

# Incorporating tools to measure resilience into Mali's local planning systems

## Limited consideration of resilience and climate change exist in current methodological guidelines

Since the introduction of local governments under Law N°96-059, communes in Mali have formulated their economic, social and cultural development plans (PDSEC) in accordance with the prevailing logic of decentralisation. PDSECs are one of the many tools used to plan local development actions.

To avoid confusion in the planning procedure, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government and the Ministry of Economy and Finance collaborated to produce a methodological guide (through their technical structures) to enable all local authorities to follow a single procedure when designing their PDSECs. This guide does not include a process that enables local authorities to integrate considerations of climate change and resilience-building at the community level.

This shortfall could be rectified by incorporating the three tools and procedures that we propose here into the formal planning system: (1) a wellbeing and livelihoods analysis; (2) a resilience scale that takes account of community-identified and prioritised interventions; and (3) a theory of change.

## Institutions in Mali have limited capacity to include climate change in local planning

Under Mali's process of decentralization, local authorities have been responsible for local development since the State devolved economic and social powers to plan development and land use, manage natural resources, mobilize financial resources and fund local development. As the contracting authorities, local authorities are responsible for planning, managing the environment, providing various public services, coordinating different sectors and stakeholders, and funding public good investments that strengthen local livelihoods and economies.

These are key roles and activities in building resilience at the community level. Local governments' proximity to their constituents should enable them to put in place tailored climate adaptation strategies that reflect the diversity and complexity of local economies, ecosystems, needs and priorities. Community-based institutions have strong local legitimacy, especially in areas such as land use, resource management and conflict mediation. They also possess proven knowledge, understanding and strategies for dealing with climate variability.

But institutional capacity to integrate climate change into planning is relatively weak in Mali and efforts

Participatory resilience approaches use tools that engage communities to measure, analyse and evaluate resilience, are adapted to the local context, and can be integrated into formal local planning systems. This helps ensure that indigenous knowledge and views are taken into account in adaptation and resilience-building strategies and institutionalised in local government decision-making systems.



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to manage climate change effects at the local level make little use of climate information. Local technical services are involved in planning processes and possess expertise on climate change related to their respective sectors, such as agriculture, sanitation, livestock and social development. But they lack a deep understanding of local communities' experiences and needs in the face of climate change.

This is the context in which the Decentralising Climate Funds (DCF) project operates in Mali. The project aims to build resilience and reduce communities' vulnerability to climate extremes and other shocks by improving local authorities' institutional capacities to manage climate funds and providing direct funding for public adaptation investments identified and prioritised by the communities concerned. This engages a multi-actor exercise that requires changes in how development processes are conducted. The DCF project has developed and tested several tools at the community level to better understand how resilience can be improved.

## Description and importance of the proposed tools for measuring resilience

Resilience tools help identify different factors in local people's vulnerability to climate variability and extremes (which vary according to the agro-ecological zone and production system concerned), with a focus on women and youth to ensure that local planning offers an inclusive reflection of local priorities. We propose that a participatory approach should be incorporated into the formal planning system, so that local people's views and knowledge about climate adaptation and resilience strategies are institutionalised in local government decision-making processes

Table 2: Proposed tools

Tool	Objective	Techniques used	Local people (men and women) express their needs and describe their experiences with resilience	Tool to be incorporated into planning systems
Tool 1 Wellbeing Analysis	To understand wellbeing criteria and categories, changes in levels of wellbeing, and different types of livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion in plenary session – brainstorming and questions and answers to define terms, describe wellbeing and understand social dynamics and changes in wellbeing</li> <li>• Define different levels or degrees of wellbeing in the project zones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local vernacular terms to describe resilience</li> <li>• Wellbeing criteria and categories</li> <li>• Levels of wellbeing change and describe different types of livelihood</li> <li>• Links between natural resources and livelihoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Diagnostic phase: Identify climate adaptation measures (use tools to analyse wellbeing and the resilience scale)</b></li> </ul>

## What is resilience?

Resilience is the ability of a system to cope with stress and shocks. The BRACED Programme defines climate change as *"the long-term capacity of a system or process to deal with extreme weather events and climate change while continuing to develop."*

No single model exists for building resilience. It is essential to define who or what needs to be made resilient, and to what kind of future change or shock. Indicators of resilience to climate change are therefore specific to the situation, and not generic.

We propose the three tools listed below for inclusion in the guide for formulating PDSECs, as they enable local people to describe their experiences with resilience and are sufficiently practical to be incorporated into the existing system. These tools are:

- wellbeing analysis
- resilience scale
- theory of change

Table 1: Phases in formulating PDSECs and inclusion of the proposed tools

Preparatory phase	Proposed tools
Diagnostic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellbeing analysis</li> <li>• Resilience scale</li> </ul>
Spatial Analysis and Planning	
Programme design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change, development of indicators</li> </ul>
Document finalisation	

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Table 2: Proposed tools (cont.)

Tool	Objective	Techniques used	Local people (men and women) express their needs and describe their experiences with resilience	Tool to be incorporated into planning systems
Tool 2 Resilience scale	To determine where different wellbeing groups feature on the resilience scale  Identify key factors in resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plenary session, brainstorming and questions and answers to define and characterise resilience</li> <li>Group exercises to identify factors that enable livelihood systems to improve resilience</li> <li>Report back to plenary session followed by Q&amp;As and comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resilience in their own words</li> <li>Rating scale for self-evaluation and to understand differences between their levels of resilience</li> <li>Summary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New vocabulary – important to understand resilience terms and categories</li> <li>Subjectivity</li> <li>Easy exercise for participants</li> <li><b>Diagnostic phase: Participatory diagnostic sessions in each village</b></li> </ul>
Tool 3 Theory of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand how resilience can be strengthened, and which processes can make households more resilient</li> <li>To identify 3 or 4 possible inputs to strengthen resilience and indicators that will show improvements</li> <li>To make the link between climate change and how an action will build resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plenary session to explain the exercise</li> <li>Group work to identify 3 or 4 priority actions, a diagram of outcomes that will be generated by the actions, the effects of these outcomes, and the impact of these effects.</li> <li>Identify criteria for determining the outcomes and effects that have been generated</li> <li>Report back to plenary session, followed by Q&amp;As and comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a link with climate change and development</li> <li>Establish a link between activities and outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new tool/way of thinking</li> <li>Recognise this can be difficult to understand</li> <li>Can be appropriated by local people if the approach and concepts are simplified and properly explained.</li> <li><b>Programme design phase: Planning workshop</b> <i>(Use tool to develop a theory of change)</i></li> <li>Indicators / M&amp;E are useful for analysing change and needed to monitor and evaluate implementation of the PDSEC</li> </ul>

## Lessons learned about the constraints associated with these tools

The DCF project has developed and tested several tools at the community level to better understand how resilience can be improved.

While there is no doubt that tools such as these can play an important role in improving planning and building community resilience to climate change, there are a number of constraints that need to be addressed so that they can be scaled up effectively:

- **Time allocated for each tool:** The Implementation of tool must be given sufficient time, enabling them be used to gather as much information as possible. The process should be given at least five days and the steps

should overlap to ensure the approach is as iterative and productive as possible.

- **Quality of moderators/facilitators:** Moderators/facilitators who conduct workshops and surveys should work in multi-disciplinary teams and must have a mastery of resilience concepts so they can use the tools properly and effectively.
- **Quality of participation:** To obtain an accurate profile of each zone, the participants who are invited to respond to these tools must have a good understanding of the different production systems and practices in their area.
- **Linguistic considerations:** These tools need to be simplified and translated into local languages to help participants develop a shared understanding of the concepts and accommodate literacy levels in the rural areas where they are deployed.

- **Complexity of certain tools:** Tools such as the theory of change are very technical, creating a risk that participants will not understand and use them. The technical team of moderators/facilitators responsible for finalising this tool must ensure that local people understand the logic behind different actions and investments and their effects on resilience. Communities and support programs can then use the theory of change as a tool for monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, the tool for developing the seasonal calendar is highly relevant, but requires a skilled and dynamic facilitator to avoid a process that is very tedious and time-consuming.
- **Financial resources needed for these tools:** Local government funding to implement the different stages of the process remains problematic. Raising local authorities' awareness of the value of these exercises is necessary to lead them to become involved in, and ultimately own, the processes and to view such programmes as a means of boosting their development, as tools for planning, action, negotiation, monitoring and evaluation and ultimately a way to improve people's living conditions.

## Main challenge and recommendations for scaling up the process

The challenge of how to pilot a participatory approach that can be incorporated into the planning system and institutionalised at the national level remains.

In Mali, an ongoing Green Climate Fund accreditation process for the National Local Investment Agency, *l'Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales* (ANICT), could be a real opportunity to incorporate the most relevant tools into the formal planning system, and thereby institutionalise it in the national decentralisation dynamic.

## Conclusion

Including these tools (wellbeing analysis, resilience scale, theory of change) in the methodological guide to planning will add value to local government planning processes. This will enable local people to recount their experiences with resilience (as the tools are sufficiently practical to be incorporated into the existing system) and help ensure that local planning processes take account of resilience and climate change.



## The project

Decentralising Climate Funds (DCF) is a research-action and advocacy project supporting local people in Senegal and Mali to become more resilient to climate change through access to locally-controlled adaptation funds. The project is part of the BRACED programme funded by the UK government and carried out by the Near East Foundation (NEF) with Innovation, Environnement et Développement en Afrique (IED Afrique) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

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