

# SMALL GRANTS FACILITY

*Responding to climate change*



## An Emerging Framework for Capacity Building:

Reflection and response as part of Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation

### Case Study 3



Clockwise: Project beneficiaries in the Mninginisi Block 2 Village demonstrating how plant seedlings are protected from extreme temperatures in a climate-smart nursery, Mopani District (Photo: SANBI); Heat and drought tolerant climate-resilient livestock that were introduced in the Leliefontein and Kamiesberg communities, Namakwa District (Photo: SANBI); An established climate-smart communal garden in the Mamanyoha Village has introduced drip irrigation techniques to irrigate agricultural produce, Mopani District (Photo: SANBI).

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Above left: An earth dam in the Ga-Ntata Village that serves as a water drinking point for rural livestock in the Mopani District (Photo: SANBI); Above right: A Facilitating Agency officer capturing lessons from a capacity building workshop in the Namakwa District (Photo: SANBI).



## Key Messages

To ensure sufficient capability is achievable for all stakeholders, the various levels and types of capacity required for Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation should be well understood and be applied to the Project Management Team as well as grantees. Key capacity building lessons are outlined below.

- To understand capacity needs, a refined and responsive grant applicant screening mechanism and needs assessment is required to determine the specific strengths, weaknesses and needs throughout the project.
- Capacity should be defined and framed within the requirements established by the donor and administering agencies. Compliance requirements should be included in capacity assessments to ensure systems can achieve minimum obligations.
- A responsive and flexible approach to time and resource allocation is required. Capacity should be understood as a 'quality' that is built over time, rather than a 'quantity' that can be established prior to starting work.
- Potential grantees with approved adaptation concepts should be provided resources and support to develop key competencies over time prior to project implementation, ultimately saving costs and time.
- As systems are created in response to contexts and needs, so it should be recognised that a degree of capacity will have to be built across the system, including within the project management team.
- Due diligence at inception should focus on the extent to which project implementers have a full and nuanced grasp of the capacity required for effective Enhanced Direct Access. Furthermore, this understanding should be applied in ways that develop detailed and unique accounts for the capacity building needs of each Small Grant Recipient.

## Project Overview

The “Taking Adaptation to the Ground: A Small Grants Facility for enabling local level responses to climate change” project (known as the Community Adaptation Small Grants Facility project) was funded by the Adaptation Fund in 2014. The project sought to pilot a new mechanism of Enhanced Direct Access for local level climate change adaptation in South Africa, with a broad goal of understanding how such a mechanism could be scaled and replicated in the future.

The objective of the project was to increase resilience and reduce the vulnerability of local communities who are most vulnerable to climate change through building capacity and empowering these communities to identify and implement adaptation measures. It aimed to facilitate the inclusion of climate change adaptation responses into local practices so that assets and livelihoods would be protected from local climate-induced risks associated with expected dry spells and droughts, seasonal shifts and storm-related disaster events. The emphasis was to support projects that harnessed local knowledge and creativity, integrated climate science, addressed gender disparities and ultimately generated tangible adaptation responses.

The Community Adaptation Small Grants Facility project targeted vulnerable, rural communities in the Namakwa District in the Northern Cape and the Mopani District in Limpopo, South Africa. The project offered grant sizes of approximately US\$100 000 to communities for the implementation of tangible climate change adaptation responses that were identified locally. The project was approved as a four-year pilot project but was extended to over five years to accommodate unforeseen delays.



## Building Systemic and Organisational Capacity for Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation

This case study highlights the extent and importance of individual, organisational and systemic capacity, and capacity building, for effective Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation. Capacity building played a significant role throughout the CA SGF project, and while there was acknowledgement in the planning stages that this process was important, the extent to which this would consume time and resources was not fully anticipated. This case study, therefore, derives its learning from the experience of implementation, elaborating on the depth of capacity, and capacity building required to implement Enhanced Direct Access to climate finance. Finally, the case study reflects on what might have been done differently to tackle capacity deficits.



## **‘Theory of Organisational Capacity’: Learning from the CA SGF project experience**

Defining ‘capacity’ within the context of unique and complex interventions in Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation presented a challenge. The original project conceptualisation envisaged that communities would require improved financial skills and that Small Grant Recipient project implementation would require increased understanding of climate change adaptation responses, but it was learnt over time that existing capacity was overestimated and many more forms of capacity were required.

In addition to purely technical or quantifiable skills and abilities, where considerable variability existed already, there were less tangible aspects of capacity that were built, or grew over time, including how role-players related to each other. The more complex elements required multiple stakeholders to work together as a unified whole. This brought into question the term ‘capacity building’ which generally refers to a process through which people, organisations or systems enhance skills or knowledge to achieve specified levels of competencies and can

include practical and theoretical training. Implicit in this is an exchange whereby one entity has the requisite competencies needed by another.

As the CA SGF project progressed, it was realised that the above definition was inadequate and a systemic view of capacity was needed for each Small Grant Recipient as well as for the CA SGF project management system as a whole. In this view, the CA SGF project’s provision for adaptive learning and management had to be drawn on whereby the whole system was seen as continuously learning and adjusting its functioning to better respond to the needs and realities it encountered. This entails a different, more dynamic and less predictable view of both ‘capacity’ and ‘capacity building.’

The growth in systems capacity is illustrated, for example, in the statement of values coming out of the Project Management Team reflection and learning meeting in September 2018, after two years of project implementation:

*Below: Arid landscapes of the Namakwa District (Photo: SANBI).*



Out of discussion with the National Implementing Entity, and noting the need for improved communication amongst Small Grant Facility role-players, the following principles were generated for work going forward:



Figure 1: Working principals for the CA SGF project.

The above highlights the complexity in defining and measuring capacity. Capacity resides in technical, quantifiable skills, knowledge and abilities. However, it also resides between people and organisations, and in areas that are less tangible such as leadership, communication and tone.

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1 Reflections, Learning and Planning Workshop, Project Management Team Year 4 Way Forward 10-13 September 2018. These working principles were further broken down into detailed plans.



Put another way, there is a limit to the fixed quantity of 'capacity' that can be specified and then delivered. Rather, each new set of relationships will grow and identify its own capacities as well as those it needs to develop. The comprehensive framework for capacity that came out of the learning of this project stands as an initial overview of the range of capabilities that might be in place and/ or

developed over time. In that sense, it can be used as a lens through which to view new situations. However, the precise combination of capacities and needs will emerge out of each situation, as will the systemic needs, depending on the context and project management approaches in place.

## Capacity Building within the CA SGF Project

### Capacity building as part of the project design

It was understood during the conceptualisation of the CA SGF project that its implementation demanded skill sets in climate change adaptation, administration, financial management and compliance – and that these were not readily available in the vulnerable rural areas selected for the project. To develop requisite capacity, the CA SGF project proposal allocated resources dedicated to capacity building efforts. In addition, a multi-tiered project management structure was developed, in part to provide the necessary support to address community-level capacity gaps.

The CA SGF project proposal also provided for capacity building of its management structures. It identified a dedicated capacity-building session to ensure that the Executing Entity and Facilitating Agencies were able to “competently screen” and detect risks in future project monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes, with particular reference to the Adaptation Funds’ Environmental and Social Policy. It also envisioned the Facilitating Agencies providing expert input into grant applicants’ proposals as well as ongoing monitoring and support.

### Capacity building as part of project implementation

Despite these capacity building provisions, the CA SGF project did presume a degree of general organisational functionality and capacity from the Small Grant Recipient applicants who met the eligibility requirements. However, the level of effort and expertise required to build requisite organisational, technical and management capacity amongst Small Grant Recipients was underestimated. In addition to technical expertise in areas such as engineering, agro-ecology, and hydrology, for example, the development and facilitation of whole and complex financial and administrative systems within community organisations was required.

Furthermore, although the project management structure was developed to enable and facilitate capacity building, the complex arrangements generated their own capacity needs. The individual institutions grappled with their roles and responsibilities within the structure. The uncertainty inherent in pilot projects was an additional source of misunderstanding. Ultimately it emerged that in order for the CA SGF project to succeed, the capacities of its implementers and managers also needed to grow, in addition to the system as a whole.

The Facilitating Agency's role was particularly critical in terms of capacity building as they were responsible for both facilitating technical capacity growth as well as providing requisite support to ensure reporting and compliance. As project compliance, monitoring and reporting requirements emerged throughout the life cycle of the Small Grant Recipient projects, capacity had to be built on an ongoing basis, particularly as fund disbursements were dependent upon approved reporting of all projects. The result was that all disbursements were dependent on aggregated compliance of all Small Grant Recipient projects. In effect, failure in any one part of the system resulted in cash-flow shortages across the whole of the CA SGF project. While the Executing Entity was able to utilise its balance sheet to pre-finance activities, there were limits to this ability. It required the Executing Entity to incur financial and opportunity costs when a differentiated approach could have addressed the challenge.

This is an important point not only because it would have eased the burden on the Executing Entity, but also because the CA SGF project was intended to be a global learning opportunity and it was understood that all parties were learning as they went along. The aggregated compliance, in effect, placed the greatest burden on the Facilitating Agencies and Executing Entity as they were responsible for ensuring a complete and comprehensive package of reports. The accumulated project success became a key deliverable to which the whole system was held to account, with particular difficulties in reporting and compliance.

The dual roles of the Facilitating Agencies, ensuring capacity and supporting implementation while enforcing compliance, were not always compatible, as they were constrained by resource limitations. Therefore, while

the provision of oversight support was anticipated and integrated into the design, the level of resourcing was inadequate. Far from being a separate 'input' to the project, capacity building was its predominant and continuous quality, running throughout all activities and requiring extra effort, regardless of the other activities underway.

Such a practice of continuous capacity development, while simultaneously providing and enabling technically and administratively specialised processes, requires a particular understanding of the work and skill in undertaking it. The CA SGF project was fortunate to have several such skilled people across the system. The Mid-Term Evaluation noted comments from similar funders who expressed that projects of this nature require such comprehensive capacity building that it becomes a core function of the project.

In addition, applying adaptive management practices to understand and address the various types and levels of capacity gaps took time. This was largely due to the decision-making hierarchy and limited delegated authority as well as the development of the CA SGF project's ability to understand and respond to the capacity needs of both the Small Grant Recipients and the system. Capacity building, therefore, required collaborative engagement by all role-players to develop a shared understanding of the needs of the Small Grant Recipients and the CA SGF project, and the ability to work together to meet these. As implementation proceeded, it emerged that 'capacity' and 'capacity building' were both dynamic and contextual qualities; that the concepts do not exist as abstract external quantities only, but also emerge and demand response in the particular geographic and institutional contexts of each attempt to pursue Enhanced Direct Access for climate change adaptation.

*Below left: Livestock herders learning how to assemble a geodesic dome which protects them from extreme weather events in the Namakwa District (Photo: SANBI);  
Below right: An assembled geodesic dome in the Namakwa District (Photo: SANBI).*





## Capacity results and capacity building achievements

Significant individual, organisational and systemic capacity was achieved through the life of the project – some organically as a result of in situ learning and adjustment, and some as a result of intentional and resourced capacity building efforts. In effect, the CA SGF Project Management Team increased efficiency over the project lifespan. Adaptive management practices were incorporated into the capacity building exercises, leveraging expertise at all levels of the Project Management Team as well as drawing on technical experts as needed. Capacity was developed in various technical areas, as well as in working within the constraints of a strong compliance framework in the context of South Africa's under-resourced organisational and institutional life.

The Small Grant Recipients gained capacity in a multitude of areas through customised individual and group activities and through their own engagement with the rigours of project management. Administratively, they were provided with capacity building in financial management, record-keeping, budgeting, compliance, and overall project management. The Namakwa Facilitating Agency, Conservation South Africa, with primary responsibility for capacity building of the Small Grant Recipients in that region, focused nearly three-quarters of their training workshops during the project on report writing, financial reporting and project monitoring. Although the assumption was that reporting challenges would be resolved as organisational capacities improved, in practice, support was required for the duration of the CA SGF project.

Although measures were established to facilitate effective and transparent financial systems, such as requiring a dedicated bank account and financial due diligence prior to contracting, organisational systems as well as contextual constraints were described as challenging by

the Facilitating Agencies and many Small Grant Recipients. Immature financial management systems demanded continual training and assistance from the Facilitating Agency. The lack of local suppliers, particularly in speciality areas, and inadequate understanding of basic rules of competition and how to document it, required constant support to meet procurement requirements. It was exhausting for project managers at all levels of the system, straining relationships and occasionally resulting in over-spend on administration costs.

Furthermore, there was a broadening of awareness of climate change as a contextual reality for people in these two regions. Climate change adaptation knowledge was improved alongside specific technical skills required for adaptation responses. The investment in training in adaptation technologies was particularly high in the Mopani District, which as a whole had little experience in adaptation measures prior to involvement in the CA SGF project. Nearly one-third of the capacity building training sessions delivered over the course of the project by the Mopani Facilitating Agency, CHoiCe Trust, were involved in either the development and refinement of a farm plan or agro-ecology technologies. This was in addition to experts contracted to provide training and services in various technical areas. While comprising a significant portion of capacity building efforts, adaptation specific capacity-building events provided by the Namakwa Facilitating Agency were less than one-quarter of the total. In part, this is accounted for by the relatively higher level of adaptation experience in the Namakwa region but the focus on administrative capacity remains noteworthy. Topics of technical assistance ranged from pest and disease control to drought-resistant crops, some of which are highlighted below.

Table 1: Topics of technical assistance.

| WATER RESERVOIR MANAGEMENT     | LAND MANAGEMENT                   | SOIL CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Pest and disease control     | • Drought-resistant crops         | • Succession planting            |
| • Livestock grazing            | • Poultry and vegetable gardening | • Greywater harvesting           |
| • Water, sanitation and health | • Agro-ecology                    | • Farm planning                  |

At the level of community and beneficiary capacity, an increase in climate-smart budgeting and planning was observed from local community members. As the project progressed, capacity and confidence to engage with various high-level stakeholders grew, including community engagements which began to occur more regularly than before the start of the project. Communities were involved in multiple training activities including water-wise gardening, nutrition, conflict resolution, food preserving methods, grazing and land management, and greywater use and management.

A third area of enhanced capacity, knowledge generation and dissemination on the part of the Small Grant Recipients, was increased through the CA SGF project process. Several platforms to promote learning were facilitated within the project. However, skills and experience particular to sharing knowledge and information outside of the confines

of the implementation villages was an unanticipated result. This demonstrated the increased capacity to share knowledge and skills with nearby communities and Districts. Furthermore, through the contact established between the beneficiaries in the two regions, Small Grant Recipients developed the capacity to relate across previously unknown contexts and cultures, to seek and find commonality, particularly in relation to adaptation practices. This process helped to break isolation, find common cause, solidarity and courage.

Finally, increased capacity to share knowledge and best practice mechanisms at local and international forums was developed. An example is the extensive Small Grant Recipient representation at Adaptation Futures, an international conference on climate change adaptation. The event was attended and lauded by various national and international delegates.

## Resourcing capacity building

The extent to which the whole system needed to learn necessitated 'capacity development' to ensure technical oversight and administrative compliance within the CA SGF project. Although capacity building was integral to the project, the costs involved were unanticipated despite the allocated budget. As the CA SGF project was a pilot initiative which intended to learn from its own experience, capacity also grew over time and as all players in the system learnt how to work with each other and adapted processes to better meet the needs and realities encountered.

The original CA SGF project allocated nearly 20% of its budget, a total of US\$462 524, for dedicated capacity-building activities. In addition, capacity-building activities were included, and budgeted for, in the grants of the Small Grant Recipients and each Small Grant Recipient had its own learning line-item in their respective budgets, which averaged US\$11 000. At the end of the fourth and final year of Small Grant Recipient project implementation, most of the budget was spent.

The total cost of capacity building is difficult to ascertain as coordination of external trainers could take several days to obtain quotes, ensure qualifications and undergo the rigorous procurement process as well as to brief and assist with logistics. Capacity building by the Facilitating Agencies is captured, but the time spent to assess

training needs and develop customised responses is not always fully captured. Additional support required to build requisite capacity amongst communities was absorbed by the Small Grant Recipients themselves through extra administrative time collecting information and reporting.

In short, if we assess the capacity development over time, this has ultimately been achieved but requiring the following investments:

- Additional capacity building activities needed to address the gap between expected capacity and existing capacity.
- New and different types of capacity building activities were required, including training in financial management, conflict resolution and several other topics.
- Creative capacity building delivery methods were developed to increase effectiveness of communities unaccustomed to traditional academic methods that typically involve printed texts and lectures.
- Increased investment of time and human resources to facilitate and embed learning.

Improved understanding of capacity needs in advance of contracting Small Grant Recipients could improve both efficiencies of resources and effectiveness. Capacity



building needs assessments of each Small Grant Recipient would have to include all aspects of requisite capacity, climate adaptation knowledge as well as financial and administrative skills. Capacity would also need to be assessed against all compliance requirements. A framework for assessing and understanding capacity, developed by the CA SGF Project Management Team, provides some insights into how this could be achieved.

## Framework for capacity building

In September 2018, just over mid-way through the CA SGF project, the Project Management Team realised the need to better articulate capacity-building to support “environmental, institutional and financial sustainability”, as outlined in the Mid-Term Evaluation, particularly as

the CA SGF project approached its conclusion. The result was a framework for understanding the capacity that the CA SGF project sought to develop, based on the Project Management Team’s emerging comprehension of what capacity building involves.

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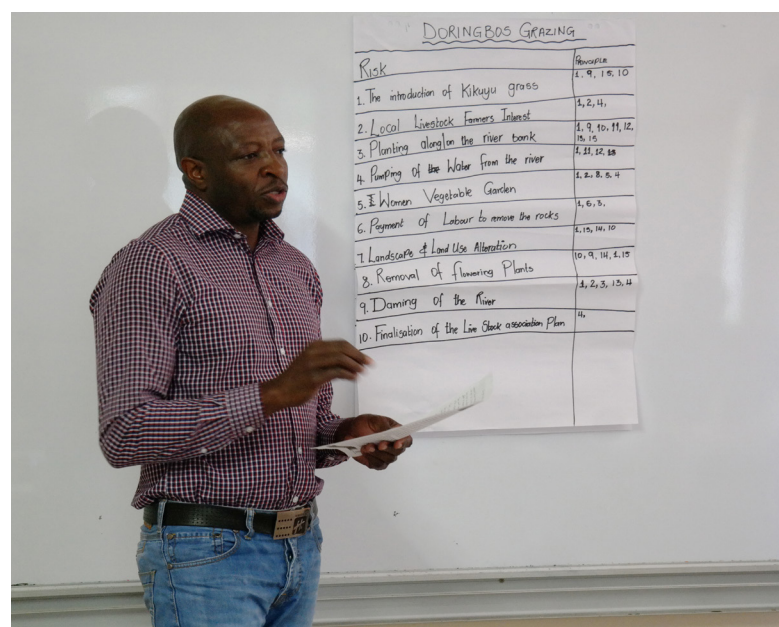
**Precisely because of the variability in each District, Small Grant Recipient needs and strengths, and Small Grant Facility contract, defining capacity – what is sought as an overall project outcome – becomes immensely important.”**

**Project Management Team learning workshop, September 2018**

The framework incorporated an expanded view of capacity that included the ability to work effectively with communities as well as exercise compliance with the global funding requirements. It emphasised the view that capacity building within the context of Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation is built over time and proceeds differently for different organisations. It also recognised that varying capacity qualities will manifest within different organisations, depending on their histories, contexts and existing abilities.

Recognising the vast variability within capacity building, the framework sought to develop a map to generate accessible and common management data upon which to

*Below: A Small Grant Recipient from the Ramotshinyadi HIV/AIDS Youth Organisations during a workshop aimed at building capacity to comply with the Adaptation Fund’s Environmental and Social Safeguards (Photo: SANBI).*



base decisions, including resource allocation. It could also start to discern patterns which might further deepen the understanding of what is involved in capacity building for Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation.

Outlining seven primary areas of capacity, the framework highlights the breadth of skills and capacity outputs that the CA SGF project aimed to develop. Developing capacity was explicitly envisaged in the proposal in areas such as financial management and climate change adaptation, however, the framework below highlights the complexity of skills needed emerging from the implementation of the CA SGF project.

Table 2. Framework for elements of capacity and capacity development.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| A. Elements of organisational capacity that we seek in, and seek to build within, SGRs and their intermediaries (including FAs). | 1. <b>Identity</b> , sense of self and purpose especially in relation to the broader context of climate change and specifically community-based climate change adaptation, including an understanding of and commitment to principles of gender equity, democratic participation and foregrounding of indigenous and local knowledge systems.   |
|  | 2. Quality and strength of organisational <b>leadership</b> , especially in relation to community-based climate change adaptation.  |
|  | 3. <b>Human capital</b> - stability and skill of staff/ membership/ volunteers.   |
|  | 4. Recognition of and ability to distinguish <b>Organisational type</b> – (i) Funded, professional service providing NGO ('intermediary') (ii) Community Based Organisation (CBO) (iii) Hybrid.   |
|  | 5. A <b>practice</b> for supporting and promoting CCA in community, including – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Appropriate community engagement disposition and practices (core engagement skills), including participatory methods and a commitment to enabling gender equity and youth participation.</li> <li>– 'Absorption' of, familiarity with, and ability, in CCA expertise and/or practices.</li> <li>– Recognition of indigenous and local knowledge as equally valuable to external knowledge and ability to integrate this understanding into programmes of work and project management.</li> <li>– Capacity to create community-based activities out of project management and donor requirements in such a way that requirements are met and CCA and organisational capacity is enhanced. These include an increasing ability, over time to work effectively and smoothly with beneficiaries/community partners to - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assess and account for context and project against the ESPs;</li> <li>– Provide detailed, enumerated accounts of their situation (including baseline and change);</li> <li>– Report on activities and expenditure to the required level of detail and frequency.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|  | 6. <b>Project management</b> including planning, monitoring and reporting.  |
|  | 7. <b>Financial management</b> including banking and online systems, record keeping, procurement, bookkeeping and reporting (monthly, quarterly, annual).   |

These elements can function as a conceptual map for understanding capacity and the types of capacity development that might be needed from each Small Grant Recipient (and indeed any organisation seeking to work towards effective Enhanced Direct Access). Development in these areas can be tracked over time to generate a guide as to where capacity building efforts should be focused (see "B" on the next page for an example of a simple tracking tool) and even for assessing against minimum project requirements (see "C" on the next page).

Below: Traditional herder shelters for livestock farmers in the Namakwa District (Photo: DFPE).





Table 2. Framework for elements of capacity and capacity development. (Continued)

| <b>B. Tracking Capacity Development over Time</b>                           | <b>Point in Time</b>   | <b>Date</b>   | <b>Rating (1-5, with detail)</b> |
|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
|   | 1. Pre-grant<br>2. Contract<br>3. Current<br>4. Minimum needed for a successful end-grant<br>5. Minimum needed for a sustainable project on Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation capacity | Of first assignment:<br><br>Of signing:<br><br>Current Date:<br><br>End grant date: |                                  |
| <b>C. Community-based Climate Adaptation Progress against project plans</b> | <b>Point in Time</b>   | <b>Date</b>   | <b>Rating (1-5, with detail)</b> |
|   | 1. Current<br>2. Minimum needed for successful end-grant<br><br>Minimum needed for sustainable project on Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation capacity                                   | Current date:<br><br>End grant date:  |                                  |

While the development of this framework served to expand Project Management Team members' understanding of capacity, the extent to which it was being built and in what areas, its potential as an assessment and management tool (for example, as a set of indicators against which capacity development of individual Small Grant Recipients and the CA SGF project as a whole, could be tracked over time) was not taken further. This could be utilised in future project efforts.

## Conclusion

The CA SGF project brought capacity strengths and weaknesses to the foreground. Capacity building, likely to be a permanent feature of similar attempts to deliver Enhanced Direct Access climate finance to communities, is complex and dynamic. The technically complex requirements of global climate finance and the fact that Enhanced Direct Access climate finance gets implemented in new sites, each with their own unique features and challenges and new project management arrangements, will likely demand strong consideration of capacity building needs and an ability to apply concepts flexibly and responsively.

This requires due diligence at the inception phase of projects that focuses on the extent to which project

implementers have a full and nuanced grasp of the capacity required for effective Enhanced Direct Access. The ability to understand capacity needs within context and in accordance with multiple elements, many of which are outlined in the emerging framework presented in this case study, is critical. As is the ability to apply this understanding in ways that develop detailed and unique accounts for the capacity building needs of each Small Grant Recipient. Adequate resources must then be allocated to the delivery of the requisite customised, and ongoing, capacity building efforts.

Furthermore, the broader context in which Enhanced Direct Access climate change adaptation interventions take place is important. Ideally, the flow of climate finance

to the ground should be part of broader efforts to support climate change adaptation in whole regions and contexts, including the institutional governance-related contexts. This requires a sense of longevity in programming commitments and project management approaches to ensure that design and implementation of subsequent projects invest (substantially) upfront and

sustain the capacity building required to embed climate change resilience within rural communities. It further requires the whole system to engage and discuss 'capacity' as a strategic question and an emergent quality running across the whole system, not just technical 'abilities' within individual Small Grant Recipients.

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