DESIGNING PROJECTS IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD:
Guidelines for Embedding Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation into GEF Projects

WHAT IS THE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK (RAPTA)?

The Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) framework is an approach to embed resilience concepts in development projects so they can better achieve their goals, and deliver durable outcomes in the face of socio-economic uncertainty and rapid environmental change.

Ethiopian-GEF project team discusses environmental and livelihoods changes with stakeholders near Jijiga town, Somali Region, Ethiopia, April 2016. Photo by Alan Nicol.

The Resilience Framework guides participatory assessment of current social-ecological systems, and helps identify measures that can improve their condition in the future. It uses an adaptive learning approach which facilitates refinement of interventions over time, to improve their effectiveness as conditions continue to change.

How can the Resilience Framework be applied?

The Resilience Framework encourages project developers to think about a system's capacity to cope with both anticipated and unexpected shocks and stresses, and to determine whether incremental adaptation is required, or whether more fundamental transformational change of the system is needed to achieve long-term sustainability. Resilience thinking helps to focus efforts where interventions will be most effective; it considers multiple temporal and spatial scales, drivers of change, vulnerabilities and possible thresholds or system tipping points.

Project developers are encouraged to work with stakeholders to evaluate:

1. **Resilience of what?** What are the valued products and services delivered by the system?

2. **Resilience to what?** What hazards or shocks could impact the system's capacity to deliver those products and services?

3. **Key Determinants?** What are the controlling variables of resilience in the system?

4. **Points of Influence?** How can the project affect those key determinants?

5. **Project Effectiveness?** How will the outcomes of the project be monitored, and lessons applied?

The Resilience guidelines comprise seven modules. Each module provides step- by-step guidance to the user. Much of the material will be familiar to experienced project planners. The framework applies adaptive management during implementation, uses results from monitoring and assessment to revise strategies, and tests hypotheses underlying the project design.

Who is the Resilience Framework intended for?

The guidelines are aimed at practitioners working with local stakeholders to devise effective development projects. Project developers may be particularly interested in building resilience into project design that help interventions withstand impacts of shocks, stresses, and major external change.

The RAPTA Framework is intended to assist countries and Agencies in assessing and reporting on resilience – a cross-cutting theme of the Integrated Approach Pilots (IAPs).

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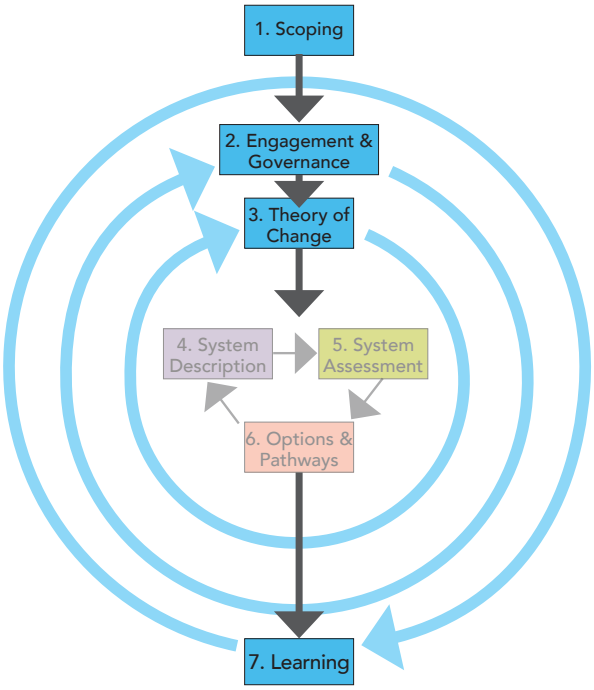
In the Food Security Integrated Approach Pilot (FSIAP), the Ethiopia and Nigeria investments are using the Framework in their project design. It will also be useful for any project addressing issues across the sustainable development agenda.



This diagram illustrates the iterative, yet step-wise nature of the Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment Framework (RAPTA).

The Stockholm Resilience Centre is also piloting the Resilience Framework in their "Guidance for Resilience in the Anthropocene" (GRAID) project to assist with mainstreaming resilience thinking into development strategies.

How will the Resilience Framework be useful to your projects?

The RAPTA Framework offers a fresh dimension to the familiar task of project planning and development – one which allows considerations of rapid social, physical and environmental change in an uncertain world – leading to projects which deliver better results, more durably, reliably and consistently. This approach seeks to anticipate the rate, magnitude and novelty of the changes we face and the fact that, for these challenges, there may need to be adaptive solutions. Moreover, resilience thinking helps to focus efforts where interventions will be most effective. The Framework promotes a structured approach to learning that should enable constant improvement and adaptation to change.

The concepts of adaptation and transformation can enhance successful outcomes of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) program, and are critical to meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to land degradation, climate change, food security, and safeguarding ecosystem functions.

How was the Framework developed?

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), responding to the GEF's growing interest in assessing resilience and a request from the Secretariat to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, commissioned the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation of Australia (CSIRO) to develop this approach.

CSIRO partnered with STAP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to produce guidelines for applying the Resilience Framework, as an approach to aid the assessment of resilience as well as the related concepts of adaptation and transformation.

Given the GEF's interest in applying the Framework in the FSIAP initiative, the guidelines are particularly targeted at food security projects. However, they are relevant to a wide range of projects across the GEF program.

This policy brief is based upon STAP Document GEF/STAP/C.50/Inf.02 "Designing Projects in a Rapidly Changing World: Guidelines for embedding resilience, adaptation, and transformation into sustainable development projects", prepared for GEF/STAP by O'Connell, D., Abel, N., Grigg, N., Maru, Y., Butler, J., Cowie, A., Stone-Jovicich, S., Walker, B., Wise, R., Ruhweza, A., Pearson, L., Ryan, P., Stafford Smith, M. Available at http://www.stapgef.org/publications. *For further information about RAPTA and the guidelines, please write to Guadalupe Duron,* guadalupe.duron@unep.org

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) comprises seven expert advisors supported by a Secretariat, who are together responsible for connecting the Global Environment Facility to the most up to date, authoritative and globally representative science. **http://www.stapgef.org**

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