

## How to build a strong project rationale and description for your PIF

**This document contains some background notes on 6 aspects of completing the project description and rationale of a PIF that will help to make a good impression.**

Here are 6 aspects of providing a convincing project rationale and description in a PIF, based on requests from developers. These are not exhaustive factors of success for a full PIF. And proponents must also complete the table of implementation risks, and other fields in the PIF, and elaborate other issues that may be specific to the type of project (e.g. projects on adaptation for the LDCF/SCCF, or using Non-Grant Instruments).

The 6 aspects are not entirely sequential, but are key to a strong Project Rationale (mostly 1, 2, 3) and Project Description (4, 5, 6 plus some of 2, 3) fields in the PIF template (as well as the Project Summary).



### *1. Define the problem and resulting objectives.*

*Apply systems thinking to provide a succinct system context and baseline, and identify what long-term outcomes are needed to address the problem*

- Why is the issue important? Why is it GEF-relevant? What are the key drivers determining how the system will evolve over time (e.g. demography, market demand, climate change, etc.)? What will (or won't) happen in the absence of a GEF investment (the baseline)? What are the resulting (integrated) objectives and outcomes to be achieved, including GEBs and/or adaptation benefits and co-benefits? <sup>1</sup>

### *2. Plan for the future, choose an enduring response.*

*Show convincingly that you've thought about the future conditions that the project must prepare for, choosing a response that is resilient and will ensure that the outcomes will be sustained long-term.*

- How may the key system drivers evolve (e.g. using simple future narratives)? <sup>2</sup> What are the barriers to and opportunities for an intervention? Why choose this response, and what will ensure it is resilient to future

<sup>1</sup> For climate adaptation projects seeking LDCF and/or SCCF finance, define the current and anticipated impacts of climate hazards that the project seeks to address. See GEF guidance here for more information. A [Decision Tree for Project Developers](#) has been developed by STAP and the GEF Secretariat in consultation with GEF Agencies for designing impactful climate change adaptation projects.

<sup>2</sup> See STAP's [brief on future narratives](#) in general. For climate adaptation projects seeking LDCF and/or SCCF finance, provide two or three scenarios, preferably using RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 for 2050.

changes? <sup>3</sup> What will ensure that the outcomes will endure long term? <sup>4</sup> How will the response avoid being undermined by leakage, policy in-coherence or perverse incentives? <sup>5</sup>

### 3. Empower your stakeholders.

*Show how you have engaged with relevant parties, including women, youth, Indigenous peoples, other less-dominant groups, to iteratively test and refine the proposal.*

- Who are the key stakeholders? Have affected parties without a voice been involved? How do the stakeholders help to define the problem, and what is their part in the response? How will they support the success and durability of the project's outcomes?

### 4. Provide a theory of change that justifies the project components.

*Provide a good theory of change narrative, with key causal pathways that justify the project components.*

- How and why will the set of project activities achieve its intended outcomes? <sup>6</sup> How do the key causal pathways address the barriers and harness the opportunities? Be clear about the assumed cause-and-effect relationships on which the project outcomes depend, citing evidence.<sup>7</sup> Is the resulting set of project outputs both *necessary* and *sufficient* to achieve the outcomes, linking (if needed) with what activities being undertaken by others? What are the critical cause and effect assumptions in the logic? How will any necessary behavior changes be addressed? Do calculations of benefits<sup>8</sup> confirm the cost-effectiveness of the approach?

### 5. Innovate, scale and transform.

*Explain how your project is innovative, and how this will be scaled to contribute towards eventual system transformation.*

- What are the innovations? Can they be scaled for transformation? If so, is the aspiration for transformation plausible? How will it be achieved (even if it is after this project, or in combination with other investments or anticipated changes)? What is the theory of change for the scaling? Does it imply actions during this project?

### 6. Monitor and learn, and manage the knowledge.

*Identify what you will monitor to learn and adapt during the project, and how new knowledge from the project will be managed and exchanged.*

- How will tracking key assumptions in the theory of change help with adaptive management of the project? How will new knowledge and learning be generated, managed and exchanged with relevant actors? How

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. climate impacts in the project area or a decrease in demand for targeted commodities

<sup>4</sup> E.g. continuing financing, improved capacity, institutional uptake, potential for scaling (see paragraph 8 in the [GEF-8 Programming Directions](#) regarding guiding principles for lasting and transformative impacts)

<sup>5</sup> E.g. subsidies for clearing in the valley next door to your reforestation project, or regulations preventing changes in fishing gear when this is needed to reduce bycatch – see STAP's [brief on policy coherence](#).

<sup>6</sup> For climate adaptation projects seeking LDCF and/or SCCF finance, how will the project outcomes and outputs directly address the current and anticipated impacts of climate hazards defined in the problem statement? How will these outcomes and outputs mainstream climate adaptation in broader development strategies?

<sup>7</sup> See STAP's [Theory of Change Primer](#). For example, biodiversity projects often develop alternative enterprises, assuming that "increased participant income will provide the motivation and ability for participants to discontinue unsustainable activities and exclude others from illegal uses." The [experience of and evidence for this assumption](#) is mixed, so this assumption would deserve monitoring.

<sup>8</sup> GEBs, adaptation benefits, co-benefits. [Guidelines on the Implementation of the GEF-8 Results Measurement Framework](#)

will this knowledge be integrated within new or existing platforms that promote application beyond the period of the project?

