

External Mid-Term Review Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) Africa Work Program

Submitted to the Global Center on Adaptation

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) is a multi-sectoral organization that works as a solutions broker to catalyze action and support for climate change adaptation. In 2021, the GCA launched its flagship program, the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP), a joint initiative with the African Development Bank (AfDB). This followed an urgent call by African leaders to accelerate momentum on adaptation and was driven by the GCA Board's desire to focus on transformational adaptation for vulnerable communities in Africa. The AAAP seeks to mobilize USD 25 billion (Bn) by 2025 for climate change adaptation in Africa.

Commissioned by the GCA, this Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the AAAP is a formative- and outcomes-focused evaluation. It assesses the implementation of the AAAP, progress made toward achieving objectives, and potential areas and actions that can lead to greater impacts.

Methodology

The MTR team adopted a tailored, multi-faceted methodological approach for undertaking this review, comprised of: (a) Formative and Outcome Evaluation; (b) Utilization-focused Evaluation (UFE); (c) a Participatory Approach; and (d) an Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Approach.

The MTR was undertaken using mixed methods, including a desk review of over 100 documents, interviews with 67 stakeholders, and the preparation of three case studies, including a Ghana case study, a case study on the AAAP's Climate Smart Digital Technologies for Agriculture and Food Security (CSDAT) pillar, and a case study on the GCA's support in high needs, low-capacity (HNLC) contexts. Six consultative meetings were also held to gather feedback from GCA senior leadership, GCA pillar leads, and GCA donors.

Relevance

The AAAP focuses action along four programmatic pillars, namely CSDAT, African Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator (AIRA) (with a focus on infrastructure and urban water), Empowering Youth through Jobs and Entrepreneurship (YouthADAPT), and Innovative Financial Instruments (IFI). There is broad agreement that the choice of the four AAAP pillars and their associated business lines closely align with contemporary African adaptation priorities. Moreover, the GCA has maintained its anchoring in an Africa-led, deliberative planning process with high-level country endorsement.

The AAAP business model has created a virtuous cycle whereby assembled knowledge informs advocacy and agenda setting, adaptation commitments backed with knowledge spur accelerator activities across AAAP pillars, which in turn address commitments and deepen knowledge. Overall, the GCA's use of three pillars of activity to describe its mandate – Agenda Setting and Advocacy, Knowledge Acceleration, and Programs and Action are appropriate but do not capture the fullness of the GCA approach playing out in the AAAP. Essential elements of the AAAP such as financial resource mobilization, capacity building,

technology transfer, partnership, and youth engagement are not reflected in the GCA's current pillars of activity.

Finally, the GCA, and by extension the AAAP Upstream Facility, is positioned as a nimble player amidst a vast and complex field of actors. Unencumbered by the heavy protocols guiding the assembly of large climate initiatives, the GCA has the latitude needed to broker solutions that are responsive to diverse contexts. Early indications of the GCA's flexibility are seen at the project and strategic levels.

Coherence

The AAAP is found to be generally well connected and complementary to other actors and initiatives in the African climate adaptation space. This connectedness and complementarity are noted in the political realm, as well as with other key actors such as multilateral development banks (MDBs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, and other international, regional, and national entities.

The GCA and the AAAP have a notable value addition compared to other actors, which largely stems from the GCA's singular focus on adaptation underpinned by an extensive base of knowledge, its action orientation and global-local vertical range, and its strong and diverse network of partners. Together, these have enabled the GCA to convene and influence ideas, bring adaptation solutions to projects, and begin to leverage funding from diverse sources for adaptation.

A few areas warrant attention as the GCA consolidates its presence in Africa and deepens its solutions brokering work. These relate to the GCA's partnership approach, which is not currently guided by a strategy that ties its partnerships to programming outcomes, and which some partners describe as too project-focused; enhancing clarity in the working relationship between the GCA and AfDB regarding the long-term management of activities; and the implications for GCA-AfDB joint management of the AAAP as additional MDBs – such as the World Bank – engage with and bring their own institutional characteristics to the AAAP.

Effectiveness

Early evidence indicates that the GCA's activities and outputs are beginning to move the needle on the AAAP's intended outcomes in the areas of Knowledge, Convening, Leadership, Enabling Environment, Solutions, and Finance.

Most evidence to-date supports the GCA's ability to increase knowledge, understanding, and awareness of climate adaptation (e.g., various research-based reports); to convene a variety of stakeholders around adaptation (e.g., the 2022 Africa CEO Forum and the Adaptation, Loss and Damage Day at COP26); and to identify climate adaptation solutions through research and data-driven approaches that have the potential to influence the enabling environment (e.g. the *Ghana: Roadmap for Resilient Infrastructure in a Changing Climate*). The GCA has also demonstrated that it can secure funding for solutions through its partnerships with MDBs; there are less examples of funding for solutions outside of MDB pipelines.

Currently there are limited indications of a systematic effort to mainstream capacity building into the GCA's work, although some projects to date have incorporated specific capacity building activities; stakeholders are keen to have more of these opportunities. There also is not yet a robust framework for the GCA's work in the area of Leadership outside of its youth-focused activities.

There is some documentation of gender equality and inclusion considerations in the GCA and AAP strategy and design, particularly regarding women and youth. Early achievements related to a gender balance in projects are noted, although evidence of the effects of gender and inclusion considerations are limited. Possible challenges to realizing gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) include the degree to which the GCA, given its focus on large-scale and institutional change, can meaningfully achieve inclusivity of groups operating at smaller scales with more limited capacity to engage; finite resources impeding the ability to engage various groups in stakeholder meetings or validation workshops; and a need for further clarity and direction regarding the GCA's GESI policies and practices.

The AAP is generally responsive to the needs of low-capacity states. GCA staff have expressed a commitment to engaging in these countries where the potential for impact may be great but increased resources (in both time and money) are needed. Case study findings indicate that the design of projects in these contexts is likely to contribute to nearly all outcome pathways, although less work on convening is being done in these contexts as compared to others. Importantly, the GCA's approach to engaging with low-capacity states is not codified with a particular strategy for low-capacity or fragile contexts.

Finally, many of the AAP's activities are inclusive of pro-poor development priorities, including by improving access to jobs and reducing vulnerability to climate shocks in the areas of agriculture and urban infrastructure. Additionally, the GCA often relies on the pro-poor policies and strategies of its implementing partners. However, a deliberate pro-poor orientation is not indicated in the design of AAP activities or in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework.

Impact

Although the AAP is in the early stages of implementation, there is credible evidence that its knowledge to implementation model works to strengthen the adaptation components of projects in the pipeline of MDBs such as the AfDB as well as in the climate strategies of other organizations operating in Africa. The most promising approaches appear to be those that are rooted in partnerships with clear expectations of how knowledge is transformed into action and in the provision of tangible, illustrative projects.

Early evidence further suggests that the GCA's activities, knowledge products and processes are likely to influence African government policies and strategies for adaptation in development. The GCA's approach to country-level support has produced relevant and specific knowledge products that interviewed stakeholders indicate will contribute to long-term changes to government development planning processes. This is particularly noted in Ghana, where the findings from the Ghana Roadmap and the Accra Climate Risk Assessment are expected to be incorporated into Ghana's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and national and subnational infrastructure planning practices. At the same time, there are identified challenges to realizing concrete and formalized changes, including insufficient technical capacity, a perception of limited funding opportunities, and competing priorities for government resources.

Sustainability of Benefits

Given the recent launch of the AAAP and the limited number of projects that have been completed, the extent to which the benefits achieved will be sustained cannot be assessed. However, preliminary analysis provides some indication of likelihood. Project and program design shows that the GCA utilizes several entry points to advance the potential sustainability of benefits. These include some capacity building, establishing partnerships, and working to influence policies and strategies.

Conversely despite exit strategies being most effective when crafted as early as a project's concept note stage, there is limited evidence on the AAAP's clear planning and communication of exit strategies (particularly outside of MDB-related projects). Looking forward, additional risks that may impact the AAAP's progress and sustainability of outcomes include the possibility of limited resources, challenges in finding sound institutions with which to partner, and a lack of in-country technical capabilities to take the GCA's work forward.

Strategic Management

The AAAP design is well aligned with GCA Board priorities, with Advisory Board members expressing support for the Program during the 2021 Board meeting. The AAAP is notably aligned with key themes discussed and emphasised during Advisory Board meetings. These include a strong emphasis on partnerships, country ownership, and building equity in climate resilience.

To foster internal efficiency and pave the way for impact, the GCA has deliberately and incrementally developed frameworks and guidelines and implemented adequate systems. The Project Approval Committee (PAC) has been established as a quality enhancement system, to ensure selected projects are closely aligned with the AAAP pillars and business lines. However, while the GCA is generally recognized as nimble and flexible, stakeholders reported some concerns regarding decision-making processes, heavy procedures, resulting delays, and their impact on the efficiency of the AAAP.

Nonetheless, the AAAP is being implemented cost-effectively, as evident through the alignment between planned and utilized financial resources. Overall, financial reporting indicates the AAAP is currently operating within budget. For each pillar, actual costs were lower than planned, except for the IFI pillar. Where overspending has occurred, it has mostly been due to either higher value in-kind contributions or reflective of planning challenges related to COVID-19. The AAAP has been careful to adopt effective cost-saving strategies such as working with local partners. At the same time, delays in recruitment and in implementing activities are noted. While delays encountered in 2021 are not a serious concern at this stage, these aspects will be a matter for further monitoring throughout 2022 and beyond.

In terms of M&E, the GCA has only recently drafted the AAAP M&E Framework, with the first reporting period currently underway. The Framework has been developed through a consultative process. It clearly outlines roles and responsibilities, timelines, M&E approaches and deliverables, indicators, and targets. However, the AAAP lacks a Theory of Change (ToC) to clearly outline the contributions of the AAAP pillars and their respective business lines to the six outcome pathways. Moreover, it remains unclear how the GCA will capture the extent of its contributions to results through current M&E practices.

Finally, there is evidence of risk management at the strategic level, and evidence of risk management practices embedded in policies and frameworks. At this early stage, evidence of the extent to which these are reflected in operations remains limited.

Recommendations

The MTR provides 12 recommendations, organized by key area and priority level. These include: five Priority Level 1 recommendations, for which immediate implementation is recommended; four Priority Level 2 recommendations, which provide opportunities for the GCA to engage more strategically and better reflect impact; and finally, three Priority Level 3 recommendations, which include opportunities for expansion or are linked to wider GCA processes (beyond those identified for immediate action). In general, the recommendations speak to the following areas:

- **Business Model (*Highest Priority*):** On further clarifying the business model and clearly presenting key elements of the GCA and AAAP work, including through developing a AAAP ToC and reformulating the GCA's three pillars of activities.
- **Partnerships:** On strengthening the GCA's partnership policy and strategy and broadening partnerships to include other adaptation funds and the private sector.
- **Achieving Outcomes:** On increasing the development of contextually and geographically specific knowledge products.
- **Sustainability (*Highest Priority*):** On systematically developing exit strategies during project preparation, with an emphasis on ensuring sufficient financial and technical capacities so that projects achieve the desired scope and scale.
- **Operational Documentation:** On updating PAC documents to include key elements related to cross-pillar synergies, risk management, M&E, and exit strategies, as well as refining and clarifying key indicators and monitoring methodologies for the AAAP's M&E Framework.

Readers are invited to consult the complete report, including the full set of 12 recommendations