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Update on the Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF) Implementation Project

*Submitted by the co-leads of the ARAF Implementation Project
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An Arctic Resilience Approach

With the rapid changes underway in the Arctic region, the growing risk of crossing numerous potential thresholds threatens significant disruption for Arctic ecosystems and communities. A resilience approach emphasizes understanding and responding to such change through its focus on interlinked social-ecological systems; interactions across local, regional, national and international scales; interdisciplinary collaboration; the integration of scientific disciplines and other knowledge systems; and the bridging of knowledge, policy and practice. As a cross-cutting approach, resilience is increasingly important for the Arctic Council.

Background on the Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF)

The Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF)¹ is an organizing framework to improve coordination and enhance learning and information-sharing, using the resilience approach as a tool. The ARAF was developed with input from the Arctic Council States, Permanent Participants, and all six of the Arctic Council Working Groups. The Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF) was adopted in the 2017 Fairbanks Ministerial Declaration. Many regions around the globe have developed mechanisms to coordinate action on adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development. The ARAF is an opportunity for the Arctic Council to demonstrate global leadership in this space.

The ARAF Implementation Project (2017-2019) is a pilot effort to implement the ARAF by sharing best practices for building resilience and promoting dialogue among the Arctic States, Permanent Participants and Working Groups. The ARAF Implementation project is being led by the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) in close coordination with the other Working Groups. All six of the Arctic Council Working Groups are leading actions that enhance circumpolar resilience, making additional discussion, coordination and knowledge integration important for strengthening the Arctic Council's approach to building resilience.

The ARAF Implementation project consists of three main activities:

1. Identify actions that are being taken by the Arctic Council States, Permanent Participants, and Working Groups, in 2017-2019, that build resilience, and highlight best practices.
2. Develop a catalog of protocols and indicators that can measure progress towards building resilience.
3. Plan an Arctic Resilience Forum to discuss best practices and challenges around building resilience. The Arctic Resilience Forum will take place September 10-11, 2018 in Rovaniemi, Finland. Working Groups are being invited to take part in smaller discussions on the second day of the Forum.

¹ <https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/handle/11374/2019>

Recent Progress

An ARAF Implementation Team was recently formed under the SDWG. The Implementation Team held its first teleconference in late January 2018. The Implementation Team includes representation from all eight Arctic States and several of the Permanent Participants. Representation from all Arctic States and Permanent Participants, as well as involvement from all six of the Arctic Council Working Groups, further strengthens the important dialogue around Arctic resilience.

Finland is leading planning for the Arctic Resilience Forum in September 2018 and has conducted a pre-study on resilience in Finland. The Implementation Team and Working Groups have been invited to provide input into the planning for the Arctic Resilience Forum.

Next Steps

- The Implementation Team will compile a set of actions that their country or organization is taking to address ARAF resilience priorities, while emphasizing a few best examples that should be showcased at the Arctic Resilience Forum in Rovaniemi and beyond.
- The project co-leads will work with the six Working Group Chairs and Executive Secretaries to compile a list of actions that Working Groups are taking that build resilience.
- There will be a meeting on 21 March in Levi, Finland, to which all six of the Working Group Chairs/Executive Secretaries will be invited. The purpose of the meeting is to invite and discuss input to the planning of the Arctic Resilience Forum in September.
- The Arctic Resilience Forum agenda will be updated and refined, incorporating input from the Implementation Team, Working Groups, and other stakeholders.
- The project co-leads will work with the Implementation Team to identify available information and expertise to develop the inventory of measurement protocols and indicators. Proposed indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could demonstrate useful insights and complementarities with this process.

Annex: ARAF Priorities and Examples of Working Group Activities that Build Resilience

The ARAF is organized around four broad priority areas:

ARAF Priority Area 1: Analyzing and Understanding Risk and Resilience in the Arctic

ARAF Priority Area 2: Building Resilience and Adaptation Capacity

ARAF Priority Area 3: Implementing Measures that Build Resilience through Policy, Planning and Cooperation

ARAF Priority Area 4: Encouraging Investment to Reduce Risk and Build Resilience

All six of the Working Groups are leading activities that contribute to resilience-building. While at the present time, there is little activity to address Priority Area 4, Working Groups are already leading activities related to Priority Areas 1-3. These activities demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of a resilience approach and suggest the value in additional discussion and collaboration by the Working Groups on the resilience topic.

Below are a few examples of current Working Group activities that contribute to the ARAF Priority Areas:

- ACAP is engaging new communities of local observers through the Circumpolar Local Environmental Observer (CLEO) Network (Priority Area 2)
- AMAP is supporting the IPCC process, especially to support the special report on “climate change and the oceans and the cryosphere” (Priority Area 1)
- CAFF is implementing the Arctic Invasive Alien Species Strategy and Action Plan to collectively reduce the threat of invasive alien species in the Arctic (Priority Area 3)
- EPPR is engaging in annual search and rescue and oil spill response exercises (Priority Area 3)
- PAME is completing the Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Communities and Marine Activities (MEMA) report, which documents best practices on the meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples and local communities in marine activities (Priority Areas 1 and 2)
- SDWG leads the Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA) project, which builds capacity to transition from diesel to hybrid and renewable energy systems (Priority Area 2)