



# Piloting climate-smart development planning for local government in Ethiopia

## Lessons learned from the BRE programme

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Despite growing consensus that climate-resilient development should be at the top of the agenda for least developed countries, a persistent implementation gap means there is little practical learning derived for governments on how to operationalise. Describing an action research project to assess the readiness of Ethiopia’s planning system for locally led climate-resilient development, this paper identifies areas for action, provides valuable lessons on the constraints to institutionalising these processes in Ethiopia, and illustrates some of the challenges and design trade-offs that development practitioners and local governments in least developed countries will have to make when implementing the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation.

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# Acronyms

<b>ACT</b>	Action on Climate Today
<b>BRE</b>	Building Resilience in Ethiopia
<b>CBO</b>	community-based organisation
<b>CBPWD</b>	Community-Based Participatory Watershed Development
<b>CRDP</b>	climate-resilient development planning
<b>CRGE</b>	Climate-Resilient Green Economy
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organisation
<b>CVCA</b>	Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
<b>DCF</b>	Decentralised Climate Finance
<b>EFCCC</b>	Ethiopia Forests and Climate Change Commission
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GHG</b>	greenhouse gas
<b>GTP</b>	Growth and Transformation Plan
<b>HABP</b>	Household Asset Building Programme
<b>IIED</b>	International Institute for Environment and Development
<b>LDC</b>	Least developed country
<b>LIFE-AR</b>	Least Developed Countries Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience
<b>LLA Principles</b>	Principles for Locally Led Adaptation
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
<b>MoFEC</b>	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
<b>MoPD</b>	Ministry of Planning and Development
<b>MSWT</b>	Multisectoral Woreda Transformation Initiative
<b>NAP-ETH</b>	Ethiopia National Adaptation Plan
<b>NDC</b>	nationally determined contributions
<b>NGO</b>	nongovernmental organisation
<b>PSNP</b>	Productive Safety Net Programme
<b>RLLP</b>	Resilient Landscapes and Livelihoods Project
<b>SLMP</b>	Sustainable Land Management Project
<b>SNNPR</b>	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region
<b>WASH</b>	water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WCSDP</b>	woreda climate-smart development planning

# Summary

Given the increasing severity of the climate crisis, there is growing interest among least developed countries (LDCs) about how to operationalise climate-resilient development. This means finding socially just and effective development pathways that combine progress on the Sustainable Development Goals — that is, leaving no one behind — with the need for progress on climate mitigation and adaptation.

There is growing consensus among scientists, policymakers and practitioners in the international climate change community that climate-resilient development is not just about mainstreaming climate concerns into business-as-usual programming. The fundamental uncertainty associated with climate futures requires a systemic shift in governance that better integrates all aspects of government action — finance, planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning, policy, and institutional change — into an ongoing and iterative learning process. In particular, there is a need for greater bottom-up accountability and empowerment of those that are most affected by the impacts of climate change: communities and livelihood systems at the local level. Equitable and sustainable climate-resilient development can only be achieved by putting local communities at the heart of decisions that directly affect their climate resilience, as outlined in the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation (LLA Principles), and by drawing on expertise and understanding from individuals and organisations across the whole of society.

While practical guidance and a variety of tools for government actors about how to integrate climate adaptation considerations are available, very few fully incorporate the Locally Led Adaptation Principles and even fewer are widely operationalised at local level. IIED has developed a climate-resilient development framework to address this gap by helping national and local governments ensure they are establishing the right institutions, policies, climate-resilient planning and monitoring, evaluation, and learning MEL tools — and have the finance in place — at all levels to support the integration of equitable and sustainable climate resilience into development planning. Inspired by the latest thinking on climate-resilient development, locally led adaptation and ‘business unusual’ (McIvor, 2021) approaches to climate finance, the framework identifies five fundamental areas of government action and eight crosscutting operational principles to shape plans to

promote climate justice and the agency of local actors and leverage local knowledge to avoid maladaptation. A flexible framework, local governments and associated actors in the climate space can use it in several ways.

This working paper describes an action research project to assess the readiness of Ethiopia’s planning system for locally led climate-resilient development and identify areas for action. Working with local (woreda) governments, the national climate finance agency and a private Ethiopian climate consultant, the project used IIED’s Climate-Resilient Development Framework as a tool to co-design and pilot a set of practical, user-centred climate resilient development planning (CRDP) guidelines for local government use. As well as providing valuable lessons on the constraints to institutionalising locally led climate-resilient development processes at the local level in Ethiopia, the project illustrated some of the challenges and design trade-offs that development practitioners and local governments face when implementing the LLA Principles in an LDC context.

This paper contributes to the research on climate-resilient development in several ways. First, it introduces and applies an innovative analytical framework to assess the preparedness of LDC institutions and planning processes to adopt climate-resilient development practices across five pillars of government action. Second, it presents our findings from applying that framework in Ethiopia, showing the strengths and limitations of the country’s local government planning system. Third, it explores how the LLA Principles could be operationalised in local-level planning, if capacity and financial gaps are addressed. And fourth, it reports on the general challenges of integrating CRDP into local government planning systems that face serious capacity and financial constraints. Although the focus is on the Ethiopian context, these findings apply to all LDCs.

Building on the challenges encountered by the project, and the serious capacity and financial constraints facing local governments in Ethiopia, the paper draws the following conclusions:

1. While Ethiopia's climate policies and regulatory frameworks provide a strong foundation for climate-resilient development at the national level, there is a significant implementation gap at sub-national levels and the planning process remains top-down with very little systematic community input. Local government planning processes are strongly sectoral and climate risk management is minimal. Operating in a context of severe funding constraints, the main focus in annual budgeting and strategic direction is strongly shaped by regional sectoral targets and guidelines, (which are themselves not climate smart).
2. To effect change in Ethiopia's local government planning system, the country must first build a cross-sectoral coalition for action at the national level and then work down. The organisation leading this coalition needs to have enough convening power, mandate, political momentum and financial resources to coordinate and lead change across all levels. Guidelines can provide an operational manual but can only succeed if accompanied by formal authorisation for institutional collaboration at all levels, long-term institutional commitment, and reliable funding for planning.
3. Ethiopia's regions currently provide strategic direction and technical support of many kinds to lower levels of government. Where woreda-level capacity is poor, it may be more effective to make the region, zone or woreda cluster the focus of climate-smart strategic development planning processes — while also taking care to ensure meaningful community engagement from, and accountability to, lower levels.
4. Given the capacity gaps and wide range of local conditions, a flexible approach to designing planning systems is required. This should be sensitive to regional differences in professional ways of working, levels of capacity and the organisation and formal/informal structure of civil society in different places.
5. Local government planning systems do not generally deal with the radical uncertainty associated with future climate change and its local impacts. Scenario planning is a useful tool that builds on both available scientific information and local knowledge, can be used at various scales, builds community awareness of future climate risk and helps build downward accountability.
6. Ethiopia already has guidelines for integrated participatory community-level planning at watershed level, and these have been semi-institutionalised within well-funded national flagship programmes housed within specific ministries. Although watershed planning processes cannot be a substitute for woreda planning systems, they can provide climate-resilient governance interfaces at lower tiers. Reviewing and aligning these watershed guidelines with the CRDP Principles and establishing a formal professional certification process through accredited training institutions could help build capacity nationally.
7. A CRDP system involves multiple actors with divergent interests working together systematically across scales in mutually beneficial ways. Such a system is based on longstanding relationships and networks of trust through sustained collaboration and will take time to develop.

The paper will be of interest to:

- LDC governments interested in establishing the systems, mechanisms and tools for equitable and sustainable climate-resilient development that leaves no one behind
- Ethiopian government actors in the planning and climate space interested in understanding the implications of climate-resilient development paradigms for government planning systems and the readiness of existing Ethiopian systems for business-unusual approaches
- Adaptation and development practitioners interested in the burgeoning field of locally led adaptation who wish to explore the challenges and practicalities of operationalising the LLA Principles in an LDC context, and
- Stakeholders, practitioners and other actors in the international climate financing community and system.

# 1

# Background

Setting the context for the Climate-Smart Development Planning for Local Government pilot in Ethiopia, this chapter introduces the legislative and policy background to climate action, briefly describes the main actors involved and some of the planning tools used at the local level. It also provides an overview of the project.

## 1.1 Introduction

Climate-resilient development recognises that sustainable development and climate action are mutually dependent goals that cannot be pursued independently. Climate-resilient development is neither a set of abstract targets to be met nor an outcome that can be met once and for all. Rather, it is an ongoing and iterative process involving a systemic shift in governance that better integrates finance, planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), policy, and institutional change centred on inclusion and social justice (IPCC, 2023b). For least developed countries (LDCs) — which have contributed the least to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions yet have the poorest populations in dollar terms — this poses specific challenges as they choose their development pathways to middle-income status. As well as managing future carbon emissions, they must increase the climate resilience of the poorest and most marginalised groups in their society. To be effective, the system of governance for selecting, implementing and assessing development pathways needs to be socially just, inclusive and flexible in the face of uncertain future

climate conditions (Pisor et al., 2022). Climate-resilient development therefore goes well beyond the standard process of mainstreaming climate into normal, business-as-usual government operations at different administrative levels.

In 2019, the LDC Group launched a 2050 vision at the Climate Action Summit. The vision is “for all LDCs to deliver climate-resilient development pathways by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050 to ensure our societies and ecosystems thrive” (IIED, 2019; LDC Group, 2019).

But it is clear that existing models of international climate finance are not fit for this purpose. The design logic and priorities of development projects are typically decided by external donors, with tightly controlled, short-term finance that is challenging to access, restricted with conditionalities and inflexible in the face of both unpredictable climate risks and emerging opportunities for positive change. As a result, they neither reflect LDC priorities nor incorporate local people's understanding, expertise or agency (Omari-Motsumi et al., 2019).



There is limited guidance for LDCs on how to implement climate-resilient development. The eight LLA Principles provide a high-level framework outlining important formal characteristics that an ideal climate-resilient adaptation governance system should exhibit to maximise efficiency and equity while also challenging business as usual (Coger et al., 2022; Soanes et al., 2021; WRI n.d.). But these do not amount to an instruction set for governments. There is little normative guidance on how to scale out the LLA Principles in an LDC government planning context, how to institutionalise them within existing systems, whether sequencing or prioritising different principles matters, and whether there are trade-offs or dependencies between the individual principles.

It is, therefore, vital to experiment and document efforts to implement such systems. But there is also a need to reflect on and learn from climate-resilient development practice more widely, exploring the practical real-world challenges and difficulties of turning a manifesto into an effective system of governance at multiple scales of government, the different strategies for doing so, and their relative merits. This paper aims to:

- Introduce a high-level framework for analysing institutional readiness for climate-resilient development planning (CRDP) and use this to assess the Ethiopian context
- Explore the challenges and difficulties encountered in woreda-level CRDP, particularly in terms of capacity and resources
- Provide a high-level overview of what a CRDP process might look like at the woreda level, and
- Reflect on the learnings from the piloting process, particularly insights that are relevant for applying or operationalising the LLA Principles

## 1.2 Climate action in Ethiopia

### 1.2.1 Climate policies and frameworks

Ethiopia was a pioneer among LDCs when it introduced the Climate-Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Strategy<sup>1</sup> as part of its national planning system in 2011 (FDRE, 2011), setting out a clear vision for transforming Ethiopia into a middle-income country following a low-carbon resilient development pathway (Bhandary, 2022a; Dagne et

al., 2022). The CRGE Strategy informed Ethiopia's first nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and has been at the heart of the updated NDC process (FDRE, 2021b). It has also been integrated into successive national development plans — including the first two five-year growth and transformation plans (GTPs) and the 10-year development plan for 2021–2030 (FDRE, 2021a) — and is now one of the country's main policy agendas.

While the CRGE Strategy has successfully mainstreamed mitigation and low-carbon development into national and sectoral planning frameworks through the Green Economy Strategy, it has been less successful in mainstreaming adaptation (Dagne et al., 2022). It subsequently developed sector-specific versions of its climate resilience strategy for agriculture and forestry, water and energy, and transport, but it was the development of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP-ETH) that finally consolidated these efforts and extended the analysis to eight vulnerable sectors, identifying 18 thematic adaptation options and five strategic priority areas. A NAP-ETH Implementation Roadmap (FDRE, 2020) identifies key enabling activities, timelines and milestones and suggests key actors responsible for implementation.

Since 2011, Ethiopia has also developed various guidelines to help sector and subnational administrations integrate the CRGE Strategy into their annual and strategic planning processes, such as the Woreda Climate Resilient Green Economy Investment Planning Guide (FDRE et al. 2013) and the Wereda<sup>2</sup> Disaster Risk Mitigation/Adaptation Planning Guidelines (FDRE and Ministry of Agriculture 2014). Following the preparation of the NAP-ETH (FDRE 2019b), which notes the need to mainstream adaptation into planning at all levels and makes building planning capacity a strategic priority, the Ethiopia Forests and Climate Change Commission (EFCCC) prepared a revised guideline to help integrate both the CRGE Strategy and NAP-ETH into local government annual and medium-term planning processes (FDRE, 2019a). This was tested in five woredas in five regions, but capacity and financial constraints and a lack of prioritisation mean they have not been institutionalised<sup>3</sup> and the findings from the pilots have not been made available. Table 1 summarises key climate change policies and guidelines.

1 Formally, the CRGE Strategy consists of two distinct and separable strategies, namely the Green Economy Strategy (which focuses on mitigation) and the Climate-Resilient Strategy (which focuses on adaptation).

2 Woreda and wereda are both acceptable English transcriptions of the Amharic term. We prefer the general use of the term woreda in the text, except where wereda is in a document title.

3 Key Informant Interview, EFCCC.



Table 1. Key climate policies, guidelines and frameworks in Ethiopia since 2011

YEAR	NAME
2011	Climate-Resilient Green Economy Strategy, comprising: Green Economy Strategy (focused on mitigation) Climate-Resilient Strategy (focused on adaptation)
2013	Woreda Climate-Resilient Green Economy Investment Planning Guide National Policy on Strategy and Disaster Risk Management
2014	Wereda Disaster Risk Mitigation/Adaptation Planning Guidelines
2015	Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) 2015/16–2019/20 Climate Resilience Strategy: Agriculture and Forestry Climate Resilience Strategy: Transport Sector Climate Resilience Strategy: Water and Energy
2017	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) National Adaptation Plan to Address Climate Change (NAPA)
2018	Guideline for Mainstreaming CRGE
2019	Ethiopia Forests and Climate Change Commission (EFCCC) Planning Guideline to Integrate the CRGE Strategy at Woreda Level Ethiopia's CRGE National Adaptation Plan (NAP-ETH) Multisectoral Woreda Transformation: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of Ethiopia Strategic Document Watershed and Rangeland Planning Guide Green Legacy Initiative
2020	Ethiopia's CRGE National Adaptation Plan: Implementation Roadmap CRGE Facility Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Community-Based Participatory Watershed Or Rangeland Development Guideline
2021	Updated NDC Ten Years Development Plan: A Pathway to Prosperity 2021–2030

Sources: World Bank (2018); Eshete et al. (2020).

## 1.2.2 National institutional architecture to support climate action

### The CRGE Facility

Following the publication of the CRGE Strategy in 2011, Ethiopia set up a national climate fund, the CRGE Facility, within the MoFEC with the national mandate to source, mobilise and channel climate funds in support of the multisectoral CRGE Strategy (Bhandary, 2022a; Dagne et al., 2022). It is one of the more successful national climate funds set up by LDCs.

The Ministry of Finance is accredited as a direct access entity by the GCF and the Adaptation Fund. This means it has met fiduciary and governance criteria, which allows it to access adaptation and mitigation funding directly from these climate funds without using an international organisation as an intermediary (Caldwell and Larsen, 2021). The GCF accreditation allows the ministry to handle small projects (up to US\$50 million) of medium environmental and social risk (Category B), up to project management level.

Until it was reorganised in 2021, the EFCCC co-managed the CRGE Facility with the Ministry of Finance, and had the mandate to lead and coordinate overall climate-aligned national development strategy, including updated NDCs and the NAP-ETH. It was the institutional home for technical capacity related to climate change and provided support, training and coordination across all administrative levels. Since 2021, the EFCCC's climate mandate has been split between the EPA, which is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the NAP-ETH and other climate-related actions, and the MoPD, which is responsible for cross-sectoral coordination and mainstreaming the CRGE Strategy into national, regional and woreda-level plans, the updated NDC and the Long-Term Low-Emissions Development Strategy.

### Sector ministries

The MoPD sets CRGE related target indicators for sectoral ministries, especially all those identified as priority areas (agriculture, water, energy, transport and forestry). The ministries develop their own sectoral plans and strategies (which integrate climate related priorities and mainstream the CRGE strategy to varying degrees) and oversee their respective regional bureaus. Sector ministries are also closely associated with the delivery and coordination of significant national flagship programmes.

### National flagship sustainable development programmes

Various national flagship development programmes — such as the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), Sustainable Land Management Programme (SLMP), Resilient Landscapes and Livelihoods Project (RLLP), the Agricultural Growth Program (AGP) and the Lowlands Livelihood Resilience Project (LLRP) also contribute to national development and CRGE strategic objectives with longstanding funding commitments from international multilateral and bilateral donors and development partners (see Table 2). These programmes have cross-sectoral sustainable development objectives determined by national government in agreement with international development partners, and are coordinated through group focal points in sectoral ministries.

Some have run for decades and are institutionalised, with sophisticated coordination and delivery structures at all administrative levels, including formalised technical support, management and coordination committees, programme implementation manuals (PIMs), environmental and social management frameworks (EDMFs), gender mainstreaming guidelines and other standards, and donor-mandated reporting systems. Each provides its own local planning guidelines and woreda/sub-woreda planning institutions, often based around variations of the Community-Based Participatory Watershed Guidelines (FDRE and MoARD, 2005). They are a major source of reliable and predictable development funding in Ethiopia. However, apart from some pilot initiatives, these programmes do not explicitly plan for future climate risk, nor do they track climate related expenditure or have explicit CRGE-related performance indicators.

### LIFE-AR: an alternative, climate-resilient development funding mechanism

In 2018, Ethiopia signed the LIFE-AR Country Compact (LDC Group, 2019) as a frontrunner country. Its cross-ministerial platform, technical committee and task force, housed in the EPA, has been experimenting with a business-unusual climate finance mechanism (McIvor, 2021) that commits to channelling 70% of climate finance to the local level, engaging with whole-of-society/whole-of-government principles in a transparent and accountable manner. Investment decisions are demand-led at community level according to the principle of subsidiarity. This experiment in transformative governance is being piloted in a woreda in Oromia region, North Shoa zone. The government has since signed up to the LLA Principles at COP28 in Dubai in 2023.

Table 2. Overview of selected national flagship programs contributing to CRGE Strategy objectives

<b>Productive Safety Net Programme (Ministry of Agriculture)</b>	
<b>Overview</b>	Operating since 2005 and now in its fifth phase, the PSNP has become a fully institutionalised shock-responsive social protection delivery mechanism targeting poor and extremely poor households in food-insecure and drought-prone kebeles of selected woredas.
<b>Contribution to CRGE Strategy objectives</b>	Using the watershed as the basic unit of development planning, the programme finances unconditional or food for work transfers for undertaking public works or social infrastructure projects related to natural resource management (e.g. soil conservation or water harvesting). Livelihood support activities (capacity building, training, access to credit etc) also aim to build resilience to shocks and community adaptive capacity through a layered approach of livelihood diversification, early warning systems and adoption of climate-smart techniques.
<b>Sustainable Land Management Programmes (1 and 2) and Resilient Landscapes and Livelihoods Project (Ministry of Agriculture)</b>	
<b>Overview</b>	SLMP 1 and 2 were World Bank-funded programmes designed to reduce land degradation, enhance land productivity, and improve livelihoods and the environment through an integrated cross-sectoral sustainable landscape management approach. RLLP builds on SLMP 1 & 2 with an added emphasis on climate-smart agriculture.
<b>Contribution to CRGE Strategy objectives</b>	SLMP builds resilience through integrated sustainable land management in micro-watersheds (soil and water conservation/water harvesting), supported by land certification and institutional capacity development to boost smallholder investment, reduce land degradation and improve agricultural productivity. The third phase (RLLP) adds climate-smart practices (Deichert, 2017) and livelihood diversification.
<b>Agriculture Growth Programmes AGP (1 &amp; 2)</b>	
<b>Overview</b>	Operating since 2010, the AGP programmes aim to increase agricultural productivity by targeting woredas with high potential for agricultural growth.
<b>Contribution to CRGE Strategy objectives</b>	AGP builds resilience through increased agricultural production, increased uptake of technology (with a focus on gender, nutrition and climate smart agricultural practices) and the development of value chains. It also focuses on small-scale rural infrastructure and irrigation development, using the watershed as the unit of intervention.
<b>Lowlands Livelihood Resilience Project (LLRP) Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands (formerly under Ministry of Peace)</b>	
<b>Overview</b>	Operating since 2019, the LLRP aims to build the resilience of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in lowland areas to external shocks including drought, conflict and disease.
<b>Contribution to CRGE Strategy objectives</b>	LLRP focuses on improving pastoral rangelands through participatory rangeland management at the landscape level and governance arrangements supportive of pastoralist mobility. There is also a focus on demand-led community pastoralist development and livelihood diversification, and the provision of basic services.

Table 3. Formal institutions involved in climate related planning and action in Ethiopia, by administrative level

INSTITUTION	FUNCTIONS
<b>Federal/national level</b>	
<b>Ministry of Finance</b>	Facilitates and coordinates climate and development funding as an accredited entity for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund
<b>CRGE Facility</b>	National climate fund, housed within the Ministry of Finance, tasked with sourcing international and domestic finance for climate action
<b>EFCCC (until 2021)</b>	Responsible for technical support and training on climate change at federal and regional levels Provided technical support to the CRGE Facility Developed the NAP-ETH Revised the NDC
<b>EPA (since 2021, successor to EFCCC)</b>	Responsible for technical support and mainstreaming NAP-ETH, LIFE-AR and other climate-related actions
<b>MoPD</b>	Responsible for integrating CRGE Strategy into long-term planning and climate-related targets into national, regional and woreda plans
<b>Line ministries (eg Ministry of Agriculture)</b>	Implementation entities for CRGE-related programmes and initiatives
<b>CRGE directorates within line ministries</b>	Provide technical support and capacity building to line ministries for CRGE mainstreaming
<b>Regional (zonal) level</b>	
<b>Regional Bureau of Finance</b>	Facilitates and coordinates climate and development funding
<b>Regional Planning Commission</b>	Provides strategic climate-related indicators and targets (CRGE Strategy) to sectors and validates annual sector plans
<b>Regional sectoral bureaus</b>	Implementation entities for CRGE-related programmes and initiatives Provide technical support and coordination
<b>CRGE directorates in each sector bureaus (as of 2024; incomplete presence in many regions)</b>	Provide technical support and capacity building to regional ministries for CRGE mainstreaming
<b>Woreda level</b>	
<b>Woreda finance office</b> <b>Woreda planning office</b>	Prepare annual plans based on regional/zonal strategic priorities
<b>Sectoral offices</b>	Prepare sectoral plans based on regional/zonal strategic priorities Responsible for sectoral service delivery, act as implementing agencies for sectoral strategies and national flagship programmes
<b>Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/development partners</b>	Often plan and act independently of woreda processes
<b>Kebele sector offices</b> <b>Kebele cabinet (management)</b> <b>Extension services</b> <b>Development agents</b>	Sectoral planning and implementation entities at lowest administrative level
<b>Kebele/community watershed planning committees</b> <b>Water user associations</b> <b>Community health workers (development army)</b> <b>Farmer cooperatives</b>	These formal institutions may exist depending on regional and local context, the presence of flagship programmes, capacity and funding. Representatives from these bodies may be involved to some degree in kebele or watershed level planning but processes vary greatly.

Sources: MoA and FDRE (2019); World Bank (2014, 2019, 2020).

### 1.2.3 The woreda and the local development planning process

Ethiopia has a federal system of governance, with four subnational administrative levels: regions, zones, woredas (or districts) and kebeles (wards), which are the smallest and most local unit of government administration.

Officially, and in accordance with the constitution (FDRE, 1995), Ethiopia is engaged in a process of progressive decentralisation (Vaughan et al., 2020), creating a system where woreda-level governments are formally responsible for local service delivery, development planning, coordination and delivery — including disaster risk management, climate adaptation and mitigation (mainstreaming the CRGE strategy) — based on local contexts, priorities and needs. Woredas can coordinate the work of non-state actors in line with annual plans. Woredas are expected to produce five-year strategic plans which set out their medium-term development priorities, in addition to annual plans.

However, as our research confirms, decision making and resource allocation within this woreda planning system remain largely top-down and sectoral, with a strong focus on meeting regionally determined strategic targets. While the annual woreda planning system may involve kebele-level institutions, including government and technical staff and some community representatives,<sup>4</sup> it leaves little space for meaningful, bottom-up, demand-led community engagement and little scope for local innovation. The CRGE strategy has not been mainstreamed into woreda planning processes.

The limits of the decentralisation agenda can be partially explained by the nature of the funding deficit at the woreda level. Funding for development activities (including climate action) is scarce:

- Regions provide a General Purpose Grant (the 'block grant') to fund general woreda activities. However, most of this block grant is used by woredas on recurrent expenditures such as salaries and administration, leaving a minimal residual fund for planning or capital investment.
- Much woreda development funding comes through the national flagship programmes (PSNP and so on), which are often restricted to specific outcomes, investments and activities. Moreover, flagship programmes are targeted at specific kebeles of some, not all, woredas.

- Some limited funding for local climate action has become available through the CRGE Facility, through finance from the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund. This is only available to a very small number of woredas - and it is directed at specific kebeles within them.
- International NGOs, FBOs and development partners provide funding for projects in line with their missions and agendas, selecting intervention locations on the advice of the region or zone and woreda.

## 1.3 The Woreda Climate-Smart<sup>5</sup> Development Planning (WCSDP) Action Research Project

Funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and USAID through the Building Resilience in Ethiopia (BRE) programme (OPM, n.d) IIED worked with Echnoserve Consulting and the CRGE Facility to co-develop and pilot a set of WCSDP guidelines. This was in collaboration with 22 woredas participating in an adaptation project<sup>6</sup> secured by the CRGE Facility through the GCF's Direct Access modality (GCF, n.d.). The project focuses on building resilience to drought, primarily through investments in agriculture, water and irrigation, together with building local-level technical capacity.

Focal CRGE group/units, housed in national ministries, and the CRGE Facility secretariat within the MoPD, have tended to bypass local woreda planning units in project design, planning and appraisal processes, partly because local-level planning capacity is fragmented, under-resourced and extremely variable between regions and sectors.

The basis of the WCSDP project's theory of change is that building the capacity of these woreda planning units will lead to better integration and mainstreaming of CRGE strategy initiatives into regular planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation processes and will support the decentralisation agenda. A focus on emerging best practice in climate-resilient development, with its emphasis on cross-sectoral, demand-led, socially just and inclusive decision making, will lead to more context-appropriate, equitable and effective local-level plans that are well suited to the dynamic contexts associated with climate change.

4 Particularly where national flagship programmes have targeted woredas and specific kebeles within them.

5 Climate-resilient development as a concept refers to a wider ecosystem of enabling conditions, governance mechanisms and principles as set out in our CRD framework. A set of guidelines is only one component of the 'pillars' of CRD — so we refer to them as 'climate smart' rather than 'climate resilient'.

6 FP058 - Responding to the increasing risk of drought: building gender-responsive resilience of the most vulnerable communities.

Our project aimed to contribute to this by operationalising IIED's Climate-Resilient Development Framework (Section 2.1) as a set of practical, cost-effective, climate-resilient planning guidelines that woredas could integrate into their normal planning systems. The project objectives, developed by IIED and Echnoserve with the CRGE Facility, were to:

- Build on the EFCCC guidelines to synthesise emerging best practice and learning on locally led adaptation into a set of practical WCSDP guidelines that are suited to the Ethiopian context and aligned with national policy and legislative frameworks
- Pilot and refine these guidelines with GCF woreda planning teams, through action research, to maximise their feasibility and sustainability, with the hope of institutionalising their use in woredas benefitting from climate finance through the CRGE Facility
- Provide learning on the practical difficulties and challenges woredas face in integrating climate programming into their planning
- Use the piloting process to produce medium-term climate-smart woreda investment plans that identify investable activities that could attract additional climate finance from the GCF and through current and future CRGE Facility projects, and
- Conduct research to analyse and reflect on the implications of the practical challenges associated with operationalising the LLA Principles in LDCs.

## BOX 1. WHAT'S DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THE WCSDP GUIDELINES?

The WCSDP guidelines build on and extend the EPCCC guidelines. They support the woreda planning system with the aim of integrating the CRGE Strategy and the NAP-ETH into a practical and sustainable planning process.

They are distinctive from other guidelines due to:

- Their focus on strategic, integrated cross-sectoral planning based around development priorities chosen by woredas and informed by local climate risk
- Their comprehensive step-by-step focus on all aspects of the planning process (co-developed with woredas), and
- The way they systematically set out clear principles for climate-resilient development and explicitly describe how to operationalise them.



# 2

## Framework, methodology and guidelines

IIED developed a high-level climate-resilient development framework that shows how to realise best practice in locally led climate action in a local government context. Based on eight principles of climate action, the project used the framework and an adaptive action research methodology to design the WCSDP guidelines.

### 2.1 The Climate-Resilient Development Framework

Drawing on research conducted during this project and prior engagements, IIED have developed a generic conceptual framework to help developing country governments consider the implications of climate-resilient development when designing their own governance processes (Crick et al., 2021). The framework draws on the latest research on adaptation, climate-resilient development and the LLA Principles (Coger et al., 2021, 2022; Erisken et al., 2020; IPCC, 2023b; Soanes et al., 2021; Vincent and Colenbrander, 2018) and IIED's experience of developing the Decentralised Climate Finance (DCF) mechanism, an institutional architecture designed to channel climate finance through the public finance system to demand-led public good investments selected and overseen by local communities themselves (Crick et al., 2019; DCF Alliance, 2019)

The Climate-Resilient Development Framework provides a succinct analytical structure for thinking about how core government areas of action should incorporate

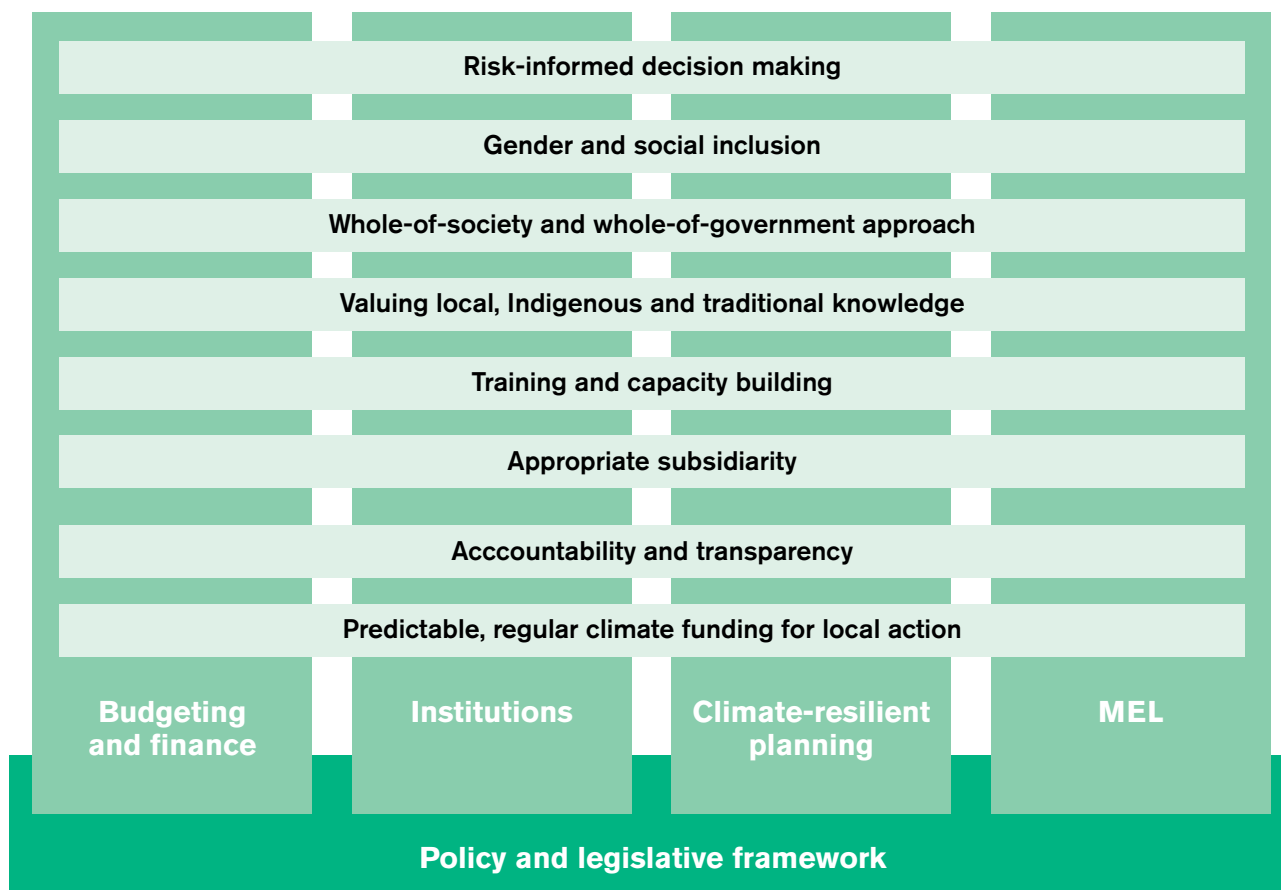
climate adaptation and mitigation in an effective, sustainable and socially just way (see Figure 1). It shows how eight fundamental principles of climate action — the CRDP Principles (see Appendix 1), which are largely identical to the LLA Principles — must be embedded in five domains or 'pillars' of government action:

- The wider **policy and legislative framework** at national and subnational levels, which creates the enabling environment for locally led climate action and creates the conditions for the other four pillars
- Trustworthy and capable **budgeting and finance systems**, which enable climate funds to flow to all levels (including local government)
- Appropriate **institutions** and decision-making structures, which support cross-sectoral thinking and meaningful citizen participation at all stages of the development cycle
- Capacity to conduct **climate-resilient planning** using appropriate risk management tools and relevant climate information at different scales of government action, and

- An effective **MEL** system, which is essential for tracking the progress of interventions, scaling up learning, flexible and adaptive responses, and avoiding maladaptation.

This framework is intentionally conceptual and high-level and needs to be operationalised, and the precise form this will take will depend on the context where it is applied. Our objective in this project was to translate this abstract template into a set of practical guidelines that could be used for strategic planning in Ethiopia at woreda level.

Figure 1. The Climate-Resilient Development Framework



## 2.2 Methodology

### 2.2.1 Institutional readiness assessment

Working with Echnoserve and the CRGE Facility, we used several methods to refine and use the Climate-Resilient Development framework to assess institutional readiness for WCSDP. These included:

- A desk review of international literature to identify approaches, best practices and insights into climate-resilient development, to refine and supplement the Climate-Resilient Development Framework
- A desk review of key national level policies, plans, existing guidelines and large-scale local development and social protection programmes
- Semi-structured interviews with federal, regional and woreda-level stakeholders, including high-level officials from the EFCCC, Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy, and the Ministry of Agriculture (from the Planning, CRGE and Disaster Risk Management Directorates), and
- Workshops involving key regional and woreda officials to document and assess woreda planning processes, followed by community consultations in a limited number of kebeles in those woredas. These were held in the Amhara region and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (SNNPR).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The woredas selected were Bahir Dar Zuria and Mecha in Amhara and Wondo Gente and Melga in SNNPR. Woredas were selected to represent different agroecological zones within the constraints of accessibility due to security concerns.

Crick et al. (2021) analysed our findings from this stage in an interim internal report, which sets out the Climate-Resilient Development Framework (with its principles and institutional pillars) in more detail. Their analysis made clear that introducing and institutionalising climate-smart development planning at the woreda level would require much more than simply refining a set of guidelines. New processes and the capacities required to carry them out would need significant action across all five building blocks of government action, and the appropriate institutional architecture, political prioritisation and adequate financing. A key recommendation was to develop a cross-sectoral national working group that could create coordinating structures and facilitate management and technical support both vertically and horizontally.

### 2.2.2 Developing the draft WCSDP guidelines

Building on the findings of the institutional readiness assessment, we sketched out a draft woreda-level, medium-term strategic planning process and the associated WCSDP guidelines to operationalise the framework for the Ethiopian local government context. These were modelled on the EFCCC's CRGE mainstreaming guidelines for woredas (FDRE, 2019a), (which as mentioned before, were trialled in five regions but not scaled out due to resource and capacity constraints). Applying the Climate-Resilient Development Framework, we extended the guidelines to introduce some novel features, such as more integrated cross-sectoral planning, and systematically embedding the CRDP Principles (see Section 3.2).

After developing the guidelines, we invited clusters of representatives from the 22 GCF woredas to four five-day training sessions run by our local partner Echnoserve. The objective was twofold: to help build the capacity of woreda experts in climate-sensitive sectors to conduct climate-resilient planning, and to provide an opportunity to test and refine the concepts and processes presented in the guidelines, with woreda experts advising on their viability, intelligibility and practicality. By co-developing and co-designing the guidelines with the woredas themselves, our objective was to ensure they reflected practical realities at woreda level as well as national needs, and to ensure they were both useable and affordable. Feedback from these sessions reinforced initial findings about the large capacity gaps at woreda level and highlighted the tension between designing guidelines that emphasise quality processes but are also accessible and practical (see Chapter 5).

The original plan was for woreda-level planning teams to pilot each and every phase of the WCSDP process, with mentoring and technical support from Echnoserve and specially trained regional CRGE coordinators.

Through a structured process of learning and peer mentoring, we expected to refine the guidelines as they were tested with a user-centred approach. Unfortunately, this was not possible for several reasons, including: unforeseen and uncontrollable factors such as serious internal security issues and a global pandemic, which impacted operational and research plans and impeded communication between key stakeholders; severe capacity constraints at woreda level, especially a lack of finance; limited buy-in from national-level actors and absence of a cross-ministerial working group to authorise and mobilise action at national level; and the constraints of working within a projectised entry point within the GCF Facility.

Ultimately, the set of guidelines we finalised (and describe in this paper) illustrate what a climate-resilient planning process in Ethiopian woredas might look like if it were sufficiently resourced and promoted through a supportive institutional coalition of actors. We wanted to set a standard that Ethiopian woredas can aspire to, rather than produce a simplified version dictated by current capacity. Although institutionalising these guidelines within the GCF project was not a realistic objective, the lessons learnt from this initiative shed light on how climate-resilient development might be introduced in the future.

### 2.2.3 Limited piloting of the guidelines and producing climate-smart development plans

For the reasons noted above, none of the 22 woredas were able to pilot the WCSDP guidelines and produce their own plans as originally intended. But the pilot did produce 16 written climate-smart woreda plans as deliverables for the GCF project.

Our in-country partner Echnoserve Consulting took a lead role and provided significant direction, input and support to all woredas, coordinating, developing and writing the plans with woreda experts providing significant inputs. Loosely following the guidelines, they adapted steps to reflect available capacity and resources at woreda level. Though not a formal piloting process, Echnoserve's observations and reflections became a major source of data on the implications of embedded assumptions and practical challenges of doing CRDP at woreda level.

An Echnoserve-IIED team carried out some quality assurance deep dives in selected woredas for specific activities featured in the WCSDP guidelines, including:

- Phase 2 piloting of the field guide and community consultations in two woredas: Haroreys in Somali and Enbise Sar Midir in Amhara, selected to contrast a lowland, agropastoralist region with a highland, agricultural region, and

- Phase 3 piloting of the multistakeholder (whole-of-society/whole-of-government) workshop in Somali and Harar regions.

The team used several research methods, including semi-structured key informant interviews and participant observation, which allowed reflection on some of the challenges faced in implementing the principles on the ground. While this is clearly not a comprehensive piloting process, it provided important insights into issues surrounding WCSDP implementation, which we capture in Chapter 5.

### 2.2.4 Final climate-smart development plans

The 16 woreda plans successfully mainstreamed CRGE strategies into their planning processes in one precise way: they articulate climate-related

strategic development objectives that are relevant to the woreda and set out related intervention options. These plans successfully mainstream national climate policy at the woreda level by translating the CRGE Strategy and NAP-ETH into discrete, investable options for possible inclusion in specific woreda annual plans.

Although the woreda plan preparation process was inspired by the WCSDP guidelines, the final development plans do not fully reflect the principles of the climate-resilient development process. And, because they did not implement Phases 4 and 5 (see Figure 2), the plans are still very much top-down, supply-driven outlines that require further discussion and validation with all community stakeholders. However, the institutionalisation of CRDP into existing structures is extremely challenging, and these plans are an important step in an iterative and gradual process of learning and experimentation.

# 3

## The WCSDP guidelines

Outlining the WCSDP guidelines that we developed based on the Climate-Resilient Development Framework, this chapter explains key design decisions made to operationalise the principles into the planning framework. Recognising that the wider enabling environment is not yet fully in place to facilitate their institutionalisation in Ethiopia, this illustration will be useful for future work and for other LDCs.

### 3.1 Structure of the WCSDP process

Guided by the high-level principles set out in the Climate-Resilient Development Framework (Section 2.1) and the findings of the institutional readiness assessment (Section 2.2.1), we developed practical guidelines for WCSDP. The guidelines outline an ideal woreda planning process with five discrete phases (Figure 2).

**Phase 1. Preparation:** The woreda establishes a cross-sectoral, gender-balanced planning team, conducts a whole-of-society stakeholder analysis, and prepares a budget and timeline.

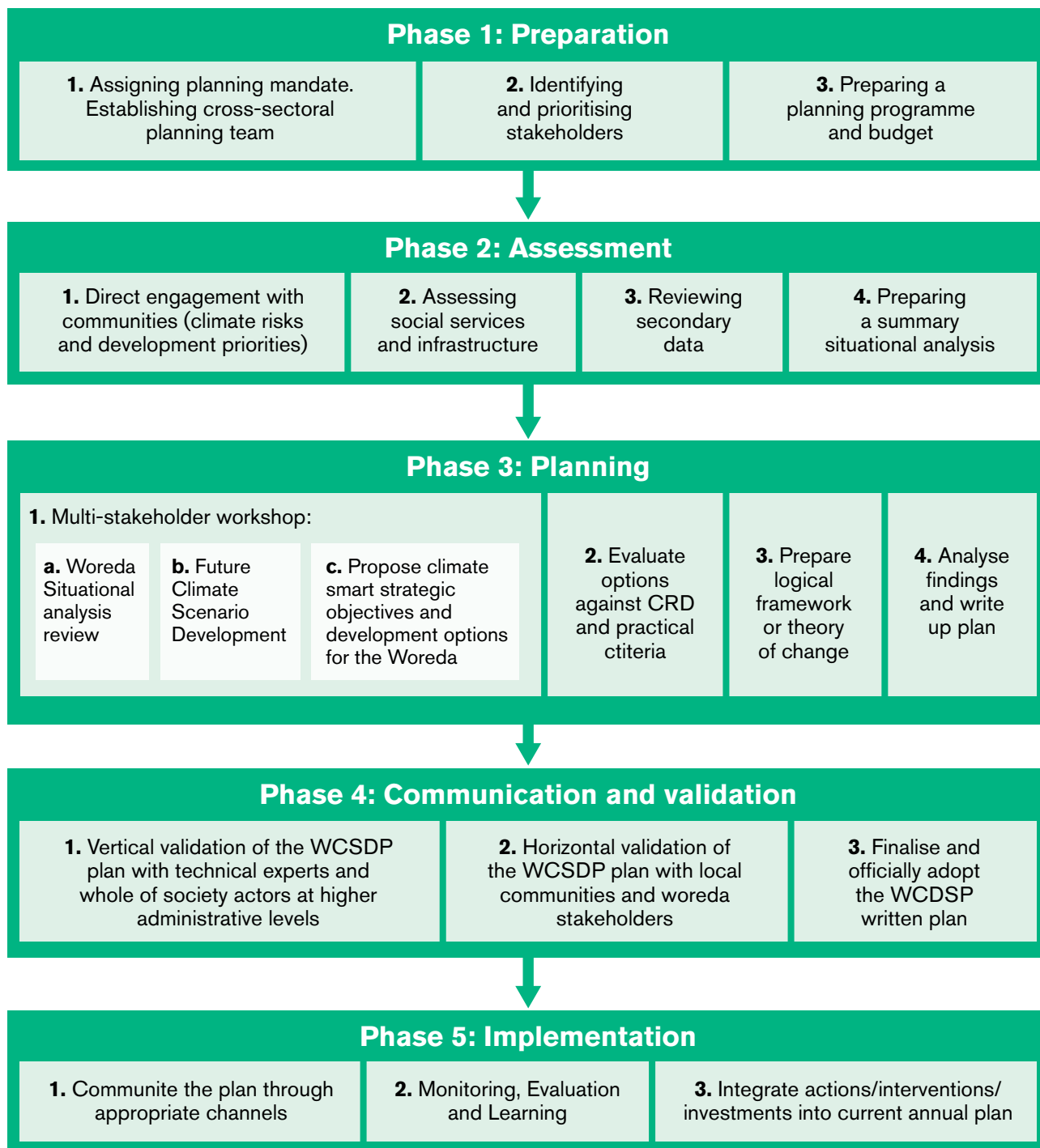
**Phase 2. Assessment:** The planning team prepares an overview of the woreda development context (a situational assessment). Primary data are collected through fieldwork conducted with a representative sample of kebeles in the woreda; secondary data are sourced from woreda sectoral offices and other development actors. Where available, data include hazard and risk information from woreda-specific disaster risk profiles (FDRE, 2012) prepared by the National Disaster Risk Management Commission.

**Phase 3. Planning:** The planning team convenes a multistakeholder workshop including whole-of-society and whole-of-government actors. Workshop participants collectively review the situational assessment from Phase 2, conduct a summatory climate risk review, prepare future climate scenarios, and propose a set of high-level, cross-sectoral strategic climate-smart objectives — a vision — for the woreda. The planning team subsequently assesses these objectives and related interventions against evaluation criteria that include cost-effectiveness, social inclusion, robustness to future climate scenarios and coherence with national and regional policy, preparing a theory of change for each intervention. It produces a detailed written strategic plan following a standard template including relevant findings and decisions from Phases 2 and 3.

**Phase 4. Communication and validation:** The team crosschecks and validates the draft plan with stakeholders from across the woreda before finalising it. It designs a communication strategy to make it accessible for all community members and promote transparency.

**Phase 5. Implementation:** The annual planning process is guided by the final five year climate smart development strategy. Activities are implemented and MEL is carried out.

Figure 2. The five phases of WCSDP





## 3.2 Integrating the CRDP Principles into the WCSDP process

Table 4. Operationalising the CRDP Principles to guide woreda-level planning

PRINCIPLE	RATIONALE	PLANNING PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION/ACTIVITY (AND ASSOCIATED ASSUMPTIONS)
<b>Risk-informed decision making</b>	<p>Decision making must be informed by a robust understanding of the dynamic nature of climate risk. Planning decisions (especially over medium- and long-term timeframes) need to acknowledge and account for deep and irreducible uncertainty about future climate conditions.</p> <p>Decision making must also consider multiple forms and sources of climate information: scientific, local knowledge etc.</p>	2	Conduct participatory climate risk assessments with communities in a representative sample of wards (kebeles), stratified by climate risk characteristics (eg agroecology).
		2	Assess all readily available climate change and disaster risk information and integrate it into a summary situational analysis that presents actionable information about the woreda and known climate risks.
		3	At a multistakeholder workshop, review the woreda climate risk profile with whole-of-society actors.
			Develop long-term future climate scenarios at the workshop to help visualise possible climate futures. Screen strategic objectives and development options for robustness against future scenarios.
<b>Gender and social inclusion</b>	<p>Gender-based, economic and political inequalities need to be recognised as root causes of vulnerability.</p> <p>Climate-resilient development solutions need to be identified and selected through a socially inclusive process that recognises and prioritises the specific climate priorities of socially disadvantaged groups.</p>	1	Establish a cross-sectoral woreda planning team that aims for gender balance.
		2	Ensure community-level participation activities (eg risk assessments) are sensitive to inequalities and power differentials between social groups, split activities by gender, age and/or any other relevant dimension of difference.
		3	Invite members of socially disadvantaged groups — including elders, community-based organisations (CBOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and NGOs — to a high-level strategic objectives multistakeholder workshop to ensure inclusion and representation.
		3	Planning team screens criteria for shortlisting climate-resilient development options for gender and social inclusion.
		3	Disaggregate climate risk profiles for disadvantaged groups in written strategic plan, clearly stating how planned interventions will benefit them.
		4	Ensure communications and validation processes are sensitive to the differential needs and preferences of distinct social groups.
		5	Disaggregate MEL indicators to allow tracking of intervention outcomes for different groups.

PRINCIPLE	RATIONALE	PLANNING PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION/ACTIVITY (AND ASSOCIATED ASSUMPTIONS)
<b>Whole-of-society / Whole-of-government approach</b>	<p>Effective climate action needs to be a systemwide response, drawing on the knowledge and experience of multiple and varied stakeholders across society and government, including CSOs, CBOs, the private sector, academia, NGOs, parastatal organisations and others at many different scales.</p> <p>A cross-sectoral and holistic planning approach recognises that the goals of climate and sustainable development are interdependent and synergistic.</p>	1	<p>Ensure the planning team is cross-sectoral.</p> <p>Use stakeholder analysis to notify and include relevant whole-of-society actors in the planning process.</p>
		2	<p>Conduct a situational analysis, drawing on service delivery updates, cross-sectoral reports and nonstate actor reports/data.</p> <p>Conduct participatory fieldwork at the kebele level to gather community climate risk information.</p> <p>Use local knowledge and systemic livelihood needs as a starting point, not sectoral assessments.</p>
		3	<p>Conduct a multistakeholder strategic objectives workshop with whole-of-society actors to review the woreda climate risk profile, develop climate scenarios and identify medium-term goals for the woreda.</p>
		4	<p>Integrate strategic objectives and planned activities across sectors, guided by livelihood needs and community vision.</p>
		4	<p>Validate the plan and communicate it to other stakeholders to allow for cooperation and activity coordination.</p>
		5	<p>Engage stakeholders in participatory monitoring and evaluation, and a system of learning and reflection for adaptative, flexible planning.</p>
<b>Valuing local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge</b>	<p>Local people and existing livelihood systems already have significant adaptative capacity and Indigenous technical knowledge for dealing with climate change. Climate-resilient development should actively recognise, document and research the comparative effectiveness of these practices, allowing for the possibility that they (or improvements on them) may be more climate-robust than mainstream development solutions.</p>	2	<p>Fieldwork with communities provides understanding of Indigenous and traditional knowledge through participatory (kebele-level) climate risk and livelihood hazard consultations.</p>
		3	<p>Multistakeholder strategic objectives workshop brings whole-of-society perspective on Indigenous technical knowledge at multiple scales, including community, landscape and cross-border.</p>
		4	<p>Validation workshops confirm understanding of Indigenous and traditional knowledge through engagement and validation with communities and whole-of-society actors.</p>

PRINCIPLE	RATIONALE	PLANNING PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION/ACTIVITY (AND ASSOCIATED ASSUMPTIONS)
<b>Training and capacity building</b>	<p>Climate-resilient development requires investment in a wide range of capabilities and skills of those involved in governance and decision making, including communities, government staff and whole-of-society actors.</p> <p>Capacity building is most sustainable when it builds on and complements existing tools and processes that are already institutionalised and funded.</p>	ALL	<p>Where possible, base strategic planning activities on and build them around existing woreda planning processes and institutions.</p> <p>Prepare comprehensive and context-relevant written guidelines covering all aspects of the planning process.</p> <p>For greater accessibility, translate guidelines into Amharic as well as English.</p> <p>Provide training to woreda clusters at regional level for cost-effectiveness and to encourage both peer-to-peer learning and regional-level backstopping and technical support. Include key cross-sectoral woreda experts (who are expected to form part of the planning team) and regional staff in this training.</p>
<b>Appropriate subsidiarity</b>	<p>Local actors are most immediately affected by climate change and have deep knowledge about its impacts (both social and bio-physical).</p> <p>For reasons of justice and effectiveness, climate-resilient development requires decision making to be devolved to the lowest appropriate administrative level. This level will depend on interdependencies and spillover effects within the ecosystem, social system, economies of scale and issues of capacity.</p>	ALL	<p>The woreda is the most appropriate level for conducting and coordinating strategic planning for climate-resilient development, given its formal administrative and legal role as the most local coordinating body, implementation hub and service delivery centre.</p>

PRINCIPLE	RATIONALE	PLANNING PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION/ACTIVITY (AND ASSOCIATED ASSUMPTIONS)
<b>Accountability and transparency</b>	<p>Transparency is fundamental for downward, horizontal and upward accountability. Downward accountability to communities builds trust, reinforces the social contract and social justice, and enables learning about effective adaptation responses.</p> <p>Horizontal accountability encourages more effective coordination and better integration of sectoral responses.</p> <p>Upward accountability to donors encourages trust and addresses concerns about fiduciary risk.</p>	3	<p>Provide a comprehensive, publicly available written plan at woreda level.</p> <p>This is a formal commitment that allows stakeholders at all levels to review decisions taken and the rationale behind them, and to hold local government and other actors to account on commitments made. It also provides critical climate risk information for all stakeholders.</p> <p>Translate written plans into a variety of different formats — such as oral, visual, social media — for wider accessibility.</p>
<b>Predictable, regular climate finance for local action</b>	<p>Regular funding needs to be available for both the governance of climate-resilient development (planning, institutions etc) and sequenced and interconnected investments.</p> <p>National policies, finance systems and climate funds need to support the transfer of both domestic resources and international climate funds to the local level for both these purposes.</p>	ALL	<p>Using the national climate fund (the CRGE Facility) as an entry point in connection with a high-level policy agenda (the CRGE Strategy) will make it easier to fund and institutionalise a CRDP process at woreda level.</p> <p>By identifying specific climate-related investments and their rationale, formal, written woreda climate-resilient development plans will make it easier for the CRGE Facility and other development agents to effectively target climate funds (and design bespoke projects) from multiple sources to the local level in a socially just and sustainable manner.</p>

Table 4 presents a general overview of how we operationalised the eight CRDP Principles within the five phases of the WCSDP guidelines. This section provides more detail on some of these design decisions, particularly where they differ from other guidelines such as those developed by the EPCCC, and provides the rationale and assumptions embedded in them.

### 3.2.1 Community participation: fieldwork at kebele level

Community participation is fundamental to equitable and effective CRDP, with a special emphasis on demand-led prioritisation and bottom-up accountability. Findings from our institutional readiness assessment (Crick et al., 2021) confirmed that

community involvement is generally limited during standard annual woreda and sub-woreda planning processes (see Table 5). The EPCCC guidelines (FDRE, 2019a) for CRGE mainstreaming recommend using popular tools for community consultation, but assume woreda capacity to interpret and implement them effectively.

To address these limitations, the WCSDP guidelines emphasise meaningful community engagement and participation throughout the woreda planning process; but it is especially important in Phase 2. This is where fieldwork with communities at kebele level provides climate risk and development priority information for communities across the woreda, with a special focus on culturally disadvantaged and climate vulnerable groups within them.

We developed a tailor-made field guide with very detailed instructions and structured response tables. The rationale for a new guide was to provide tailored, easy-to-use, context-relevant instructions for woreda staff, covering participatory livelihood and climate risk assessment activities. We developed two field guide variants, allowing for the woreda's choice according to its capacity and funding.

Participatory risk assessment activities in the field guide use livelihood systems and community wellbeing rather than sectoral targets as entry points. By encouraging participants to articulate challenges as they see them — as opposed to how the government categorises them — this approach allows for a more systemic assessment of development needs based on a more holistic understanding of local livelihood strategies, addressing the principle of valuing local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge.

The guidelines promote sensitivity to the differential needs of disadvantaged and minority groups by recommending holding separate workshops for men and women, and paying careful attention to the attendee profile to ensure representation of different livelihoods, geographical areas, age groups and wealth groups, addressing the gender and social inclusion principle.

For cost effectiveness, we recommend using quota sampling to select kebeles for fieldwork. Sampling by agroecology — for example, lowland, midland or highland — or livelihood characteristics allows the planning team to develop an understanding of the range of climate risk and vulnerability contexts present within a woreda while keeping costs manageable. This may also allow woredas to share costs and pool capacity between WCSDP and other flagship programmes that are already conducting planning in specific kebeles.

### 3.2.2 Cross-sectoral, integrated and strategic development planning

CRDP is not restricted to analysing only climate-related impacts. Climate change is a crosscutting theme and a risk multiplier: it will exacerbate existing vulnerability and social issues, and could create new ones. In other words, climate change cannot be treated in isolation, or as a bolt-on (Eriksen et al., 2021). Its systemic nature means that climate risk requires layered and coordinated responses that involve multiple sectors working together over time to reduce vulnerability, based on a systemic

assessment of the drivers of vulnerability and an appraisal of the dynamic interactions over time, which may not be entirely beneficial.

Planning processes at all administrative levels — including the woreda — are currently strongly sectoral, an approach endorsed by the EFCCC climate mainstreaming guidelines (FDRE, 2019a).

The WCSDP approach is distinctive in that it aims to produce a comprehensive five-year development plan based on non-sector-specific development goals endorsed by the whole of society and whole of government. The systemic strategic development goals chosen by the woreda could be explicitly related to addressing emerging climate vulnerabilities or they could engage with broader sustainable development objectives that build resilience. The WCSDP approach aims to create opportunities for sectors to work together across the whole of government to identify overlaps and synergies and coordinate interventions, using a testable theory of change to make these explicit.

Cross-sectoral planning is embedded in all aspects of the WCSDP process, but it is particularly important in Phase 3 where a multistakeholder workshop brings together whole-of-government and whole-of-society actors to agree medium-term, non-sectorally specific development goals and explore how sectoral initiatives could work synergistically towards these.

### 3.2.3 Future climate scenario planning

Climate change presents distinctive challenges for planners at all levels. Decision making takes place in the context of deep and irreducible uncertainty about climate futures over longer (decadal and multidecadal) planning timeframes. Special decision support tools are needed to ensure that current adaptation and mitigation measures do not lock in undesirable future development pathways in the context of a dynamic and evolving risk environment (IPCC 2023a). Such tools are lacking in the Ethiopian local planning context.

Even where climate risk is considered - for example, as part of flagship national programmes with a climate-smart component, such as PSNP - there is an assumption that building climate resilience can largely be addressed by identifying optimal responses to largely predictable future climate impacts — for example, by adopting specific climate-smart agriculture techniques or preparing optimised watershed infrastructure development plans.

But climate change is by its very nature dynamic, uncertain and subject to sudden tipping points that can change local ecosystems dramatically in unprecedented ways (Lenton et al., 2023). Planning in such an uncertain context requires specialised decision support tools as well as resources for communicating climate risk to local stakeholders. Climate scenarios have the potential to translate otherwise abstract climate futures into concrete and locally intelligible and tangible realities, making explicit the impacts across different sectors, with an emphasis on plausible extreme events. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change defines a scenario as “a coherent, internally consistent and plausible description of a possible future state of the world. It is not a forecast; rather, each scenario is one alternative image of how the future can unfold” (IPCC, 2011). It also notes that “the most useful climate-resource scenarios are plausible, relevant, divergent, challenging, and oftentimes memorable”.

As part of the multistakeholder whole-of-government/whole-of-society workshop in Phase 3, stakeholders co-produce locally relevant climate scenarios that embrace this uncertainty and translate it into locally intelligible narratives. The WCSDP team then uses these scenarios to screen for ‘robust’ development options that are likely to be effective across a wide range of possible climate futures (Lempert et al., 2006; Wilby and Dessai, 2010).

### 3.2.4 Logframes and theory of change

Planning staff at all administrative levels in Ethiopia are familiar with logframes as practical managerial tools for clearly setting out and monitoring the delivery of project outputs. Ideal for upwards accountability to

donors, a logframe assumes a linear and predictable causal relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

A theory of change approach is better suited to uncertain situations where the effectiveness of an intervention is an open question that needs to be assessed, tested, modified and adjusted in real time. It is a learning tool that supports flexible and adaptive programming by locally engaged actors. It is effective for exploring dynamically uncertain and evolving social and environmental contexts — that is, climate change situations (Prinsen and Nijhof, 2015).

Developing a theory of change requires planners to be explicit about how they expect interventions to work to achieve the woreda's wider strategic objectives identified in the plan. A theory of change facilitates learning because it allows planners to develop indicators that can genuinely test underlying assumptions about the problem domain and expected pathways of change. This is particularly important for climate adaptation, where maladaptation is a risk, and it may be necessary to adjust intervention pathways in response to rapidly changing conditions.

Although local government planners are generally unfamiliar with theory of change approaches, logframe and theory of change approaches complement each other because they serve different purposes (Biden, n.d.). The WCSDP approach recommends that the woreda planning team be explicit about their theory of change for each single (and combined) intervention they propose. This empowers local-level actors to design, pilot and evaluate their own solutions to contextually dependent local situations.



# 4

## Findings: the limitations of guidelines

Using the five pillars and the eight principles of the CRDP framework as an analytical lens, this chapter explores the wider challenges of institutionalising a climate-resilient system of governance and shows how guidelines can only go so far.

Our institutional readiness assessment made clear that a set of guidelines alone — no matter how clear and comprehensive — would never be enough to institutionalise CRDP at the woreda level. Guidelines are just one small part of the wider enabling policy framework.

The assessment concluded that building a supportive enabling environment for sustainable CRDP would require coordinated action across all five pillars of government action: the policy and legislative framework, institutions, climate-resilient planning, MEL, and budgeting and financing. Our subsequent experience during this action research project only confirms this conclusion.

### 4.1 Policy and legislative framework

Ethiopia was one of the first LDCs to seriously consider how to integrate climate change into long-term strategic planning. It has a collection of

supportive policies that provide a strong foundation for climate-resilient development (see Table 1). The CRGE Strategy promotes mainstreaming and increasingly focuses on adaptation through the NAP-ETH, and it already has guidelines for mainstreaming climate into development. Its ongoing decentralisation process supports subsidiarity, in theory empowering woredas to develop local plans and budgets to reflect local needs and context. Its CRGE Facility can mobilise funds with accreditation to the international climate funds, and it officially recognises the need for participatory, multistakeholder and socially inclusive development planning.

However, despite these supportive frameworks at national level, an acute implementation gap remains at subnational and local levels, and coordination with other development initiatives and national programmes remains weak (Dagne et al., 2022). At regional and woreda level, there is a lack of policy awareness, limited implementation capacity to support national and international commitments, and insufficient follow-up.

## 4.2 Institutions

Having appropriate institutions and effective, functional relationships between them (both horizontally and vertically) is crucial for embedding climate-resilient development into governance systems at all levels and across the whole of society (Crick et al., 2019; IPCC, 2023b, 2023a). Institutions are complex systems, and capacity-building efforts aiming for lasting change require sophisticated, multipronged approaches that work in a politically informed and opportunistic manner to leverage dynamic opportunities for change when and where they arise (Shakya et al., 2018).

In Chapter 1, we described the main institutions involved in delivering climate finance. Here, we explore some of the institutional difficulties we encountered during the project; problems that contributed to our inability to build a national-level working group that could authorise and resource piloting at the woreda level.

In Ethiopia's hierarchical state structure, the institutional sponsor for climate-resilient development needs to be an influential actor at federal level, with enough cross-sectoral convening power and an effective mandate for planning. Our institutional entry point (the CRGE Facility) is housed within the Ministry of Finance and specialises in raising and managing finance for projects from international climate finance agencies such as the GCF and Adaptation Fund. As such, even though it has an interest in local-level climate-resilient planning, it does not have the authority to coordinate, resource or implement a comprehensive, cross-sectoral local planning process. The projectised nature of the specific entry point — a GCF project delivered through the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Water, rather than as part of a wider cross-sectoral national programme — further limited the resources available to the project.

Although housed in the Ministry of Finance, the CRGE Facility received technical expertise and support on climate change programming from the EFCCC, which developed the NAP-ETH, woreda mainstreaming guidelines (FDRE, 2019a) and contributed to the 10-year development plan. The EFCCC might have been a complementary entry point and could have assisted with resourcing as well as authorising climate action. But when the EFCCC was reorganised in 2021 while the project was midstream, ownership of climate change-related responsibilities was transferred at all administrative levels, and mandates and institutional structures at subnational levels have remained in a state of flux.

This highlights the challenges of working in a fluid institutional environment where ministries and mandates are frequently reorganised — a common situation in LDCs. But it also shows the importance of perseverance over time, continued engagement with a wider range of interested actors and sensitivity to the changing political agendas of different institutional actors. These are all crucial factors in working flexibility to take advantage of 'moments of momentum' in these contexts.

## 4.3 Climate-resilient planning

Another major learning to emerge from this work is the lack of woreda capacity and skills for both annual and strategic climate-resilient planning. While we explored these issues during the initial readiness assessment phase of our research, Echnoserve's work with woreda offices and our deep-dive piloting further emphasised the capacity gap for planning at the woreda level.

Table 5 summarises how the annual planning processes in the woredas where we worked measure up against the CRDP Principles.

Table 5. Assessment of annual woreda planning process against the CRDP Principles

CRDP PRINCIPLES	ANNUAL WOREDA PLANNING PROCESS
<b>Risk-informed decision making</b>	Climate risk assessments are not conducted at woreda or sub-woreda level There is limited climate information available for any timescale, and this is not used for planning Disaster risk profiles are sometimes available but their use is limited
<b>Gender and social inclusion</b>	Representation of women on planning teams is limited There is no differentiated climate risk analysis for disadvantaged groups There are no gender-disaggregated MEL indicators
<b>Whole-of-society/ whole-of-government approach</b>	Whole-of-society actors are not systematically included in the annual planning process NGOs often operate independently Sub-woreda (kebele) planning tends to involve technical discussion between experts, with community engagement limited to ratifying prepared plans Coordination between sectors during planning process is weak at both kebele and sub-kebele levels, unless within projects/national programmes
<b>Valuing local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge</b>	Planning teams take no specific measures to document or act upon this knowledge There is little scope for innovation based on scaling up or out of local solutions
<b>Training and capacity building</b>	Woreda staff training on formal strategic planning and climate programming is limited Training provided is one-off and not embedded in continuous practice Frequent staff turnover limits the effectiveness of training
<b>Appropriate subsidiarity</b>	Strategic targets and objectives are largely decided at zonal/regional level and passed down to woredas Woredas have scarce funds for independent action
<b>Accountability and transparency</b>	Planning at kebele level is through undocumented, informal consultations and discussions between experts and community members Annual plans are not published and/or widely communicated among woreda stakeholders
<b>Predictable, regular climate funding for local action</b>	Budget for planning is extremely limited, especially for climate-related programming There is little capital budget from the block grant available for climate and development investments and interventions There is no budget for MEL

Source: Data based on workshop discussions and key informant interviews with woreda and regional experts, and with community members in Amhara and SNNPR. There is great regional variation in woreda preparedness, and performance may be much stronger in kebeles where national flagship programmes are present.

### 4.3.1 Strategic planning

Despite their central role in service provision and project implementation, most woredas do not currently produce five-year written strategic plans, only annual plans.<sup>8</sup> There is no budget allocated for strategic planning and, as far we could ascertain, there are no up-to-date guidelines or processes for this purpose in line with the current Ten-Year Perspective planning process.

Woreda planning teams do routinely compile and coordinate an annual operational plan and budget. This is a collection of sectoral plans developed largely independently by each woreda sectoral office, with strategic direction provided by regional sectoral strategic plans and/or national flagship programmes. Producing annual plans involves negotiation between woreda staff and regional actors, and informal prioritisation to meet local needs.

<sup>8</sup> Reports from woreda key informants suggest that under previous five-year planning systems (GTPI and GTPII), some woredas did prepare strategic five-year plans.

One consequence of this lack of strategic planning expertise is that woreda staff are unfamiliar with the setting and refining of medium-term formal strategic objectives and goals. For example, we originally proposed a woreda visioning activity as part of Phase 3 to help teams identifying long-term woreda-specific, cross-sectoral climate-resilient goals, but the woreda teams assessed this as being complex for their level, so we dropped the exercise. If Ethiopia is to scale out strategic planning at woreda level, significant capacity building and adequate funding will be required. Alternatively, it may be necessary to reconsider the locus of planning.

### 4.3.2 Cross-sectoral (whole-of-government) planning

While long-term climate and development planning benefits from an integrated systems approach, the piloting process showed that framing objectives in non-sectoral terms and encouraging cross-sectoral (whole-of-government) strategic integration is a serious challenge at woreda level.

Evidence from Phase 3 deep-dive multisectoral workshops in Harar and Somali — and from the consultant's experience of drafting the 16 finalised plans

delivered as part of the GCF project — confirms that sectoral thinking is extremely entrenched at woreda level. Experts typically operate in silos even within the very sectoral offices where they are based. Given this deep-seated organisational culture, woreda experts and planning teams struggled to articulate strategic objectives for the woreda in non-sectoral terms.

Cross-sectoral integration between woreda sectoral offices does happen at woreda level, but this typically takes place within well-funded flagship national programmes — such as the SLMP, PSNP, RLLP, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme, and Household Asset Building Programme (HABP) — where cross-sectoral goals have been set at the national level and modalities of cooperation and coordination between line ministries have already been established through a formal programme architecture supported by structures at all levels of government. For example, national programmes that use the watershed as the unit of participatory development planning already feature cross-sectoral planning teams that set priorities at watershed level.

But fully integrated cross-sectoral planning at woreda level is novel and transformational in Ethiopia, and is being piloted (Box 2). This approach represents a fundamental shift in institutional norms and culture.

## BOX 2. MULTISECTORAL WOREDA TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE (MSWT)

Recognising the fragmentation and siloed nature of service delivery and development programmes in Ethiopia, the MSWT, initiated in 2019, puts empowering woredas to make progress on the sustainable development goals at household level at the centre of its delivery and performance targets. Overall initiatives are set nationally by focusing on the four Ls — 'livelihoods, lifestyle, literacy and life expectancy' — and, while climate risk is a crosscutting theme, it is not central to the initiative.

The MSWT focuses on integrated planning at the woreda level and integrated service delivery and community engagement at the subworeda level by insisting on:

- **One plan**, which is horizontally and vertically aligned to ensure integration across sectors
- **One budget**, which is an integrated/comprehensive costed woreda plan with explicit woreda-level priorities, and
- **One performance monitoring system**, which includes multisectoral targets that support woreda development objectives. Woreda sector offices are required to endorse and allocate resources to multisectoral woreda indicators, irrespective of their individual sectoral mandate.

Confirming our findings in this research, authorising and resourcing the MWST required the establishment of formal working groups between federal line ministries and their respective technical working groups, supported by committees at lower tiers of administration for coordination and technical support. It is currently being piloted in just one woreda.

Note that we have not evaluated the MWST programme comprehensively against all the CRDP Principles, nor have we reviewed evaluation or programme progress reports.

Source: FDRE (2019c)

### 4.3.3 Facilitation and workshop organising skills

The piloting process confirmed that organising and facilitating participatory whole-of-society engagements requires considerable financial and technical capacity, which in many cases is not present at woreda level. This reflects the complexity and novelty of the activities and the wide range of stakeholders being convened, which have no parallel in current woreda planning. Ideally, planning activities should just be an extension of a longer-term engagement strategy involving a wide range of organisations — such as NGOs, CSOs, CBOs and academia — with differing agendas, levels of capacity and long-term interests. For example, the guidelines propose holding a multistakeholder workshop as part of Phase 3. This is a pivotal event where government experts and community representatives meet to propose and co-develop long-term, cross-sectoral strategic objectives for the woreda in the light of the findings from the community fieldwork, situational analysis and future climate scenarios. Holding such an event requires advanced logistical and organisational skills, sophisticated facilitation and note-taking capabilities, finance, and the ability to manage and coordinate diverse interests.

### 4.3.4 Reporting and plan preparation

While there is wide regional variation, we found that woreda staff have relatively little experience of preparing extended formal written reports and often lack the capacity or time to do so. Where written reports are needed, this task is outsourced to external consultants, as was largely the case with the 16 plans that were prepared for this project. In many contexts, the organisational culture of woredas favours oral and informal modes of governance, possibly as a flexible response to multiethnic, multilingual woreda administrations where fluency in any single language — be that English, Amharic or any other — cannot be assumed.

This has important implications for transparency and accountability, as well as appropriate subsidiarity (see Section 5)

## 4.4 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

We found that woreda-level monitoring and evaluation systems were severely under-resourced and functionally limited. Frequent staff turnover coupled with weak information technology and poor information management systems resulted in extensive gaps in sectoral documentation and reporting. Phase 1 of the WCSDP guidelines recommends compiling a situational analysis that provides an overview of the woreda's development context to provide a baseline for setting

strategic goals for the woreda. But, even with technical assistance from the consultant, pilot woredas found it extremely difficult to compile this information due to a lack of comprehensive data.

If monitoring and evaluation is generally weak, systematic learning is practically non-existent. Woreda staff were also unfamiliar with using a theory of change approach to explain the rationale behind investments. During the guideline drafting stage (see 2.2.2), workshop participants advised against introducing this new approach as it was significantly beyond the current capacity of woreda staff. However, this creates an important limitation to learning by trial and error. As a result, future programming will be less adaptable and flexible in response to dynamically changing system conditions.

## 4.5 Budgeting and finance

As noted in the Section 1.2.3, funds for development activity of any kind are scarce at the local government level.

Our theory of change is that we can increase flows of climate finance to the local government level by helping woredas to produce comprehensive, climate-smart strategic plans. With clearly identified investment entry points, we assume that additional funding will become available from the CRGE Facility and other sources of climate financing (such as international NGOs).

Working with woreda staff, we produced climate-smart plans for 16 woredas, but it is too early to assess whether they have had any significant impact, in terms of affecting the selection of woreda investments as part of existing woreda-level programmes or additional funding for the activities identified. This limits our ability to comment on the theory of change.

In the short term, as an alternative it may be possible to use existing and established programmes — such as the SLMP, PSNP and WASH — as entry points for climate action by making their planning systems more climate smart and increasing the range and scope of investments they make. This is the approach taken by Climate-Smart Mainstreaming PSNP (DAI, n.d.), which modified the existing Watershed and Rangeland Planning Guide (FDRE, 2019d), already used by multiple national programmes, to take account of climate risk and climate-smart activities. But this approach risks fragmentation, duplication of resources and maladaptation without effective coordination and learning across scales (See Box 3 - PSNP and integrated participatory watershed management).

## 5

# Lessons for the LLA Principles

In this chapter, we reflect on lessons learned and issues raised from our Climate-Resilient Development Framework, which by extension also apply to the LLA Principles.

## 5.1 Risk-informed decision making

As GCF project FP058 specifically targeted woredas — and kebeles within them — where no other programmes were running, our target woredas had very limited prior experience of conducting climate change assessments or integrating climate risk into annual sectoral planning. In some cases, tailored woreda disaster risk profiles were already available as part of the national Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector database, but we found that outside of the specialised disaster risk management office, woreda staff do not routinely use this information. While these data are comprehensive and detailed down to the kebele level — for example, the report for Jigjiga woreda (DRMFSS and FDRE, 2015) runs to 254 pages — they are not easy to use and interpret by themselves and lack a holistic, explanatory narrative. There was little awareness of providers of climate information and woredas had no established links with the Ethiopian National Meteorological Agency. Given this low level of capacity and resources, how do we go about embedding climate risk into local government planning systems?

There is a clearly an urgent need for access to climate information across all temporal scales — from daily or weekly forecasts to seasonal forecasts and decadal and multidecadal projections. But at the strategic planning level, there are two major challenges: the first is around supporting decision making in the context of deep and irreducible uncertainty about climate futures over longer (decadal and multidecadal) planning timeframes; the second around ensuring that current adaptation and mitigation measures do not lock in undesirable future development pathways in the context of a dynamic and evolving risk environment (IPCC, 2023a). It is important to assess trade-offs and prioritise options through an iterative and ongoing process that explores the robustness of adaptation options and pathways against future climate and socioeconomic uncertainties and is sensitive to issues of equity, justice and inclusion.

The pilot multistakeholder workshop conducted in Somali region confirmed the feasibility of using future climate scenarios as a useful decision support tool and pointed to their value in a setting where preparing extensive written reports is often challenging.



Scenarios are particularly effective for transparency and accountability in local climate change planning in two ways. Firstly, they can translate abstract future scientific projections based largely around rainfall and temperature averages at higher scales into concrete and meaningful information for citizens, communities and their specific livelihood systems and geographic and socio-economic contexts. Secondly, they can help to move the agenda beyond planning for existing and known climate hazards to considering the prospect of unprecedented and unexpected climate change impacts associated with never-before-experienced extreme events.

Ideally, long-term climate scenario planning would be embedded in a comprehensive climate-smart strategic local planning process (such as the WCSDP), whether this is conducted at woreda or another level. But shared woreda climate scenarios co-designed with local stakeholders are also useful as flexible, standalone climate action decision tools that can be used independently by different sectors and programmes.

Even in the absence of scientific data, with imperfect data or insufficient capacity to process it, it is possible to conduct effective long-term contingency planning for plausible future climate outcomes and screen interventions to identify robust solutions with as few as three scenarios providing vivid illustration of local biophysical and socioeconomic impacts. Valid for up to ten years, these scenarios can be supplemented with maps and translated into local languages, allowing widespread dissemination through locally appropriate channels, such as cartoons, videos or songs. This would allow sectoral planners to screen suggested initiatives easily against possible future impacts, and communities and their representatives to critically assess proposed initiatives through a climate lens and hold local government to account. More granular information can be added as capacity allows — and be greatly enhanced by increased whole-of-society participation in the scenario development process — by including expert judgement and through further stakeholder engagement and scientific models of particular biophysical subsystems. Scenarios can also be extended to include dimensions of possible social, economic or political change, in addition to climate futures (Cavanna and Abkula, 2009).

## 5.2 Gender and social inclusion

WCSDP planning needs to understand and account for the distinctive climate risk profiles of different groups within communities, paying particular attention to the needs and priorities of disadvantaged and minority groups, such as women and young people.

Our WCSDP Phase 2 uses focus group activities run by woreda planning staff and local development agents for this purpose. The dedicated field guide provides detailed instructions on how to select participants to ensure the experiences and interests of all groups are considered, documented and adequately represented. But woredas can interpret these instructions very differently depending on local contextual factors, regional variations and operational constraints, and these differences have important consequences for the legitimacy of the findings.

Although we were unable to conduct a full piloting of all aspects of the guidelines, IIED and Echnoserve staff did carry out light-touch quality assurance visits during Phase 2 in two woredas with very different geographical profiles: Amhara, a highland region, and Somali, a lowland region. The limited nature of the available funding provided interesting insights into how, irrespective of the ideal processes set out in guidelines, resource constraints and local conditions are likely to shape real-life practice, imposing biases and constraints on the legitimacy of the findings.

First, in both woredas, resource constraints meant that we could only sample a limited number of kebeles (up to two in each) and the selections were due to convenience, not representativeness. This led to an accessibility bias - all the kebeles chosen were well connected by road and close to the main woreda offices. But the most vulnerable kebeles are likely to be remote, costly to access and have poor transport links. Having enough available funding is vital to ensure fieldwork can be conducted where development support is weakest and services most deficient.

Second, the selection process for focus group participants was interpreted differently in different regions. For example, in Amhara — where there is a rich network of formal, functional community governance structures — woreda officials worked with kebele-level development agents and staff to select exemplary community members, preferably people who were already active in other community-level institutions, such as water and watershed committees. While these participants effectively articulated their concerns and priorities, the system is exposed to both elite capture and confirmatory bias, where participants simply reiterate existing government understandings and

Male community members participate in a men's focus group in Enbise Sar Midir woreda in Amhara.



endorse existing interventions that favour more powerful community members.

This bias was successfully avoided in a rural kebele in Somali, where kebele officials used convenience quota sampling on the day. But this introduced other forms of bias and participants were less effective at communicating and articulating their interests. And, while both selection processes were operationally convenient and cost-effective in their particular context, they lacked democratic accountability and legitimacy because the community was not involved in their selection.

One solution to the problem of political and statistical representation is to move beyond one-off consultations and work with longer-lived, bespoke community planning institutions (recall that appropriate institutions are one of the five pillars of government action in the CRDP framework). For example, Kenya's County Climate Change Fund (CCCF) set up new community planning institutions at ward level. Communities used transparent, socially inclusive selection criteria that emphasised knowledge, honesty and trustworthiness (not literacy) to determine membership. Members were elected and minorities were included through membership quotas (Crick et al., 2019). These institutions became vehicles for greater community

empowerment and engagement throughout the development cycle, including implementation and MEL. Members received training and capacity building to help them act as empowered partners of local government, capable of authoritatively speaking on behalf of their communities on a more level playing field.

Funding a system of community institutions can be a serious challenge. In Ethiopia, it would make sense to build on existing institutions where they exist, have local legitimacy and already have funding — such as the watershed committees established and funded under PSNP following the Community Rangeland and Watershed Guidelines — paying due attention to social justice and equitable representation in the selection process. In lowland regions such as Somali, informal but powerful community institutions such as clans and councils of elders may be a more effective entry point, rather than insisting on imported formal structures that have little legitimacy or authority.

Of course, even the most functional and locally legitimate institutions may not always be able to champion the interests and needs of socially disadvantaged groups consistently. That is why in Phase 3 step 2 of the WCSDP planning process we insisted on mandatory social inclusion assessment criteria that explored the impact of all proposed interventions and



Female community members participate in a women's focus group in Haroreys woreda, Somali region.



activities on the most vulnerable and dis-empowered groups in the community. Further scrutiny and amendment is possible during Phase 4 (Communication and validation).

Using a whole-of-society approach, including CSOs or CBOs with deep experience in advancing the interests of particular minority groups, is another solution (Greene et al., 2020). CSOs and CBOs can help local government with community engagement, run focus groups, participate in woreda-level planning events and provide oversight of investment plans. As they usually have a good sense of the context and local power dynamics, they can help navigate complex social dynamics and give voice to disadvantaged minorities in ways that are consistent with their own aspirations rather than externally driven agendas. This can help avoid power imbalances and conflicting agendas as experienced, for example, between Tanzanian national NGOs directed by middle-class urban women and the priorities of rural pastoralist women's groups (Hodgson, 2017).

## 5.3 Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach

### Whole of government

Strategic planning across sectors is a challenge for LDCs, especially at subnational levels. What does the Ethiopian experience teach us about addressing the difficulty of working across sectors and setting cross-sectoral strategic objectives?

In Ethiopia, it is possible to work across sectors and scales, but doing so requires formal coordination from the top down. Several national programmes, including WASH and PSNP, have and deliver integrated objectives. But they are housed within specific ministries at the national level which are accountable to international donors for ensuring delivery. Formal programming frameworks set out the modalities of collaboration and coordination - which are supported by cross-sectoral working groups at all levels of government.

Convening and coordinating sectoral offices at the woreda level, on the other hand, is extremely difficult without a formal structure and official mandate. Even if the higher administrative levels can authorise

and coordinate such collaboration, conceptualising and independently setting long-term non-sectoral development planning goals at woreda level is extremely difficult due to entrenched sectoral thinking and deep-seated organisational culture. In the short term, therefore, strategic goalsetting in Ethiopia is likely better achieved either at higher levels of planning than the woreda — where capacity exists to prepare integrated programmes that can be translated into discrete sectoral targets for implementation at lower levels — or through whole-of-government collaboration across vertical scales, with adequate coordination and technical support from the region or zone where necessary. Indeed, effective vertical integration means that the woreda should never have to ‘go it alone’: higher-level technical advice and oversight should always be part of the planning system, even while prioritising demand-led priorities and preferences.

Less ambitious forms of integration can also be beneficial. For example, CARE’s seasonal participatory planning tool describes a process whereby cross-sectoral stakeholders convene regularly to discuss the latest seasonal weather forecast, its implications for each sector’s immediate implementation objectives, and coordinated contingency plans and responses across sectors (CARE, 2018).

### Whole of society

Whole-of-society action is crucial because different kinds of knowledge about climate risk and vulnerability are distributed across society and climate action is the sum of actions and interactions by multiple stakeholders — individuals, households, academia, NGOs and private firms — not just the actions of government. Climate-resilient development planning by local government requires synchronised engagement with this wider ecosystem of climate stakeholders.

The WCSDP guidelines set out a structured process for involving whole-of-society actors. At the heart of this is the multistakeholder workshop in Phase 3. However, efforts to include them in all aspects of the planning were curtailed by cost considerations and the limited planning mandate of our GCF host project. Our research also confirmed that, like sectoral offices, whole-of-society actors at woreda level often work independently in silos, following their own project-based agendas, duplicating efforts and working at cross purposes.

But, more significantly, the project underlined the lesson that whole-of-society engagement cannot mean simply holding a one-off workshop with nonstate actors at the woreda level.

It should involve establishing, building and nurturing a network of ongoing relationships across the full planning and implementation cycle, and building a whole climate-resilient development community of practice to help

reinforce the resource and implementation functions of climate government action. Closer cooperation with CSOs, CBOs and NGOs can complement government actions and address capacity gaps in planning processes at multiple scales, from community engagement at kebele level to woreda and regional level processes. They can aggregate, intermediate and articulate interests, acting as brokers with deep understanding of local culture, history, livelihoods and patterns of social exclusion. Academic and research institutions can make scientific findings accessible at local level, while local government needs can influence the content and practical relevance of research agendas.

Setting up networks of longer-term collaboration based on shared climate interests would help address questions of cost, since other actors have an incentive to pool resources. It can also help retain expertise and know-how despite high local government staff turnover.

## 5.4 Valuing local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge

Research consistently shows that building on local systems and ideas is crucial for effective and sustainable adaptation (see for example, Pisor et al., 2022).

In the WCSDP guidelines, the main conduits for capturing local Indigenous and traditional knowledge are through structured participatory activities during community consultations in a sample of kebeles during Phase 2, and the multistakeholder workshop in Phase 3.

There is a well established literature on the problems with the use of participation in development (see e.g. Cooke & Kothari, 2001), especially with regard to the unequal power dynamics within which community consultations so often take place. Our deep-dive pilots in Amhara and Somali regions also illustrated some of the limitations of one-off workshops, focus groups and participatory consultations when it comes to identifying and valuing local knowledge.

The cognitive and epistemic biases of outside actors (including the government experts we worked with) can mean that this kind of knowledge is invisible, mislabelled or misunderstood; this is particularly the case where local populations and their livelihood systems have been historically marginalised and discriminated against by elites that have the power to define what constitutes legitimate knowledge. The problem is particularly acute where standardised national policies are not sensitive to the specifics of particular local ecosystems and livelihood strategies.

For example, we noted that a common assumption across policy frameworks is that local people’s existing adaptive capacity is very low. Almost all local responses

to climate variability are reflexively considered ‘coping strategies’ — that is, emergency measures that are both undesirable and unsustainable. Pastoral mobility can easily be interpreted in this light, a desperate action taken in response to exceptional, emergency conditions rather than a routine and effective livelihood response to the variability of resources in the drylands across space and time. (African Union, 2013; Barrow et al., 2007; FAO, 2022; Krätli, 2019). In other words, it is considered an expression of vulnerability rather than an expression of resilience.

Reflecting on the 16 climate-smart plans produced, we note that woreda experts sometimes recommend mitigation interventions without fully understanding local livelihood system dynamics. For example, the CRGE Strategy (FDRE, 2011) recommends substituting low-emitting livestock types, such as poultry, and changing livestock management practices — including smaller cattle herd sizes — to reduce GHG emissions while increasing productivity in agriculture. But it is important to interpret such blanket advice carefully in the light of local environmental conditions and the sustainability of the proposed alternatives. For example, in pastoralist areas, livestock breeds and many management practices are already optimised for resilience to local variable environmental conditions and therefore productive in their context (Krätli et al., 2015). The absence of well developed theories of change in the 16 plans makes it all the harder for communities and whole of society actors to assess and challenge the background assumptions of planners, and compare expected delivery pathways for interventions against actual outcomes.

Overall, it is important to note that focus groups may not always be the best source of information on complex adaptation strategies that even local people find difficult to articulate clearly. Unequal power dynamics may prevent some groups within communities from challenging dominant discourses or policy narratives. A systemwide and/or landscape perspective may only be visible at higher operational scales of planning, so bringing in whole-of-society actors that operate at different scales can help contextualise local decisions within a broader framework. Academic and research organisations, networked through national and international knowledge circuits, may be able to help here. Where a culturally nuanced perspective is only visible to those with deep and longstanding knowledge of community norms, CBOs may be the solution.

There is also a need for knowledge management of local practices and solutions, and this information needs to be vertically and horizontally integrated. Some of these practices could inform the development of the NAP-ETH and lead to a wider or more flexible range of official

adaptation options; but at the same time, flexibility is vital for adopting and endorsing effective solutions that are context-specific, even if they cannot be scaled.

## 5.5 Training and capacity building

As already noted, we found extensive capacity weaknesses at the woreda level, from conducting climate risk assessments and using climate information to preparing formal plans and writing reports. It was therefore difficult to build on existing capacities and institutional processes, and we did not have the mandate to implement and institutionalise entirely new ones.

Our assumption was that more comprehensive guidelines would help improve capacity on the ground. Take, for example, participatory community engagement. In the WCSDP project, we chose to develop a new field guide for Phase 2 (section 4.3.4), considering that off-the-shelf tools, such as CARE’s Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CVCA) (CARE, 2019) are not tailored to Ethiopian local government contexts and can be difficult for woreda staff to adapt without extensive and expensive training. We provided detailed written instructions in English, to ensure the climate-resilient quality of the process and to move away from fragmented, sectorally biased consultations.

But while there is clearly a need to build capacity at woreda level, it is important to also consider sustainability and reflect on the conditions necessary for effective training and learning to be retained. The feedback we received on the field guide indicated a clear preference for experiential and social learning rather than relying on long, written documents, and we observed that practitioners in the field substituted these ‘complex’ instructions with alternative, familiar approaches used by their particular sectors. The longer a document is, the less likely it is to be used — especially in contexts where woreda teams have varying levels of functional mastery of technical vocabulary in different languages.<sup>9</sup>

This preferred learning style, frequent staff turnover and limited resources at woreda level suggest that standardisation of processes and ongoing training is vital for effective capacity building. It is better to prioritise recurring training for activities that are embedded in mandated processes for which civil servants are accountable, and where funding is available to cover the cost of these activities. Providing certification or professional training through academic or training institutions would be helpful, alongside a community of practice to advise on how to tailor the guidelines to different contexts.

<sup>9</sup> If guidelines are to be translated into other languages, length becomes a cost issue, and the lack of sophisticated technical vocabulary presents additional difficulties.



When it comes to community-level consultations and risk assessments, it may be more effective to embed and refine existing guidelines rather than attempt to introduce a completely new process as we did for Phase 2 of the WCSDP.

The Participatory Watershed and Rangeland Development guidelines, which have been in evolution since 2005, have been endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture for use nationally and have been adopted by several high-profile funded national flagship programmes including the SLMP and PSNP (FDRE, 2019d; FDRE and MoARD, 2005). Using the watershed as the preferred unit of intervention, these guidelines include a detailed participatory

rural appraisal field guide. They also recommend the creation of various permanent participatory structures at the watershed, kebele and woreda level to facilitate ongoing planning and engagement with communities using the watershed as the basic unit of development (see Box 3).

Fully institutionalising a common set of CRDP-compatible community-level planning guidelines that can be adopted (and crucially, funded) by several national programmes and by different sectors will create demand for certified professionals who are trained on the guidelines and a pool of woreda-level experts who can use their skills in any woreda across the country.

### BOX 3. PSNP AND INTEGRATED PARTICIPATORY WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

In the absence of a formally integrated woreda strategic planning process and an institutional structure to support it, the most effective existing mechanisms for facilitating cross-sectoral planning at the local level and ensuring regular funding flows is through national flagship programmes.

Now in Phase 5 (FDRE and MoA, 2021), the national flagship PSNP is an institutionalised shock-responsive social protection delivery mechanism that targets extremely poor and vulnerable households in food-insecure and drought-prone kebeles of selected woredas.

PSNP finances conditional or unconditional cash or food transfers in exchange for undertaking public works or social infrastructure relating to natural resource management — such as water harvesting or soil conservation — with the explicit objective of reducing disaster risk and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation. In addition to public works and resource transfers, the programme has evolved to provide a bundle of cross-sectoral solutions for its clients, including livelihood support (through capacity building, training and access to credit), and a platform with linkages to a broad range of government services.

Delivered through the Ministry of Agriculture, the programme has a well-developed institutional architecture that features integrated and well-established modalities of coordination and collaboration across many line ministries in pursuit of nationally determined objectives from the federal down to the woreda level. Programme-wide guidelines and frameworks cover all aspects of operation, including community participation, environmental and social management, gender and social inclusion.

In line with many other national flagship programmes, PSNP uses the watershed as the unit of integrated planning at the community level and establishes (and funds) formal participatory planning institutions in *the kebeles where it is operative*. The nationally endorsed Community Based Participatory Watershed or Rangeland Development (CBPWRD) Guidelines (2021) are comprehensive and cross-sectoral and provide participatory tools for gender responsive disaster risk and climate risk assessments;<sup>10</sup> however, at present take-up and quality of implementation is limited due to capacity and funding constraints.

Properly resourced, and suitably screened against the CRD framework principles and informed by lessons from the PSNP climate mainstreaming experience, the CBPWRD guidelines could be scaled out as one model for community-based, demand-driven, climate smart planning at the sub-woreda level (the community engagement process of Phase 2 of the WCSDP guidelines we present in this paper). But while it meets many of the CRD principles, this kind of watershed level planning still needs to be integrated into wider climate resilient planning processes at other scales (woreda, zonal, regional) to check for policy coherence, possible maladaptation, systemic sustainability, and equity of various kinds; its contribution to climate action objectives needs to be quantified, and additional funding needs to be secured outside of existing national flagship programmes for both climate smart planning and investments.

Sources (Adem et al., 2017; DAL, n.d.; FDRE and MoARD, 2005; FDRE and MoA, 2021)



## 5.6 Appropriate subsidiarity

Our research provides insights into the meaning of appropriate subsidiarity when designing a locally-led climate-resilient planning system.

When preparing the climate-resilient development guidelines, we assumed that the locus of strategic planning at the local level should be the woreda. The woreda is the official home of elected local government representatives and has an executive office (the 'cabinet') overseeing the coordination, delivery and implementation of government services and interventions at the local level. All national and regional government line ministries are represented here. The woreda has formal planning responsibilities and has been the main focus for previous guidelines aiming to mainstream the CRGE Strategy into local government processes. This choice of unit actively supports the decentralisation agenda which progressively delegates responsibility to the woreda level (Vaughan et al. 2020; FDRE 1995).

But our findings showed that, although there were large variations between the woredas where we worked, levels of capacity for climate-resilient planning were generally low and there was little (if any) dependable funding for strategic medium-term planning. As such, our research suggests that in many cases it would be more cost-effective and efficient to encourage the close involvement of the region or zone in the WCSDP process.

There are a number of models for this. It may mean regions providing extensive and focused technical

support to individual woredas as they each prepare their own plans. It may mean convening clusters of woredas to conduct specific activities (See Box 4) – leveraging economies of scale, pooling technical expertise and widening the circle of whole of society actors involved. But it can also mean deciding that the most appropriate unit for formal planning is not the single woreda at all<sup>10</sup>. Local circumstances (including available resources, ecosystem and landscape dynamics) may indicate that strategic plans are better produced at the woreda cluster, zonal or even regional level – with due attention to the other CRDP principles. Ultimately there is a need to be pragmatic and flexible.

This brings us to a broader reflection on the principle of subsidiarity and its role within CRDP systems. Appropriate subsidiarity recommends that decisions be taken at the most appropriate lower level. This does not specify what the local level should be, nor does it mean that planning should take place exclusively at any one level, or as part of one single process. Rather than a specific geographical place or administrative scale, 'local' is better understood as a 'social-political entry point' - one that prioritises local ownership, agency and empowerment (Vincent, 2023). Locally-led planning for climate action requires both horizontal and vertical integration and coordination between many actors across many scales of government. It involves creating and nurturing socially inclusive spaces for accommodation, contestation and negotiation between diverse worldviews, conceptions of well-being and priorities in the face of the unfolding climate crisis.

### BOX 4. SOMALI WOREDA CLUSTER PILOTING WITH REGIONAL SUPPORT

In Somali region, IIED and Echnoserve explored clustered planning with two adjacent woredas for the whole-of-society/whole-of-government strategic objectives workshop in Phase 3. This was held in the regional capital, Jigjiga.

Holding a joint workshop at this stage of planning enabled us to include regional staff with greater capacity, promoted both horizontal and vertical integration, and encouraged a more systemic scale of analysis by including representatives from the German development agency GIZ and Jigjiga University.

In terms of climate risk, it clearly illustrated how the same climatic phenomenon (sudden downpours) could have different, but interconnected, impacts in adjacent woredas. In one, the main problem was rapid drainage, leading to soil erosion and damage to property; in the other, it was extensive lowland flooding. The joint workshop also provided an opportunity to develop two plausible climate scenarios rooted in locally observed trends and an exploration of local impact with a wider range of stakeholders.

<sup>10</sup> The guidelines and ideal process that we developed were inspired by the DCF work piloting of the County Climate Change Fund in Kenya (Crick et al. 2019), where the devolution process favours the county. But Kenya has many fewer counties (47) than Ethiopia has woredas (more than 700).

## 5.7 Accountability and transparency

Climate-resilient development requires planning processes and plans to be as accessible and transparent as possible for all stakeholders. This promotes meaningful participation and ongoing learning in line with the LLA Principles, as well as downwards accountability to communities. Setting out a clear and verifiable theory of change promotes more effective MEL.

Creating comprehensive, written strategic plans that include climate risk management helps ensure accountability and transparency by providing lasting documentation and therefore continuity in cases of high government staff turnover. As well as creating an essential reference for understanding local climate risk, a written plan signals commitment to climate action and competency to donors and provides clear entry points for investment. There can be a tendency to equate climate mainstreaming with the production of such plans. But where capacity to produce written plans is lacking — for example, due to time constraints, reporting language issues or organisational culture — quality will suffer and important planning knowledge may be omitted from these plans. In any case, busy woreda staff may have little time to read longer reports, IT equipment may be lacking and printed hard copies are expensive, nondurable and quickly outdated.

These issues can partly be addressed by tailoring modes of transparency through subsidiarity. At lower levels of government, it is worth institutionalising and legitimising alternative and more accessible

modes of documentation and information sharing, such as wall charts, audio, video and social media. Diversifying communication channels and formats — including community radio programmes, dedicated local spokespeople, social media, diagrams, cartoons and songs — is also key to addressing accessibility challenges at community level due to low literacy and/or language differences.

Adequate financial resourcing for transparency can be a challenge. Whole-of-society approaches may be helpful in ensuring continuity and communicating with communities effectively, particularly where non-governmental development actors have established and trusted access to communities or disadvantaged groups within them. Development becomes embodied in functional relationships between trusted and accountable networks of people, rather than documents.

## 5.8 Predictable regular funding

Predictable and regular funding is needed not only for climate-resilient interventions, but also for the planning system and to maintain the wider ecosystem of ongoing stakeholder relationships that make up the climate resilience governance system.

Although we developed the WCSDP guidelines with cost-effectiveness and practicality in mind, it is clear that existing woreda financial resources alone are not enough to fund a CRDP process. This requires political prioritisation from the national level and, action across all five pillars of government.

## 6

# Conclusion

Our key takeaways from the research project focus on the importance of working with existing institutions and practices, ensuring there is enough support and funding for reform, addressing capacity and resource gaps, and the need for time, patience, multiple iterations and a willingness to learn from failure.

Our Climate-Resilient Development Framework underlines that CRDP is not a variation on the existing planning system. It is not just about mainstreaming nationally determined climate-related plans and policies across all sectors and all levels of administration. Nor is it simply a matter of better, clearer guidelines or a one-off process that leads to plans that are mechanically implemented and followed. Rather, CRDP requires a fundamental systemic shift in governance across multiple domains of government. This includes: the policy and legislative frameworks that underpin everything else; the institutional architecture at all levels; practices and capabilities for climate-resilient planning; adequate funding for planning and investment; and MEL, which allows us to experiment with and assess policy responses to rapidly changing environments.

Appreciating this complexity helps explain the challenges we encountered in attempting to pilot and institutionalise a new set of local government guidelines. Despite our best efforts to ensure these were co-produced with local actors, tailored to local contexts and aligned with existing capacities, several factors — including the reorganisation of key national institutions, serious security issues and a major global pandemic — we were unable to assemble an effective cross-sectoral national coalition of committed actors with the mandate, political motivation and, above all, additional finance to fully trial the guidelines. A successful pilot would have required a supporting institutional structure of coordination and technical support committees at every administrative level, enabling cross-sectoral collaboration and providing the technical

support and necessary finance for planning. Our experience highlights that successful systemic climate transformation hinges on strategic timing and correctly judging both political moments of opportunity and the contingent alignments of otherwise divergent agendas.

Despite these limitations, the guidelines we developed illustrate some of the ways in which LDCs can operationalise climate-resilient development principles at the local level within a wider supportive commitment to experiment with local-level planning processes. The final guidelines we present here are certainly not normative. Rather, they are both exploratory and suggestive. This paper highlights the rationale behind our design choices, explores the practical challenges we faced in implementing them and questions some of the implicit assumptions we made while operationalising the CRDP Principles. These are some of our key takeaways:

1. **It is important to work with the grain of existing administrative structures and government culture and practices.** For example, Ethiopia's governance structure, although federal, is top-down, strongly hierarchical and deeply sectoral. This means that before reforming planning at the lower levels, proposed changes must be negotiated, sponsored, institutionalised and operationalised at the national level, particularly if they involve cross-sectoral cooperation. All national flagship programmes in Ethiopia operate with coordination and technical support structures present at each administrative level; and deeper cross-sectoral collaboration at the local level requires a superstructure of this kind.

2. **A significant reform agenda must have adequate political and financial support.** When selecting an entry point, timing and political expediency are crucial because the ambition of the initiative must be demand-led and driven by appropriate institutions (Shakya et al., 2018). Our projectised GCF entry point was not ideal for institutionalising a new planning system: it did not have a national mandate for extensive reform; there was no formal coordination with existing planning systems through the Ministry of Planning; there was no supporting national/regional administrative structure; and it did not bring new financial flows for climate-resilient development planning or investments.
3. **Piloting of new planning systems must have sufficient funding to ensure a quality process.** However, the funding envelope must be determined with an eye to sustainability. An inclusive, participatory learning framework is also essential to improve processes. Piloting can be limited to one or two demonstration woredas, but scaling up must take into account regional and agro-climatic differences.
4. **Capacity and resource gaps at lower levels of local government can be a huge obstacle to introducing CRDP.** Recommendations for addressing this issue include:
  - **Regions and zones have a critical role to play in plugging capacity gaps.** In addition to providing tailored technical support, they can convene and facilitate activities and workshops at the woreda cluster level and facilitate peer learning. A flexible approach is needed. In some areas of the country, the individual woreda may not be the best unit for strategic planning.
  - **Whole-of-society actors can complement government staff and build resilience into the planning system.** Whole-of-society engagement is not simply about increasing the number and range of people attending workshops. Establishing a functional, well-resourced and coordinated network of actors with an interest in climate action can create a pool of expertise and resources that can complement and extend the reach of local government. They can provide scientific advice, as well as acting as trusted community gatekeepers.
5. **To ensure capacity building is sustainable, modifying existing planning frameworks that are already institutionalised and working at scale can help, while funding it properly is vital.** In the case of the WCSDP guidelines, it would be possible to scale up fieldwork with communities more sustainably by modifying existing participatory watershed and rangeland guidelines, which local government staff are already familiar with and trained on. Several national programmes that also provide funding for planning have also already adopted these guidelines.
  - **Scenario planning with local stakeholders is a cost-effective way to plan in conditions of uncertainty.** Used sensitively, shared common scenarios can be accessible, transparent and intuitive tools that enable stakeholders at many levels to screen suggested investments or interventions against a range of plausible climate futures in terms that are meaningful and relevant to them. Once a common scenario is developed it can be used repeatedly by different sectors and national flagship programmes.
5. **Climate-resilient development involves iterative, systemic change and may require multiple solutions and pathways to implementation.** Experimentation involves time, patience, multiple iterations, funding and a willingness to accept failure as successful learning outcome. This means that knowledge management and documentation are essential components of the process.
 

However, MEL systems at lower levels of government in LDCs are often minimally functional. The lack of support for inclusive, participatory and systematic learning and reflection across scales severely limits the flexibility and agility that is needed to respond effectively to the unprecedented impacts of rapid and unpredictable climate change on complex, dynamic, socio-economic systems.

There is an urgent need to address this. This working paper and other ongoing initiatives experimenting with 'business unusual', such as LIFE-AR, are key contributors to this process.

# Appendix 1: The CRDP and LLA Principles

The Climate-Resilient Development Planning (CRDP) Principles largely correspond to the rationale underlying the Principles of Locally Led Adaptation (LLA Principles) as set out in Table A.1. There are a few differences:

- MEL is an LLA principle but appears in the Climate-Resilient Development Framework as one of the five pillars of government action.
- Valuing local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge is not an explicit LLA principle, although the importance of local knowledge is recognised in Principle 5: Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty.
- LLA principle 8 (Collaborative action and investment) refers more to whole-of-government, cross-sectoral and integrated government and para-governmental action across scales but does not refer to whole-of-society, which recommends including a wider range of actors.

Table A.1. Comparing the CRDP and LLA Principles

CRDP PRINCIPLE	LLA PRINCIPLE
Appropriate subsidiarity	<b>1. Devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level:</b> Giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over: how adaptation actions are defined, prioritised, designed, implemented; how progress is monitored and how success is evaluated.
Gender and social inclusion	<b>2. Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, disabled, displaced, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised ethnic groups:</b> Integrating gender-based, economic, and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action and encouraging vulnerable and marginalised individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.
Predictable, regular climate finance for local action	<b>3. Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily:</b> Supporting long-term development of local governance processes, capacity, and institutions through simpler access modalities and longer-term and more predictable funding horizons, to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions.
Training and capacity building	<b>4. Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy:</b> Improving the capabilities of local institutions to ensure they can understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate solutions, and facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project-based donor funding.
Risk-informed decision making	<b>5. Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty:</b> Informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local, traditional, Indigenous, generational and scientific knowledge that can enable resilience under a range of future climate scenarios.
(MEL pillar)	<b>6. Flexible programming and learning:</b> Enabling adaptive management to address the inherent uncertainty in adaptation, especially through robust monitoring and learning systems, flexible finance and flexible programming.
Accountability and transparency	<b>7. Ensuring transparency and accountability:</b> Making processes of financing, designing and delivering programmes that are more transparent and downwardly accountable to local stakeholders.
Whole-of-society / Whole-of-government approach	<b>8. Collaborative action and investment:</b> Collaboration across sectors, initiatives and levels to ensure that different initiatives and sources of funding (humanitarian assistance, development, disaster risk reduction, green recovery funds etc) support each other and avoid duplicating activities, to enhance efficiencies and good practice.
Valuing local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge	(not present)

Source: Descriptions of the LLA Principles are from Global Center on Adaptation (n.d.).



# Appendix 2. Woreda climate and disaster risk management planning scorecard

We developed this self-assessment scorecard to enable woreda planning teams to assess their readiness for climate risk and disaster management during Phase 1 of the WCSDP process. It covers aspects including financing, participation, social inclusion, use of climate change information and understanding of

climate change. The self-assessment methodology is based on IIED's Tracking Adaptation and Measuring Development framework (Brooks and Fisher, 2014). It can be used to measure baseline capacity, but also to measure progress through time as capacity is built and institutionalised.

## Section A. Woreda activities and capacity rating

SCORE	GUIDANCE
0	The woreda does not do this at the moment, and has no experience of doing this in the recent past
1	The woreda has just begun doing this in a very limited way
2	The woreda does this (or has recently done this), but only in specific sectors or projects
3	The woreda has integrated this across many of its planning or budgeting activities for a number of years but there are still gaps and it is not mandatory
4	The woreda has fully integrated this across planning and budgeting for all programmes and projects; it is now institutional standard procedure

**Section B. Consider each of these statements below and rate them according to the scoring system given above**

WOREDA NAME		SCORE (0–4)	EXPLANATION AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/ NARRATIVE FOR RATING (3–4 SENTENCES MAX)
Principle	Indicator category		
<b>Risk-informed decision making</b>	<p>To what extent do woreda planning processes assess and plan for climate and disaster risks?</p> <p>Concrete examples of doing this may include any of the following (as well as others not listed):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Using climate information such as historical weather data, weather forecasts, early warning systems and/or climate projections to understand short- and long-term climate risks</li> <li>▪ Conducting climate and disaster risk assessments of current livelihoods and planned economic activities in the woreda</li> <li>▪ Conducting climate and disaster risk assessments of infrastructure such as roads, public buildings and services</li> <li>▪ Consulting communities to understand how current and historical climate and disaster risks are affecting or undermining livelihoods and decision making</li> <li>▪ Using future climate and disaster scenarios to understand the potential impact of severe weather events or unexpected crises.</li> </ul> <p>We are not asking if woredas do all the above. These are illustrative examples only. Please provide a single score (0–4).</p>		
<b>Training and capacity building</b>	<p>To what extent do woreda planning processes include staff with experience and technical training relevant to climate and/or disaster risk management?</p> <p>Examples of relevant skills include people with experience of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interpreting, using and collecting climate and weather information, such as meteorological data and climate projections</li> <li>▪ Conducting climate and disaster risk assessments</li> <li>▪ Disaster risk management and early warning systems</li> <li>▪ National and regional climate change policies, commitments and programmes (eg NAP-ETH, CGRE etc)</li> <li>▪ Hydrology, groundwater management and integrated watershed management</li> <li>▪ Climate-smart agriculture approaches</li> <li>▪ Climate adaptation and mitigation</li> </ul> <p>We are not asking if woredas have people who are familiar with all of the above. These are illustrative examples only. Please provide a single score (0–4).</p>		

<b>Whole-of-society / whole-of-government approach</b>	To what extent does the woreda involve and consult a wide range of stakeholders affected by climate change (eg CSOs, producer groups, universities, private sector actors, traditional or Indigenous communities) during woreda planning and budgeting processes?		
	To what extent do different sectors systematically consult each other about climate and disaster risks and coordinate their responses and sectoral plans?		
<b>Valuing local, Indigenous and traditional knowledge</b>	<p>To what extent do woreda planning processes use inclusive participatory methods such as discussion tools, focus groups, participatory mapping, field guides and community outreach processes to enable local people and communities to explain and document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local livelihood systems and the impact of climate change on them</li> <li>▪ Local and traditional knowledge that can inform climate adaptation and reduction of risk in those systems</li> </ul>		
<b>Gender and social inclusion</b>	To what extent do woreda planning processes include individuals with expertise in gender issues and working with socially disadvantaged individuals and groups?		
	<p>To what extent are the interests of disadvantaged groups that are most negatively affected by climate change (including women and other marginalised groups) meaningfully represented at all stages of woreda planning/ decision making? This could be through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The use of participatory consultation processes that are sensitive to local patterns of exclusion and different communication preferences</li> <li>▪ Collaboration with CSOs, CBOs and NGOs that have deep knowledge and experience of working with these groups</li> <li>▪ Institutionalised screening of development options for impacts on disadvantaged groups</li> </ul>		
<b>Accountability and transparency</b>	To what extent are opportunities to allow stakeholders (eg CSOs, producer groups, universities, private sector actors, traditional or Indigenous communities) to raise concerns, objections or complaints about woreda plans, budgets or implementation, especially regarding investments or initiatives impacted by climate and/or disaster risks?		
	To what extent are planning processes and final development plans publicly available for consultation, considering the specific accessibility needs of all stakeholders, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalised?		
<b>Monitoring, evaluation and learning</b>	To what extent does the woreda have a current MEL strategy?		
	To what extent is the MEL strategy being implemented?		
	To what extent does the woreda use lessons learnt from previous activities to inform new activities and development plans?		

## Section C. YES/NO questions

Principle	Indicator	Yes/No
<b>Institutional readiness</b>	The woreda has a formal climate change or disaster risk strategy	
	An authoritative body or department within the woreda is mandated with ensuring climate change issues are considered in planning across all sectors	
	There is dedicated funding or certainty of long-term funding for sustaining this coordination activity by the body/department	
<b>Predictable, regular funding for local action</b>	There is adequate political and administrative support and prioritisation for climate action by an authoritative financial entity (eg at regional or national level, Ministry of Finance)	
	Funding is available to <i>pilot</i> measures that address climate change (eg adaptation, risk management, mitigation, low-carbon development)	
	Funding is available for specific measures addressing <i>gender inequalities related to climate change</i> and/or the specific vulnerabilities, needs and priorities of women	

# Appendix 3. Indicators for assessing the presence of climate-resilient or climate-smart planning in local government annual and five-year development plans

We developed these indicators as part of the WCSDP guideline piloting process to help with project MEL.

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	WHERE IN THE PLAN	TYPE OF EVIDENCE IN PLAN
<b>Community participation</b>	Community participation captures perspectives from all livelihoods and agroecological zones in local area	Methodology Summary of findings from community participation activities (in main text or appendix)	Clear explanation of community participation strategy with rationale Community sampling strategy aims to capture representative sample of livelihoods, agroecological zones and people from marginalised and/or particularly vulnerable groups
	Community participation focuses explicitly on climate risks, hazards and impacts	Narrative for detailed plan/logframe Logframe	Details of participatory learning and action tools used to identify community risks, adaptation strategies and priorities
	Community participation captures priority investments/ interventions	Participation reports (eg in appendix)	Evidence that community priorities have been addressed in the plan Evidence that Indigenous knowledge has been considered and included in the plan Evidence of validation with communities Explanation of limitations and possible biases in data List of workshops, consultations and attendance statistics

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	WHERE IN THE PLAN	TYPE OF EVIDENCE IN PLAN
<b>Whole-of-society approach</b>	Co-development of the plan with expert and professional stakeholders including NGOs, community representatives, private sector actors and multiple government departments	Methodology Summary of findings from whole-of-society participation activities (in main text or appendix) Narrative for detailed plan/logframe Logframe Planning team details Workshop reports (eg in appendix) Workshop attendance lists (eg in appendix)	Clear explanation of participation strategy Stakeholder analysis Details of participatory tools and research methods used References to reports and resources produced by other stakeholders Validation includes feedback from multiple actor types List of workshops, consultations and attendance statistics
<b>Social inclusion</b>	Plan recognises the different climate impacts experienced by marginalised social groups Plan activities address priorities and perspectives of typically marginalised groups	Methodology Summary of findings for marginalised or vulnerable groups (in main text or appendix) Narrative for detailed plan/logframe Logframe Workshop attendance lists (eg in appendix)	Participation strategy takes a gender-responsive approach (tools and methods disaggregate risks and priorities by gender, age and other excluded identities) Evidence that selection (and refinement of) activities or investments has considered the needs of and differentiated climate risks for marginalised and excluded groups
<b>Cross-sectoral collaboration</b>	Planning covers all sectors Planning explores sectoral synergies and avoids duplications Sectors actively plan interventions together based on cross-sectoral strategic objectives	Planning team list Methodology Strategic objectives Logframe Planning workshop summaries (eg in appendix) Participation records (eg in appendix)	Planning team features members from across sectors Process involves activities with sectors comparing their priorities and planned activities in the face of climate risk Evidence of sectors/offices allocating budget to cross-sectoral strategic objectives in response to climate risk
<b>Climate information</b>	Current and future climate and disaster risks and impacts identified and explored Climate risk incorporates local expert knowledge and lived experience	Climate and disaster risk section (in main text and appendix as needed) Methodology Summary of findings for community/whole-of-society workshops (in main text or appendix).	Plan refers to the woreda disaster risk profile Plan refers to future climate projections Participatory activities and tools explore Indigenous and local understanding of climate risk and climate trends with community and whole-of-society actors Future climate scenarios are co-produced with whole-of-society actors and the impacts on different livelihood systems, sectors and vulnerable groups is explained



CATEGORY	INDICATOR	WHERE IN THE PLAN	TYPE OF EVIDENCE IN PLAN
<b>Integration of climate risk</b>	<p>Climate risk is reflected in choice of strategic development priorities</p> <p>Climate risk is reflected in choice of specific activities</p>	<p>Strategic objectives</p> <p>Logframe narrative for activities</p>	<p>Process for choosing strategic development priorities considers identified current and future climate risk</p> <p>Evidence that activities have been screened for climate risk or justified in terms of reducing vulnerability, especially for the poorest and most excluded or marginalised</p> <p>Adequate and realistic funding allocated towards activities and priorities likely to reduce vulnerability, build resilience and/or reduce emissions</p>
<b>Policy alignment with national policy and legislation</b>	<p>Strategic objectives and investment priorities aligned with national climate plans</p>	<p>Overall plan orientation</p> <p>Policy and legislative frameworks section</p> <p>Strategic objectives</p>	<p>Process for choosing strategic objectives and activity or investment options explicitly aligns with Ten-Year Perspective Plan, CRGE Strategy, NAP-ETH etc</p>
<b>MEL</b>	<p>MEL addresses resilience to climate risk</p>	<p>MEL section</p>	<p>MEL plan includes specific indicators for increased resilience or reduced vulnerability to climate risk</p>

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Despite growing consensus that climate-resilient development should be at the top of the agenda for least developed countries, a persistent implementation gap means there is little practical learning derived for governments on how to operationalise. Describing an action research project to assess the readiness of Ethiopia's planning system for locally led climate-resilient development, this paper identifies areas for action, provides valuable lessons on the constraints to institutionalising these processes in Ethiopia, and illustrates some of the challenges and design trade-offs that development practitioners and local governments in least developed countries will have to make when implementing the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation.

IIED is a policy and action research organisation. We promote sustainable development to improve livelihoods and protect the environments on which these livelihoods are built. We specialise in linking local priorities to global challenges. IIED is based in London and works in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific, with some of the world's most vulnerable people. We work with them to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them — from village councils to international conventions.



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