently adopted at COP30, calls for a rebalancing of climate finance - maintaining mitigation efforts while significantly scaling up investment in human-centered adaptation measures. These include climate-responsive social protection systems and crop insurance for smallholder farmers – instruments that are also part of the Policy Basket. The Declaration also recognizes the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, as a flexible, action-oriented initiative that can help bring structured support, shared learning and better integrated finance to country-led, program-level implementation across these domains, in synergy with several other initiatives, including the different multilateral climate funds, as explored in this paper.

2.3. Climate-Finance Architecture, Challenges & Recent Trends

The concept of climate finance has evolved significantly since it was first articulated with the adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The UNFCCC established a collective obligation for developed countries to provide “new and additional” financial resources to support developing country Parties in implementing their obligations under the Convention (Article 4.3, UNFCCC, 1992), marking a turning point in international environmental politics. Earlier agreements did not mention the transfer of resources or restricted it to assisting developing countries in using alternative technologies and substituting products (UN Treaties, 1987). However, as developing countries insisted that implementing environmental policies could not come at the expense of their development priorities, the creation of the Multilateral Fund for the Montreal Protocol (1990) set an important precedent for the design of the UNFCCC's financial mechanism (Bodansky, 1993).

In 2009, developed countries committed to mobilize USD 100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries (Paragraph 8, Copenhagen Accord, UNFCCC, 2009). In 2015, the Paris Agreement extended this goal to 2025 and included, among the obligations of developed countries, the provision of financial resources aiming to achieve a balance between mitigation and adaptation, as well as strategies to mobilize financial

⁷ A deeper analysis of how the instruments of the Global Alliance's Policy Basket can align with climate action can be found on the “Guidance Note on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty”, available at: [Global-Alliance-Guidance-Note-on-NDCs-2.pdf](https://www.globalalliance.org/publications/global-alliance-guidance-note-on-ndcs-2.pdf)

resources from a wide variety of sources, instruments and channels, taking into account the needs and priorities of developing countries, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to climate change and have significant capacity constraints (Article 9, Paris Agreement, 2015). Countries also agreed to negotiate a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) prior to 2025 (a commitment that is further explained below).

Within this framework, the NCQG adopted by countries at COP29 set a new target of at least USD 300 billion per year by 2035, with developed countries taking the lead in providing, alongside mobilizing private finance with these flows. In complementarity, it was also agreed on pursuing efforts to at least triple annual flows from UNFCCC funds by 2030, with a view to significantly scale up the share of finance delivered through them. Beyond this, considering the needs of developing countries are significantly higher, the decision also called for all actors to mobilize at least USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2035 (UNFCCC, 2024).

Even though climate finance flows have increased, the gap is still concerning. For instance, the Standing Committee on Finance estimated that the gap between the needs and the support provided and mobilized for countries to implement their Nationally Determined Contributions⁸ (NDCs) is currently around USD 5.8-5.9 trillion up until 2030 (SCF, 2021); while the Adaptation Gap Report estimates the adaptation finance needs range from USD 310 billion to USD 365 billion per year by 2035 (UNEP, 2025).

In addition to the need to scale up finance, it is equally important to consider the quality of the flows to avoid exacerbating vulnerabilities and negatively impacting developing economies, already most affected by climate change. Although not defined, “quality” of climate finance tends to refer to the terms on which finance is provided (and its links to debt sustainability), the targets and beneficiaries of climate finance (including vulnerable groups, local communities, Indigenous People, women, youth and children), and ease of access (Watson, 2023). In this context, the First Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement noted the critical role of new and additional grant-based, highly concessional finance and non-debt creating instruments, and also recognized the positive connection between having sufficient fiscal space and advancing on a pathway towards low emissions and climate-resilient development (UNFCCC, 2023).

The way resources are structured – whether as grants, concessional loans, guarantees, equity investments, or blended finance – has direct implications for their impact. While concessional and grant-based instruments can support transformative action without burdening developing countries, the increasing predominance of loans has raised

⁸ NDCs are a core part of the Paris Agreement structure, and are linked to the achievement of its long-term goals. The Paris Agreement requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive climate commitments that it intends to achieve.

concerns about worsening debt vulnerability. The latest Biennial Assessment and Overview of Climate Finance Flows confirmed that more than half of global climate finance was provided in the form of debt instruments, while grant finance more than doubled in absolute terms but still accounted for 6% of the total flows (SCF, 2024), contributing to fiscal pressures in already indebted economies. In this context, 52 developing economies are currently in or at high risk of debt distress, representing more than 40% of the world's poorest population (UNDP, 2023). Thus, the reliance on debt-based instruments contradicts the fairness and effectiveness of the current climate finance architecture, underscoring the need for non-debt-creating and predictable support in line with the equity principles of the Paris Agreement.

To operationalize these principles, the NCQG decision (1/CMA.6) invited international financial institutions, including multilateral development banks (MDBs), to align their operational models, channels, and instruments with the Paris Agreement, including by deploying a range of non-debt-inducing instruments, shifting their risk appetite, simplifying access to finance and scaling up highly concessional and grant-based finance for developing and most vulnerable countries. Simultaneously, it called on multilateral climate funds, including the operating entities of the Financial Mechanism to strengthen their efforts to scale up and prioritize direct access, simplify and harmonize application, approval, and disbursement processes, and promote programmatic approaches that can deliver finance more predictably and at scale (UNFCCC, 2024). These measures aim to ensure that climate finance not only reaches those who need it most but also does so through modalities that are transparent, responsive, and aligned with developing countries' own strategies.

In terms of quality, the NCQG decision acknowledged the fiscal constraints and rising adaptation costs faced by developing countries, emphasizing the need for public and grant-based resources and highly concessional finance, especially for adaptation and for addressing loss and damage in countries that are particularly vulnerable and have significant capacity constraints, such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The decision also underscored the importance of reducing systemic barriers to access, such as high cost of capital, co-financing requirements, and complex application procedures that have undermined the effectiveness and equity of climate finance.

Ultimately, climate finance can be both a driver of sustainable and low-emission development, and a source of new fiscal and structural vulnerabilities. Its effectiveness depends on factors such as predictability, accessibility, and, where appropriate, the availability of concessional or grant-based instruments. Equally important is the transparent alignment of financial flows with national priorities and development

strategies. This is a key element to maximizing the transformative potential of climate finance while minimizing unintended economic and social risks.

3. Climate Funds and Adaptation: Portfolio Snapshot

Amid the climate crisis and the evolving financial landscape, multilateral climate funds have become central instruments for adaptation finance. While Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) still provide the largest share of international funding for adaptation – about 57% of international public flows to developing countries – multilateral climate funds have been increasing their share toward this goal, especially in supporting locally led initiatives that require grant-based finance. Yet, MDBs and multilateral climate funds adaptation finance portfolios differ substantially. Because MDBs use a different mix of financial instruments (including sovereign and non-sovereign loans, grants, risk-sharing instruments, equity investments, blended finance, bonds and technical assistance), their portfolios show distinct sectoral patterns and scales of implementation, with a stronger focus on infrastructure investments, followed by agriculture and water supply and sanitation. While infrastructure receives the largest share of adaptation finance from MDBs, it accounts for less than 5 per cent of all implemented projects under the Adaptation Fund, the GCF and the GEF. Multilateral climate funds have reportedly been prioritizing capacity-building and smaller-scale interventions (UNEP, 2025). This contrast indicates that MDBs and the climate funds are supporting different types (and scales) of adaptation action.

3.1. Under the Lens: Projects Alignment with the Policy Basket Instruments

This section explores how the GEF, GCF, AF and CIF align their portfolios with the Global Alliance's Policy Basket, drawing on its categories: Social Protection, Access to Basic Services, Support to Smallholder Farmers, Cross-cutting Instruments, Funding, Nutrition and Integrated Programmes, with a particular focus on those Policy Basket Instruments that connect social protection, food systems and climate resilience. The analysis considers the latest projects disclosed in each fund's public portal and reviews them according to their institutional mandates, financing structures and operational approaches. This section provides, for each of the four funds, indicative signals of alignment between the projects supported by these funds and the Policy Basket, noting patterns, gaps, and opportunities to build synergies.

3.1.1. Green Environmental Facility

Established in 1991, the GEF is the oldest and arguably the most institutionally consolidated multilateral climate fund. It operates primarily through grants and co-financing, channeled via implementing agencies such as FAO, UNDP, UNEP, as well as regional development banks. Its mandate spans Land Degradation, Climate Change and

Biodiversity, under a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. The reporting system is comprehensive, with full project identification forms, mid-term and terminal evaluations, and annual progress reports. In FY2025 so far, the GEF has approved 48 adaptation-related projects totalling US\$398.75 million (plus US\$2.72 billion in co-financing), mainly in grants.

Overall, the GEF shows the strongest alignment with the Policy Basket Instruments and categories. Across projects, cross-cutting considerations, inclusion of women and Indigenous peoples, and multi-component designs (combining safety nets, productive inclusion and infrastructure) stand out.

Within the Alliance's broader categories of Social Protection and Integrated Programmes, many operations align with the Integrated programmes for climate and shock resilience, including programmes related to anticipatory, adaptive and shock-responsive social protection. In total, 38 projects (US\$89.1 million + US\$555.6 million in co-financing) engage with these themes. Typical designs include predictable transfers, public works that create protective assets, and productive inclusion – matching the Alliance's guideline's recommended triad.

Under Support to Smallholder Farmers, GEF projects connect with specific instruments such as Access to Irrigation. These frequently reference community water committees, tenure assessments and participatory management, aligning well with the call for decentralised governance. On Climate-Resilient Agricultural Technologies, alignment is widespread: irrigation kits, agroforestry systems, post-harvest solutions are commonly paired with technical assistance and gender inclusion measures, reflecting the Global Alliance focus on inclusion of vulnerable population groups. There are also initiatives (6 projects; US\$9.4 million + US\$45.9 million co-financing) that integrate insurance with extension, savings and input credit.

GEF projects stand out as socially conscious, mandating local coordination, the participation of women, and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, in several cases, these social considerations appear as procedural requirements rather than true drivers of project design. The prevailing focus still centers on biophysical metrics such as hectares of forest restored, emissions reduced, or land under sustainable management rather than on human-centered outcomes like income generation, productivity gains, and market participation. The alignment between the projects supported by GEF and the Alliance's mission could be a strong fit, with a few adjustments.

In short, GEF-funded projects exhibit strong operational alignment with the Policy Basket categories and instruments. Remaining gaps are less about thematic intent and more

about formalizing contingency features - to name a few, for illustrating purposes, pre-agreed financing triggers, explicit surge-response plans and shock-contingent eligibility waivers.

3.1.2. Green Climate Fund

Created in 2010 under the UNFCCC, the GCF is today the largest multilateral climate finance mechanism by potential capitalization. Unlike the GEF, it deploys a mixed financial architecture (grants, concessional loans, guarantees, and equity investments), prioritising scale and catalytic leverage across public and private partners. The ten projects reviewed for this analysis (adaptation-related approvals in FY2025) represent US\$587.98 million in approved resources and US\$822.02 million in co-financing, illustrating the Fund's capacity to mobilise blended finance and privilege scale over volume of operations. Of the 10 projects, 5 were grants, 3 mixed grants–loan operations, 1 loan, and 1 an equity-plus-grant operation.

The GCF shows a generally positive alignment with the Policy Basket instruments. Under the Alliance's categories Social Protection and Integrated Programmes, projects frequently combine early-warning systems, anticipatory action and institutional preparedness - consistent with an adaptive social protection logic. These features suggest alignment with Adaptive and Shock-Responsive Social Protection, though to varying degrees. Strengths include a focus on anticipatory components and institutional readiness; closer alignment would benefit from more explicit triggers, pre-arranged financing, and surge action plans.

Within the category Support to Smallholder Farmers, one large-scale operation (~US\$40 million + US\$80 million co-financing) targets Access to Irrigation, prioritising macro-infrastructure over direct farmer access, hence diverging somewhat from the instrument's micro-level emphasis. By contrast, the policy instrument Climate-Resilient Agricultural Technologies appears across four projects (~US\$168.2 million + US\$468.4 million co-financing). Scale and blended-finance models are clear strengths, while partial gaps in voucher governance and beneficiary targeting details temper alignment. The portfolio also includes an inclusive insurance project (~US\$9 million + US\$9.6 million co-financing), combining weather-indexed insurance with financial inclusion, aligned in concept with the Policy Basket.

Since July 2025, the GCF has been an active member of the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, participating in its strategic decision making instance, the Board of Champions. During the Global Alliance First leaders' Meeting, the African Development Bank announced its intentions to work with GCF to support the implementation of water-access programmes in Kenya, as part of the Alliance's Fast Track Programme, through which it seeks to accelerate national programmes for the fight against hunger

and poverty in 13 countries⁹. This announcement does not represent concrete investments yet and therefore was not considered in this analysis, however it shows a willingness of the Fund to align with the policies present on the Alliance Basket by working with the platform directly.

Overall, the GCF presents a mixed picture: alignment is strongest where operational rules (e.g., vouchers, triggers, targeting) are explicit, while some projects lean more toward ecological and infrastructure outcomes, with socio-economic design features less foregrounded.

3.1.3. Adaptation Fund

Established in 2007 under the Kyoto Protocol, the Adaptation Fund finances adaptation projects and programmes, as well as capacity-building, in developing countries. It pioneered direct access, enabling accredited national entities to receive funding directly, and is financed primarily by a 2% share of CDM proceeds, alongside contributions from governments, the private sector and individuals. Despite steady demand, the Fund remains resource-constrained and has fallen short of its (self-determined) US\$300 million mobilisation goal in recent years.

In FY2025, the AF approved 20 projects totalling US\$156.5 million, with project sizes ranging from ~US\$0.993 million to US\$14 million, all as grants. Implementation spans multilateral and national entities (e.g., UN-Habitat, WMO, IFAD, WFP, UNIDO, and several national implementing entities), with sectoral coverage across agriculture and food security, water resources, community resilience, ecosystem restoration and rural development - ensuring both thematic diversity and geographic balance.

The AF portfolio reads as broadly aligned with the Policy Basket. Several projects advance Adaptive and Shock-Responsive Social Protection through climate-smart landscape planning and sustainable land management for vulnerable rural communities. Others reflect Integrated Programmes for gender equality and empowerment, acknowledging differentiated climate impacts, especially on women, and incorporating these considerations into adaptation and resilience planning.

Under Support to Smallholder Farmers, projects frequently promote Climate-Resilient Agricultural Technologies, starting from needs assessments and tailoring solutions to local contexts. Many also apply risk-assessment frameworks to inform local decision-making in agriculture and food security. In line with Pro-poor access to agricultural inputs, technology and knowledge and the Training instrument, AF operations place strong emphasis on capacity-building for communities and local governments.

⁹ See [Countries Mobilize Multi-Partner Support for National Programs against Hunger and Poverty under a new Approach to Development – Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty](#).

Complementarily, there are signals of alignment with Multilevel Governance, an instrument that prioritizes the direct engagement of vulnerable groups in programme design and supporting them to receive and manage funds.

In sum, the AF tends to align well with the Alliance's instruments, with a consistent and cross-cutting emphasis on community-level participation, gender inclusion, capacity building, and governance mechanisms that support long-term resilience and social development.

3.1.4. Climate Investments Fund

Operational since 2008, the CIF works through thematic sub-funds within a programmatic framework that includes the Clean Technology Fund (CTF), Renewable Energy Integration Program (REI), Scaling Up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries (SREP), Global Energy Storage Program (GESP), Industry Decarbonization Program, Technical Assistance Facility (TAF), the Forest Investment Program (FIP), the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) and Nature, People and Climate (NPC). Operations are commonly implemented by multilateral development banks (MDBs) - for example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and African Development Bank (AfDB).

While most programmatic approaches lean toward the energy transition and broader decarbonisation goals, three windows are conceptually relevant for this analysis given their connection to adaptation and resilience. FIP supports countries to tackle drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and empowers forest-dependent communities, including Indigenous peoples, to manage natural resources for sustainable development. NPC funds nature-based solutions in low- and middle-income countries, recognising the interdependence of land use, mitigation, adaptation and rural livelihoods. PPCR supports country-led strategies for resilience and adaptation (ranging from irrigation and water management to disaster risk reduction) through participatory, programmatic approaches.

In 2025 (to date), the CIF approved 44 projects, most linked to energy transition and renewable energy. Of these, 4 projects focus on adaptation and resilience - promoting restoration of degraded ecosystems, biodiversity enhancement, reduced vulnerability to extreme weather via nature-based solutions (NbS), resilient livelihoods and landscape management, increased forest cover through sustainable forestry, land tenure and community-based initiatives, and inclusive agroforestry in degraded landscapes. For these four projects, CIF mobilised US\$54.5 million with US\$328.38 million in co-financing.

Documentation for all four projects is not fully available on the CIF platform. From what is accessible, one project features a substantive Resilient Livelihoods and Landscape Management component with strong resonance to the Alliance’s mission, categories and several Policy Basket instruments. It invests in sustainable management of forests, watersheds and agro-pastoral landscapes; finances conservation and rehabilitation of miombo forests and degraded lands via community-led land and water management, reforestation and agroforestry; and strengthens Community Forest Management Groups. It also supports climate-resilient livelihoods through infrastructure (e.g., irrigation, water harvesting), income-generating activities and NbS. Approximately 300 community subprojects are slated for scale-up, with targeted support for women, youth and persons with disabilities.

For the remaining projects, while there are clear thematic touchpoints, explicit links to the Alliance’s specific instruments are less evident in the publicly available materials. It is also worth noting that in previous years the CIF has supported operations featuring components aligned with instruments covered in this report (such as Climate-Resilient Agricultural Technologies, Access to Irrigation, Inclusive Insurance and Adaptive and Shock-Responsive Social Protection) – similar to the other funds analysed.

Overall, the CIF’s institutional role remains strategically significant as an incubator for scalable models but exhibits a stronger tendency to prioritize infrastructure and programmatic frameworks led by multilateral development banks. That said, the comparatively small share of adaptation- and resilience-oriented approvals in the most recent pipeline – especially relative to prior years – suggests a near-term emphasis on mitigation, contrasting with current calls to better balance allocations between mitigation and adaptation.

4. From biophysical outputs to social outcomes: from climate finance to climate justice

At the big-picture level, adaptation finance still gravitates toward the traditional model of public infrastructure and environmental outputs, only partially embracing social-first approaches capable of generating deeper and more durable impacts. In this context, adaptation still has to evolve as part of broader development planning. At the design stage, projects and programmes can identify and embed socio-economic co-benefits even when pursuing environmental outcomes (GEF, 2024). While opportunities for social additionality are expanding, the limited information on health, poverty alleviation and livelihoods, for example, may hinder strategic resource mobilisation (UNEP, 2025).

Governance and monitoring should also evolve accordingly. Each fund should be able to trace where resources flow, how they circulate locally, and what social multipliers they

generate. Embedding socio-economic indicators – income stability, employment, productivity, market access, inclusion and empowerment – alongside biophysical metrics would allow portfolios to evidence durable resilience, not just completed activities (GEF, 2024). Yet most reporting still emphasises outputs, with outcomes documented far less frequently, limiting the ability to judge real welfare gains and equity effects (UNEP, 2025).

This reflects a persistent structural bias – treating climate primarily as a biophysical problem – toward quantifying environmental deliverables rather than human welfare impacts on income, smallholder resilience and equity, with little systematic tracking of social mobility or livelihood improvements. By contrast, the broader development-finance evidence points in one direction: when protection and production are designed together, socially oriented instruments deliver climate goals more effectively and at lower cost. Reviews by the World Bank and partners show that adaptive social protection, cash and voucher-based assistance, and inclusive risk-financing reduce losses before and after climate shocks, protect productive assets and accelerate recovery – functioning as climate instruments in substance, even when not labelled as such (Bowen et al., 2020). FAO (2024) likewise links cash/voucher assistance and resilient agrifood systems to quicker, more dignified recovery and stronger household resilience. The Global Center on Adaptation (2022) similarly underscores the high benefit–cost ratios of people-centred adaptation, reinforcing the case for scale.

Against this backdrop, the path forward for adaptation finance is to rebalance from infrastructure-led, output-heavy designs towards socially rooted, outcome-driven programmes. Integrating the key design features embedded in the Policy Basket instruments and especially those reflected in the Instrument linked with climate and shock resilience, including programmes related to anticipatory adaptive and shock responsive social protection, could sharpen impact per dollar: pre-agreed, risk-layered finance; clear disaster triggers; surge eligibility rules; voucher mechanisms for climate-smart technologies; inclusive irrigation governance; and insurance linked to financial inclusion. For the GEF, for instance – already closer in contextual terms – there is an opportunity to translate its inclusive intent into explicit contingency mechanics and socio-economic results tracking.

This reframing also centres a critical point for the Alliance: adaptation is primarily a strategy for reducing inequality and vulnerability – not necessarily a synonym for new infrastructure (although yes, resilient infrastructure is a key component of climate adaptation). Linking early-warning and climate-information investments, for example, to anticipatory cash, insurance, and livelihoods support would ensure that risk signals and impacts trigger protective action – transforming monitoring systems and data into social protection systems. By fully integrating the social dimension into their design logic, and

seeing ecosystems as integrated living systems with those who inhabit them, adaptation finance could produce more profound, equitable, and longer-lasting climate outcomes, bridging the persistent adaptation finance gap through efficiency rather than expansion.

These implications offer a concrete role for the Alliance in the climate sphere. Beyond convening, the Alliance can issue practical operational conditions for projects through the Policy Basket instruments and guidance alignment, help matchmake proposals with financing windows, and support governments and implementing entities to wire these elements in from the outset, directly linking climate projects with vulnerabilities reduction. Done well, this engagement can steer climate funding to simultaneously reduce poverty and inequality – so that ecosystem gains translate into food security, income, and dignified livelihoods.

Finally, this study offers a point-in-time snapshot rather than a longitudinal assessment. A logical next step is a rolling, fund-by-fund dataset that tracks pipelines, approvals, instruments, and outcomes over time, paired with a public dashboard and other relevant reports. This continuity would allow to document shifts in practice, unveil what works, and tighten the bridge from biophysical outputs to social outcomes – helping close the gap between climate finance commitments and climate justice.

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