International Water Management Institute

Al Murunah Project

Brief

Understanding National Climate Change Commitments and Associated Opportunities for Financiers

A practical guide to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and Climate Finance

Abstract

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) can serve as national investment roadmaps, signaling priority sectors, costed targets, enabling policies and co-financing potential.

This practical guide helps credit officers, portfolio managers and risk teams read these commitments as investment signals and bridge the gap between national climate priorities and commercial finance. It highlights adaptation and mitigation opportunities—particularly in water, agriculture, infrastructure and Nature-based Solutions (NbS)—and shows how these opportunities can translate into project pipelines, new lending and revenue streams and stronger portfolio resilience.

Drawing on Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and global examples, the guide shows how concessional capital, guarantees and blended finance can reduce risk and improve project bankability. It also offers practical steps to align portfolios, assess climate risk and capture early-mover opportunities.

Introduction

Climate change is already affecting the value of assets you finance. Infrastructure, water systems and agricultural land face growing exposure to droughts, floods and shifting rainfall, risks that can deteriorate borrower repayment capacity and concentrate risk portfolio in ways standard credit tools may not fully capture. In other words, climate risk is increasingly credit risk, with direct implications for asset quality, portfolio concentration and capital adequacy (Basel Committee on Banking Supervision [BCBS] 2021; Network for Greening the Financial System [NGFS] 2019).

Governments are responding through structured national climate change plans — **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** and **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)** — that translate climate goals into specific actions and investment needs, creating a growing, government-backed project pipeline in water, agriculture, infrastructure and resilient communities.

What Are NDCs and NAPs?

NDCs and NAPs are national climate strategies under the Paris Agreement — the legally binding international treaty on climate change.

- **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**: Short-to-medium-term national targets covering emissions reductions and adaptation actions, updated every five years, with recent NDCs increasingly identifying costed investment priorities.

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- **National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)**: Longer-term strategies protecting populations, infrastructure and economies from unavoidable climate impacts.

How to read them as a financier: identify priority sectors with government backing and co-finance potential; look for costed targets where private capital is being invited in; note enabling policies that reduce regulatory risk; and track implementation momentum. Following the 2023 Global Stocktake, adaptation is shifting from planning to execution. For example, a costed NDC target on irrigation modernization signals upcoming procurement pipelines, potential sovereign backing and opportunities for co-financing with Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) or climate funds.

This guide helps credit officers, portfolio managers and risk teams globally read NDC and NAP commitments as investment signals, navigate the climate finance ecosystem and position their institution for early-mover advantage. Early movers are better positioned to access concessional capital, shape project pipelines and build internal expertise before competition intensifies. A gap currently exists between national climate priorities and financiers due to differences in language, time horizons, data availability and risk frameworks. This guide is designed to bridge that gap practically.

Figure 1 shows the flow from high-level climate goals to tangible financing opportunities. International agreements such as Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are translated into national commitments (NDCs, NAPs), which produce investment signals highlighting priority sectors, de-risking measures and options for the development of pipeline projects — creating finance opportunities for banks, investors and blended-finance structures.

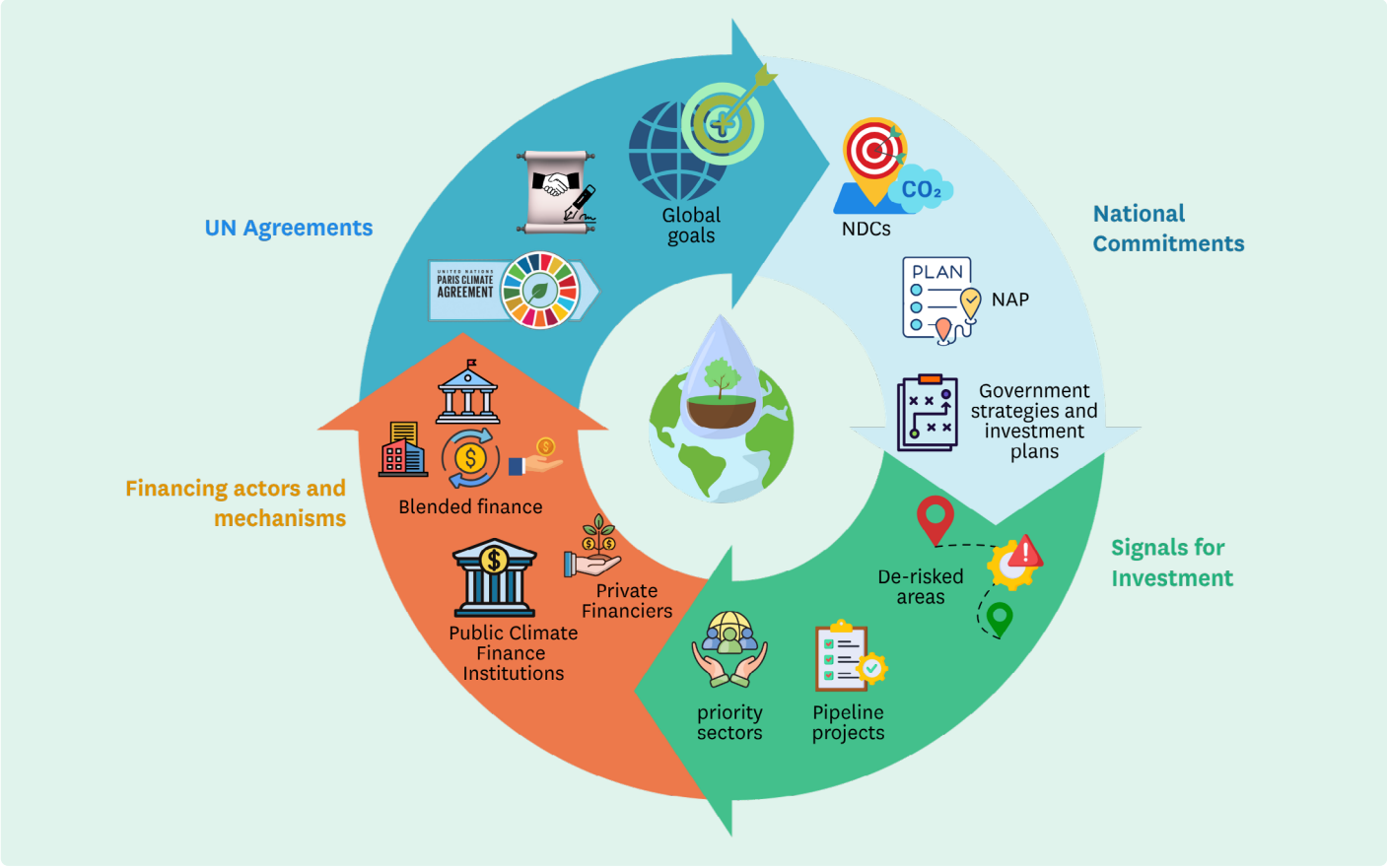


Figure 1. The role of NDCs and NAPs in guiding finance. *Source*: Author (2026)

Climate Finance, Adaptation and Mitigation

Adaptation and mitigation are two fundamental strategies for addressing climate change. Understanding the distinction between them is essential for structuring transactions and assessing risk-return profiles. **Adaptation** aims to reduce the impact of climate risks already underway —such as droughts, floods and shifting rainfall patterns. This can include Nature-based Solutions (NbS) like adopting water-efficient farming practices to reduce operating risks and costs. Mitigation focuses on addressing the root causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as investing in renewable energy or minimizing emissions from agricultural production (Behsudi 2021). Mitigation has historically received greater attention and financing as a global priority, but there is now growing recognition that adaptation must be equally prioritized, particularly in regions already facing severe climate impacts.

Adaptation finance is the capital — grants, concessional loans, guarantees, equity, or other instruments — mobilized to fund adaptation actions.

For financiers, adaptation and mitigation have different risk-return profiles and credit considerations. Mitigation investments can create value through reduced emissions, energy or resource savings, productivity improvements, carbon revenues or, in some cases, energy sales. Adaptation projects — e.g., water reuse infrastructure, flood-resilient irrigation — create value through risk reduction and operational savings at the asset and

portfolio level. Understanding this distinction underpins sound integration of climate finance into credit framework. This often requires shifting from revenue-based lending models to risk-adjusted or blended finance approaches.

Why Climate and Adaptation Finance Matters for Financiers

Engaging in climate and adaptation finance offers a dual opportunity. **Commercially**, it opens long-term lending in government-backed sectors — water management, agriculture, infrastructure and insurance. **Strategically**, it strengthens Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) positioning and unlocks access to concessional and blended funding from global climate institutions.

From a risk perspective, physical climate risks — flood exposure, drought, salinization — are materializing at the asset level in the sectors you lend to. Borrowers and collateral exposed to these hazards carry credit risk that may not be fully priced and supervisory expectations around physical climate risk management are tightening.

Climate investments involve a **diverse mix of co-financing partners** — governments, global climate funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), bilateral donors such as UK International Development, multilateral development banks (MDBs), national development banks and private investors — creating partnership models that can improve your risk-return profile on individual transactions.

NDCs and NAPs are the primary signals governments send about where the resources will flow. Figure 2 maps the three interacting layers of the adaptation finance ecosystem: **national governments** (policy and priorities), **public and private financiers** (funding, de-risking, co-finance) and **implementation and knowledge partners** (project delivery, monitoring, evidence).

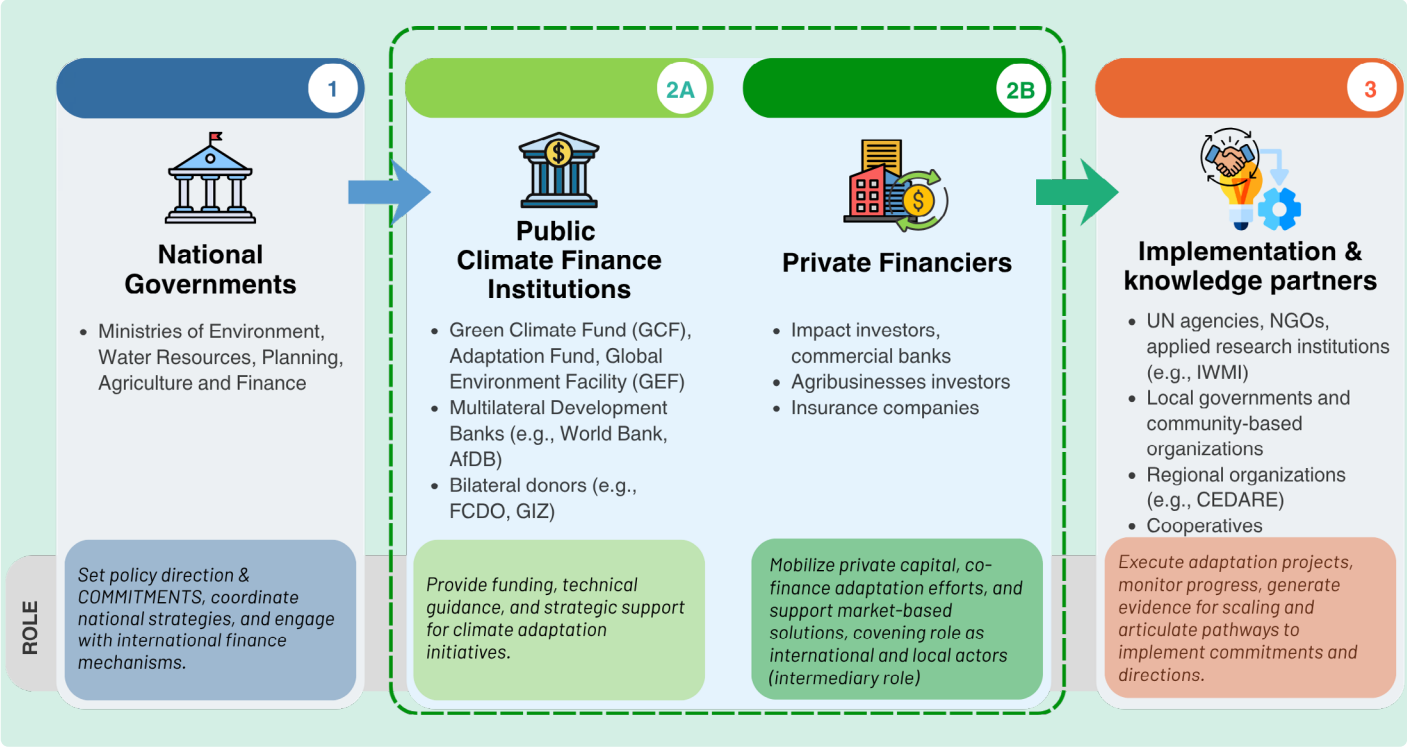


Figure 2. Ecosystem map of climate adaptation finance actors. *Source*: Authors (2026)

Figure 3 illustrates how policy, finance and implementation interact to enable climate adaptation. Governments set direction through NDCs and NAPs; financiers provide capital and technical assistance to implementation partners; those partners deliver projects and feed evidence back to refine climate priorities, improving investment signal quality over time.

One often-underestimated actor is **local communities and the important role they play in contributing to the sustainability of investments**. In water, agriculture and NbS projects, communities are critical delivery agents and long-term stewards. Projects without genuine community engagement face higher execution risk and weaker performance — a direct credit risk consideration for lenders. For financiers, weak community engagement can translate into delays, cost overruns and underperformance, all of which directly impact loan quality.

The Al-Murunah project, operating across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, provides a practical example of this dynamic. By embedding community participation, trust-building and local ownership throughout the design and implementation of interventions, the project achieved measurable improvements in water efficiency and agricultural productivity. These outcomes show that community engagement can strengthen investment resilience and reduce implementation risk in climate adaptation projects.

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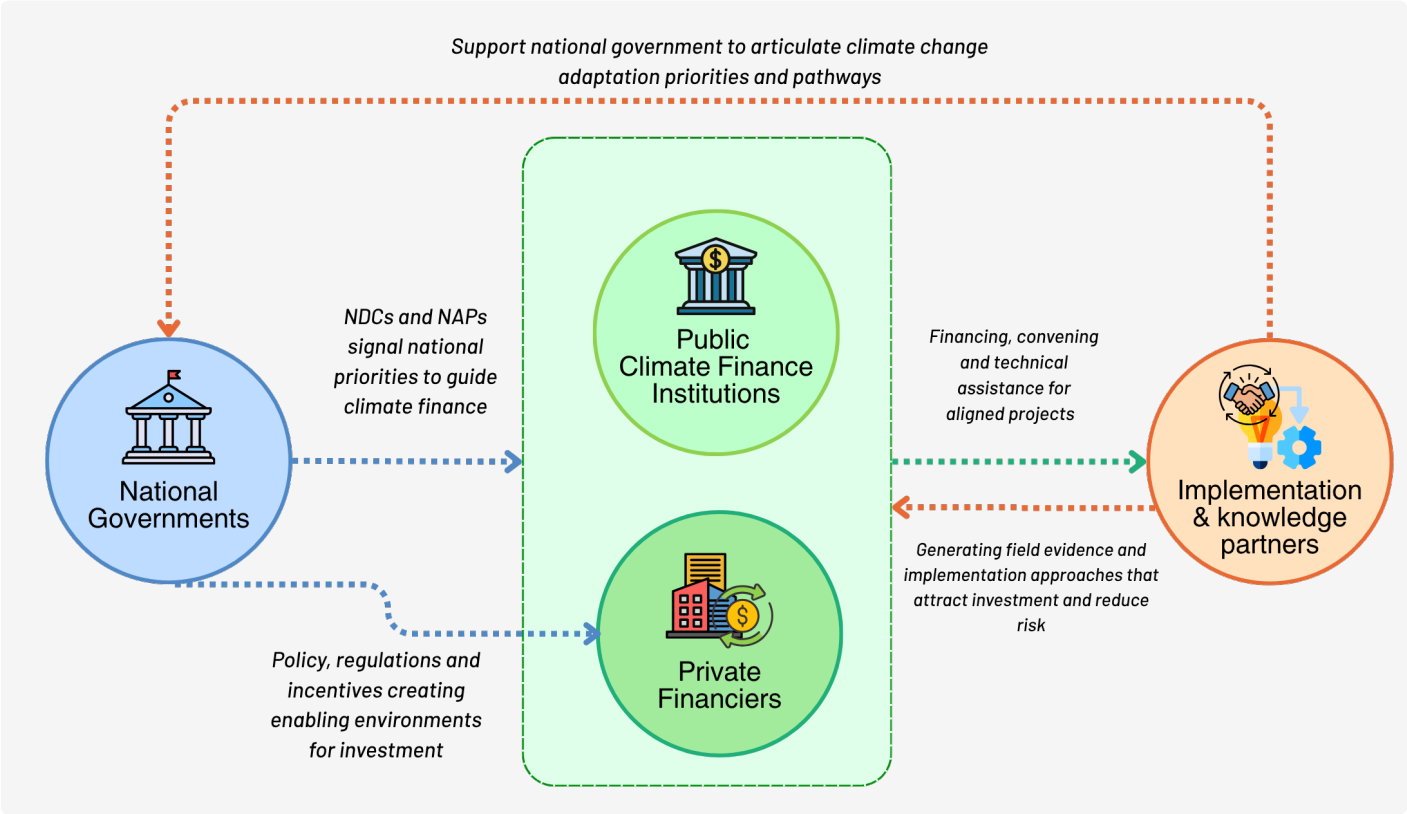


Figure 3. Policy-finance-implementation linkages. *Source*: Authors (2026)

Where Are the Investment Opportunities in Climate Adaptation?

For financiers, NDCs and NAPs are national investment roadmaps. They identify priority sectors, government-backed targets and cost estimates that reduce investment risk and signal where public funds, donor support and concessional finance will flow.

Adaptation also creates direct business opportunity beyond risk management; financing businesses using drought-tolerant crops, water-efficient technologies and climate-resilient infrastructure opens new lending and revenue streams.

Among the various adaptation and mitigation approaches outlined in NDCs and NAPs, **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** are recognized for their ability to deliver cost-effective, sustainable and resilient outcomes. NbS protect, restore and manage ecosystems to deliver climate resilience. For example, restoring vegetation around agricultural land reduces soil erosion, protects crops and improves water retention — lowering irrigation maintenance costs and increasing farmland value. NbS also strengthen infrastructure resilience to floods and droughts while adding long-term asset value.

Despite this potential, NbS remain heavily underfinanced: only 1.5% of all public international climate finance currently supports NbS for adaptation in developing countries (Swann et al., 2021). For investors willing to engage early, this financing gap presents a first-mover opportunity to shape bankable models and establish market leadership in an emerging asset class.

Globally, water security represents one of the largest opportunities for adaptation finance. This opportunity is particularly pronounced in the MENA region, where water is the highest-priority adaptation sector and governments have identified important investment pipelines through their NDCs and NAPs. Egypt's NDC targets (a) rehabilitation of 20,000 km of irrigation canals benefiting 60 million people and (b) reuse of approximately 14 million cubic meters of treated wastewater per day — signaling lending demand in water distribution and treatment infrastructure (engineered and nature-based), grey-water harvesting, groundwater storage and recovery, solar-powered desalination (USD 625 million pipeline) and on-farm irrigation modernization (USD 4 billion pipeline) (Ministry of Environment, Egypt, 2023). These investments generate mitigation co-benefits by reducing energy demand, increasing their attractiveness to blended finance and green bond structures.

Jordan's NAP also prioritizes investments in climate-resilient water infrastructure. Priority areas include renewable energy efficiency across water pumping, transfer, desalination and wastewater treatment, alongside flood-risk mapping, water loss reduction and climate-resilient water safety planning. Together, they signal demand for renewable-powered water infrastructure and digital monitoring. For municipal lenders, climate-resilient water investments reduce long-term operating expenditure, directly strengthening municipal debt servicing capacity (Jordan 2025).

Food: Egypt's NAP targets expanding modern irrigation to 1,680,333 hectares, increasing agricultural water efficiency by 20% — signaling demand for precision irrigation, fertigation, drought-resistant crops and treated wastewater reuse. These investments reduce the physical risk profile of agricultural borrowers: fewer crop losses, more reliable water supply, lower input costs.

Disaster Risk Reduction: Egypt's NDC commits to a national early warning system benefiting 30 million people, with a USD

1.5 billion pipeline for agricultural insurance and early warning services — opening opportunities in climate risk analytics, digital forecasting platforms and inclusive insurance.

From Climate Commitments to Investment Pipelines — MENA Examples

Governments are translating NDCs and NAPs into costed, investment-ready frameworks, incorporating NbS alongside traditional infrastructure.

Jordan: wastewater networks in Al-Koura (USD 52.4 million), rehabilitation of water networks in Ardah (USD 21.2 million), irrigation efficiency in the Jordan Valley (USD 27.7 million), reducing losses in the King Abdullah Canal (USD 0.5 million) and community resilience for displaced persons (USD 7 million).

Egypt: rehabilitating Northern Delta agricultural areas affected by sea-level rise (USD 2 billion), on-farm irrigation systems (USD 4 billion), early warning and agricultural insurance (USD 1.5 billion), solar-powered desalination (USD 625 million) and solar pumping for irrigation (USD 50 million).

From Climate Commitments to Investment Pipelines — Global Examples

Ethiopia's NDC 3.0 packages forestry, renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture priorities into costed, fundable programs with Climate Investment Funds (CIF) engagement structures (Ethiopia 2025).

Bangladesh's Climate-Smart Agriculture Investment Plan builds directly on NDC objectives, mobilizing MDB and donor financing. Its Climate Development Partnership platform coordinates public and private climate finance nationally (World Bank Group 2022).

Costa Rica converted NDC priorities into predictable revenue streams through its Payments for Environmental Services (PES) program and blue-carbon strategies for mangroves and coastal wetlands — making NbS projects financeable through PES payments and carbon credits. This demonstrates how NbS can be structured to generate cash flows relevant to private investors (UNFCCC 2020).

Who Funds Adaptation and How Blended Finance Works

Global Climate Finance Ecosystem

Green Climate Fund (GCF): The largest dedicated climate fund for developing countries, with more than USD 20 billion committed across 354 projects and programmes as of March 2026, divided roughly evenly between adaptation and mitigation (GCF 2026). Commercial banks can become GCF-accredited entities, opening direct access to funding and co-financing opportunities.

Global Environment Facility (GEF): Provides grants and blended instruments; has provided over USD 26 billion in financing and mobilized USD 153 billion in co-financing.

Adaptation Fund (AF): Focused on tangible adaptation projects in vulnerable developing countries; committed more than USD 1.39 billion since 2010.

Access note: GCF, GEF and AF funding requires endorsement by the country's National Designated Authority and implementation through accredited entities. If your institution is not yet accredited, partnering with an existing accredited entity is the practical entry point.

Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs): The World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) collectively committed a record USD 137 billion in climate finance in 2024 and mobilized USD 134 billion in private capital (European Investment Bank 2025).

For financial institutions, they offer concessional credit lines to on-lend to eligible projects, partial risk guarantees reducing exposure on new sectors and technical assistance for climate risk assessment.

Bilateral Funds: A non-exhaustive set of examples includes Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) which provide grants and concessional capital increasingly structured to crowd in domestic commercial finance.

Domestic and Local Finance

Domestic institutions like commercial banks, national development banks and microfinance institutions are often best positioned to finance small and medium-sized water, agriculture and municipal projects given local market knowledge and client relationships. They provide the first layer of capital moving projects from planning to implementation. Domestic capital is blended with international concessional finance to de-risk lending and build local capacity for climate risk assessment.

Blended Finance: Aligning Public and Private Capital for Adaptation

Adaptation investments often deliver **public goods** (clean water, flood protection, ecosystem restoration) alongside **private returns** (improved yields, lower operational risks). NbS illustrate this well: rehabilitating irrigation canals benefits the entire farming community while individual farmers gain more reliable water supply and lower input costs. Blended finance reconciles these goals by ensuring projects with broad societal value still offer viable returns to private investors.

Blended finance combines public or concessional capital with private investment to improve transaction economics and attract investors who would not participate at market rate alone.

Key instruments:

- **Concessional Loans**: Below-market-rate public funds reducing overall project costs. MDB credit lines are frequently on-lent through domestic commercial banks — the bank earns a margin and extends international capital into local markets.
- **Output-Based Aid (OBA)**: Donor funds released only after verified, pre-agreed outputs are delivered. Growing in

water and sanitation (OECD 2025a).

- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**: Government–private collaborations for infrastructure such as irrigation, desalination and wastewater treatment (OECD 2025b).
- **Green Bonds**: Fixed-income instruments for environmental projects. Egypt's USD 750 million sovereign green bond allocated 54% of proceeds to sustainable water, wastewater and desalination projects (Ministry of Finance, Egypt 2021).
- **Guarantees and Insurance**: Partial risk guarantees and credit enhancements reduce effective exposure when entering new sectors such as NbS or water reuse.

On time-horizon mismatches: Adaptation investments, such as solar irrigation or soil salinity treatment, generate benefits gradually over a long period (often 10–20 years), while bank loans typically require repayment over much shorter timeframes (e.g., 3–7 years). Concessional funding, guarantees and public co-finance are specifically designed to bridge this gap. Engage MDB and donor partners early in structuring to understand available de-risking instruments.

Why this matters for your institution:

- **Portfolio Diversification**: Access water, agriculture and municipal sectors and emerging NbS asset classes
- **Risk Reduction**: Use guarantees and concessional capital to mitigate exposure on new transaction types
- **Reputational and Strategic Value**: Align with national priorities and attract impact-oriented international capital
- **Market Development**: Support government targets that unlock long-term lending under NDCs and NAPs

For commercial financiers, blended finance is not just a funding source, but a risk management tool that can enable entry into otherwise non-bankable sectors.

Practical Entry Points / Recommendations

1. Map and Align Your Portfolio: Review existing exposure against NDC and NAP priority sectors. Identify where climate-relevant lending already sits and where physical risks are concentrated. NDCs and NAPs provide a practical framework for identifying priority investment sectors.

2. Engage with the Climate Finance Ecosystem: Connect proactively with GCF, GEF, MDBs and bilateral donors active in your markets. Early engagement enables participation in project design and access to concessional credit lines and guarantee facilities. Several funds have dedicated NbS and water adaptation financing windows — proactive outreach, not reactive application, is the effective entry point.

3. Integrate NDCs and NAPs into Screening and Risk Assessment: Embed NDC and NAP priorities into project appraisal and sector risk frameworks to assess co-financing eligibility and enabling policy conditions. Incorporating NbS criteria unlocks co-benefits and improves bankability with international co-financiers. This process can be aligned with established climate-risk disclosure frameworks, including the TCFD recommendations on governance, strategy, risk management and metrics and targets (Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures 2017).

4. Build Internal Capacity: Develop capability — or external partnerships — to assess physical climate risk at the asset level and structure blended transactions meeting international fund eligibility requirements. Institutions such as IWMI help close data gaps for water and NbS investments where impact measurement frameworks are still maturing.

5. Track Performance Post-Disbursement: Monitor both financial performance and environmental impact after financing. This is increasingly expected by co-financiers and positions your institution as a credible partner for future blended structures. Key takeaways are summarized in Figure 4.

Climate adaptation finance is a growing market. Financiers

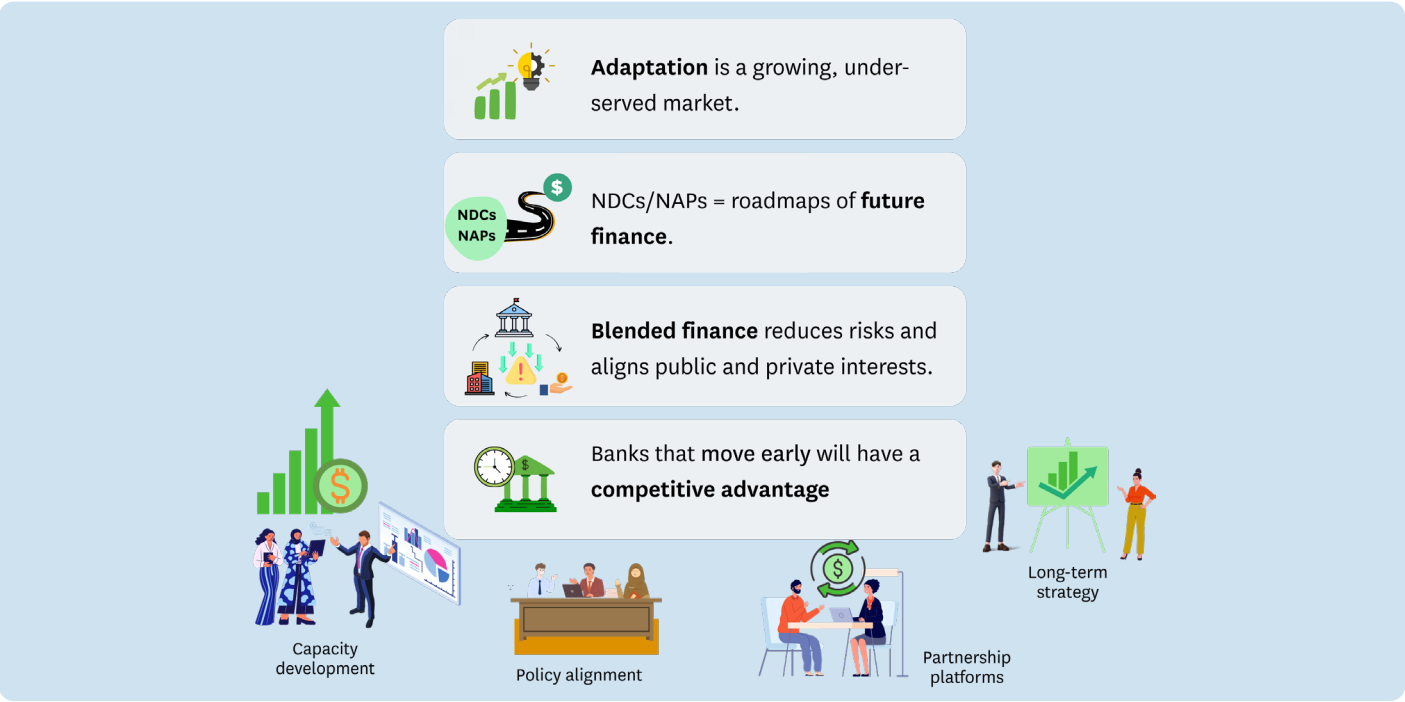


Figure 4. Key takeaways on climate adaptation finance. *Source*: Authors (2026)

who understand NDCs and NAPs will identify bankable projects early, align with donor priorities and create both financial return and measurable impact. By aligning with national climate commitments, your institution can unlock new markets, build portfolio resilience and contribute to the region's climate agenda. Institutions that fail to integrate climate considerations into core lending strategies risk both financial underperformance and reduced access to international capital.

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