



Enabling Least Developed Country Universities to Contribute to and Support National Adaptation Action

Outcomes and Programme Brief

December 2023

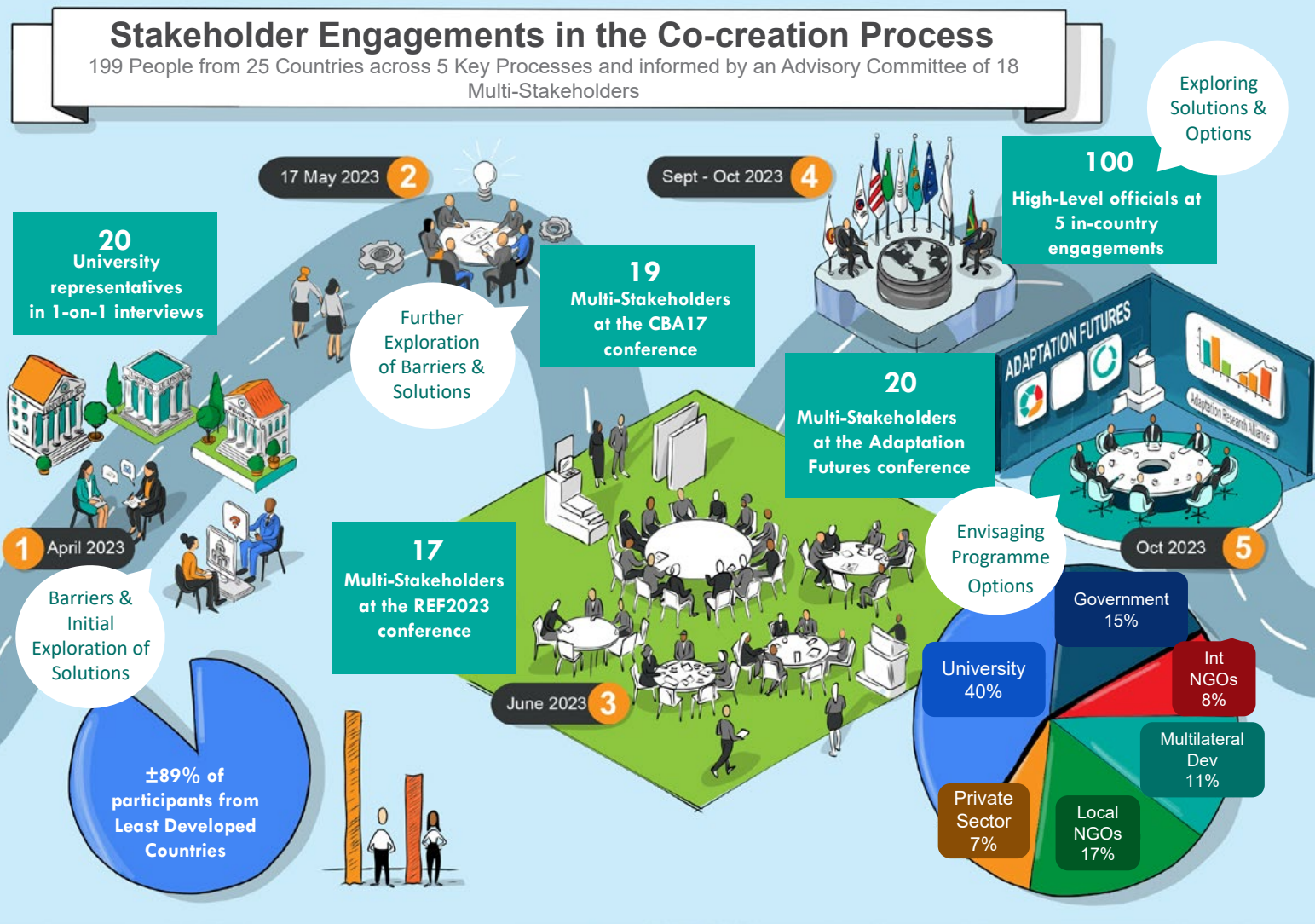


Setting the scene

Universities in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) play a pivotal role in addressing the multifaceted challenges facing these nations. Climate change stands out as an urgent concern that can exacerbate poverty and hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To effectively combat this, an integrated climate adaptation response is needed. Collaboration between universities, government, and society is crucial to bridge knowledge gaps and generate new evidence for decision-making and action.

This need was recognised by the Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC) alongside the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who came to the Adaptation Research Alliance (ARA) with the suggestion for a co-creation process to explore how such collaborative research and action could be achieved.

The Alliance presents here an outline for a new action-oriented research programme that emerged from the co-creation process designed to shift the knowledge system in LDCs and lead to more effective and equitable adaptation.



Framing the Co-creation Space

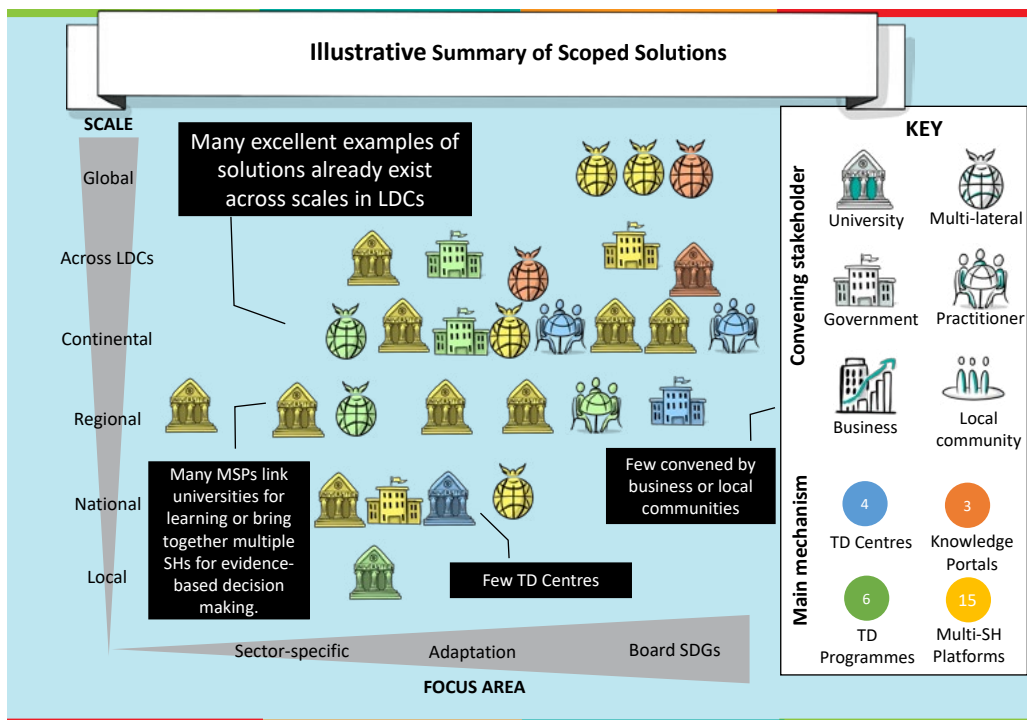
Issues in the current adaptation research knowledge system, such as a lack of locally-led research, dominance of Global North researchers, and a persistent science-policy-practice gap, informed the framing of the co-creation space. The knowledge systems framework outlined by Fazey et al. (2020)¹ guided the process, emphasizing the need to shift the knowledge system to enable locally-driven research and incorporate findings into policy and practice.

Multiple interconnected solutions across various actors and scales are recognized as essential to inform policy and practice and support vulnerable populations' adaptation to climate change in LDCs.

Scoping Solutions

The engagements in the co-creation process, and additional desk-top searches, revealed that there are many existing Global South initiatives that address some part of the science-policy-practice gap. These provide excellent examples for learning and could be replicated or built on.

A review of these initiatives suggests that solutions are needed across scales to achieve the necessary systemic shifts in the adaptation knowledge system to support action-oriented research that can contribute to policy and practice. This may mean supporting different types of structures and activities at multiple levels and scales while ensuring strong links between them all.



¹ Fazey, I., Schöpke, N., Caniglia, G., Hodgson, A., Kendrick, I., Lyon, C., Page, G., Patterson, J., Riedy, C., Strasser, T. and Verveen, S., 2020. Transforming knowledge systems for life on Earth: Visions of future systems and how to get there. *Energy research & social science*, 70, p.101724.

Overarching Programme Theory of Change

To achieve the desired outcomes and impacts and foster more effective and equitable adaptation in LDCs requires a research programme that can shift the adaptation knowledge system from one that is dominated by foreign-set agendas, low local capacity for action orientated research and poor engagement with policy makers and practitioners to one that is locally led, well-integrated with national and local policy and practice and that supports learning across LDCs regionally and globally. To drive the changes needed, three interlinked programme components were identified in the co-creation process that together constitute the overarching programme (see Overarching Theory of Change).

Overarching Programme: Theory of Change

ULTIMATE IMPACT: more effective and equitable adaptation in LDCs

1. Problem

- ❑ Fragmented knowledge system with limited capacity for collaboration and few platforms to connect
- ❑ Lack of access to data
- ❑ Lack of university capacity for action-oriented research
- ❑ Reliance on foreign-set agendas with limited timeframes

3. Programme Values

- ❑ Whole of society approach
- ❑ Locally-led solutions
- ❑ Relationship-building prioritised
- ❑ Avoiding duplication of effort
- ❑ Multi-directional knowledge sharing
- ❑ Flexible & culturally relevant
- ❑ Accessible knowledge
- ❑ Recognising power & complexity

5. Impact

- ❑ Improved capacity for multiple stakeholders in LDCs to access useable, useful, relevant data and information for CCA.
- ❑ National CCA policy and practice in LDCs reflects local needs and experiences.
- ❑ Strengthened CCA knowledge system in LDCs with connected actors across universities, government, and society.

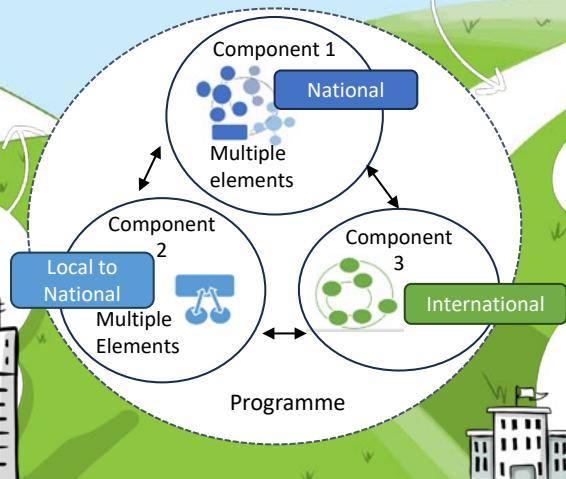
2. Overarching Programme Objectives

- ❑ Feeds new local evidence from action-oriented research into policy and decision-making processes, and adaptation practice in LDCs; and
- ❑ Builds the capacity across different actors to work together in bridging the research-policy-practice divides.

4. Areas of Activity

Three interlinked components made up of multiple elements that can stand alone but together would shift the adaptation knowledge system in LDCs to better support local adaptation of the most vulnerable.

- ❑ **Component 1:** Centres of Excellence related to NAPs and NDCs
- ❑ **Component 2:** LLA Research Chairs and Programmatic Funding
- ❑ **Component 3:** Institutional strengthening and expansion of LUCCC



The first component focusses at the national policy level and is linked to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). The second focuses at the local level and supports locally led adaptation research. The third operates at an international level, playing a role in supporting learning through coordination and networking. Ideally all three components are necessary to bridge the science-policy-practice gap and to achieve the impacts highlighted above. But not all components have to happen simultaneously; each can be implemented individually through funding from different donors. Each component is also made up of several elements which in turn can be funded separately but with the aim of building up over time. The pages that follow describe these components and elements in more detail.

Our vision is of a programme whose components are supported by multiple funders, each playing to their strengths and preferences, but in a coordinated and collaborative way that can help achieve the shifts that are critically needed for LDCs to be able to respond to the threats of climate change.

Component 1. Networked Country-level Centres of Excellence in hub and spoke model that strengthens national-level relations related to NAPs and NDCs

This component focusses on strengthening national-level relations and policies (with an emphasis on NDCs and NAPs) through action-oriented research that contributes to all stages of the policy cycle: policymaking, implementation, evaluation, and review. There are four main elements that make up this component.

First, country level, university-led Transdisciplinary Centres of Excellence structured as a hub-and-spoke model (see the ARUA Centres of Excellence in the Annexed table as an example). These Centres will have national level buy-in and become the first 'port of call' for policy-related adaptation research and action. Collaboration and knowledge co-production will be facilitated by a multistakeholder country platform hosted either by the universities or by government.

Component 1: Networked Country-level Centres of Excellence in hub and spoke model that strengthens national-level relations related to NAPs and NDCs

'Research-for-policy'

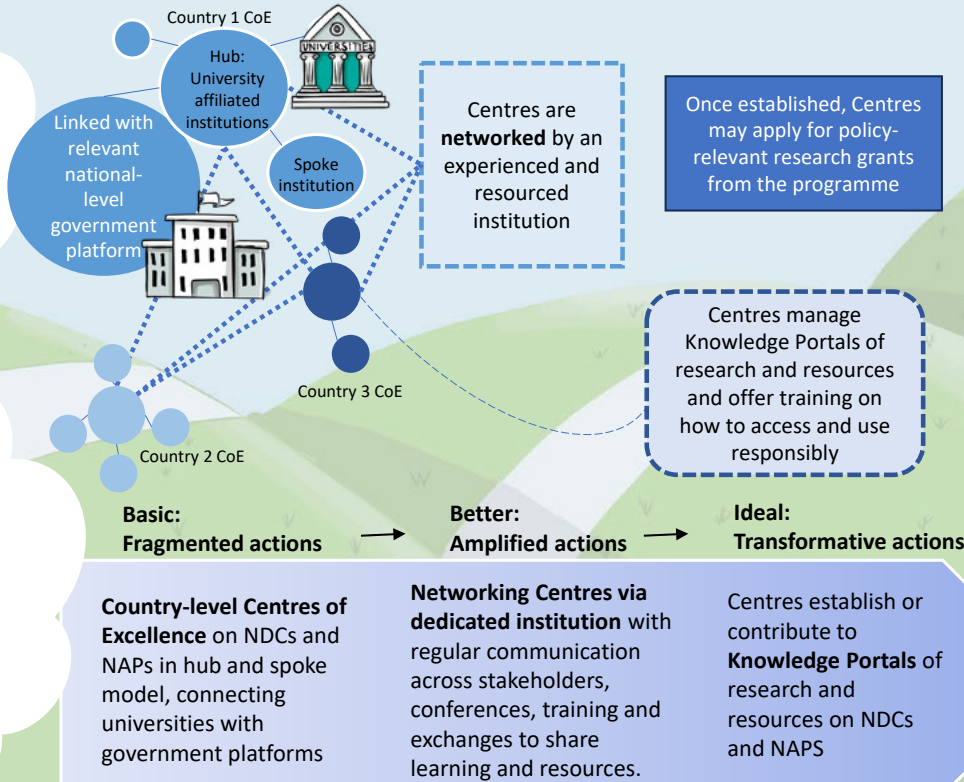
Problem:

Many LDCs rely on external, 'imported' expertise and research to inform the design, implementation and/or review of their NDCs and NAPs, at the expense of locally generated local knowledge informed by community experiences and priorities

Objectives:

- 1) Creating a 'first port of call' for national government needs on NDCs and NAPs via distributed Centres that bring together a country's collective expertise for policy-making, -review, -implementation, and -evaluation
- 2) Networking these Centres across countries to share resources and learning

Activity Areas:



Outcomes

- Improved capacity for multiple stakeholders in LDCs to access data and information for NDCs and NAPs.
- NAPs and NDCs in LDCs reflect local research.
- Strengthened CCA knowledge system in LDCs with connected actors across universities and government.

Second, learning, knowledge exchange and communication of policy relevant findings can be amplified if centres are networked by an experienced and resourced organization that has experience in supporting evidence-based policy making (such as African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), African Evidence Network (AEN) and LUCCC – see Annex).

Third, support is provided for these centres to develop and manage a national knowledge portal and offer training on how to access and use this responsibly.

Each of these elements could be implemented in a staged way as reflected in the blue box at the base of the figure above, with the ideal being to have them all functioning together for the best outcomes.

Component 2: Building up the evidence base of Locally Led Adaptation through Research Chairs and programmatic funding, brokering research for policy, and sharing synthesized findings across a network

Component 2: Building up the evidence base of Locally-Led Adaptation through research chairs and programmatic funding, brokering research for policy, and sharing synthesized findings across network

'Research-for-action'

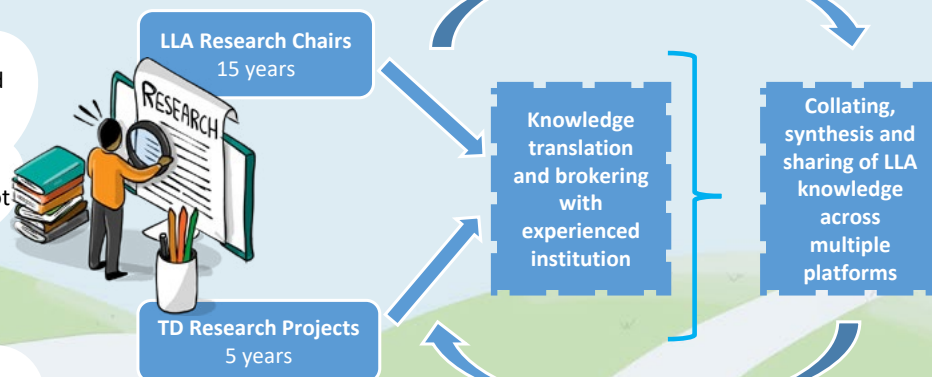
Problem:

Research agendas in LDCs are often imposed from high income countries, and do not reflect local realities, cultures and needs. National and local-level policies in LDCs do not include local voices.

Objectives:

- 1) Take local priorities into policy-making processes to reduce local vulnerability and strengthen local responses;
- 2) Capture and share experiences of LLA to inform best practice for LDCs and beyond.

Activity Areas:



Basic:

Fragmented actions

LLA Research Chairs and TD research programmes, with research agendas set with local government, NGOs and local communities.

Better:

Amplified actions

Research teams supported to translate and broker LLA knowledge with relevant policy-makers.

Ideal:

Transformative actions

Experienced institution collates, synthesises and shares LLA knowledge across multiple platforms

Outcomes

Improved capacity for multiple stakeholders in LDCs to access LLA research.

CCA policy and practice in LDCs reflects local needs and experiences.

Strengthened CCA knowledge system in LDCs with connected actors across universities, local government, and society.

This component focusses on building up the evidence base on locally led adaptation to inform local-to-national policy and support community-level adaptation action. In this bottom-up approach, local adaptation priorities and needs are integrated into national level policy processes through collaboration with the Centres of Excellence mentioned in Component 1 or through knowledge brokering and synthesis entities (e.g., AEN, the African Research and Impact Network (ARIN), and the African Synthesis Centre for Climate Change, Environment and Development (ASCEND)).

At the same time, through partnering with practitioners, the research can be designed to support more effective local-level implementation of adaptation actions. Key elements to support such engaged local-level research include the establishment of Research Chairs at LDC Universities (e.g., Oliver Tambo Research Chair in Ecosystem Based Adaptation on Arid and Semi-arid Zones based at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique), which in turn, are supported by research funding for transdisciplinary projects on locally led adaptation (e.g., the Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 in Africa programme (LIRA 2030 Africa) as an example of such a funding programme).

Component 3: Institutional-strengthening and expanding the activities of LUCCC for networking and capacity building for action-orientated research across LDCs

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'Research-network'

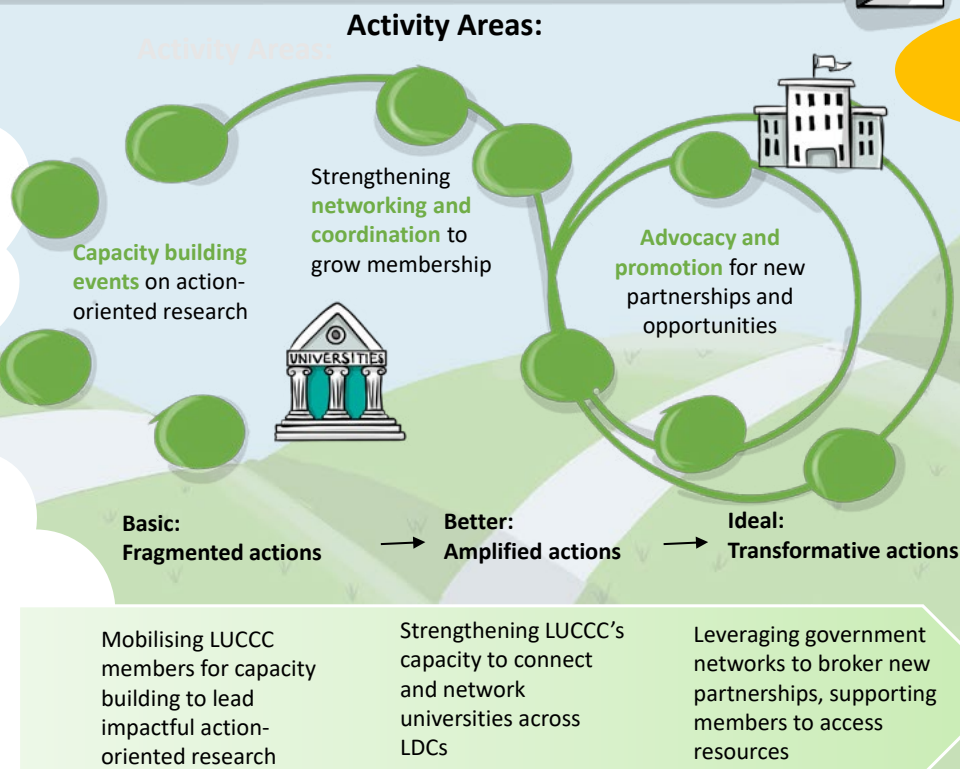
See RUForum as example: www.ruforum.org

Problem:

Universities in LDCs often lack access to resources, research and training while having to compete with well-resourced universities in high income countries for funding. Adaptation researchers often work in isolation and risk duplicating the efforts of others.

Objectives:

- 1) To support LDC universities with access to resources, training, networking and opportunities for action-oriented research; and
- 2) To promote and share the work of LDC universities with other multistakeholder networks and amplify the voices of LDCs in international climate change policy.



Outcomes

Improved capacity for universities in LDCs to access information for CCA.

Improved capacity for universities in LDCs to do action-oriented research.






Strengthened CCA knowledge system in LDCs with connected actors across universities, government, and society.

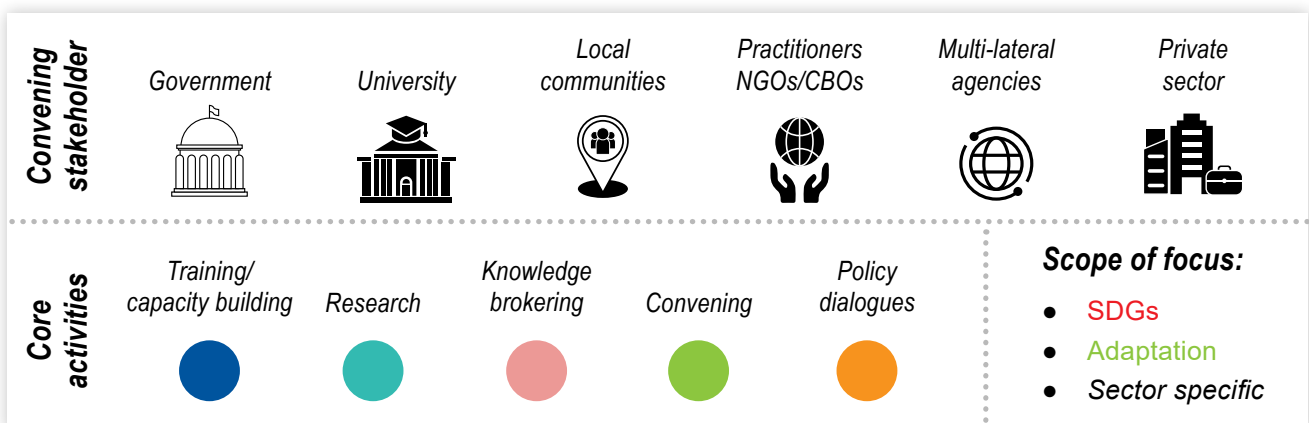
The Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC, mentioned at the start of this Brief) is an existing network that supports LDC universities. Since networking is such a vital element of any action-oriented research programme, in this component we suggest additional support to LUCCC to carry out several critical capacity development functions. It could also act as the coordinating platform and network suggested as an important element of Component 1 and 2.













This component would focus on strengthening and expanding the activities and influence of LUCCC to support LDC universities with access to resources, training, networks, opportunities for action-orientated research and knowledge brokering. It would play an important role in fund raising, advocacy and connecting researchers globally and with international stakeholders and policy processes such as Life AR or the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG).

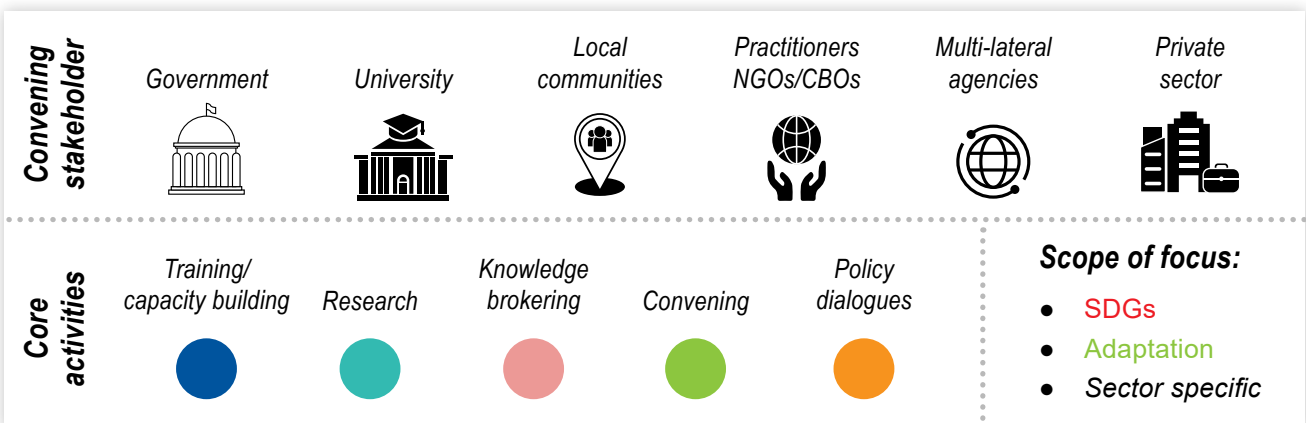
RUForum provides an inspiring example of what is possible in terms of the range of benefits it provides to its members.











Annex: Tables of solution spaces

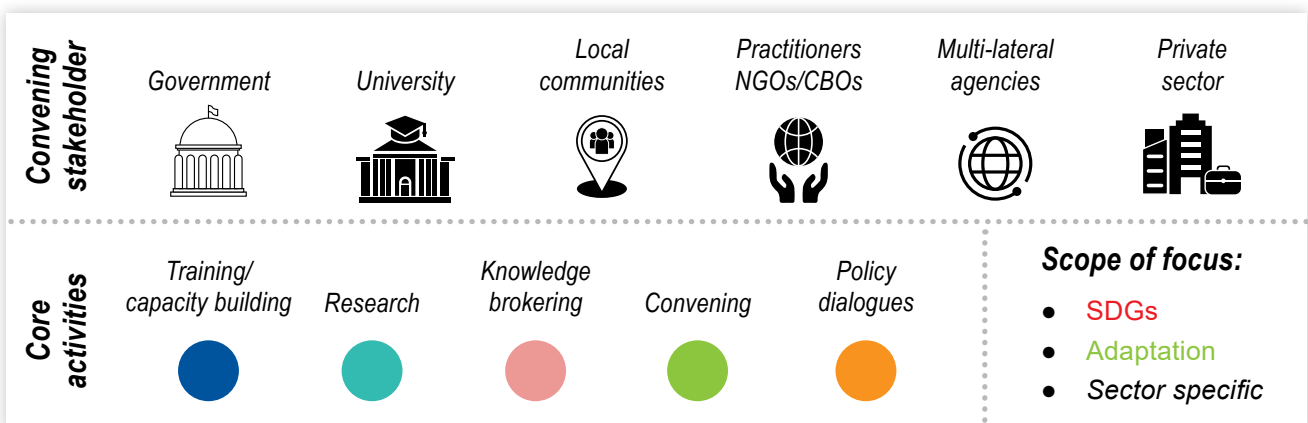
| SCALE | SOLUTION TYPE | | | |
|----------|--|---|--|------------------|
| | Multistakeholder platforms & networks | Transdisciplinary centres | Transdisciplinary programmes | Knowledge portal |
| Local | | | OR Tambo Chair at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique  AFRICA | |
| National | South African Presidential Climate Commission (SAPCC)  AFRICA | International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD)  ASIA | | |
| | Policy Action for Climate Change Adaptation (PACCA)  AFRICA | | | |
| | National Support Office of the African Union Champion of Disaster Risk Management  AFRICA | | | |









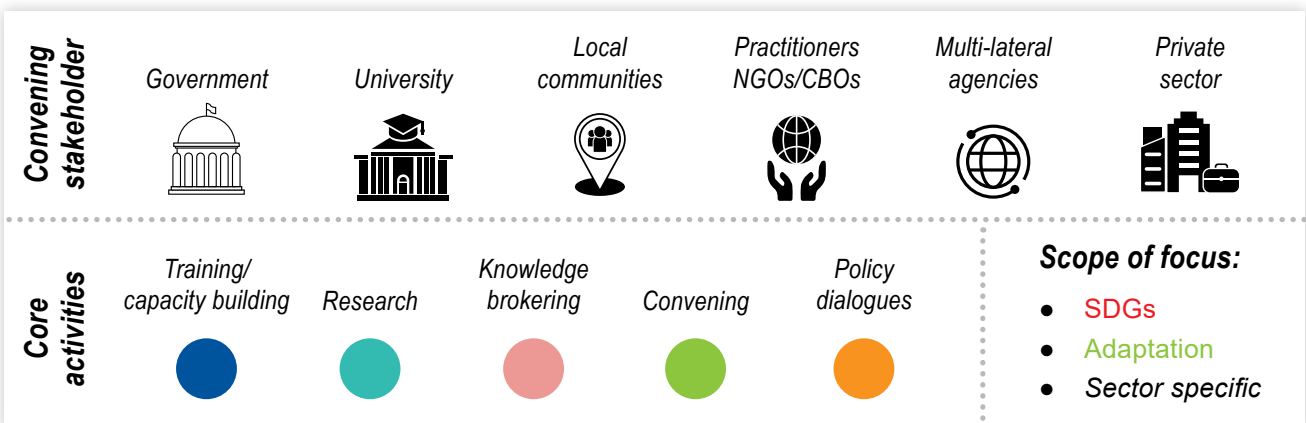
| SCALE | SOLUTION TYPE | | | |
|----------|---|--|--|------------------|
| | Multistakeholder platforms & networks | Transdisciplinary centres | Transdisciplinary programmes | Knowledge portal |
| Regional | Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network (HoA-REC)   AFRICA | | Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA)   AFRICA | |
| | Himalayan University Consortium (HUC)   ASIA | | | |
| | Sahel Universities Network for Resilience   AFRICA | | | |
| | Mekong River Commission   ASIA | | | |
| | | International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)   ASIA | | |



| SCALE | SOLUTION TYPE | | | |
|-------------|--|--|--|---|
| | Multistakeholder platforms & networks | Transdisciplinary centres | Transdisciplinary programmes | Knowledge portal |
| Continental | <p>African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA)</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | <p>The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | <p>Leading Integrated Research for Agenda 2030 in Africa (LIRA)</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | |
| | <p>Livelihood Assets & Resilience Academy (LARA)</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | <p>AKADEMIYA 2063</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | <p>Science Granting Councils Initiative in sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI)</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | |
| | <p>Africa Evidence Network</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | | | <p>Africa Evidence Network Learning Space</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> |
| | <p>Africa Research and Impact Network</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> | | | <p>Africa Research and Impact Network</p>  <p>AFRICA</p> |



| SCALE | SOLUTION TYPE | | | |
|----------|--|---------------------------|---|---|
| | Multistakeholder platforms & networks | Transdisciplinary centres | Transdisciplinary programmes | Knowledge portal |
| LDC-wide | Least Developed Countries Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC)  | | LDC Initiative for Effective Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR)  | |
| | Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG)  | | | |
| Global | | | | WeAdapt  |
| | Transforming Evidence Network  | | | |
| | Transforming Evidence Funders Network  | | | |





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For more information on the ARA Co-creation Spaces, please visit:
<https://www.adaptationresearchalliance.org/resources/ara-co-creation/>

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