



Adaptation Research Alliance

ADAPTATION RESEARCH FOR IMPACT PRINCIPLES

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The Adaptation Research Alliance is a global collaborative effort to catalyse increased investment and capacity for action-oriented research that supports effective adaptation to climate change – primarily in developing countries – at the scale and urgency demanded by the science. The ARA aims to promote evidence-based solutions that best serve those most vulnerable to climate change. This requires an agile ecosystem of action research, with alignment among all influential actors in this nexus: action funders, research funders, policy-makers, beneficiaries on the frontlines of climate change, researchers and intermediaries.

The Adaptation Research for Impact Principles have been designed by the ARA to better align and link knowledge to action; with the objective of maximising the benefits to those most at risk. In particular, widespread endorsement of the Principles should help address some of the key barriers for action research: a disconnect between research and the needs of the most vulnerable; misaligned incentives and institutional barriers; low coherence and coordination in adaptation research; limited capacity in communities and developing countries; and limited learning from implementation.

Relevant entities and organisations are invited to endorse these Principles and to make their endorsements publicly known. Following endorsement, entities and organisations will be encouraged to put these Principles into practice in their work and share learning on these efforts.

It is hoped that the endorsement of these Principles will instigate a systemic change in the landscape of action research - one that puts the needs of the most vulnerable front and centre and leads to enhanced and effective actions for adaptation and resilience.

The ARA is proposing six principles, which address: the purpose of research, the research process itself, the value and benefits of research and the linkages between research and action.

1. Research is needs-driven, solutions-oriented and leads to a positive impact on the lives of those at risk from climate change

Who or what is the research for?

Action research for adaptation is driven by the needs of users and seeks to be solutions-oriented. Research processes should aim to find practical and implementable solutions that can make a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable communities by delivering effective solutions to ameliorate both current and future climate risks. Research priorities and agendas should be set through open and inclusive processes that reflect all stakeholder contexts, needs and interests.

2. Research is transdisciplinary and co-produced with users

How should research be carried out?

From the outset, research is co-produced with the people who will use it in practice and employs transdisciplinary approaches (i.e., incorporating thinking across boundaries of knowledge and disciplines) that emphasise collaboration. Research processes should include a wide variety of stakeholders from the research-action spectrum, drawing from the science, practice and policy communities as well as vulnerable people while respecting their time, interest and capacities. Research processes should enable authentic inclusion of traditional and indigenous knowledge and a diversity of framings, narratives, voices, sectors and systems of knowledge.

3. Research emphasises societal impact

How is research valued?

Research should deliver societal impact at scale by ensuring the uptake of knowledge as well as innovative solutions for enhancing the resilience of those vulnerable to climate change impacts. Research outcomes should be measurable, with metrics that are co-developed with those at risk and relevant for their needs. Research institutions and funders should incentivize outcomes that are directed towards overcoming the challenges most relevant for those at risk.

4. Research builds capacity and empowers actors for the long-term

What can research enable?

Research processes should sustainably enhance the capacity of local institutions, organisations, coalitions, practitioners and researchers to respond to climate risks. This requires that information, tools, and knowledge products are widely accessible (e.g., in appropriate languages, not behind a paywall) and are embedded within capacity development activities that empower actors with the knowledge and ability to drive action. Research should not perpetuate existing inequalities but rather empower actors to question existing practices and produce alternative, innovative, inclusive and more effective pathways of adaptation.

5. Research processes address structural inequities that lead to increased vulnerability and reduced adaptive capacity of those at risk

How can research address root causes of risk?

Action research recognises that power relations manifest through intersectional, gender-based, economic, social, and political inequities, which are often the root causes of vulnerability. Research should encourage all sections of society, especially vulnerable and marginalised individuals, to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decision-making for transformative action. Research should recognise and mitigate the differentials in power-relations, which often leave gender and sexual minorities as well as other marginalised groups less able to effectively engage in – and benefit from – action and research processes. Everyone must have an equal right to be heard.

6. Learning-while-doing enables adaptation action to be evidence-based and increasingly effective

How can research–action links be strengthened?

Research and action processes for adaptation that involve inclusive monitoring and sharing processes allow for ‘learning-while-doing’ and stronger integration of emerging lessons on what is working and what is not. Additionally, iterative research processes accommodate emerging knowledge and allow adaptation efforts to adjust accordingly and improve effectiveness over time. Flexible approaches to planning and implementation allow real-time feedback loops between research and action, ensuring that evolving knowledge can influence adaptation practice, and enables effective anticipatory action in complex situations of high uncertainty.